

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 3rd March, 1993

Mr Speaker (The Hon. Kevin Richard Rozzoli) took the chair at 2.15 p.m.

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MATTER

The honourable member for Bligh gave notice of a matter for urgent consideration.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

PROPOSED GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr CARR: My question without notice is directed to the Premier and Treasurer. Why does he repeat the qualification "in its present form" when talking about the goods and services tax? Will he tell the House precisely what financial guarantees for the State he got from Dr Hewson?

Mr FAHEY: It would be abundantly obvious to all concerned, particularly members of this House, that when matters go before parliaments, especially those that contain two Houses, alterations can occur. I can only work out my calculations from the documentation that is available at present. That is what I responded to.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Smithfield to order.

Mr FAHEY: Let us look again at the guarantees that the Leader of the Opposition seeks on the question of Fightback and funding to New South Wales and ask: What guarantees does he have from Paul Keating that Paul Keating will turn around the \$3 billion that he has taken off New South Wales? What questions have the Leader of the Opposition or any honourable member opposite asked the Labor Party concerning what it has done to New South Wales? It has financially raped and pillaged the people of this State.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much interjection from both sides of the House.

Mr FAHEY: For five years the people of New South Wales have been treated abysmally.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Bulli to order.

Mr FAHEY: They have been treated poorly in everything that has come through from the Government in Canberra - a government that is in its dying days. There is no doubt in the minds of people on this side of the House and in the minds of the people of New South Wales that there will be a different approach to employment in this State, to the problems that this State has, and to the contribution this State makes to the rest of Australia, when there is a change of government and there are policies that address the real issues that are affecting Australia. The Government in Canberra is interested only in distractions, such as, "Will we replace the Queen with a president? What will we have on our flag?"

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Drummoyne to order. I call the Minister for Justice to order.

Mr FAHEY: That is all we get out of Canberra these days. The Government in Canberra continually throws up those sorts of distractions in an endeavour to take people's minds off the real issues. The real issues are the one million people out of work and the debt that this country is running up month after month under an administration that has failed the people of Australia.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Swansea to order.

Mr FAHEY: The future is bright under John Hewson.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Hurstville to order.

Mr FAHEY: The future is very grim indeed if Paul Keating happens to be the Prime Minister past next week.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for St Marys to order.

NATIONAL FORESTS POLICY STATEMENT

Mr COCHRAN: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Conservation and Land Management. Was New South Wales a signatory to the national forests policy statement at the Council of Australian Governments meeting held in Perth last year? Is the Federal environment Minister now seeking to change that agreement to the detriment of employment in the State's timber industry?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Illawarra to order.

Mr WEST: I thank the honourable member for Monaro for his question. The answers basically are, yes, we were signatories to that forest policy statement, and yes, the Federal environment Minister, Ros Kelly, is trying to put her own interpretation on how the policy should be implemented. The implications of her proposal to the State of New South Wales are enormous. We can all only hope that in two weeks her views will be totally irrelevant. On 13th March the people of Australia will be moving to kick out a Federal government which has done so much to harm the

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economy of Australia generally and the timber industry specifically. Mrs Kelly wants a logging moratorium to lock up huge areas of forests which she describes as having high conservation values. She is talking about 1.4 million hectares. She is talking about cutting timber production in New South Wales by 52 per cent. That would cost the economy of New South Wales \$200 million a year. It would devastate towns on the North Coast, mid North Coast and the South Coast. Around Grafton it will mean the direct loss of 2,200 jobs with a flow on affecting 6,000 jobs. Another 3,000 jobs would be at risk around Taree, Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Dorrigo, Wauchope, Coffs Harbour, Gloucester, Kyogle, Lismore and Casino. In the Pilliga region 60 jobs would be lost with no possible chance of alternative employment.

What is this Federal election all about? It is about jobs. On the South Coast more than half of the resource would be hit by the Kelly moratorium. That would mean another 400 jobs lost in Bega, Nowra, Bateman's Bay, Moruya, Narooma, Cooma and Bombala. Ros Kelly is talking unmitigated rubbish. The national forests policy statement was meant to put some common sense back into the forestry debate. Mrs Kelly has failed to appreciate this. She has gone on her own merry way. She is now heading down a road to see logging being stopped in one forest which had previously been used for agricultural purposes, has an extensive road system, is a former homestead site and has been subject to numerous harvesting cycles. Mrs Kelly seems to be unable to distinguish between wilderness areas and regrowth forests. Her letter covers 27

entire State forests in New South Wales and parts of a further 10 forests. In the southeast alone that leaves only six forests available to the timber industry, all of which contain little resource of immediate relevance to the local industry. Needless to say, the local residents are horrified by the attempted misapplication of the national forests policy.

It seems that the Federal Minister with responsibility for the environment is at odds with her own colleague the Federal resources Minister on this issue. Resources Minister Griffiths only recently issued a woodchip export licence to Harris-Daishowa. Much of the material licensed for export by that company is to be sourced from forest areas in the southeast which are specified by the Federal environment Minister for a moratorium on logging. How can one Minister expect that the licence is to be complied with, while the other Minister wants to take away the resource? They are obviously acting at cross-purposes. New South Wales has already taken action to avoid activities in areas that are likely to have high conservation value, pending the completion and determination of environmental impact statements. That process is formalised under the Timber Industry (Interim Protection) Act, specifically in schedules 1 and 2 to that Act, which place a moratorium on activities within nominated areas pending the completion and determination of environmental impact statements.

The environmental impact statement program is well under way in this State. It includes about 17 statements that will be completed by 1994 at a cost well in excess of \$13.5 million. It is our belief that the process we have put in place, as was confirmed in all of our discussions at a Commonwealth level, meets the requirements of the national forest policy statement. I have written to the Federal environment Minister and her colleague the Minister for Resources asking them to clarify their respective decisions. Of course, as honourable members might guess, to date neither of them has replied. In the absence of any reply I have given the industry my assurance that I will work to ensure that the national forest policy statement is implemented in this State as was originally intended, and not as the Federal environment Minister would seek to have it implemented through her actions.

PRISONER CORNWELL WORK RELEASE

Mr WHELAN: I address my question without notice to the Minister for Justice and Minister for Emergency Services. Is the Minister aware that the notorious convicted drug-runner Bruce "Snapper" Cornwell, while on day release, frequents many of Sydney's restaurants, including a visit to the exclusive restaurant Mario's in East Sydney? Will the Minister order an inquiry into why a prisoner on work release can dine in an exclusive restaurant?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Blacktown to order. I call the honourable member for Londonderry to order. I call the honourable member for Port Stephens to order and I call the honourable member for Charlestown to order.

Mr MERTON: It is true that Cornwell was briefly back on the work release program last week. For the record, Cornwell was employed as a general hand by a company based in western Sydney.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Blacktown to order for the second time. I call the honourable member for Oxley to order.

Mr MERTON: He started work on Wednesday, 24th February, two weeks after being sacked from his previous work release job. As has been reported, I was more than a little surprised to learn that Cornwell had rejoined the work release program. That was because the Commissioner for Corrective Services had advised me that Cornwell had been removed from the program pending a review of his case. I invited the commissioner to my office on Monday to seek an explanation for the apparent contradiction between his advice and the reality of the situation. The commissioner told me that he, too, was unaware that Cornwell had found another job.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Londonderry to order for the second time. I

call the honourable member for Ashfield to order.

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Mr MERTON: The commissioner advised me that he had previously issued a verbal direction that Cornwell be removed from the program. He further advised that his verbal direction apparently had not been passed to the appropriate authorities at Silverwater prison, from where the work release program is administered. The commissioner accepted full responsibility for the matter and expressed his regret that the situation arose. Having said that, I want to put on record my complete confidence in the commissioner, who I believe has made a significant contribution to corrective services. Let us be a little analytical about this. Here we have the gallery that gave us the revolving door prison system, the gallery that -

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The outburst from the Opposition is completely outside the level of decorum that one would like to think applies in this Chamber, and I am sure is expected by visitors in the public gallery. I ask all members to co-operate and listen to the Minister's reply in silence.

Mr MERTON: The gallery that today -

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Smithfield to order for the second time.

Mr MERTON: The gallery today have overnight had a road to Damascus experience but all the old players are still there. They were all in the cardigan Cabinet under Barrie. Little Bobby over there was the leader of the push, but of course Bob has had a road to Damascus experience. Mr Aquilina, the member for Riverstone, was there too.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will refer to members by their correct title, the name of their electorate.

Mr MERTON: The member for Riverstone was in the Cabinet too, as was the member for Heffron. They were all there.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Heffron to order.

Mr MERTON: Let us look at the situation as it existed under Labor and go back to the good old days when the Labor Party was in operation.

Mr Whelan: On a point of order. Mr Speaker, I am mindful of the ruling you gave yesterday on a point of order raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. However, I request you to ask the Minister for Justice to answer the question. The question relates to his ordering an inquiry into a notorious criminal and does not relate to anything else. If Ministers persist in not answering questions, as I said before, we might as well forget question time. For that reason I ask you to draw the attention of the Minister for Justice to the question asked and to advise the House if he is going to have an inquiry into why this notorious criminal is able, on day release, to eat in Sydney's finest eateries.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ashfield raises a couple of matters to which I should advert. First, it has long been a tradition of this Chamber that in answering questions Ministers may reply to interjections. Therefore it is always in the interest of the Opposition not to interject if it does not wish a Minister to stray from matters relevant to the question asked. However, by the same token it is incumbent upon a Minister to make answers reasonably relevant. The asking of a question does not necessarily give a Minister latitude to perambulate the whole history of his department or deal with matters that may be considered remote to the question asked. I ask the Minister to bear that in mind and ensure that his answer is relevant to the question asked.

Mr MERTON: The reality simply is this, and this is what you people fail to understand: Cornwell was

eligible for work release for one simple reason; he was eligible for work release because under your sentencing legislation -

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Broken Hill to order.

Mr MERTON: - he was eligible to be paroled in December this year. Under this Government's legislation he would not have been eligible until the year 2000; you bunch of hypocrites. The reality is that under our legislation it would have been 2000. You may smirk; you may smile; you put the boot firmly in your own backside, because that is where it belongs. Under our legislation he would not be eligible for parole.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Ashfield to order for the second time.

Mr MERTON: You are not off the hook yet. You think that is funny.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Irrespective of whether what is being said in the House is provocative, interesting or otherwise, members who have not been given the call should not react in the manner of what one can only describe at the very best as a rabble. Such reactions certainly are not illuminating. I ask members to exercise a modicum of self-discipline - difficult though that may be for some members - and to allow the Minister to proceed in the fashion in which he wishes to answer the question.

Mr MERTON: You are not off the hook yet -

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Ashfield to order for the third time.

Mr MERTON: - because when this man is released it is not in the hands of this Government; it is the hands of your Federal masters, the Federal Attorney-General. The Premier has written to the Attorney-General and has said, "There is great public concern and we appreciate that too. What are you going to do about this man's parole?".

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Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order.

Mr MERTON: To date there has been absolutely no reply.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Wallsend to order.

Mr MERTON: Let your Federal masters tell the people what is going to happen to Cornwell before 13th March so the people of Australia can realise how fair dinkum you are about truth in sentencing and law and order. The reality is that the ball is firmly in your court. Your Federal masters decide when this man will be released. But for your sentencing policy he would not be eligible for parole or work release until the year 2000. I thank you very much for the question because it is important.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Wallsend to order for the second time.

Mr MERTON: Let us look at the situation. In March 1987, when all these newfound people gained wisdom overnight, four convicted murderers went ten-pin bowling. Have you forgotten that? Have you forgotten about the 10 people who were murdered as a result of your system? Have you forgotten about Rex Jackson and the riots? You are a bunch of phonies and are not fair dinkum.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Peats to order.

Mr MERTON: We have a genuine commitment to the people of New South Wales with regard to prisons. On becoming aware of Mr Cornwell's release on day release, I immediately ordered that it be

cancelled. It has been cancelled and that is the end of the story. The fate of Mr Cornwell is in the hands of your Federal masters. Please get us an answer; but you will not get an answer because the reality is that your Federal masters, like the bunch of hypocrites opposite, are completely weak, inept and neglectful as far as law and order is concerned.

AUSTRALIAN QUARANTINE AND INSPECTION SERVICE

Dr KERNOHAN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs. Has the Federal Government delivered its promised reductions in inspection costs imposed by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service? If not, what influence have these costs had on recent job cuts at several New South Wales abattoirs?

Mr ARMSTRONG: It is a fact of life that the cost of the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service has proved to be a major factor in lay-offs recently in abattoirs across New South Wales. It has resulted in a significant contribution to the closure of at least two abattoirs. They are costs which cannot be removed despite the fact that abattoirs might become efficient, and producers may increase their efficiency. The fact of life is that it is a fundamental requirement that we have meat inspection in this State and in this country. The cost of the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service is entirely within the realm of the Federal Government. Despite years of promises the Federal Labor Minister, Mr Griffiths, has delivered nothing but increases in this particular area.

Members on both sides of the House would remember that in 1983 we entered into an agreement with the Commonwealth whereby the Commonwealth accepted 100 per cent responsibility for all meat inspection, both State and export. There was bipartisan support for that move. In 1988 the Federal Labor Party increased the cost recovery rate for the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service from 50 per cent of the cost to 60 per cent, but continued partial funding to recognise the wider community benefit of quarantine inspection. In January 1991 full cost recovery was conferred and charged at \$64,686 per inspector. However, by July of the same year another increase had lifted those costs to \$67,154 per inspector. In November of the same year, under extreme pressure, Minister Griffiths announced a package of organisational reforms. At that time in a press release he boasted that that would mean significant savings in meat inspection costs.

I further quote from that same press release where Minister Griffiths said, "AQIS cannot merely limit the rate of increase of costs; it must continue to actively pursue real cost reductions by all possible means". He went on, "It will become significantly smaller in terms of its staff numbers and in terms of its total cost to users". What is the result of those promises? In August 1992 the charge per inspector increased to \$69,169. There is no guarantee that Labor will not further increase those costs beyond the existing exorbitant levels. The food industry knows where Minister Griffiths' promises are and the new efficiency measures or reform of AQIS will result in another crippling increase just around the corner. If that is not bad enough, just three months ago AQIS inspectors walked off the job in Victoria. Even at the current huge cost, Minister Griffiths cannot guarantee the provision of service paid for by the industry which affects both our domestic and export performance.

How wide are the concerns about these matters? The classic one would have to be that the AQIS director of quarantine, Mr John Landos, addressed the New South Wales Farmers Association recently and said that quarantine services were too expensive, were too high a cost for our food and meat industries to bear in this country. The director of quarantine himself told the association that AQIS charges were too high. Of course, AQIS does not just inspect meat; it is also responsible for inspecting all food exports, including grain, fruit, vegetables, dried fruit and flowers. This is opposed to a situation where AQIS only inspects approximately 15 high-risk group imported foods. The point is that it is an inspection

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requirement by the Federal Labor Party of all major export commodities, processed and semi-processed, but when it comes to imported food, it groups only 15 foods. The qualifications and requirements imposed by AQIS on exports are significantly higher than they are on imports in terms of grouping those foodstuffs

together. Another example of cost increases, when the rate of increase is discounted to take account of Labor's move to full cost recovery, is that charges for grain inspection have risen by almost 40 per cent since 1988. That is 40 per cent against the struggling Australian grain industry because the Federal Labor Government wants to boost its own coffers.

The AQIS budget for the current year is \$187 million, which is a reduction of 8.4 per cent on last year. During the past year its staff was reduced from 3,125 to 2,799. In fact, AQIS has shed 600 positions in the past five years. It is not surprising that AQIS is able to make such large cuts because in 1991 Labor admitted there were 63 AQIS meat inspectors throughout Australia based in towns where abattoirs no longer operated. Although there was no abattoir in these towns, in 1991 there were 63 inspectors sitting there without anything to inspect. Approximately 60 meat inspector positions have been shed in the past two years. It is expected this would have meant a cost saving in excess of \$4 million, but none of those savings has been passed on to the industry. Costs keep going up. One reason might be the rorts recently identified in an investigation into deliberate misuse of government resources by AQIS officers. According to that report the investigation casts serious doubt on AQIS's current ability to manage its business with as much integrity as the Australian Government expects export industries to have.

In New South Wales, though the Government no longer has responsibility for meat inspection, it is continuing to pursue cost cuts. In August 1991 the Commonwealth review of domestic inspection, endorsed by the Australian Agricultural Council, released the detail of activities that were occurring in New South Wales. The review stated that if the recommendations were implemented, there would be a 25 per cent to 30 per cent saving in inspection costs. By April 1992 New South Wales had achieved a 15 per cent cut, but no other State had achieved any reductions, and AQIS charges were still rising. By February 1992 the Australian Agricultural Council endorsed the principle of differential charging for AQIS services. That meant charges in each State should reflect the cost of providing service in that State. New South Wales already has efficiencies of scale compared with other States and should make inspection services charges cheaper. When the 15 per cent cut through efficiency gains is added, savings should be substantial. However, to date none of these savings has been passed on by AQIS either to producers or to consumers or, indeed, to the processors in the middle of the chain.

AQIS claims the savings have been made; it can demonstrate that there is a 15 per cent reduction in New South Wales in charges; but where are the savings to the industry? The charges keep increasing at the expense of jobs and at the expense of productivity in this State. The plain, simple facts are that the promises made by Minister Griffiths and the Federal Labor Government on this subject cannot be believed. The Federal Government has misled the Australian food export industry, the processors and the consumers. On 14th March that will be in contrast when we see the new coalition Government, which has promised to reduce meat inspection costs by 50 per cent and wherever possible to make establishments responsible for their own inspection and provide random checks to ensure that standards are maintained. They are essential measures if we are to have any real reduction in the horrendous costs of the inspection of meat and foodstuffs. Producers, abattoirs and others along the meat industry chain will appreciate the long-awaited cost savings from AQIS under a coalition government. There was an interjection about the GST: the GST will mean an improvement in profits by \$1 billion to agriculture in Australia.

I should inform the House of the current position regarding inspectors employed by AQIS in New South Wales. There are 220 export meat inspectors, four other export commodity inspectors, 81 domestic meat inspectors, seven only inspectors for imported foods, and 82 relief inspectors to cover sick leave and annual leave. That means that there are 82 inspectors who are waiting for someone to get sick or to go on annual leave, yet we have only seven inspectors to inspect all the imported food coming into this country. It is long overdue that AQIS be called to heel to explain why those reductions in costs have not been passed on to the industry and why this service is not managed in a businesslike fashion that will result in some real improvements in the function it performs and in the charges borne by the general public.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE FOR Mr RONALD ALLPASS

Dr REFSHAUGE: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Justice. Did an officer of his department, Mr Graeme Zanelli, visit the home of convicted sex offender Ronald Allpass at Blacktown last week? Did Mr Zanelli attend in an official capacity to assist Mr Allpass to handle media inquiries? Did the Minister grant Mr Zanelli permission to do this?

Mr MERTON: I am not aware of that situation. I will advise the House in due course.

SALE OF STATE BANK

Mr TINK: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Finance and Assistant Treasurer. Is the Minister aware of the Prime Minister's pledge to the South Australian Government of financial assistance of \$600 million

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provided its State Bank is sold? Has the Prime Minister offered to assist New South Wales with the sale of its State Bank?

Mr SOURIS: I thank the honourable member for Eastwood, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, for his question. It should come as absolutely no surprise to anyone that no such response or offer from the Prime Minister has come to New South Wales. He has been invited to give it consideration but no response whatsoever has been received.

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

Mr SOURIS: The only thing that has happened is this rather disgraceful press release issued by the Prime Minister on 17th February, which states that the State of South Australia will receive a \$600 million incentive to privatise the State Bank of South Australia, plus an offer for tax compensation. The State Bank of South Australia has been a weeping sore for the South Australian Labor Government since its extravagant expansion in the 1980s and the unbridled activities of its wholly owned finance subsidiary. Even the press release issued by the Prime Minister says:

The Prime Minister and the Premier of South Australia have recognised that the debt burden imposed by the State Bank of South Australia goes beyond the capacity of South Australia to resolve without placing an undue burden on the citizens of the State.

The Labor Party in South Australia has put the State of South Australia into insolvency. Like its Labor comrades in Victoria, the South Australian Labor Government used its State Bank as the money tree to seduce big business. The questionable relationship between the South Australian Labor Government, the State Bank and its finance arm offshoot, Beneficial Finance, is the subject of the Jacobs royal commission, which is now being conducted. It is clear that the activities of the Labor Party in that State and the relationship it had with its State Bank contributed to the \$3.4 billion loss that Labor has cost the people of South Australia. Labor has cost every man, woman and child in South Australia \$2,500. The Opposition's Labor mates in Canberra have offered \$600 million of taxpayers' money to the South Australian Government as a reward for the mismanagement of its State Bank.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Ermington to order.

Mr SOURIS: It is a blatant election bribe at the expense of New South Wales and Victoria. Where else is the money coming from? There is a very serious ethical problem with the way the Labor Party operates in financial matters.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Ermington to order for the second time. I call the honourable member for St Marys to order for the second time.

Mr SOURIS: The Keating Government is in the business of rewarding Labor governments for mismanagement. And I remind honourable members of the Tricontinental collapse, the staged rescue of the Victorian State Bank, WA Inc., and the mismanagement of the State Bank of South Australia. What a trilogy of disgrace. When it comes to financial incentives for the sale of our State Bank - and the Prime Minister has told us repeatedly that banking is a business State governments should not be in - the Australian Labor Party in Canberra does not say a word. If the South Australian State Bank is worth \$600 million to Paul Keating -

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Bulli to order for the second time.

Mr SOURIS: - we can look forward to a 10 figure incentive for the sale of the State Bank of New South Wales, which is, without doubt, a larger and more profitable and better managed bank than the South Australian bank. The Labor Party in Canberra has, as usual, given up on New South Wales. The Prime Minister has given up on his own State. I would like to know how members opposite feel about that. Nothing stands in the way of Paul Keating offering New South Wales at least \$1 billion by way of incentive for the sale of the State Bank, other than that the money has run out or that he has given up on this State as a winner for the Labor Party.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Kiama to order for the second time.

Mr SOURIS: After all, in this State there is no Cain, no Bannon, no Burke to help out: there is only Carr, the soon to be replaced orphan of the Australian Labor Party.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX ON TRANSPORT FARES

Mr LANGTON: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Transport. Will an additional 15 per cent be added by way of a goods and services tax to bus, ferry and train fares? Will this mean that interurban commuters will pay up to \$250 a year more in transport fares?

Mr BAIRD: It is interesting that a member of the Opposition should ask a question about what effect a goods and services tax might have on transport. If Labor retains office in Canberra, there will be no one to use the trains. As a result of the recession caused by Labor unemployment has increased so dramatically that State Rail and State Transit have experienced a 7 per cent drop in patronage.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Bankstown to order. I call the honourable member for Bulli to order for the third time.

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Mr BAIRD: If the recession continues - and it is the Opposition's mates in Canberra who have caused the recession - there will be a continuing loss of patronage on our trains and buses. The Opposition's mates in Victoria, in just 18 months, increased fares by no less than 40 per cent. The honourable member has asked me about the impact of a GST on fares. It will be interesting so far as this State is concerned because though a GST will be imposed, a number of secret taxes, which are applied by the Federal Government, will be abolished.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Waratah to order.

Mr BAIRD: The \$44 million per annum that State Rail pays in fuel excise goes directly into the Federal Treasury and is used to subsidise the road industry. None of it comes back to State Rail. A further \$62 million is paid by State Rail in payroll tax. With the abolition of these taxes, the State Transit Authority will save \$11 million in fuel excise and \$12 million in payroll tax. The transport industry will benefit from the abolition of the fuel excise, payroll tax, and wholesale sales tax. It has been estimated that transport operators and State Rail will save about \$4 million a year on construction work, not to mention the savings that will result from the

lowering of the cost of car spare parts. Car spare parts and cars will be cheaper for the taxi and hire car industries. Wholesale sales tax will be abolished as will the compulsory training levy. A freeze will be placed on compulsory superannuation contributions and the capital gains tax will be revised. Transport operators will no longer have to pay seven taxes. Clearly any application to increase transport fares in this State has to be referred to the Government Pricing Tribunal, which will determine the net cost and the pluses that this State would receive under the Fightback program.

Mr Bowman: You do not know.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Swansea to order for the second time.

Mr BAIRD: What I do know is that in State Rail we will not have to pay \$44 million a year in fuel excise; we will not have to pay \$62 million in payroll tax. State Transit will not have to pay \$11 million in fuel excise and \$12 million in payroll tax. One thing is sure: Labor is running around the countryside telling commuters that they will have to pay an additional 15 per cent on rail fares, but the Opposition knows and I know that that is absolute rubbish, just like the other furrphies that are being spread throughout the State are rubbish.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Murwillumbah to order.

Mr BAIRD: Next time the Labor Party wants to run that line, it should remember that all the hidden taxes that it imposed will be abolished. The fuel excise, of which most are unaware, will be abolished, as will the other taxes that I have mentioned - payroll tax and wholesale sales tax. We have a proposal from the future Federal coalition Government for a sensible restructuring of the taxation system, and no one could argue with that. The Opposition's mates in Canberra doubled taxation during the 10 years they have been in office. I look forward to the election of a coalition Federal government because I am sure it will give this State the funds that it requires. Federal Labor has continued to ignore this State and has put back very little into public transport. It has ripped us off.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX ON TRANSPORT FARES

Mr LANGTON: I ask a supplementary question of the Minister. In view of the Minister's answer, is he guaranteeing that there will be no increase in fares whatsoever in the event of the introduction of a goods and services tax?

Mr BAIRD: As I said before, the Government Pricing Tribunal determines what fares are charged.

HEAVY VEHICLE LOG BOOKS

Mr BECK: I address my question to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works and Minister for Roads. Has the Deputy Premier received representations from drivers of heavy vehicles concerning the 12-month time limit on the use of log books and, if so, is he taking any action on this matter?

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY: Log books were first introduced in New South Wales in 1957 and have served a very good purpose in regulating the number of hours drivers of heavy vehicles may operate before taking a break. In recent years this Government has introduced other significant road safety measures for heavy vehicles, including tachographs, speed limiters and improved safety standards for passenger vehicles. Over time I have received a number of representations on behalf of heavy vehicle operators who have complained about the need for heavy vehicle log books to be renewed every 12 months, irrespective of whether the book had been fully used. Obviously this was proving to be an irritation to heavy vehicle transport operators.

The Australian professional driver's log book has 160 pages and costs \$24 at Roads and Traffic Authority

motor registries. In many cases operators use only 20 or 30 pages in a year and are then required to buy a new book. This applies especially to seasonal activities, such as farming, the operation of farm vehicles and small business vehicles that do low mileage. I have directed that the system cease as from the first day of this month. In future any log books purchased after 1st March can continue to be used, provided that the unused pages remain in good condition. Books purchased prior to 1st March, 1993, must be replaced. The log book system is an improved road safety initiative, as are the many other road safety initiatives introduced by this Government.

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Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I call the honourable member for Moorebank to order.

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY: The Government has put into operation a most successful road safety campaign to address the issues of speed, fatigue, drink-driving, driver education and cycle and pedestrian safety awareness. Combined with a significant improvement in our roads, brought about by the record spending on roadworks and the introduction of the highly successful 3 x 3 fuel levy, this Government has made a spectacular impact on the annual road toll in New South Wales. Last year the downward trend in road fatalities on New South Wales roads continued with 11 fewer deaths than the 1991 total of 663, a figure which is still unacceptably high but which is the lowest in 30-odd years. This year the downward trend is continuing. To the end of February there were 75 fatalities - 35 fewer than for the same period last year. This Government is continuing to focus on providing New South Wales with better and safer roads.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. If honourable members wish to converse, they should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY: In addition, the Government has developed Road Safety 2000, a road safety plan which provides a framework for co-ordinating and managing the efforts of all organisations involved in road safety. I am happy to inform the House that today Rotary International joined the Roads and Traffic Authority in a challenge to reduce death and injury on our roads through Road Safety 2000. As a leading community organisation and through its diverse membership Rotary International has the capacity to create wider interest within the community on road safety issues. Such a highly respected, dedicated group of people will have an enormous impact through the promotion of Road Safety 2000. Approximately 165 clubs throughout the three districts from Canberra to Newcastle will be involved in this project.

MINE CLOSURES AT BROKEN HILL

Mr TURNER: I address my question without notice to the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Cooperatives. Is he aware of the significant financial problems facing Broken Hill council because of the recession and mine closures? What steps is he taking to assist the council and the Broken Hill community?

Mr PEACOCKE: The honourable member's question relates to the extremely serious and important problems facing one of our most important and famous inland cities. At the moment Broken Hill is experiencing traumatic times. Its people are hard working, and are only interested in getting their jobs done and making their town as prosperous as possible. Therefore, the decision by Pasminco to cease mining activity at the North Broken Hill Mine has been a blow of serious and monumental proportions for the community, as the honourable member for Broken Hill is well aware. The recession promoted by the Federal Government has had a devastating effect on business everywhere, but in a town like Broken Hill - isolated as it is - the loss of these jobs is an unmitigated disaster. Not only is there the projected loss of jobs and business for the townspeople, but also the closure will have serious ramifications for council finances.

Some time before Pasminco closed I received a deputation comprising the honourable member for Broken Hill and a couple of members of Broken Hill council asking me to examine what was emerging as an extraordinarily serious problem for the council - the continuation of the rating basis on which Broken Hill

council relies. The rates collected from Pasminco and, of course, from other mining companies in the area represented a significant proportion of the total rates collected by the council. The council is now in danger of not being able to service the local community because of loss of funds exacerbated by the closure of Pasminco. At the time of the deputation and as a result of the projected shortfall and the need to ensure that the council continues to service its community I examined the situation facing the council and agreed to appoint a task force which would look at ways of coping with the ongoing problems faced by Broken Hill council.

The task force has flexible terms of reference. It will look at funding options and ways of improving the council's internal efficiencies and performance. Considerable concern has been expressed locally about the urgent need to streamline the day-to-day workings of the council and introduce stricter financial disciplines. Membership of the working party comprises representatives from the department, the local chamber of commerce, the council and the local mining industry. The task force is not a talkfest. It has already met and is expected to issue an interim report next week. The final report on the findings and recommendations will, in accordance with my original instructions, be submitted by 14th May.

The New South Wales Government recognises the unique position that Broken Hill has occupied for the past century, and I am prepared, if necessary, to recommend suitable legislation to ensure the continued effective operation of its council into the next century, if that proves possible. My ministerial colleague the Minister for Natural Resources has advised me that, through his department, he is looking at ways to assist Pasminco to maintain a presence in Broken Hill through its other mining ventures. Water charges are being examined and the Federal Government has been approached to give the company some relief. It is significant that to date the Federal Labor Government has neither recognised the danger facing Broken Hill nor made any realistic attempt to assist its people in their fight.

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The Federal Labor Party seems to acknowledge the existence of country Australia only when there is an election or a photo opportunity in the offing. I am sure the honourable member for Broken Hill is equally disturbed at the Federal Government's lack of action in his region. Indeed Broken Hill seems to have suffered in the Federal Government's pork-barrelling frenzy. Out of the so-called capital works-job creation scheme funding allocated to councils last year, the Federal electorate of Parkes - an electorate that covers approximately one-third of the State - received only \$1.2 million from the honeypot. Admittedly, it was one of the few non-Labor seats to be offered funding. This employment scheme - which was probably designed to bolster the flagging reputation of a Federal Government that has put more than one million people out of work and doubled everyone's taxes during the period it has been in office - has ploughed the lion's share of funding into Labor and marginal seats. More than \$88 million went to Federal Labor seats compared with about \$15 million to coalition seats.

Compared with the Broken Hill region the so-called marginal seats of Richmond and Page held temporarily by the Labor Party - and which are about to be lost by the Labor Party - received a bonanza. Richmond received more than \$3.2 million and Page hit the jackpot, receiving more than \$5 million. If I were the honourable member for Broken Hill, I would be ashamed of the Federal Labor Government and its colleagues for doing that to the electorate. When the coalition wins the Federal election the honourable member for Broken Hill will receive increased funding for his electorate and a lot of good things will happen. The Federal coalition will have a big win in the Broken Hill area, and when this country has a decent government in Canberra - namely a coalition government - something will be done for country people, for whom the Labor Party has cared little.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Waratah to order for the second time.

Mr PEACOCKE: The problem with the funding is that local ratepayers are actually paying for this pork-barrelling because each council which was offered funding had to raise 10 per cent to 20 per cent of the project cost to win the Federal grant.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Port Stephens to order for the second time.

Mr PEACOCKE: The logical consequence of that is that ultimately it is the ratepayer who foots the bill and in Richmond and Page, in particular, that must be quite a bill. But even in Broken Hill, which is facing immense problems, local ratepayers are facing an increased burden. The only hope that Broken Hill really has is to get rid of the Federal Labor Government and put in a decent government - and that will happen on 13th March.

PETITIONS

Fame Cove Preservation

Petition praying that Fame Cove, Port Stephens, be preserved in perpetuity for the people of New South Wales, received from **Mr Martin**.

F6 Freeway Emergency Telephones

Petition praying that the House will consider the installation of emergency telephones on the F6 Freeway from Yallah to the north of Wollongong, received from **Mr Rumble**.

Central Sydney Area Health Service Investigation

Petition praying that the Public Accounts Committee inquire into and report on the financial management of the Central Sydney Area Health Service over the past six years, received from **Dr Refshauge**.

Balmain Hospital

Petition praying that Balmain Hospital not be downgraded or closed, received from **Ms Nori**.

Ingleburn and Macquarie Fields Police Stations

Petition praying that the House provide, as a matter of urgency, a permanent police station at Ingleburn and upgrade the existing police station at Macquarie Fields, received from **Mr Knowles**.

EASTERN DISTRIBUTOR TRAFFIC CHAOS

Consideration of Urgent Matter

Ms MOORE (Bligh) [3.14]: I move:

That this House calls upon the Government to begin work immediately on stages 2 and 3 of the Eastern Distributor to alleviate the traffic chaos in the inner eastern suburbs of Sydney caused by the opening of the Harbour Tunnel, which has serious social and economic implications for the local area and the State.

The residents of the inner eastern suburbs are desperate because of this Government's refusal to complete stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor, which is causing traffic chaos. There is virtual traffic gridlock during peak hours and when there are major sporting events at Moore Park stadiums. Motorists who must travel from the east to the city or from the north to Mascot and Port Botany are also desperate, as are the international tourists trying to reach the airport. As predicted by many commentators, including engineers from within the Roads and Traffic Authority, the opening of the harbour tunnel has generated a huge increase of through traffic in the inner east.

The latest RTA figures show that an extra 115,000 vehicles are crossing the harbour every week since the tunnel opened because stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor have not been completed. This through traffic, an extra 10,000 to 20,000 vehicles a day, is flooding through the residential and local commercial streets of Woolloomooloo, Darlinghurst, Surry Hills,

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Redfern, Paddington, Woollahra, Potts Point and Kings Cross. Local journeys take much longer. Residential streets carry more traffic than they are designed to carry. The amenity of local people - the most densely populated area in Sydney or in Australia for that matter - has been degraded by noise and fumes from the extra traffic.

The situation for pedestrians is as bad. Taylor Square is one of the worst pedestrian black spots in the State. The junction of Oxford and Crown streets is not far behind in the pedestrian death and casualty lists. Small businesses in one of the most vibrant commercial and tourist areas of Sydney are affected as more and more parking is removed, clearways are extended and shopping streets and squares are turned into noisy, smog-laden highways. Traffic in this area was a major problem before the harbour tunnel opened; now it is chaos. I do not normally support freeways in the inner city but one cannot build a beginning and the end and leave out the middle. One cannot build stage one of an expressway and leave out the other two-thirds. Traffic problems in the inner east have long been recognised. Plans to cope with these problems have been around for a decade. So it is instructive to examine the history of the Eastern Distributor to see how a problem has been created by the abandonment of unequivocal election promises and by this Government's acute lack of planning and policy co-ordination on urban issues.

The original proposal by the previous Labor Government for an eastern distributor back in the early 1980s was for a valley-style freeway which would have cut a swathe through Woolloomooloo and Darlinghurst and an open cut through Taylor Square. Such a plan would have destroyed the area. In the mid 1980s strong community action persuaded the then Government to opt for tunnel solutions. In this way traffic from the Cahill Expressway would link up to underground tunnels in William Street and Taylor Square, leading to the southern highways. The traffic bottleneck would be alleviated without the demolition of whole suburbs. Stage one of the Eastern Distributor, a tunnel under William Street, has been built. Stages two and three, northbound and southbound tunnels under Taylor Square to feed Anzac Parade, South Dowling Street and Moore Park Road, were shelved by this Government in 1988. This Government, while in opposition, opposed the harbour tunnel and supported the Eastern Distributor. However, when it came to power it did exactly the reverse; it built the harbour tunnel and dropped stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor from its roads program.

The Government's explanation for shelving the Eastern Distributor is extraordinary. The former Premier, in a letter dated 9th July, 1992, explained that a lack of money was stopping the completion of the Eastern Distributor. The funds were simply not there. But look at the roadworks and the expressway building north of the harbour in recent years. The Warringah by-pass or the Gore Hill freeway cost \$130 million. I am sure the people of the inner eastern suburbs would not be amused to know that the Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works and Minister for Roads is laughing during this debate. Funds were found for these projects, which merely transferred a congestion problem from the northern end of the harbour to the southern end. The Minister for Roads, in a letter to me dated 4th August, said that the Eastern Distributor was a low priority.

Mr W. T. J. Murray: It still is.

Ms MOORE: He repeated that statement in a letter to me on 22nd September and on 1st December. The Deputy Premier has just interjected and said that it still is a low priority. I would like to say to the Minister for Roads that completion of stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor is a priority for New South Wales. This is not only a local issue; it is a matter of public importance for this State. I would like to give five reasons why this road project is important to the State. First, there is tourism. We are told that the tourist industry is one of our fastest growing industries. It is suffering because of the traffic chaos in the inner east and the Sydney areas. Recently the Minister for Transport and Minister for Tourism took initiatives to address this State's relative decline in the share of the national tourism market. What sort of image do Sydney and Australia project to international tourists when their first experience after leaving the airport is a traffic jam in

Darlinghurst on the way to a hotel in the city or Kings Cross? What sort of lasting memory would they have when they travel to Bondi Beach through an Oxford Street traffic jam, or when they try to move from Kings Cross to the city or travel to the airport on their way home? Do we want to project the image of a gridlocked smoke-laden city?

Second, the Government's Olympic bid surely cannot be assisted by traffic chaos in the middle of the city, Kings Cross, the airport or Moore Park. What image will International Olympic Committee members have this week of our city and its ability to cope with the thousands of Olympic participants and visitors if work is not started immediately so that the distributor is finished well before the year 2000? I wonder how long IOC delegates have been waiting in a congested traffic snarl in Bourke Street, South Dowling Street or Oxford Street, reading South Sydney City Council signs which read: "Don't blame us for the traffic congestion. Blame the State Government. Complete the Eastern Distributor Now!" Olympic venues in the inner east will include yachting at Rushcutters Bay, wrestling at Moore Park, soccer at the football stadium, track and field athletics at the E. S. Marks Athletic Field, and the marathon at Centennial Park. Without the Eastern Distributor our capacity as a city to hold the games must be undermined.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much interjection.

Ms MOORE: The Government has supported the construction of a third runway, which will come on line in 1995, to expand the passenger and freight

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capacity of Sydney airport, but funds have not been expended to upgrade the major route between the airport, the city and the north. What effect does a clogged northern road route have on Port Botany, one of our major ports? What about business needs in the inner area - the small shops, workshops, service providers, restaurants and hotels in the inner east? They are suffering from the congestion and the increasing use of clearways and the loss of parking. The major manufacturing complexes of South Sydney are suffering because of the difficulty of transporting goods through congested streets. Businesses throughout the State are suffering because the major access route to the airport and the port is clogged.

When the completion of the Eastern Distributor is so essential to the residents of the inner city and eastern suburbs, how can the Government claim it is not a priority? When the distributor is so important to tourism, to the Olympic bid, to the airport, to Port Botany and to all levels of business, how can the Government claim it is not a priority? It is a local priority and a major State priority. I call upon the Government to assume political will and planning foresight and complete the distributor now. This must be the only road project in respect of which everybody is in favour of and nobody is in opposition to its construction. Residents, commuters, business groups, councils, and local members of Parliament all agree that the work on the distributor must begin now. Even Action for Public Transport and the Light Rail Association members attended the recent rally in Taylor Square. As the editorial of the *Eastern Express* stated on 24th February, "It's time, Mr Fahey, to get the east moving again".

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY (Barwon - Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works, and Minister for Roads) [3.22]: It is marvellous how times change. The same people who opposed, and battled, fought and wrangled with Labor when it was in government to prevent the construction of the Eastern Distributor are now doing the most screaming and urging to have it built. Surely there must be some consistency. It is interesting that the former honourable member for Heffron had a great plan to put this process into place some time ago, in fact about five or six years ago. It was all ready to go, but the same people who were then complaining about his Eastern Distributor plan are now saying it has to be built. That was not very long ago. It is amazing that the total program for the Eastern Distributor and tunnel put forward and promoted by the same member for Heffron was killed off by those people. One fascinating aspect is that the honourable member for Bligh said the coalition opposed the tunnel.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member for Bligh and the honourable member for Heffron wish to converse, they should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY: The Government opposed the principles and the method of contracting the tunnel, and that is it. The fact is that the contract was tight and the tunnel was built.

Mrs Grusovin: Thank God.

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY: I have no argument with that. I repeat, for the benefit of the honourable member for Bligh, that the Eastern Distributor is of low priority in the forward planning of the Roads and Traffic Authority and is not on the five-year plan under which the Roads and Traffic Authority is currently operating. The relativity of the Eastern Distributor to other areas of the city demands that other jobs be carried out. The very high cost of this project, \$180 million, would mean the deferral of many major projects in the program which will achieve a significantly higher benefit at a much lower cost ratio than building the second and third stages of the Eastern Distributor. For example, I am sure honourable members in the area of the city west link, from Rozelle to Five Dock, would not wish funding for that proposal to be removed and transferred to stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor. The honourable member is smiling.

Ms Nori: I am not saying anything.

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY: Not saying anything, but making it abundantly obvious that she does not want that to happen. The next project is the Great Western Highway at Woodford, Linden, Warrimoo and Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains, which is a major link to the west of the State. It is one of our highest priorities and is where funding is going at the moment. The Hume Highway-Route 33 intersection at South Strathfield is a major requirement in managing the traffic in the city of Sydney. Victoria Road-Route 33 intersection at Top Ryde has a far greater priority than stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor. The widening of Pennant Hills Road through to Beecroft also has more priority, because Pennant Hills Road will become one of the major western bypasses in the whole of the city of Sydney. There needs to be as much traffic as possible bypassing the city of Sydney, moving north to south, and that road will receive close attention. The intersection of Victoria Road and James Ruse Drive at Rydalmere is also far above stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor. I wonder whether the honourable member for Ashfield or other members representing western suburbs would be asking us to withdraw from their areas funds that are critical for works to move hundreds of thousands of vehicles.

Mr Langton: That argument is fallacious.

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY: I wonder why the honourable member for Kogarah is not jumping up and down supporting the Government's plan. Is he supporting the movement of funds away from the western suburbs of Sydney? If he supports it, he should get up and have his five minutes and say so. Let him tell us that he does not want the money

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spent in the west of Sydney, that he will give support of the Labor Party to the movement of these funds to the second and third stages of the distributor. If that is what the Labor Party wants to do, it should tell the Government. The Government would be delighted to meet its requirements. The Victoria Road and Silverwater Road intersection at Ermington has an enormous traffic problem, and it is worsening. Those are some of the priorities that are absolutely essential and of far greater priority in the works of the Roads and Traffic Authority than the completion of stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor. All these major projects will achieve significant economic benefits by relieving the severe delays being incurred by trucks and other commercial traffic and will relieve the many severe accident black spots. The existing levels of delays and accidents at these locations are all more extreme than those existing at east Sydney.

The Eastern Distributor project does not qualify for funding under any of the Federal Government programs such as the national arterial roads program, which is funding the Glebe Island arterial road and Glebe Island bridge. I should have thought that the influence of the Federal members of Parliament representing the eastern suburbs of Sydney, especially the former New South Wales member for Heffron, would have led to a contribution, or even the consideration of a contribution, to a major arterial program worthy of funding by the Federal Government. If this funding is taken from the existing State program at a rate of about \$49 million a

year, which would be required, that single project would consume about 40 per cent of the road development program for the whole of the Sydney region. The shadow minister for transport will acknowledge that if he were in my position he would not take 40 per cent of funding for all Sydney roads and use it for the Eastern Distributor. I acknowledge that other roads around the State are equally important, especially the Pacific Highway and other roads that have dreadful death tolls.

The Roads and Traffic Authority in consultation with the South Sydney Council, the Sydney City Council and the Woollahra Municipal Council developed a number of proposals to ease congestion and reduce delays along the north-south corridor between South Dowling Street, Surry Hills and Sir John Young Crescent, Woolloomooloo. Those proposals are being put in place and will result in benefits that will lead to a reduction in vehicle delays, improve safety, improve pedestrian amenities to which the honourable member for Bligh referred - especially in the streetscape of Taylor Square - provide additional transit lanes to reduce delays for high occupancy vehicles, and provide bus priority lanes. A reduction in vehicle running costs will be achieved, as well as additional signalised pedestrian crossings in this region. I acknowledge that some off-street parking will be lost, but that is the reality of the requirements of the people represented by the honourable member for Bligh. She wants additional roads for people to travel on. That automatically means that available parking along many of those roads will be reduced, especially in peak periods. This project will not be completed overnight. [*Time expired.*]

Mr LANGTON (Kogarah) [3.32]: That was the most pathetic display I have heard by a Minister in this House in the 10 years I have been a member of Parliament. Has the Minister for Roads not learnt anything about his portfolio? He is a disgrace. The Minister did not even mention the topic that is being debated today, the Eastern Distributor. I doubt if he knows anything about it. In discussions in this Chamber the word gridlock has been tossed around. There is a book called *Gridlock* that was written by a man called Ben Elton. The Deputy Premier should get someone on his staff to read it to him one day. He might then understand the type of traffic problems that his policies are creating, particularly in this area.

Mr W. T. J. Murray: Why did the Government of which the honourable member for Kogarah was a member not build the Eastern Distributor? It had the chance.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier has made his contribution to the debate.

Mr LANGTON: The Deputy Premier knows very well that the former Labor Government started the Eastern Distributor construction. It built stage one, which was finished in 1987, three months ahead of schedule. It was intended that stages two and three be constructed. Even the honourable member for Vacluse went into print to say that he would make sure that it was finished. It was always intended by the Labor Government that the road would be constructed by 1992. However, in the first Greiner-Murray Budget the project was deferred from 1992 to 1995; it was included in the 1988 Budget, but then disappeared altogether in the 1989 Budget and has not been spotted since. Following the completion of the harbour tunnel in 1992 there has been an increase of well over 10,000 vehicles a day in that region. Now the region has to cope with about 80,000 vehicles daily. It is unbelievable that the Deputy Premier should suggest it is not a problem or that it can be solved by some fairyfloss, bandaid measures. I have seen the proposals put forward by the Roads and Traffic Authority. If the Deputy Premier believes they will solve anything at all, I can only repeat that he has no idea about his portfolio - or perhaps no one has given him a briefing note on it.

Let me talk about the money aspect, which was the main subject spoken of by the Deputy Premier. He said if this work were to be done, money would have to be diverted from other road projects. That is wrong, and the Minister knows that it is wrong. Let me preface my remarks by saying that the greatest lie told by the Deputy Premier and the Government is that all money from petrol tax and registration fees goes to roads. That is a great lie. That money goes to the Roads and

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Traffic Authority, but it does not go to roads. The Roads and Traffic Authority spent \$90 million on the bungled computer. How many million dollars goes on the bloated senior executive service in the Roads and Traffic Authority? How many times has the Opposition been able to prove in this Chamber the gross waste and

mismanagement in the Roads and Traffic Authority? That is where the money is going and that is where the money should be coming from to fund these essential and urgent roadworks. The Minister said that the money would have to come from other roads. He knows that there are savings to be made in his department. If he put his hand on the tiller and got rid of some of the mismanagement and gross waste, it would be possible to find the money for this type of work.

The Deputy Premier has been loud and strong in promoting the third runway. All the additional traffic generated by that third runway will come to a great bottleneck at Taylor Square. I do not believe that the Deputy Premier has any idea of traffic planning or the problems created by additional traffic being funnelled into that area. Another matter I should raise in regard to finance relates to the 1989 Budget, when funding for the Eastern Distributor disappeared from the roads budget. We know where the money went in 1988: it went to the electorate of the former Minister for Roads, the present Minister for Transport. One can see the direct transfer of the money that was supposed to be directed towards the Eastern Distributor going towards work on Pennant Hills Road. Now we are told that completion of the Eastern Distributor cannot be afforded. Where has the Minister transferred the money to? He has directed it to the Gore Hill Freeway. The simple answer is that if the Minister or the Roads and Traffic Authority had any understanding of the problems they would realise that the completion of the Eastern Distributor is a priority, that the work should be recommenced as quickly as possible. The money is available and could be found almost immediately if the Deputy Premier was willing to get in and clean up his own department. [*Time expired.*]

Mr YABSLEY (Vaucluse) [3.37]: The case for stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor is clear. It has been established over many years and, as has been pointed out, construction of the harbour tunnel and its success - I must say its inevitable success - have created a traffic problem in the inner eastern suburbs and the eastern suburbs generally that should have been foreseen, but which to a large extent was not foreseen, by the Roads and Traffic Authority. That has created the situation that there would appear to be no option but to complete stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor to get the traffic out of residential streets such as Palmer Street and Bourke Street that have served as thoroughfares in the eastern suburbs. The problem is more far-reaching than that. I am talking about far worse congestion on streets such as Ocean Street, which has the enormous disadvantage of being a relatively wide straight road linking Oxford Street and New South Head Road, and therefore offers the obvious attraction of being a thoroughfare for traffic making its way to or from the city. I understand what the Deputy Premier has said that there are always competing priorities. We understand the other major traffic problems in various parts of Sydney, but I challenge the idea that the problem in the inner eastern suburbs is any less than some of the worst traffic congestion points around Sydney.

These things are always subject to claim and counterclaim. However, everyone is aware that the problem in the eastern suburbs now is very serious. As has always been the case, I have no compunction in supporting construction of stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor. From the Cahill Expressway through to the other major exit points south of Taylor Square on to South Dowling Street and Anzac Parade it is clear that stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor are the missing link in what should otherwise be a highly successful freeway and expressway system to service both the residential areas of the eastern suburbs and the through traffic that uses those streets. Each day in the order of 50,000 vehicles travel along William Street and 30,000 vehicles use Ocean Street, a residential street.

The case for the Eastern Distributor is established. I shall continue to pursue it vigorously with my colleague the Minister for Roads and I hope that ultimately a satisfactory solution will be found in the short term. This debate has demonstrated the absolute hypocrisy of the honourable member for Bligh when she came up with the extraordinary line, "I do not normally support freeways". She does not normally support freeways unless she thinks she can get a handful of votes. Of course, that is the message she has read around her electorate. She thinks she can squeeze another 500 or 600 votes out of the Bligh electorate by supporting construction of the Eastern Distributor. Honourable members should have heard the member for Bligh in 1984 or 1985 at the Surry Hills neighbourhood centre. She said, "Over my dead body. The Eastern Distributor will not go ahead". She had her hands on her hips and was throwing the usual Clover Moore tantrum and jumping up and down on the spot.

The honourable member for Bligh did the greatest backflip of all time - so predictable - grandstanding on her soap box, calling a community rally, getting the local councils to provide funding in what was an absolutely disgraceful act of dishonesty. She asked the local councils to provide \$1,500 to conduct a community rally. Of course, the Mayor of South Sydney council, in his wisdom, decided to withdraw the \$1,500 when he found out this was just a plaything for the honourable member for Bligh. She is manipulative, dishonest in her approach to the issue, and is seeking to grandstand on an issue that only a few short years ago she was actively opposing. One need only ask the Paddington Chamber of Commerce where the

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honourable member for Bligh stands in supporting local business; or ask the community of St John's Church in Oxford Street where she stands in supporting that community. The case for the Eastern Distributor is established in a loud and clear fashion. It must be built in order to relieve a serious traffic problem. I hope the honourable member for Bligh will be more consistent in the future than she has been in the past.

Mrs GRUSOVIN (Heffron) [3.42]: I am glad that the honourable member for Vacluse is still in the Chamber talking about the inevitable success of the harbour tunnel and how problems should have been foreseen by the Roads and Traffic Authority. I wish to place a few important matters on the record. The harbour tunnel is not just causing this problem. In 1985 the Labor Government announced that the harbour tunnel and the Eastern Distributor under Taylor Square would be completed, together, in 1992 as the Gore Hill Expressway was successfully completed. However, in 1988 we had a change of government.

Mr W. T. J. Murray: Just as well.

Mrs GRUSOVIN: When the history books are written about contributions to the life of Sydney and the way in which this society works, some names will be emblazoned for the work undertaken. The Government went to the polls on a promise to stop the building of the harbour tunnel. That is how farsighted the then coalition Opposition was. It sought cheap political votes by saying, "We will stop the building of the harbour tunnel". The people of Sydney should be told that, because everyone knows it was inevitable that the harbour tunnel had to be built. The Government also said that Darling Harbour would not work.

Mr W. T. J. Murray: It still does not. It has a debt of \$70 million.

Mrs GRUSOVIN: That is because it was not finished properly.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Deputy Premier to order. He has had the opportunity to make a contribution in the debate.

Mrs GRUSOVIN: When the 1988 Budget was released, and following an answer to a question in the House in October that year, the Opposition ascertained that the \$20 million earmarked for the Darlinghurst tunnel project that year was no longer available. The Opposition spokesman said the money was spent in Pennant Hills. For a long time honourable members have been aware of that fact. That was handy for Mr Baird but it did not assist planning for traffic expected to be generated by the harbour tunnel. The harbour tunnel was built to bring traffic around the perimeters of the city, to take traffic from the north via the tunnel and tunnels under William Street and Darlinghurst, south to the airport and further south in the State. This was to prevent some of the chaos being experienced in the centre of Sydney.

The Minister for Transport is supposedly in charge of planning for the Sydney Olympic bid and this same man, in whom we are now asked to have confidence, ensured that money was taken from this vital missing link - it was called the missing link by the then member for Heffron in 1988 when he discovered that the money had been pinched. Even the honourable member for Vacluse was upset about that at the time. When he was in Opposition he strongly endorsed the design plans and timetable put forward for the Eastern Distributor. In 1988 the money was pinched and Mr Baird told the Parliament that no commitment or promise had been made by him when he was shadow minister for transport. This is the far-sighted man who is responsible for endeavouring to make Sydney successful in its bid for the Olympic Games. One might wonder how people will be transported to and from the airport if that objective is achieved. I also include the Deputy Premier

because he has been a great supporter of the third runway, but the Government does not seem to understand that with increased air traffic coming into Sydney, we must have in place an adequate road system.

The harbour tunnel, the Darlinghurst tunnel and the Gore Hill Expressway were all vital components of a well thought out and well planned visionary traffic solution for much of inner Sydney's traffic problems. However, this vision was devastated when the Government came to office. The former Premier in 1988 said that the tunnel was a vital element in solving traffic problems in this area. He said it should go ahead but, of course, that was not the case. More and more we are realising that the Government does not always keep its promises. I cannot believe some of the statements made in the House; they demonstrate that the Government is not capable of understanding - *[Time expired.]*

Ms MOORE (Bligh) [3.47], in reply: It was interesting to hear what the Minister for Roads said about stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor being a low priority and not part of the RTA's five-year plan, and to hear the Opposition spokesman say it is a high priority and that funds are available. When one considers the sorry history of the Eastern Distributor, one asks what has happened to responsible planning in this State and where is the co-ordinated urban transport strategy. It is an indictment of the Government that the important planning and road portfolios are in the hands of the National Party. It appears that they neither understand nor care about city problems. The Minister for Roads is still laughing. The RTA's bandaid solutions referred to by the Minister will not ease congestion around Taylor Square. At the meetings, officers of the RTA said that bandaid measures are not an alternative to the distributor; that they are stopgap measures which will cause as many problems as they solve. For example, the changes around Taylor Square will create a larger pedestrian area and will benefit some businesses, but they will also force a local Greek Orthodox church to close, put the lives of clients of a refuge lodge in danger, increase the traffic in front of St Margaret's Hospital, force a major factory which

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pays \$20 million tax each year to lose its loading docks and to move, and remove parking for a dozen presently successful small businesses in Bourke Street. That is what will result from the bandaid measures the RTA is putting forward. This city has been the victim of enough bandaid solutions; it needs decisive action. Stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor need to be implemented immediately.

I will restate and summarise the local and State reasons to build the distributor. Without the distributor, the local residential amenity will be destroyed in the most densely populated area of Australia. The area is a gridlock for motorists. An extra 115,000 harbour vehicle crossings are flooding the inner east - an extra 10,000 to 20,000 vehicles a day. Local journeys take longer, pedestrians are under siege, and there is extra noise and fumes. This is a Government that dared to say in the Governor's Speech that it has an urban consolidation policy. What a joke! The State needs stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor so that tourism does not continue to be undermined; when the third runway comes on line in 1995 there will be an adequate road system to handle the traffic; there will be an adequate road system to connect Australia's largest city with its largest port, Port Botany; the Olympic bid, about which the Government is so enthusiastic, will not be jeopardised; and business at all levels will not be undermined or destroyed.

The urban consolidation policy that the Government continues to espouse is being undermined by the Government and its National Party Ministers not caring about, developing or protecting co-ordinative strategies to allow the people who already live in an urban consolidated area to continue to do so and to encourage more people to live in that area, which would be an advantage for the whole State. By not placing stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor on the priority list the Government is destroying the most consolidated area in Sydney. Band-aids do not work. Proper planning and a co-ordinated urban strategy are needed. The Eastern Distributor needs to be commenced now. Tourism, business and residents are hurting, and unless work starts now the distributor will not be ready for the third runway or the Olympic Games, and the Government will continue to destroy the amenity of the thousands of people trying to live in the inner eastern area.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order of Business

Mr West: I seek leave of the House to move a motion to suspend standing orders to permit consideration this day of Government Business Notice of Motion No. 1.

Leave not granted.

Mr WEST: I seek leave of the House to move a motion to suspend standing orders to permit consideration this day of Government Business Notices of Motion Nos. 2 and 3.

Leave not granted.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS IN REPLY

Third Day's Debate

Debate resumed from 2nd March.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury) [3.53]: I listened with interest to the Governor's Speech at the recent opening of the Parliament. I am aware that the Governor's Speech is written for him by the Government of the day. However, I believe that he may have included some of his own comments. In one particular reference when speaking about the environment he said, "In a time of recession and high unemployment the Government needs to remain vigilant to ensure that environmental values are not compromised for short term gains." Never were truer words spoken. As the Government recently obtained a special dividend from the Sydney Water Board - it grabbed \$100 million - I believe that the Governor's statement about not compromising for short-term gains was timely indeed. In fact, it would seem that it was almost a warning to the Government to stop trying to balance its budget by ripping off funds from statutory bodies - funds which are specifically set aside for environmental protection. The Government would argue that sufficient funds are still available that would equal those collected last year from the \$80 environmental levy. However, the Opposition does not believe for one minute that it was purely coincidental that that \$100 million obtained from the Water Board approximated the amount raised from the levy last year.

Though it may be argued that the Water Board will not ignore environmental projects during the next 12 months, one thing that is certain is that under this Government the Water Board will not be spending the full \$100 million it achieved last year. It has not done so in the past. That is largely because all up the Board is \$100 million worse off. Of course, that is not the first time this has occurred. The amount achieved by these special dividends is really running at \$200 million, an extra \$100 million having been obtained in 1991-92. It is little wonder it was all too much for Mr David Harley, the former chairman of the board, who ultimately resigned when the Government not only took the dividend but reneged on the deal to hand over assets in exchange for the \$100 million payment. Environmental projects and essential Water Board works will be ignored during the next 12 months.

An example of that is the lack of attention currently being given to the banks of the Cooks River in my electorate. This is particularly so in an area in Earlwood between Bankside Avenue and the sewer outfall, where an adjacent cycle path is in

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danger of collapsing because of problems with a bank that the Government continues to ignore. In September 1990 I wrote to the Minister for Public Works about this particular problem. That letter was written on behalf of the Cooks River 521 Committee that consisted of a number of councils associated with the river. The committee approached me to see if I could help. The Minister replied in November of that year, and I was surprised that he advised that Canterbury Municipal Council was responsible for the maintenance of the river

bank at this particular location. I found it incredible that local government was responsible for maintaining government-owned land, because the banks of the Cooks River are owned by the Government. Further, various government authorities have easement rights over all the banks of the Cooks River.

Approximately three years earlier when I was employed in local government, local councils were not then responsible for any care or maintenance of the actual banks of the Cooks River. I was surprised at the Minister's response. However, the council did not react and so I let the matter go until last year when again I was approached by the 521 committee. This time I addressed a question on notice to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works and Minister for Roads. That question basically asked for an investigation into the problem of the banks of the Cooks River collapsing. It also asked the Minister to adopt some strategies to prevent further collapsing and to undertake necessary restoration and repairs to those areas where banks had collapsed already.

The Minister gave a lengthy response. In a nutshell what he had to say was that the Cooks River Management Committee - a committee established by this Government - and not the Public Works Department was responsible for identifying the problems. Management should be left to the Cooks River Management Committee, according to the Minister. He said in his answer that the broad community is also responsible. In other words, we should forget about the Public Works Department and let the community identify the problems and report to the Minister. He said he felt that local councils should be responsible for preventing collapses. This is somewhat in line with his earlier advice that it was really the responsibility of local government. He considers local government responsible for restoration and repair work and said that local government may apply for a 50 per cent subsidy for such works, without any guarantee of government funding.

I checked this with Canterbury Municipal Council to see if it felt responsible in any way for the work. The council said it did not feel responsible. It agreed with me that it is not responsible for the repair, restoration, care or control of banks along the Cooks River. However, the council advised me that it had reluctantly set aside some funds to try to save an adjacent path. What else could the council do? The Government holds a gun at the council's head and says that it will not repair at all, that it will not look at the problem unless the council comes good with 50 per cent of the cost of the repair, yet it is not the council's responsibility in the first place.

I acquired from the local council a letter it received from the Public Works Department following a complaint from the council to the department about erosion of the banks. The Public Works Department stated that it was developing a number of alternative conceptual solutions. The department said also that it was endeavouring to develop an integrated and comprehensive solution that accommodates a broad range of estuarine values. We have all this waffle from the Public Works Department while the banks of the Cooks River are collapsing around us! In answer to my question the Minister stated that the Cooks River Management Committee is responsible for improving the quality of the river's catchments, soils and waters. That is contained in the terms of reference of that committee. Even the committee that the Government believes should look at this problem is not responsible for the river bank. The Government established the committee and gave it the task of looking after soils and water. Now, all of a sudden, it is the committee's responsibility to look after the banks also. Clearly, this Government is neglecting its responsibility with respect to bank restoration on the Cooks River. It appears that no financial support is forthcoming for this important environmental project. At the same time the Government expects us to believe that the \$100 million in funds ripped off from the Water Board has nothing to do with the environmental levy.

Another aspect of the Governor's Speech dealt, as always, with health. The Governor said that the Government puts people first in health care. I have no problem whatsoever with that statement, except I believe that this Government puts only some people first in health care, certainly not all people. His Excellency went on to say that even though financial and clinical resources are scarce, they are being moved to areas of population growth in Sydney's west and south, and to the North Coast and the Central Coast. That may be so but the problem we are faced with is that services that are being moved to growth areas are being taken away from existing underserved areas. A good example of that is the Government's proposal to build a new hospital network in the inner west. It sounds very good to have a brand new hospital in the inner west to cater

for the population now catered for by Western Suburbs Hospital, Canterbury Hospital and Balmain Hospital. At first glance the proposal looks good. However, services are being taken away. If we are lucky we will get a new hospital, but it will replace two hospitals, and we will lose 25 beds.

At the moment the total number of beds at Canterbury Hospital and Western Suburbs Hospital is 265. The new hospital - which may come about in five years' time and not sooner, according to this Government, even though it proposes to close one

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of the existing hospitals within six months - will have only 240 beds. This is an example of losing services in areas that are already underserved. It is estimated that by the year 2001 the population of the southern Sydney area health region will have increased by 22,000 and that in the central Sydney health area the increase will be 10,000, yet the Government's strategy is to do away with one hospital and at least 25 beds.

It would seem that the *Sydney Morning Herald* supports the Government in this regard. In December last year it published an editorial in support of this inner west hospital plan. At that time the *Sydney Morning Herald* interviewed my colleague the honourable member for Port Jackson concerning the Balmain Hospital. I must say that, quite rightly, the honourable member came out in support of her hospital and in opposition to any scaling down of it at that time. But, of course, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in typical Herald style, suggested that it was necessary to scale down services at Balmain Hospital. It stated that the issue is all about catering for the growing extremities of the city where people in suburbs with only two beds per thousand head of population are suffering. The newspaper claimed that the issue is about creating health services in those areas. It just so happens that Canterbury Hospital, which caters for the entire municipality of Canterbury because that is its catchment area, is providing 1.19 beds per thousand head of population, yet this is one of the hospitals under threat of closure by this Government. I wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and pointed this out. Needless to say, my letter was not printed because that newspaper has a habit of not printing letters.

Mr Schultz: The editor thought you were wrong.

Mr MOSS: The honourable member should try writing to the *Sydney Morning Herald*. I dare say it would not print his letters either. I was surprised that the Herald published this editorial about Balmain Hospital based on an interview with the honourable member for Port Jackson. Obviously the editorial was written by someone who had researched it for the editor and who probably lives in the inner city and thinks that the be-all and end-all of health services in the inner west revolves around Balmain Hospital. That person has probably never been out as far as Ashfield or Canterbury to see what happens at Canterbury Hospital or Western Suburbs Hospital. Whoever wrote the editorial had it all wrong. That person was shooting from the hip and did not have the decency to print my response to the Herald's mistake. By June the Government will close either the Canterbury Hospital or the Western Suburbs Hospital to make way for the construction of the proposed inner west hospital on that site. It will be five years before the proposed inner west hospital is completed and at that stage the remaining hospital will close. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Government has placed the communities catered for by Western Suburbs Hospital and Canterbury Hospital in a situation where they are damned if they do support the Government and damned if they do not support the Government. If the Canterbury community - which is having a meeting next Wednesday evening - decides to push for the new hospital to be built in its area, under this Government's proposal it would have no public hospital services for five years while the new hospital is being built on the site of the closed Canterbury Hospital. If, on the other hand, it is decided that health services should be maintained within the Canterbury area because they cannot manage without public health services, they just might win out there. They might maintain their health services, but only for five years, until the completion of the new hospital on the Western Suburbs Hospital site. During that five-year period no money would be spent on Canterbury Hospital and health services would be drastically reduced to next to nothing by the time the hospital closed. That is what I mean by the communities being put in a damned if they do and damned if they do not position.

The Government has argued that it will take five years to build the new hospital because the building costs - estimated at \$75 million - would be provided from savings in operating costs of the closed hospital. I accept

that, but I fear that to approach the problem in this manner it will take five years to raise that \$75 million. Once a fence is erected around the site of a closed hospital there is no guarantee that anything will eventuate. Not even the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing can promise that anything will happen. He knows full well that a change of policy or even financial restraints which may be forced on Government by Treasury can completely change any strategy, particularly over a five-year period.

Who can trust a government which promises a new hospital in five years but which, in February 1990, told the residents of Ashfield, Marrickville and Canterbury that they would have a new 400-bed hospital - a supermac hospital to replace Canterbury, Marrickville and Western Suburbs hospitals? That plan died. Marrickville hospital has already closed and it has not been replaced. The supermac hospital of 400 beds has been reduced to 240 beds. This Government cannot be trusted at all. I am also fearful that Canterbury, as a preferred site for a new hospital, is being ignored simply because the Western Suburbs Hospital is in the electorate of Strathfield and happens to be in the Federal electorate of Lowe where, we all know, the Liberal spokesman on health is the current member - though I do not believe he will be for long. Therefore, it is to the political advantage of this conservative Government to ignore any recommendations by the community and build on the Western Suburbs Hospital site.

[Interruption]

I will tell the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing what I want in Canterbury: I want to maintain health services; I want a new hospital, if there is one to be built, in Canterbury; and I want

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that hospital up and running before any hospital is closed. I have every right to push for those services because in the Canterbury area 90 per cent of the population are on basic Medicare cover; they do not have private cover. They rely on public health services more so than the residents of other areas in Sydney, yet this is a region with only 1.19 beds per thousand head of population. It is an absolute disgrace. The Canterbury region falls into the southern Sydney area health region, which is the health region in the electorate of the Minister for Health. It has one of the lowest bed ratios for hospital accommodation of any metropolitan region in this State. That is an absolute disgrace. The Canterbury local government area has the fourth highest unemployment rate in the State, and that is why the socioeconomic ratio of the area dictates that public health services should be maintained at all times.

The feeder region of the Canterbury Hospital is the entire municipality, taking in suburbs such as Riverwood and Undercliffe. If Canterbury Hospital were to close, the Government argues that all patients would move to Concord hospital. It is a long way from Riverwood or Undercliffe to Concord. Furthermore, 100 beds have been made available for general patients at Concord hospital in the advent of the closure of either Canterbury Hospital or Western Suburbs Hospital. Western Suburbs Hospital, which is closer to Concord, has 109 beds. Therefore, the numbers more or less cancel one another out. However, Canterbury Hospital has 156 beds. If Canterbury Hospital were to close, where would those 50 beds be accommodated? They certainly could not be accommodated at Bankstown Hospital because, as my colleague the honourable member for Bankstown will tell the House, Bankstown Hospital will have difficulties of its own accommodating those who will be affected in its area when Lidcombe Hospital closes. Nobody will be able to get into Bankstown Hospital or Canterbury Hospital and they certainly will not be able to get into St George Hospital, which is just as far away from the Canterbury Hospital as Concord hospital is.

If Canterbury Hospital closes in the interim the region most in need of public health services will be serviced by only two hospitals - St George Hospital and Sutherland Hospital. If that were to occur, 913 beds would be available to service an area of 527,500 people. No increase in productivity patient through rate could be expected to compensate for such a significant shortage of beds. It is undesirable to close Canterbury Hospital for five years to allow for the construction of another hospital. There is no obstetrics unit at Western Suburbs Hospital, and Canterbury has a 22-bed maternity ward. Western Suburbs Hospital has only a 10-bed rehabilitation ward while Canterbury Hospital has 25 rehabilitation beds. The intensive care and critical care units at Western Suburbs Hospital are combined into a six-bed ward; Canterbury Hospital has twice that many such beds. Therefore, if any hospital were to close - and I say if - because of the general nature of beds at

Western Suburbs Hospital and its proximity to Concord, Western Suburbs Hospital should be the choice as its services would be easier to replace during the construction period.

In September 1991 I asked the Minister responsible for hospitals at the time whether it was the fact that when Concord Repatriation General Hospital was placed under New South Wales Government control Canterbury, Western Suburbs and Lidcombe hospitals would close and Balmain Hospital would be downgraded? Although the Minister did not say at the time that that would happen, he agreed that, if a 700-bed high tech hospital in that part of Sydney was added to the State's system, the role and definition of hospitals within the area would have to be reviewed. In other words, well over 12 months ago the Minister was toying with the idea of closing Canterbury Hospital. But that did not stop the Minister's office from publicly accusing me at the time of scaremongering. The Minister's office said that it was not on the cards at all and that I was scaremongering. Fifteen months ago my forecast came close to what is the reality today.

A consultative committee has been established to report to the Minister on the alternatives. The trouble is the Minister has presented that committee with a *fait accompli*. He has said to the committee, "Come back and tell me which hospital you think I should close". I hope that the consultative committee, which comprises community representatives and personnel from the medical and administrative areas of Canterbury and Western Suburbs hospitals, has more guts and a few more teeth than this Government has given it credit for. It may well be that the committee will come back with a further recommendation. It may well be that it will recommend that a new hospital should be built on a third site - and that would make a lot of sense. When a new hospital is to be built it should be positioned in an area that will accommodate the regions that will eventually lose existing hospitals. A third site is the ideal way to go. I will be lodging a submission with the consultative committee to argue that a new hospital should be built on a third site.

Mr Shedden: You are wasting your time.

Mr MOSS: The honourable member for Bankstown has just said that I will be wasting my time. I probably will, but I have faith in the consultative committee. The consultative committee might well adopt my recommendations. At this stage I am concerned about what happens to the recommendations after they have reached the Minister's desk. I am adamant that health services in the Canterbury area should remain. If a new hospital is to be built in that area, well and good. But existing hospitals should remain until the new hospital is open. That is important for an area already starved of adequate public health services.

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Mr SCHULTZ (Burrinjuck) [4.23]: I compliment His Excellency, Rear Admiral Peter Ross Sinclair, A.C., Governor of New South Wales, on the Speech he delivered in the upper House on 24th February, 1993. I thank him most sincerely and praise him for the dignity he has displayed as the Queen's representative in this great State. I, like many members of this House, have been fortunate enough to have the Governor visit schools in my electorate on a number of occasions. The other day children at some of those schools were able to tell me who the Governor was and what he wore on the day of his visit. That is the sort of impression the Governor is making on people in rural New South Wales. As the representative for the great seat of Burrinjuck I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to talk about a number of issues raised in the Governor's Speech which are important to my constituents.

Much has been said in this House about the achievements of the coalition Government since it was democratically elected in March 1988. I refer to the democratic election of this Government specifically as it relates to the abuse of that process by the so-called non-aligned Independents. Since I have been a member of Parliament they have abused that democratic process in every sense of the term. However, they will be judged accordingly at the appropriate time by the people of New South Wales. Despite the misinformed opinion of this independent group, the people of New South Wales are now aware of the arrogance the Independents display regularly in this Parliament.

It may be argued that my comments are not related to the Governor's Speech. I would defend such

criticism by referring to those sections in the Governor's Speech which relate to the difficult conditions being faced by the Government as a result of a weakness in the economy created by the deficit in Australia's balance of payments. We cannot effectively address that issue when we are constantly frustrated by the attempts of the Independents to hijack the policies of a government which are designed to secure a better quality of life for the citizens of this State and for their children. His Excellency, in his Speech, made reference to better roads, State Rail, less polluted waterways and the environment, which are some of the issues I would like to mention on behalf of my constituents.

Many members of this House are aware of my stand on the pollution of the Murrumbidgee River system by the Australian Capital Territory Government as a result of partially treated sewage bypassing the Lower Molonglo water quality treatment plant at Belconnen. I believe that problem has been satisfactorily resolved with the co-operation of the Australian Capital Territory Government and the assistance of the Environment Protection Authority. An amount of \$20 million will see the building of a holding dam and three additional clarifiers at that plant, despite the antics of the Federal environment Minister, Ros Kelly, who made a statement about some pink-tailed legless lizards living on the site on which the dam is to be built. Common sense has prevailed. It has been identified that that species constitutes only 10 per cent of the total wildlife population. Australian Capital Territory residents would have had to pay significantly higher rates if the dam was built on another site.

However, there is a compounding problem. Nutrients which have settled at the bottom of Burrinjuck Dam for more than a decade as a result of the bypassing of partially treated sewage are currently being discharged through the dam's low-level gates into the Murrumbidgee River. This is creating a potential water quality problem in the Murrumbidgee River downstream of the dam wall. This problem could be reduced considerably if No. 3 stony sluice gate was utilised to allow surface waters to move through the dam and mix with dirty water which is currently being discharged through the lower valves in the dam. These nutrients, which are being dropped into the Murrumbidgee River below the dam wall, are creating an oxygen problem for aquatic life. They are creating a problem also with regard to the growth of blue-green algae.

During the summer months there is blue-green algae in the Burrinjuck Dam because water is taken only from the top and the bottom of that dam. The Department of Water Resources has recognised this potential problem and advocated badly needed maintenance to the sluice gates. It believes this will be useful in the environmental management of the Murrumbidgee River downstream of the dam wall. Obviously, this is an example of the Government's recognition of the need to tackle water quality standards in New South Wales freshwater streams. The No. 3 stony sluice gate will receive an injection of a considerable amount of money to resolve these maintenance problems.

Roads have always been a problem - a factor which was mentioned in the Governor's Speech. They have been a problem since I was elected a member of this Parliament in 1988 because the Federal Government has decreased road funding throughout the country. This Government has tried in vain to rectify the massive neglect by the previous Government of our rural road system. The difficulty has been compounded by the Federal Government failing to return to roads the 26c per litre fuel excise. That 26c per litre in fuel excise has been extracted from car owners at the petrol bowser.

The recent softwood industry development forum held at Tumut centred around the impact the lack of Federal road funds was having on the infrastructure in the softwoods region. The Forestry Commission's region has 102,000 hectares of exotic forest which, in 1990 alone, produced \$384 million of timber products. These represent direct import replacement and significant foreign exchange savings for Australia. By the year 2010, with increased production, that product value will be worth \$834 million at 1990 values. The potential for job creation alone in this industry should at least stimulate the Federal Government to inject badly needed funds into the roads in that area.

The Governor referred in his Speech to the New South Wales rail system, where some very interesting

things have happened. The State Rail Authority, through the Minister for Transport, has continued the massive upgrading of antiquated rolling-stock in freight rail and the introduction of new XPT trains to run between Melbourne and Sydney. Apart from upgrading passenger comfort, these fast and modern new trains will slash three hours from the running time between these cities - a significant contribution to attracting people back to the rail system. Despite rumours that sleeper cars will be removed from the Sydney to Melbourne service, new sleeper cars the equal of the best in the world will be supplied. Safety has continued to be a priority in State Rail.

I recently opened at Yass Junction a \$3 million modern signalling and switchover complex which will not only enhance safety but at the same time will reduce freight train running times between Melbourne and Sydney by allowing the overtaking of slower trains at designated points. The switchover will allow elderly people travelling from Melbourne to Sydney to alight on the southbound side of the Yass Junction railway station and walk out on to the platform, rather than having to alight on the northbound side where they have to traverse a very steep pedestrian crossover. That will be of enormous advantage to the elderly people who use the rail system. It is another example of the Fahey Government getting it right in its commitment to getting more passengers and freight back to rail in an environment where they can compete with road coaches and road transport in running times between the two capital cities.

The Governor referred in his Speech to the Government's commitment to health. Health has been a issue for some time and, despite the rantings of those on the opposite side of the House, the Government's performance has been exemplary considering the absolute mess it inherited from the previous regime. In his Speech the Governor, when referring to building on the reforms already in place, said:

The Government will build upon the guarantee of service and make sure that the focus of service is the citizen, the client, the consumer. Each agency will give a guarantee regarding standards of service, but more significantly, will make a commitment to listen and respond to consumer needs.

The Government's objective is to ensure that citizens benefit in tangible ways from the greater efficiency of the public service.

I alert honourable members to the Minister's initiative in investigating the duplication of administrative costs in health services and the paperwork in the Department of Health. The Minister has done this so that money being expended there can be redirected to the derivative health services at base and district hospitals, particularly in New South Wales. He recognises patient care is paramount to health and to the health dollar. He also realises that the Government is not in office to run bureaucratic empires that were set up in the previous regime. I refer to my comments in the press of late regarding the need to do away with the regional departments of health throughout the State. The Minister recognises that with budgets involving enormous amount of money there is perhaps a massive problem with waste of resources much needed at the coalface. With the falling health dollar, more and more pressure is being placed on hospitals and hospital boards.

As a local member representing the seat of Burrinjuck I have made it quite clear to the Minister that hospital boards must be allowed to responsibly manage their hospitals. They know that there has been some flak and they are doing all they can to prune the wastages and overruns on their budgets, and are doing so very responsibly. It is incumbent on the Government to ensure that it does not continue to squeeze the health stone year in and year out in the guise of efficiency gains as described by the Department of Health. The Government must ensure that the problem is approached in a sensible and logical manner. The Government then needs to look at the other areas of waste. The regional departments of health in rural New South Wales in particular need to be studied.

Despite the opportunity I have in this Address in Reply to repeat the criticism of the Federal Government's role in the demise of the health system in this State, particularly as it affected waiting lists in public hospitals, it is appropriate to raise the wonderful role played by rural communities in the southwest of the State in raising money in difficult economic times for a mobile mammography unit for the identification of breast cancer in women. In 1988 and again in 1989 I raised the issue of the devastating impact breast cancer is having on rural women and the need for mobile breast cancer screening units in rural New South Wales. Since that time a group

of dedicated women and men, without any assistance from Government, has worked tirelessly to raise \$300,000 to put a mobile unit on the road so that country women have the same opportunity for breast cancer screening as their metropolitan cousins. They will have reached that target by June this year and hope to have the van built and ready to operate at the end of the year.

I know all honourable members in both Chambers will join with me in recognising the magnificent achievement by these concerned people, who have taken this significant women's health issue into their hearts. Honourable members must also remember this contribution has come from rural people who have crossed all political boundaries in their desire to address an issue which at some time in our lives touches all of us. The Governor made reference in his Speech to the environment. The environment is a very important part of our lifestyle. Under the heading "Balancing Environment and Resource Development" he said:

... legislation will be introduced to protect endangered species which will integrate measures for the protection and recovery of species into the normal planning approval process.

Governments in general, State and Federal, have a

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lot to learn about protecting endangered species. We seem to focus our minds on the pressures that are being brought to bear by minority groups, to which I will refer in a moment, and have moved away from one of the most important issues in regard to the protection of our endangered species. I have raised this matter many times in the public arena and in this House. I refer to the problems caused by introduced species such as foxes, feral cats, pigs, and goats and the massive impact on the environment of blackberries and introduced noxious weeds in national parks. Once again I ask that the Government pay regard to what is happening because of the killing expertise of animals such as cats and foxes. I request that it consider seriously a proposal I put forward, that I noticed the Leader of the Opposition picked up and ran with about six or eight months ago. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I refer to the possibility of running a fox lotto or paying a bounty to give people an incentive to make an impact on the fox population, which has exploded out of control. Many people who drive in the country, even members who represent country electorates and travel through the country regularly, will agree with me when I say that I have never seen as many foxes on the roads as I have seen in the past two years. That problem should be addressed as a matter of urgency. I shall refer now to the ongoing saga of the radical green movement, whose members have attempted to close off more of our national parks by putting forward proposals to declare as wilderness areas sections of parks that have been used by people since our great land was first settled.

In the Burrinjuck electorate alone an attempt has been made to declare a section of the Kosciusko National Park a wilderness area. This nominated area is referred to as Goodradigbee and consists of 124,000 hectares, which is equal to 17.97 per cent of the total Kosciusko National Park. On its own that does not seem to be an unreasonable proposal for any group of people looking for a pristine environment in which they can meditate in isolation, smoke grass or do whatever they do away from the mainstream of society. However, those who put forward the proposal conveniently fail to disclose that already 269,000 hectares have been declared wilderness. That existing wilderness region alone makes up 39.01 per cent of Kosciusko National Park.

Honourable members should listen carefully to my comments. If the area now proposed is added to the existing declared wilderness region, that will in round figures be 57 per cent - or more than half of the 690,000 hectares of the total park - that will be locked up for wilderness. That is what these people are on about: closing down access to all people wanting to go to the national parks. When minority groups exert pressure on parliamentarians in regard to these matters it should be borne in mind that they are proposing decreasing the amount of public national park available for use by the community, which results in exacerbating the damage to those decreasing areas. Along with my constituents I am about protecting the environment, as are all honourable members.

For decades my constituents have been enjoying their recreational pursuits of fishing, bushwalking, horse riding and camping in national parks. I caution the Government that it must ensure that there is a balance

between living sensibly with the environment and the inherent danger of listening too intently to the selfish minority who seek to impose restrictions on the silent majority. The problem does not end there. Just prior to Christmas the National Parks and Wildlife Service was talking about putting another restriction on horse riders. I remind honourable members that horse riders have been riding horses in the Kosciusko National Park since land was first settled in that region.

One of those who ride horses regularly in the area is the honourable member for Monaro. The point I seek to make is that no scientific or practical proof is available that horse riders have caused any problem with the environment in their quest to go to the high country to look at that beautiful, pristine environment. If honourable members go to national parks as I do - not regularly, but reasonably irregularly - and see the damage pigs have done in those parks, especially Kosciusko National Park, they will understand that their minds need to be focused sensibly on the right areas if the environment is to be protected. Fortunately, vigorous representations by the honourable member for Monaro and me have convinced the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Chris Hartcher, that the direction his people were taking by issuing permits for horse riders and restricting the number of horse riders permitted to go into the park was unnecessary and a waste of a valuable resource, and a waste of time, because all of those horse riders are anxious to ensure that the environment they use is protected, as it has been for decades.

This morning the Minister for the Environment assured me, as he assured the honourable member for Monaro in the House yesterday, that this proposal has been put aside and that people will be able to use the park and ride their horses in it in the sensible way they have done for many years. I am pleased he did that, because I have been invited to go horse riding in the high country. I have not been on a horse for 30 years but those horse riders have asked me to go up to the high country with them to have a look at where they go and what they do. I am looking forward to that two-day trip very soon. I thank the Minister for his sensible approach.

Mr Merton: Mr Speaker is a rider of some note.

Mr SCHULTZ: I would like Mr Speaker to come to the Kosciusko National Park. He appreciates the beauty of the southwest which, I might add, the Tourist Commission with its lack of wisdom has not promoted as it should have been promoted. I should make a brief reference to the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing, the Hon. Joe Schipp, who is aware of the needs of small rural communities. He knows that the Burrinjuck

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electorate is made up of small and medium towns. The electorate does not have a large regional centre like Dubbo, Wagga Wagga or Orange. The Minister understands that all of those small villages and towns, in these very hurtful recessionary times, are working to save money for sporting facilities. He acknowledged that by making a significant contribution of \$51,000 during this year's sport and recreation grants. He was ably supported and advised on the distribution of those funds by my learned colleague and friend the honourable member for Gladesville, Ivan Petch. Ivan has been into my electorate and knows about the small communities. He has met the people there and knows of their spontaneous reaction in difficult times and how they all pull together to try to get facilities. I request the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing to ask the Premier to think seriously about making more funds available for sport and recreation facilities and resources for rural New South Wales.

It is extremely important to encourage a healthy lifestyle for our young people and that we allow them to have an environment in which some of the things that happen in the metropolitan area can be decentralised. It is essential to tap that valuable resource of unknown talent. I ask the Minister to think seriously about visiting the Burrinjuck electorate one Friday night to have a look at the junior athletes there, particularly in Cootamundra. Every Friday night 300 or 400 children take part in junior athletics in a park opposite my home. They are taking part in activities that we as Australians always try to encourage in our young people. Again I thank the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing for his generous contribution to the basketball association in Tumut, in that beautiful western side of the Kosciusko National Park at the southern end of the electorate. The association ran raffles - not chook raffles; they are the province of the Hon. Johnno Johnson. Chook raffles are for the Labor Party and the association did not get into that activity. It did not want to impinge on the Labor

Party's main source of revenue.

An enormous sum was raised voluntarily through holding barbecues and dances. This group seeks to build a complex for the benefit of the 600 young people who play netball. I thank the Minister for that contribution because the community appreciates his gesture. Even the little village of Stockinbingal, which was given \$2,200 to resurface its tennis courts, is appreciative of the contribution made by the Minister. I am pleased to be given the opportunity to talk in the Address-in-Reply debate. I hope all issues relating to rural New South Wales continue to be addressed. It is important that we consider roads in my electorate that have been seriously damaged through wet weather. I should like to mention a recent tragic accident involving a well-known resident who supported young children in Cootamundra - a good friend of mine by the name of Tony Masling. Tony, who ran a successful business in Cootamundra, and two of his young daughters were killed while taking a ride in his helicopter. Tony Masling provided assistance during bush fires and made his helicopter available to bring Father Christmas to the young children of Cootamundra - that was the nature of the man. I am grateful for the opportunity to say those few words about Tony Masling, a thorough gentleman and well loved in his home town.

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.52]: I should like to respond to the Governor's Speech, which has been published and is before the House. With no disrespect to the Governor, the content of the Speech was uninspiring to people looking to ascertain the Government's program for the next 12 months. It was also uninspiring because of the limited detail provided about government intentions on important issues such as health, education and so on. Only passing reference was made to those important issues. If that is the Government's program for the next 12 months, it is fair to say that the Government is only marking time or trying to keep its head above water. The first page of the published copy of the Speech relates to the strong view that controlling the Budget or, perhaps to be more accurate, rectifying the continued mismanagement of the State Budget was to be the cure-all for most of the State's ills.

The Governor has been misled by the authors of his Speech. This is evidenced by the statement on page 6 that under the capital works spending program an additional \$540 million has been allocated in the 1992-93 Budget for capital works. Of course, the Speech makes no reference to the capital works budget being underspent by \$500 million so far this financial year. Also, last year \$300 million of an appropriated capital works budget was not spent. Today something approaching \$800 million over two years of capital works funding has not been spent on employment generating projects throughout the State. In my electorate this means that capital works for roads are being neglected and result in the postponement of projects such as the dangerous intersection at the corner of Duke Street and Woodstock Avenues. Again, that slows the campaign for the completion of the second stage of the Phillip Parkway and explains why, in areas with a growing population and a dramatic increase in the number of school students, the Department of School Education is being forced to build extra accommodation rather than using funds set aside for capital works.

Yesterday the honourable member for Londonderry mentioned the ridiculous school boundaries and the local community is outraged with them. To rub salt into the wound, the Governor stated that we will have better roads, better hospitals, cleaner drinking water and so on. Either the Governor has been misled or the Government, which wrote the Speech, is completely out of touch. I should like to make some comments on several issues which come under my shadow portfolio responsibilities, such as senior citizens,

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water resources and so on. I wish to comment on how matters referred to by the Governor affect my constituents. The honourable member for Canterbury and the honourable member for Burrinjuck referred to certain health issues. Health and health-related services are undergoing dramatic changes and both of those are driven at a Federal and State Government level, not to mention a medical profession level. On page 16 the Governor's Speech made only a fleeting reference to health. The Governor commenced his Speech by making the most laughable comment in the whole document, "My Government puts people first in health care".

To give credit where it is due, the honourable member for Canterbury made the most appropriate comment when he said that it should read, "My Government puts some people first in health care". That is a more realistic statement of the Government's role in the provision of health services. Passing reference was made to

the Penrith, Liverpool, Albury and Liverpool hospitals. Again, as with the capital works contribution, no mention was made of the negatives, such as Lidcombe Hospital. Numerous staff, medical people and local residents would like to ask the Government what is going to happen with Lidcombe Hospital. Western Suburbs Hospital has been in the news, as has Balmain Hospital. And, Mr Speaker, Hawkesbury Hospital, which was a political football in the 1988 election campaign waged by the then Greiner Opposition, is still awaiting funds. The Governor's Speech made no mention of that. Blacktown District Hospital in my electorate was also the subject of a substantial campaign by Liberal candidates in 1988 and no mention has been made in the Governor's Speech of any work to be done at that hospital.

My electorate is directly serviced by a number of hospitals, mainly Mount Druitt Hospital, which is in my electorate; Blacktown District Hospital, which is on the fringe, and many of my constituents attend Nepean Hospital. As with all residents of western Sydney and other parts of Sydney, our constituents avail themselves of the services at Westmead hospital. The community is concerned about the continual march towards privatisation of our health and public hospital system. Of course, the issue of the insurance status of patients and how they are treated in public hospitals and private hospitals is of concern. The direction of the Fahey Government will be pushed along at a far greater pace should the Hewson-Fischer team ever get elected to the Federal Government.

Mr Beck: On Saturday week.

Mr AMERY: I am glad the honourable member for Murwillumbah interrupts, because I believe he should explain how his constituents will be treated in hospitals. I will give some examples, and I am sure that the honourable member could relate similar incidents that have occurred at his hospital. There is a lot of concern in my electorate about the Hewson promise to change the Medicare system. The admission statistics from Mount Druitt Hospital show that more than 80 per cent of people admitted not only go through the accident and emergency section but are Medicare-only patients. The State Government treats public hospitals unfairly and that is also the intention of its Federal colleagues. I would like to place on record the outline of two cases that exemplify the real issues with the health service and how it treats some people in our community - problems that will be exacerbated should Dr Hewson become Prime Minister.

In the first case, Mrs Lopez attended her local general practitioner in respect of a continual back problem and was referred to an orthopaedic surgeon. At this stage I point out that Mrs Lopez is a Medicare-only patient and does not receive social security - a class of patient that will be severely affected by the Federal coalition's policy. The surgeon advised Mrs Lopez that there was a two-year waiting list at a public hospital for a spine operation, though that delay was never confirmed with the hospital. Mrs Lopez was further worried when she was told by her surgeon that if she did not have an operation within six months she may be confined to a wheelchair. Those statements - that she may be in a wheelchair and the need for a hospital within six months - are designed to scare the patient. The crunch came when Mrs Lopez was told she could have an operation immediately - she could be admitted to the local private hospital, Minchinbury private hospital, I think it was - but of course she would have to pay a cash lump sum of \$3,700. Few people in our electorates could meet that cost and that type of situation.

I have referred the matter to the Mount Druitt Hospital and I hope it receives immediate attention. Mrs Lopez is a constituent with a breadwinner in the family home, she is not on social security, she is with Medicare only, and she is trying to have a major back operation. Under the proposals supported by the State Government, the Australian Medical Association and the Federal coalition, Dr Hewson would argue that if this person could afford private hospital cover her problems would be solved. In other words, if she were a little richer she could get a better service from the hospital system. The next case involves private health insurance - what Dr Hewson and the New South Wales Minister for Health, Mr Phillips, would like everyone to have. The second case is an excellent example of what life would be like if the coalition ever came to office. Mrs J required two hip replacements - two separate trips to hospital, obviously to avoid complete disability in having both hips replaced at the one time. Mrs J has maximum private health cover with the Hospitals Contribution Fund of Australia insurance company.

Not wanting to wait to be admitted to the Westmead hospital as either a public or private patient, Mrs J was admitted to the Jamison Private Hospital at Penrith where two separate operations

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were planned and carried out. On the first admission the combination of the surgeon and hospital not only took the benefit of the maximum HCF cover, plus any benefit through Medicare, but cost Mrs J an extra \$1,340 for each operation. That is almost \$2,700 for two admissions into a private hospital for a patient with top private cover with a private health insurance company. The Federal coalition and the State Government have argued that the health system would be more fair and much more efficient if everyone were in private health insurance.

The second example is a case study of what the State Government and the Federal coalition is all about - getting everyone into private health insurance. People should not be led into thinking that maximum cover with private health insurance is a solution to having operations performed quickly - it is certainly not a cost-effective solution to medical problems. This is a clear example of what is in store on the grander scale if Mr Fahey, Dr Hewson, and of course Dr Shepherd of the AMA, dictate our future health policy. I am concerned with what is happening to our health policies. As indicated earlier, more than 80 per cent of patients admitted into hospital in my electorate are Medicare-only patients and they have a lot to fear from the health policy of the State Government and the Federal coalition.

I turn now to a few matters relating to senior citizens and the Seniors Card. Like many members on this side of the House, I have done a lot of work promoting the Seniors Card and getting many of our citizens enrolled in the system so that they might receive the benefits of the various discounts offered by the private sector. Very little has been offered by the Government. The lack of promotion of the Seniors Card system in country electorates is of concern. No doubt there has been quite a substantial promotion of the system in the metropolitan area, but the country areas and country senior citizens are missing out on the benefits of the Seniors Card. That can only be put down to the poor effort by the Government in sponsoring and promoting the Seniors Card with the various retailers and businesses in country areas.

On a recent trip to the Orange electorate where I spoke to a senior citizens group in Wellington, it was clear to that group that the Seniors Card is really just another plastic card to carry around. Other than chain businesses like Woolworths, very few businesses are offering discounts to senior citizens residing in country areas. I asked for the group to provide evidence of their plight, and I was able to obtain a Seniors Card directory for the electorate of Orange. The senior citizens of Wellington could not be more accurate in saying that the Seniors Card is really a city-based benefit for retired people which has little benefit to country areas. Looking at the directory for Orange, the first store that offers a Seniors Card benefit is Buckleys Carpet House in Orange. That is the only company giving Seniors Card benefits which has an address in that electorate. The second example is an insurance company with an address in Mount Street, North Sydney. Another business offering Seniors Card discounts to residents of Orange is Larkim Aerials TV of Lorraine Street, Peakhurst, in the Sydney suburbs. I am unaware how residents in Orange obtain a discount on their aerial service from Peakhurst.

Senior citizens in Orange can obtain a discount on some sporting aids. They can travel to Goobarah Road, Cronulla to get a 20 per cent discount on sandals and assorted sporting equipment. For any reading material the senior citizens can travel or write to Wren Media Publications on the Gold Coast where a discount is offered on a "lively, monthly magazine for mature readers". This is the type of promotion that the Seniors Card has received in country areas. Orange is only one example. Many other directories have been handed to me which show that country electorates receive a very poor deal. I call upon the Premier to get motivated on this issue and start promoting this Seniors Card, which gives many benefits and discounts to city residents but very few to our country neighbours. A further issue in relation to senior citizens was raised by the Premier last weekend. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

Last weekend the Premier again promised to introduce age discrimination laws in New South Wales. Following on from Premier Greiner's practice, this seems to be the yearly Senior Citizens' Week promise. Every Senior Citizens' Week the Premier of the day says that the Government will introduce age discrimination legislation. Last year we were told that a green paper would be issued, and this year we are told there will be a

white paper, but still we do not see a bill. Of course, the Opposition has had a bill before the Parliament for almost two years. It is quite obvious that the Government is not genuine when it comes to introducing age discrimination laws in this State. We have had at least two votes in the past three or four months on an age discrimination private member's bill presented by me, and on each occasion the Liberal Party and the National Party voted against it. In 1989 Premier Greiner promised to introduce legislation to end age discrimination in all areas. He stated in Parliament, "There is no social reform on the agenda anywhere in Australia of greater potential significance to the well-being of mankind in our society than the elimination of age discrimination". They are strong words. He said, "We are confident that within 12 months" - and this was September 1989 - "there will be pace-setting legislation to remove once and for all age discrimination in New South Wales". Well, a year later no action has been taken - only silence. In November 1990 Mr Fahey, who was then Minister for Industrial Relations, introduced an amendment to abolish compulsory retirement but failed to use that opportunity to move any amendments relating to discrimination on the grounds of age, as promised by Premier Greiner.

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In December 1991, on behalf of the Labor Opposition, I introduced legislation to outlaw age discrimination, based on legislation that is now in operation in South Australia. The first squeak we heard from the Government was in May 1992 when the Minister for Health, Mr Phillips - when leading the debate for the Government on the bill, and after a point of order had been taken seeking to make him give an indication of how the Government would vote on the bill - said that the Government opposed the legislation. In November 1992, during the previous session of this Parliament, all members of the Fahey Government in this House voted against the bill. It was only with the support of the Independents that the bill got through the Legislative Assembly just before Christmas.

Opposition members in the Legislative Council again attempted to bring on the bill by way of suspension of standing orders but unfortunately, with the assistance of some of the minor parties, the Government was again able to block age discrimination laws. As I said, the Government is not fair dinkum. The Premier's announcement is just another Senior Citizens' Week stunt to tell the senior citizens organisations that the Government has some commitment. We all know that the private sector and the business community are telling the Government that they do not want a bar of age discrimination laws, and that is why the Government does not have the guts to act. It is a shame that people are growing older while waiting for this Government to bring in legislation abolishing age discrimination.

There are other matters I should like to have mentioned, especially in relation to water resources and the concerns of country people, particularly employees of the Department of Water Resources, about the Government's intention to privatise the department, especially the impact that would have on their employment. I should like to have raised some matters that I will now raise at a future date concerning increased water charges in some areas, particularly the Hay district, where there was a 28 per cent increase in water charges. I should like to bring home to country people the effect of the Federal coalition's GST package on some parts of New South Wales. I note the presence in the Chamber of the honourable member for Albury. He may wish to explain to irrigators and other water users in his electorate the impact upon them of his Federal coalition colleagues' GST package with regard to water charges.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER: (Mr Tink) Order! It being 5.15 p.m., pursuant to sessional orders the debate is interrupted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS BY Mrs MARJORIE ROBINSON

Mr THOMPSON (Rockdale) [5.15]: I wish to raise a matter concerning one of my constituents, Mrs Marjorie Robinson, a senior citizen who lives with her husband in an upstairs unit in Chapel Street, Rockdale. On 13th July, 1990, life for the Robinsons was changed dramatically, even tragically. On that day Mrs Robinson slipped and fell over at the Kogarah town centre. An ambulance was called and she was taken to St George Hospital. Her leg was found to be broken in three places. A plate was inserted in the leg and she was hospitalised for five weeks. On discharge from hospital she was treated regularly at home by a physiotherapist. She could not walk and was totally reliant on a wheelchair for mobility. Even today she can struggle around her flat only with the aid of a quad stick and must rely on a wheelchair if she goes outside the unit. During the 12 months following her discharge from hospital she endured continual pain, day and night. In her own words she described it as, "continual", "excruciating" and "shocking".

In December 1991 Mrs Robinson went back to the hospital where it was found that the plate which had previously been inserted in her leg had broken. In fact she had been exercising and trying to get around on a leg that still had three breaks and no supporting plate. On that occasion Mrs Robinson spent four weeks in hospital, through Christmas 1991. She returned home in January 1992 and thereafter was examined each month by her doctor. Regular X-rays were taken to ensure that the leg was healing. In December 1992 her doctor told her that he had done as much as he could and that she would just have to be very careful. To this day Mrs Robinson has extreme difficulty in walking. She can get around her flat but only slowly and with much difficulty and with the aid of the quad stick. She is totally dependent on her husband for meals, dressing, housekeeping and so on. As a result of the 1990 accident the lives of the Robinsons have been turned upside down. Their retirement years have been horribly disrupted.

In late 1990 the Robinsons sought legal aid to enable them to seek redress against the shopping centre management. They approached Picone and Howes, solicitors of Kogarah, and Mr D. Shanahan, an associate of that firm, handled the matter. I understand that he left the practice some time in 1992. The Robinsons informed me that they provided the solicitor with the necessary details and documents, including their financial records. Subsequently the Legal Aid Commission approved initial legal aid to the extent of \$800 for the purpose of obtaining an expert report on the flooring surface at the site of the accident. This report was furnished in September 1992. It was forwarded to a barrister for an opinion as to the prospects of success and as to the likely damages to be recovered. By letter of 16th November, 1992, the solicitors advised Mrs Robinson in the following terms:

We have now received Counsel's reply, which is favourable. Counsel has advised that there is sufficient basis to commence proceedings.

Further evidentiary details and medical reports will be required, if you instruct us to proceed.

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In the meantime, we have forwarded a copy of Counsel's advice to the Legal Aid Commission and requested the Commission to inform us if you would be granted Legal Aid for these proceedings, in view of Counsel's advice.

We will contact you upon receiving their reply.

On the surface that may seem fair enough. But when one considers that the solicitors were engaged in November 1990 one will note that it took virtually two years to lodge the main application for legal aid. The Robinsons have informed me that they have had to continually press the solicitors for action. In their view - and on the information I have I must agree with them - the solicitors have been extremely tardy. One might even suggest that their apparent lack of close attention to the matter has been extremely prejudicial to the position in which the Robinsons find themselves. By letter of 23rd February the Legal Aid Commission informed the solicitors as follows:

Reference is made to the application for legal aid submitted by you on behalf of the abovenamed.

The Legal Aid Commission has recently restricted the classes of matters for which legal aid is available in civil and administrative law.

This decision was taken on 17 December 1992 with effect from 1 January 1993. All applications undetermined as at that date are subject to the new policy.

As it appears that the present matter does not fall within any of the categories for which aid is available from 1 January 1993, nor that any of the exceptions apply, this application will not be given further consideration.

As the above determination results from a decision of the Commission, there is no right of appeal to the Legal Aid Review Committee.

This is a matter of great concern and distress to my constituents. They are elderly and have modest means. They simply cannot afford to finance legal action themselves. There are two key issues, as I see it, in this case. First, why did it take the solicitors two years to progress the matter? The second issue relates to the ill-advised and heartless decision by this Government to cut legal aid funding. I have written to the Attorney General and to the Legal Aid Commission about this case. I make this plea now in the hope that it underlines the seriousness and the urgency of my constituents' position and in the hope that the decision to refuse legal aid is reversed.

CLOSURE OF SUTHERLAND SHIRE HIGH SCHOOLS

Mr KERR (Cronulla) [5.20]: I wish to raise a matter of very serious concern to the people of the Sutherland Shire regarding some very ill-informed comment about school closures. It is time the Sutherland Shire Council looked to its own responsibilities, because a great deal of damage has been done to parents and pupils in the Sutherland Shire by these very reckless statements. However, I propose to assist the councillors. If these local government Jeremiahs had done their homework and read a report in their council papers prepared by the planning department, entitled "Planning Report, Sale of Department of School Education Property", file number EHC32, they would have seen this statement by their own staff, "There has been no indication from the Department of School Education that any school in this area is under investigation with a view to closure at this stage". If the councillors had read on, they would have learned that, "Any such proposed closure is subject to community consultation and discussion procedures. In fact there is a minimum period of 18 months between notification of a proposed school closure and its actual closure".

If they had read their own paper the councillors would have averted a lot of the angst felt in the local community. Honourable members will recall that Caringbah Infants School was closed and that some townhouses were built on its site. It is interesting to note that one of the investors in those townhouses was the Sutherland Shire Council. The Assistant Director-General (Regional), Department of School Education, wrote to all local members in the Sutherland Shire on 4th November, 1992, and said:

I am taking this opportunity to inform you that I have initiated a consultative process with Cluster Directors and high-school principals in the Sutherland Shire with a view to improving the provision of secondary educational opportunities.

I have called a meeting of High School Principals in the Shire to discuss current secondary educational provisions . . . will begin a process which will involve discussions with school communities to explore initiatives to increase the diversity of secondary educational provision in Sutherland Shire.

One of the two schools mentioned is Cronulla High School, which has very satisfactory enrolments. Recently the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Assistant Minister for Education and I attended a lunch at Cronulla High School for its worklink program, which was established by teacher Graham Hornery in his own time. The program is aimed at establishing links between local industry and the school. Streamwatch is a program being developed with the Water Board about environmental education. Cronulla High School has a great future and its distinguished ex-students will be celebrating their centenary when this present council is long forgotten.

The other school mentioned was Sylvania High School, which has a distinguished record in creative arts and a great future, as does every other school in the Sutherland Shire.

It is about time people stopped criticising public education. It is about time the Sutherland Shire Council worked out its role in life, whether it will be an education department in exile or whether it will carry out a few municipal duties because the role of local government is to provide efficient services and enhance civic pride. Yesterday I wrote to the Shire President about the lack of facilities at the Cronulla rock pools; and the condition of the swimming pool at Gunnamatta Bay would make any resident glad that the Sutherland Shire Council is not running schools. Roads, kerbs and guttering are in urgent need of attention and that is the only sort

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of gutter politics that the ratepayers of the Sutherland Shire are interested in. The Sutherland Shire Council should attend to its own duties because when one looks at the rates bill imposed on residents one realises that they are entitled to far better than scaremongering and cheap and petty politics in relation to schools that they, as residents and citizens, should be very proud of. It is about time the councillors did their homework, contributed to civic pride, and examined what is occurring in our schools and how they have improved.

Mr PHILLIPS (Miranda - Minister for Health) [5.25]: It is with pleasure that I take the opportunity to respond to the honourable member for Cronulla on what is another outrageous attempt by Sutherland Shire Council to irresponsibly scaremonger amongst the community of the Sutherland Shire. As Minister for Health and member for Miranda, in which Sutherland hospital is located, I experienced the scaremongering tactics of Sutherland Shire Council when it spoke of threatened closure of services to that hospital. Though those closures were never planned and will never eventuate, that scaremongering resulted in a meeting of hundreds of people at Sutherland Shire Council concerned about the future of their hospital. It was outrageous - something for which the council has never apologised and about which it never sought advice from the department. The council is involved in exactly the same despicable lies about education.

The Department of School Education is endeavouring to establish a sensible plan to improve educational facilities and a range of resources and courses in that area in a consultative manner. Council had the nerve to put in its report and scaremonger amongst the community about the closure of hospitals - their judgment, their report. Since when did Sutherland Shire Council become an expert on educational planning? Never. Sutherland Shire Council should get back to the job of resolving the issues in the shire that are of great concern to its residents. What is the council doing about roads? What is it doing about its desperate garbage situation? It contracted out that service, then bought it back, and now has to buy five or six trucks. It is a mess. What is the council doing about recycling, siltation in Yowie Bay, the overall siltation in Port Hacking, its dramatic drainage problems, delays in development applications and traffic problems? The council is doing absolutely nothing and it is about time it got on with its own job.

NEPEAN HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith) [5.27]: I am very glad that the Minister for Health is in the Chamber because I wish to refer to a matter of public importance concerning Nepean Hospital and I would really appreciate it if he would stay here and listen. My deep concern and the concern of the people in my electorate is about the waiting lists at Nepean Hospital, which is certainly something of which the Minister is aware. The number of people awaiting surgery is as follows: general surgery, 406; ear, nose and throat surgery, 240; orthopaedics, 302; plastic surgery, 160; urology, 58; and cardio-thoracic, 18 waiting for pacemakers. The Government has provided Nepean Hospital with \$24 million worth of buildings, and I am very grateful for that, but more important is the need for people to have access the system.

The Minister issued a press release stating that he would reduce waiting lists by giving \$3 million to the private sector. That may solve the problem but the question I am being asked in the electorate, because this plan was in the local paper, is: why is that \$3 million not being put into the system to reopen the closed beds at Nepean Hospital? Penrith has about 800 graduate nurses; Hawkesbury has frequent graduate classes and 800 nurses are seeking work. The Government and the Minister recognise these huge waiting lists. It seems

sensible to marry the \$3 million that the Government is prepared to give to the private sector with the people who are endeavouring to make a career out of nursing and reopening the closed beds at Nepean Hospital. The community is concerned that something is radically wrong with Nepean Hospital and I am not able to allay those concerns.

I write constantly to the executive of the hospital asking him to help people access the system. Mrs Clara Peacock, 72 years of age, is waiting for the removal of a cataract but has been told she will have to wait 18 months. This operation was considered urgent three weeks ago. She has now been told that she has an 18-month wait. Mr Atkins from Emu Plains was supposed to go into Nepean Hospital on 16th February for an operation which was considered urgent. He was contacted by the hospital and told that the operation was off because the hospital did not have a bed. Something has to be done.

I have written to the Minister on a few occasions about elderly people and their treatment in hospital. I know that the Minister takes this matter seriously and I know that he is addressing this problem. My question to the Minister is simply this: the Government has money, so why put it in the private sector? Why not give it to the hospital direct to employ people and to open beds so that the public health system can achieve the goals that we set for it? I do not understand why the Government needs to put \$3 million into the private sector when nurses are looking for work and hospital beds have been closed. If the Government addresses both problems, it will get rid of hospital waiting lists in no time. The solution is a simple one. It would be different if the Government did not have the money but the Government has admitted that it will be throwing \$3 million at this problem. Why throw it at the private sector? Why not put it into the public sector which the Government is supposed to be supporting?

Mr PHILLIPS (Miranda - Minister for Health) [5.32]: I am disappointed that I have only
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two minutes in which to respond to this matter. If the honourable member for Penrith had contacted my office and told my staff that she was going to speak on this issue she would have been given a full and considered answer. I get sick and tired of members who are uninformed about what is happening in health coming into this Chamber and speaking about issues without seeking information. All they have to do is ask. My office is always open to them for the provision of information. The honourable member for Penrith said that there is something radically wrong with Nepean Hospital. There sure is! Twelve years of Labor government did nothing for that hospital. When this Government was elected in 1988 it immediately started a program to upgrade Nepean Hospital to a teaching hospital.

Mrs Lo Po': And you closed beds.

Mr PHILLIPS: The honourable member for Penrith has had her say. This Government embarked also on a \$100 million building program. In the past few months additional beds have been opened at that hospital. New facilities are being opened all the time, including paediatric wards, neonatal intensive care wards and maternity wards. Karitane courses are also being conducted. These things are happening all the time in a Labor electorate. The Federal Minister does not want this Government to move resources from the inner city to the west where they are desperately needed. The honourable member for Penrith should have a word with her Federal colleagues and the Federal Minister about the Labor Government's policy with regard to the distribution of resources. That will fix the problem. [*Time expired.*]

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT PECUNIARY INTEREST PROVISIONS

Mr CHAPPELL (Northern Tablelands) [5.34]: On 19th November last the Hon. Ann Symonds in another place referred to five matters involving Casino Municipal Council, which she said seemed to flout the pecuniary interest requirements of the Local Government Act. Let me quote her second example. She said:

The second incident relates to a classic example of local government corruption - aldermen making decisions relating to land they own. The subdivision of land known as Gay's Hill is believed to be owned in part by former aldermen of the council, Gerald Kelly and

Michael Harper, who failed to declare an interest whenever the matter was before council. It would seem that multiple breaches of section 46C have been committed.

By the way, the name of one of the former aldermen is Gerard Kelly, not Gerald Kelly. Council's records show that the subdivision was before council on six occasions. On 14th December, 1981, the record shows that Mr Kelly declared an interest and retired from the chair. On 18th March, 1982, Mr Kelly declared an interest. The record further notes that the mayor did not retire from the chair, taking the view that the motion was purely procedural - it being a motion to affix the seal on the plan following the developer's compliance with approval conditions. On 26th July, 1982, the record again shows that Mr Kelly declared an interest and retired from the chair. During Mr Harper's time on council the records show that the subdivision was before council on 27th November, 1984, 28th May, 1985, and 11th August, 1987. On each occasion the records show that Mr Harper declared an interest and took no part in the debate. The Hon. Ann Symonds then said:

The third matter involves the sealing of the car park and footpath in front of the Hotel Cecil at less than cost. When determining costs the engineer did not take into account time spent by staff drawing up the plans and setting up the job for speed bumps or the new gutter crossing. A partner in the hotel is the former mayor, Michael Kelly.

Again, the former mayor is Gerard Kelly and the former alderman is Michael Harper. There is no Michael Kelly, which is the name referred to by the Hon. Ann Symonds. In 1991 a roundabout was being constructed by council at the intersection of Barker and Centre streets, Casino. The Cecil Hotel is situated on the southwestern corner of the intersection. It was owned at the time by a syndicate of which Mr Harper and Mr Kelly were members. During construction the manager of the hotel, not the partners, sought a price from council for improvements to be made around the hotel. The price was given by council, accepted by the hotel syndicate, prepaid by the hotel syndicate and the work was carried out by council. It was work carried out by council for the hotel syndicate in the ordinary course of business. There was nothing sinister about it; no rules were broken; and no rules were bent. More important, Mr Harper and Mr Kelly were not even members of council at the time. They had not been members for more than three years and seven years respectively.

Another point raised by the Hon. Ann Symonds relates to Alderman Frisken, about whom she says, "The alderman never declared a pecuniary interest". There is doubt about whether Frisken had a pecuniary interest in the matter referred to and whether this matter was raised in council at the time. Council carried out an investigation in accordance with the department's requirements. A legal opinion was sought. After considering the matter council resolved to take no further action. However, it forwarded the opinion and documentation it had gathered to the department seeking advice as to whether it should take the matter further. The department wrote back and advised that no further action was necessary. Some obvious questions have to be asked. Where did the honourable member get her facts? Did she make any effort to check those facts? Does she have any concern for the good name and reputation of the people she has maligned in such a public way? In my opinion they are entitled to their good name until she can prove otherwise; and the Hon. Ann Symonds is not entitled simply to assert otherwise in such an unsubstantiated way. Will she check each and every fact she has quoted, which are not really

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facts at all but claims and assertions? If she finds that some or all of those facts are inaccurate, will she apologise both privately and publicly to the individuals concerned?

I happen to know two of the people named - Gerard Kelly and Michael Harper. The honourable member cannot even get their names right. I happen to know them because I was at school with the brother of one and at one time I was the brother-in-law of the other. I am happy to vouch for both of them as men of exemplary character and repute. I do not know the other people referred to by the honourable member, but I wager that she does not know them either. We are too quick to destroy the reputation of people without checking the facts, without doing our homework and without making any attempt to see whether we are dealing with the truth. It is time we stopped - *[Time expired.]*

Mr MOSS (Canterbury) [5.39]: Over the years hundreds of my constituents have been concerned about the fact that they reside on a road reservation known as Cooks River County Road which extends from Princes Highway to Second Avenue, Belfield. Many of these residents lived in this area long before it was a road reservation. They are experiencing the age-old problem of trying to sell their properties but no one is interested because they are on a road reservation. For some years it has been rumoured that this reservation will be lifted because of the proposal to extend the M5 through the Wolli Creek. I am not speaking tonight to support the extension of the M5 or to support its abandonment, but the residents of my electorate on the Cooks River want to know when the Government will make a decision on the M5 so they know where they stand with regard to selling, rebuilding or extending their properties. Those who have applied to extend their properties have been frustrated by the Roads and Traffic Authority continually advising that because their land is affected by a possible future road, no compensation would be made for any extension.

The Minister for Roads has stated in the past that he would not consider lifting the reservation until the Botany West transport study was finalised and decisions made arising from it. The study should have been completed in about December last year. The Minister is on record in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 20th November as stating that he supported the extension of the M5 road through the Wolli Creek. That being so, it is high time the Government issued a firm statement on this issue, so that those who are affected by any proposal will know where they stand. It seems that the RTA is seeking to re-route this road without advising anyone of its intention. The owners of properties only marginally affected by the formal boundary of the road have been told by the local council that because only their front yards will be affected by the road they should be able to extend their homes. But after considerable expense to employ architects and draftsmen to draw up plans they are told by the RTA that extension approvals will not be granted as more of the properties will be now affected.

The RTA is drawing lines on maps - and that is reasonable. It is reasonable also to reject any future development on the basis of the proposed re-routing of a road. But the RTA should not make decisions without at least advising the local planning authority, which is the local council, of its intention to change its plans. If that were done, the local council could inform those considering extension applications not to bother consulting an architect as approval would not be granted. If it were announced that the new road will be built or that Cooks River County Road will remain, at least these people would know where they stand. They cannot sell their properties, even though they have been given an assurance that eventually the RTA will buy their properties at market value. After all, no one is interested in buying a house on a road reservation.

PARSONAGE ROAD, CASTLE HILL, ROUNDABOUT

Mr PACKARD (The Hills) [5.43]: I speak on behalf of Mr and Mrs Hill of 122 Parsonage Road, Castle Hill. An incredible decision has been made by Baulkham Hills Shire Council, which it supports by claiming that it is short of money. I acknowledge that the council is short of money and that it has only been able to impose minimal rate increases to get its budget back in order. The council's main problem is that over the years Federal governments of both persuasions have given very little to it in subsidies. Blacktown has received a lot of money whereas Castle Hill has received little. However, I do not believe that the council can for ever blame its predicament on lack of funds. Right outside Mr and Mrs Hill's house - and it would be laughable if it were not so serious - the council has decided to construct a roundabout. Across the road from the proposed roundabout are located many services industries and in order to avoid having to relocate or redirect the services, the council has decided further to move the roundabout almost into Mr and Mrs Hill's front driveway. It will take away the footpath in front of the Hill residence.

At the moment Mr and Mrs Hill, on entering their driveway, proceed up a ramp to get to the garage. If the roundabout goes ahead, they will have to drive off a roundabout which is at exactly the same level as their driveway, which is, in effect, a T-junction off the roundabout. They have lost their footpath. They will drive straight on to the ramp and up to their garage. Baulkham Hills Shire Council, which will save \$20,000 by this action, has come up with a magnanimous suggestion which Mr and Mrs Hill cannot accept. The council

has decided to offer Mr and Mrs Hill electric garage doors. This is bureaucracy at work in Australia today! Mr and Mrs Hill are not young people. One can imagine them going around the roundabout many times until they have their car aimed directly into the driveway, driving up the driveway, and having to remember to press the garage door button. I am sure that on occasions Mr and Mrs Hill will miss the driveway or, worse still, they will forget to press the button. If the council cannot reverse its decision, perhaps it can give Mr and Mrs Hill a few sets of garage doors, because they will need a bit of practice.

With the help of Department of Local Government officers, I have uncovered an unusual and rarely used section - section 269A - of the Local Government Act, which is administered by the Minister for Main Roads. I am sure the Minister will be delighted to hear that there is a section of the Act that is seldom used. Under that provision the Minister has the power to reverse the council's action and I ask him to do so. The Shire Clerk of the Baulkham Hills Shire Council has informed me by letter that it would cost \$35,500 to have the job done properly, but because it is short of funds the job will be carried out at a cost of \$15,000. I realise everyone is short of funds, but it is totally unfair to inconvenience Mr and Mrs Hill just because the job cannot be done properly. The council's action is not reasonable. I ask the Minister to reverse the decision made last night by Baulkham Hills Shire Council. I ask the councillors to carry out a site inspection, which they obviously have not bothered to conduct already. I am sure that they would not expect one of their relatives to travel around a roundabout a few times in order to line up their driveway, and then hit the button and open the doors. It is an absolutely ridiculous situation, and I ask the Minister to intervene to have the decision reversed.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING IN BRIDGES ROAD, NEW LAMBTON

Mr MILLS (Wallsend) [5.48]: I ask that top priority be given by the Roads and Traffic Authority to funding of a light-controlled pedestrian crossing in Bridges Road, New Lambton. Bridges Road is main road 326, near Sketchley Road. I seek support for a decision by the Newcastle City Traffic Committee on Monday, 1st March, to recommend the installation of either a pelican crossing or a T-intersection light. The traffic committee can only make recommendations. The Minister for Roads is the only person in a position to expedite the approval of funds in the very near future; that is, as soon as approval is given to the department to put up those lights. There is a story behind this, and I shall now relate it. The Newcastle City Council with the co-operation of the RTA and the local community carried out an investigation over 18 months and developed a New Lambton traffic study which was adopted by the council in March 1992. One of the recommendations was the replacement of the existing marked pedestrian crossing at Bridges Road near Sketchley Parade with a pelican crossing as a medium-term option subject to availability of funds and pedestrian usage. Constituents wrote to me in July 1992 and I referred the correspondence to the traffic committee.

They wanted to draw to the attention of the traffic committee the plight of pedestrians wishing to cross that road during the evening peak hour, particularly between Lambton Road and St James Road. They understood that the existing pedestrian crossing was planned to be converted to a pelican crossing and wanted the work expedited. The traffic committee did a count. In the meantime the local patrol sergeant had observed the danger of the crossing and wanted the traffic committee to consider removing it altogether. The first count, in mid-November, showed that the warrant even for a marked pedestrian crossing was not met. I will come to the reason for that in a moment. It was noted that there had been two pedestrian accidents and one nose-to-tail vehicle accident on the crossing in the previous five years. When the matter finally came back to the traffic committee last Monday, the committee agreed to change its mind. A new count was taken in mid-February. The warrant was now met for the morning peak period, although it was still not met for the evening peak period. I shall read correspondence I have received from residents that indicates why that happened. Mrs Sternbeck of Burke Street, New Lambton wrote:

I am in my late 60s and avoid crossing as much as possible. I have lived here for over 30 years and feel now that I am getting on in years I should not be penalised by not being independent and to be able to come and go as I wish. Nearly all the elderly people that live in this area flatly refuse to try and cross and are unable to even go buy a paper. No one will allow their children to cross because of the danger.

Janet Sternbeck of Burke Street, New Lambton, wrote:

In order to use the convenience stores or public transport it is necessary for me to traverse this busy intersection. This is a dangerous corner, with several local people being hit by vehicles who do not yield to pedestrians. On many occasions it has taken from 10-15 minutes before a courteous driver stops his vehicle and allows me to cross.

This kind of barrier, an extremely busy road in a suburb, has social consequences. The traffic committee recommended that funding be provided so that the community amenity could be maintained. A letter from Mrs Hoy of Longworth Avenue stated:

... we are too frightened to cross there because many cars will not stop for us. Last November I came home from Sydney, alighted at the shop bus stop just on dusk, waited 20 minutes to cross, but nobody would stop, so I had to turn back to the St James lights.

That is about 350 metres away. The letter continues:

I have a hip replacement and it took me 35 minutes to get home to Longworth Avenue. By then it was very dark and I was very frightened in case I would fall in the dark. I used to take my shopping trolley to do my shopping in New Lambton. Now I have to catch the bus, pay \$1.60 to have my goods sent then catch the bus back home again. Children

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from this side going to the Catholic school also have to cross that speedway, which it is. I have many friends on the other side of Bridges Road. They won't cross at that crossing, not even on a Sunday, so they have to catch a cab.

We are not lucky enough to have a median strip which would have been good, but of course the road wasn't wide enough for that.

The New Lambton Senior Citizens and Pensioners Association sincerely hopes that the traffic committee can be convinced that the crossing should be updated to a crossing controlled by lights. The Catholic school advised that 14 children and their families rely on that crossing to get across the road to the school. [*Time expired.*]

TAMWORTH ELECTORATE PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREA

Mr WINDSOR (Tamworth) [5.53]: I take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the House a recent tour of inspection I undertook of the proposed Oxley Wild Rivers and Macleay Gorges wilderness areas and sections of the Werrikimbe National Park which have been assessed recently as a proposed wilderness area. I have a number of concerns about what could happen to what I believe to be some of the most magnificent country in the State. I am pleased that the honourable member for Oxley is present in the Chamber. He shares my concern. After hearing what I have to say I am sure he will be more concerned not only about the land grab, as he calls it, or the lockout mentality in regard to what some suggest should happen to the land, but also the economic impact of the transfer of weeds that were found in the area, which up to this stage have been largely neglected by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Most honourable members would be aware that a decision will be made in the near future about whether these areas are classified as wilderness.

I visited the location for a day with members of Walcha Shire Council, three weeds experts, one of whom was provided by the Minister for Agriculture - and I thank him for that - and neighbouring landholders, to assess the weed problem. The service had been saying that following an assessment of the area in their view no real weed problem existed. Some of the neighbouring landholders suggested there was a weed problem. I thought it best to have a look at the region. Having been involved in agriculture for a number of years I know a weed problem when I see one. And there is a weed problem in that area. The potential problem is much greater. Locking up that land will cause a catastrophic weed problem that will affect that land - the very land that those who nominated it as a wilderness area are trying to save - and also will impact greatly on neighbouring landholders who are trying to make a living. Also, it will have an effect on the watercourse that runs down to the coast through the electorate of Oxley, on the Macleay River flats.

The weed golden dodder, which was found in the area, could have massive implications for agriculture. All honourable members will be aware of the economic circumstances that could arise from an invasion of golden dodder. For the record I should mention a few of the noxious weeds that were found in the area: blackberry, golden dodder, Noogoora burr, Bathurst burr, sweet briar and red lantana. Most honourable members may not be aware that red lantana is poisonous to livestock. I had been told previously by the National Parks and Wildlife Service that red lantana would not grow at altitude. We found it at 3,000 feet, almost over the lip of the gorge. We found also 26 exotic plants which, in the view of the weed experts with us, could have a severe effect on the existing natural species. The point I seek to make and which was made by the noxious plants advisory officer, Mr Geoff Keech, who was with us, is that because of the weeds the area should be kept as a national park - and no one would argue against that - where proper management and or grazing base programs could be initiated. For that to happen vehicular access is imperative. It became obvious to me that the National Parks and Wildlife Service has not been able to take care of the weed problem in a national park. How on earth will it be able to take care of that same area if vehicular access and proper management of the land are disallowed if the land is declared a wilderness? I urge the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture to reflect on this matter when the submissions come before Cabinet.

ILLAWARRA HEALTH SERVICES

Mr SULLIVAN (Wollongong) [5.58]: I draw the attention of the House to two issues to illustrate the deplorable insufficiency of health services in the Illawarra. The first concerns the provision of orthodontic treatment through the dental service of the Illawarra Area Health Service. The second is the decision taken by the New South Wales Cancer Council not to establish a mammography assessment centre in the Illawarra. As the Cancer Council was contracted by the Government to establish these centres, I submit that the Government is ultimately responsible and should intervene as a matter of urgency. Last week my colleague the member for Kiama informed the House that Dr Grusd, the full-time orthodontist employed by the dental service of the Illawarra Area Health Service, had resigned. The distress to parents and children waiting up to three or four years for orthodontic treatment has now been exacerbated by confusing and contradictory advice contained in replies to letters sent to the member for Kiama, myself and the orthodontic action group, which represents parents and their children.

Replies to the correspondence were written on 23rd, 24th and 25th February respectively. All were signed by the acting chief executive officer of the Illawarra Area Health Service. On 23rd

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February the honourable member for Kiama was informed that there were "no plans to advertise the full-time staff position" and that "it is probable that a Visiting Orthodontist will be employed part-time". On 24th February the reply made no reference to the position, despite my explicit request that the position of orthodontist be filled immediately. On 25th February the reply to the orthodontic action group was contradictory and confusing - deliberately so, I believe. On the one hand parents were advised that "restructuring of the service will however take place. The service will be provided at the Port Kembla Clinic probably by a visiting orthodontist". In the next paragraph parents were then informed, "A locum service has been established to accommodate this backlog while recruitment of a permanent orthodontist takes place". I ask whether that means that the Illawarra Area Health Service intends to fill the full-time position

I ask the Minister to intervene to ensure that recruitment commences immediately to fill the full-time position of orthodontist. Even so, the resources available for orthodontic treatment through the dental service of the Illawarra Area Health Service are clearly inadequate. It is shameful that children are waiting for years for orthodontic treatment and because of the delay are suffering physically and psychologically. I emphasise that particularly young children, with badly disfigured faces through poorly shaped teeth, are suffering real damage and will not recover for many years. This is extremely distressing for the children and their parents. The second issue concerns the decision of the New South Wales Cancer Council -

Mr Phillips: On a point of order. Though the honourable member for Wollongong is a reasonably new member he should be aware by now that standing orders require private members' statements to be restricted to

one issue. In his introduction the honourable member stated he would raise two issues, and has now said that he is going on to the second issue. The two matters are not related, and I submit that the honourable member should be called to order.

Mr SULLIVAN: I will read my first statement. I draw the attention of the House to two issues -

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Tink): Order! I uphold the Minister's point of order. Under the rules governing private members' statements only one subject-matter can be raised. I refer to a ruling on this point by Mr Speaker on 17th September, 1992. If the honourable member wishes in the time available to amplify the first issue, he is in order. However, if he is proceeding to a second point, I uphold the Minister's point of order.

Mr SULLIVAN: I shall restrict myself but I must say that I was talking about health services, plural, in the Illawarra. I defer to your ruling, but I must voice my objection because I believe that it is simply a means of silencing a member. I shall continue speaking about orthodontic treatment. Some parents are being led to believe that their children will be looked after and that services may not be provided to others. People are waiting for three and four years for braces - [*Time expired.*]

Mr PHILLIPS (Miranda - Minister for Health) [6.3]: I thank the honourable member for Wollongong for bringing the matter of dental services to the notice of this Parliament.

Mr Harrison: It is a pity you did not let him speak on the other one as well.

Mr PHILLIPS: The honourable member knows the standing orders. He can raise the other matter tomorrow or some other appropriate time. There are plenty of opportunities. I extend my appreciation to the honourable member for Wollongong for following the normal conventions of advising my office of the issues to give me an opportunity to respond. Most people involved in health would recognise that the provision of dental health services overall leaves a lot to be desired. Demand has increased because of the recession as people have not been able to afford private dental services. This places more demand on the public sector. The Federal Government has recognised this by suddenly promising, in the lead up to the election, to provide Medicare rebates for dental care. I am pleased the Federal Government is addressing that problem and I assure the honourable member for Wollongong that I shall continue to pursue that issue to ensure that dental services improve in this State. We must work with the Federal Government to do this. On a future occasion I look forward to responding to the second issue of the honourable member.

ALBURY FLOODING

Mr GLACHAN (Albury) [6.5]: I wish to speak about serious flooding in Albury that is causing distress to many residents of south Albury. In October last year - a very wet spring - local flooding in south Albury inundated a number of homes, ruining carpets and possessions and upsetting many people. South Albury is situated on the flood plain of the Murray River. Some sections of south Albury are low-lying and from time to time have been subject to flooding. Unfortunately, those who suffered from the flood in October experienced a further downpour three months later, on 18th January. On this occasion 100 millimetres of rain fell in five hours, 60 millimetres of it in two hours. As a result of the flood 157 homes were affected.

The difficulty with some of those low-lying areas is that water runs into them from other parts of Albury. As the city has been built up and more roads are sealed, increased runoff is evident, and with time the problem is getting worse. The people of south Albury have always experienced floods and expect them to occur. However, the worsening situation puts these people in desperate need of help.

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Damage to houses was of the order of \$550,000. The sad part is that they were flooded twice in three months. On the day following the flood in January I inspected the area and visited a number of homes. I heard distressing stories about elderly people in wheelchairs being wheeled out of their flooded homes in the middle of the night, not understanding what was going on. One young family that had an extension done to their home

last year - including new carpets, which were ruined during the October flood - waited until the rain had eased. On 17th January they laid the new carpets. Next day the carpets were ruined by floods again. Honourable members can imagine the distress caused by that event and by the family having to spend some time in a motel.

Many people have experienced similar difficulties. The city council has developed a strategy to contain the flooding. It says it cannot guarantee that flooding will never happen again given extenuating circumstances, but it will certainly do its best to provide relief. However, this is expected to cost \$3.1 million. The council has already diverted \$650,000 from existing programs to commence flood mitigation work. Drainage basins need to be deepened, canals widened and improved, and some pumps constructed. When the council approaches me with a worthwhile strategy, I shall appeal to the Minister for Natural Resources to consider the strategy in an endeavour to provide the best assistance to those people who have suffered so much.

I pay tribute to the Mayor of Albury, Alderman Arch McLeish, and other councillors who have worked tirelessly with council officers, such as the Director of Technical Services, Brian McLennan, and the Residents Committee, consisting of Mrs Goldrick, Mr Anderson and others who have developed a scheme and a viable solution to the problems besetting the residents of south Albury. I pay tribute to Alderman Alcott, who heads the State Emergency Services in Albury, and his regional director, Dawn Bellamy. I pay tribute also to the police officers, officers of the State Emergency Services, council workers, police, ambulance officers and volunteers from the community, all of whom rallied round to give assistance during the floods. That was wonderful but now there is work to be done. Money needs to be spent. I appeal to the Minister and the Government for support in obtaining funds to help council implement a scheme to relieve the problems of south Albury residents.

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills - Minister for Justice, and Minister for Emergency Services) [6.10]: I thank the honourable member for Albury for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I thank him for his hard-working attitude in this matter. He is indeed a very caring person. I certainly will be taking these matters forthwith to the Minister for Natural Resources.

Private members' statements noted.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Tink) left the chair at 6.10 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS IN REPLY

Third Day's Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr GLACHAN (Albury) [7.30]: I am pleased to say a few words in response to the Speech of His Excellency Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair on the occasion of his opening the third session of the Fiftieth Parliament of New South Wales. His Excellency and Mrs Sinclair visited my electorate late last year. His Excellency left a wonderful impression on me, my family and my constituents because of his obvious dedication to his job and the support he receives from Mrs Sinclair in carrying out his duties. He brings great credit to himself, to the Navy that trained him and to the office of Governor of New South Wales. I was pleased to hear the Governor say when delivering his Speech that the Government has a determination to control debt. I believe that along with the determination that the Government has to ensure good management is employed in all government departments are two key elements to ensure the success of government in New South Wales. It is easy to find in recent times examples of governments throughout Australia that have been careless with debt and unconcerned about good management. The results have been unfortunate for those governments and especially for the people they represent in their Parliaments.

In my position as member for Albury I have ample opportunity to look across the border into Victoria to see examples of bad management and carelessness with debt. The Victorian people are now suffering because

of that situation. The public transport system in that State loses approximately \$5 million every 24 hours. As a result the Victorian Government has had to cut out all country trains. It is sad for the people of Victoria, but a price has to be paid for the carelessness of the Government that controlled that State for so long. Therefore, I am particularly pleased with that pledge by the New South Wales Government to work hard to control debt. It is simple to take the easy way and borrow more and spend more, but in the long run the debt has to be paid, and so has the interest. Someone has to pay the bill and it is always the taxpayers of the State. His Excellency mentioned the success of government trading enterprises and noted that in 1987-88 some \$100 million was returned in dividends to the taxpayers and that in 1992-93 it is expected that the return will be in the vicinity of \$1 billion. This is a wonderful improvement and zealously endorses the policies of the Government in privatising and putting those trading enterprises on commercial footings.

Members of the Opposition have complained, saying it is not right to expect profits of that nature, but common sense dictates otherwise. When these profits are made they should be used to lighten the burden of the taxpayers of the State to contribute to the funding of health, education and police services. It is of particular importance when there have been

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vicious cuts in the amount of money allocated to New South Wales by the Federal Government. The shortfall in money has to be made up from somewhere if the expectations of the people are to be met. The trading enterprises now operating commercially and satisfactorily are returning good profits and lightening the burden of the State's taxpayers. His Excellency also mentioned moves to reform our legal system. I imagine each of us is proud of the legal system we inherited from Britain when the colony was first established. We are proud of the law in this State, proud of the protection it brings to our citizens, and proud of the high standard and integrity of those involved in delivering our legal system. The difficulty is that costs have continued to escalate over the years and unfortunately ordinary people in this State now cannot afford to become involved in lawsuits, no matter how successful they believe their case to be.

Sadly we are rapidly reaching the stage in New South Wales where only the very poor, who can receive some type of legal aid, or only the very rich can ever seriously think about going to the courts to settle whatever problems they might have. Ordinary people just cannot afford that process and therefore the opportunities offered by our legal system are out of reach. Perhaps expanding and altering the system may meet the needs of the people so that it will continue to serve us in the future as well as it has in the past. I remember the case of a former constituent of mine, a farmer who is now deceased, bought some hay to feed his valuable cattle. He paid a lot of money for the hay because it was in a drought period - his cattle were worth a lot of money and he wanted to save them so he could continue to breed the cattle after the drought. Unfortunately, the hay poisoned his cattle and a number of this valuable stock died. He became very upset and decided to go to the law to seek some type of compensation for his loss.

The suppliers of the hay had no assets at all but they received legal assistance - legal aid. The farmer won the case quite convincingly but was awarded a paltry amount in damages for the cost paid for the hay and the loss of his stock. He had to pay all his own legal costs. In his case the law was not satisfactory. I remember how upset he was and how he continued to complain year after year at how unjustly and badly he felt he had been treated. Cases of that type make us doubt whether the law is actually doing the job for which it is intended. A number of reforms to the legal system are needed. Some people within the legal system are opposed to the reforms being suggested, but for their sake and for the sake of the institution changes must be made. I was also interested in His Excellency's remarks about the injection of \$540 million capital works funding provided by the Government this year. He made reference to the increase in employment that would flow from this investment. In my electorate of Albury a number of government projects that have been promised and are now being delivered are beginning to create employment opportunities for the people of the area and will provide lasting excellent results for the district in the years to come. Some of these projects are sponsored by the Government and some are sponsored by sections of the private industry.

The first project I want to mention is that of Macquarie Worsted's Ltd, which has been operating successfully in Albury, employing a large number of people and making a great contribution to the local economy. Macquarie Worsted's has just announced a \$50 million expansion program that will provide 200 new

jobs in the city of Albury. The important thing about this expansion is not simply the extra 200 jobs but that the investment will guarantee the retention of 340 existing jobs because there was a great deal of competition from other cities throughout Australia, particularly in Victoria and South Australia, to secure this investment.

Had the investment been made elsewhere, it is likely that in time the company's activities in Albury would have been scaled down and eventually ceased, and the activities would have moved to wherever the new investment was made. But we were able to secure this investment because of the co-operation of a number of organisations including the Albury City Council, the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation, Murray River Electricity and, most importantly, the New South Wales Department of State Development under the direction of the Minister, the Hon. Peter Collins. I would like to pay tribute to that Minister who quickly assessed what was at stake with this investment and moved with his department to provide incentives that ensured that Macquarie Worsteds made its \$50 million investment in Albury and secured those benefits for Albury.

The \$58 million Albury Base Hospital project has begun in earnest. Last Friday I was involved with the pouring of concrete for the foundations. This will be a new style hospital, designed in particular with two very important sets of people in mind. The first are the patients who will use it and the second are the staff who will take care of those patients. The hospital has been designed, to put it in modern-day language, as a user friendly facility that will bring great benefits to the people of Albury for many years to come. I confidently predict - though I guess this is common knowledge - that at some time all people in the area will have cause to use the hospital, either to seek treatment for themselves, for someone in their family or among their circle of friends. The benefits will flow to us, to our children and to our grandchildren for many years to come.

I believe that work will commence in two weeks' time on a new police station in Albury. It is a long-awaited project. Albury police have been working in cramped and outdated accommodation and the new building will provide the sort of accommodation they need, as well as providing a public building of which the people of Albury can be proud. The total cost of this project is about \$7 million and it will provide much employment as it is

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being erected. The recently completed new school at Jindera is a great boost for that district. A new bridge has been built over the railway line at Borella Road in Albury. That has been of help in speeding up traffic flow, which will be further improved when a traffic relief route is built for Albury, hopefully some time in the near future.

It is interesting to note that when the new hospital project was first announced some people in Albury were opposed to the concept. Public meetings were called at which some people said they did not want a new hospital, that they liked the old one - old though it might be. It is unfortunate that those people had no concept of what a brand new hospital could deliver by way of health care services to the people of southern New South Wales and northeastern Victoria. I felt very sad that those people were trying to deny the people of Albury a one and only opportunity to have a hospital that could deliver the latest in health care. A similar thing happened with the new police station. There were a number of holdups with the development and difficulty in acquiring extra land that was needed.

There were problems about the siting of the police station but, as the new court house had been built some time earlier in Olive Street near the existing police station site, the police department had no choice but to insist that a new station be built as close as possible to the court house. It is easy to see why that is necessary because had the police station been built on the site suggested by the council, that is, some blocks away - a site the council happened to own at the time - there would have been great cost involved in moving prisoners backwards and forwards, not to mention the danger involved. One of the other handicaps with that site was that many years before the old Albury gasworks were located on there and there was some talk of the site being polluted and of difficulty in knowing how to deal with that. That difficulty would have caused quite a holdup in the construction of the police station had a problem developed about the pollution. I believe the Albury community and the council are happy with the present site and with the plans that the Government has for what will be a building of which we can all be proud.

I noted his Excellency's reference to Sydney's bid for the year 2000 Olympic Games. I am delighted by the support that the community across New South Wales is giving that bid. On Tuesday morning, among my fellow passengers on the plane as I travelled to Sydney, were the principal of Albury West Public School and two of his students who were on their way to Sydney to meet a representative of the International Olympic Committee who had come here from Africa. The principal and the students were taking supporting information from other students at the school to help support and promote Sydney's bid for the Olympic Games. A successful bid will greatly increase the number of tourists coming to Australia. I am sure everyone is aware of the benefits that will flow. It will provide for us long-term access to good sporting facilities and accommodation. All the support that the citizens can give would be well founded. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

His Excellency referred also to road programs. I want to touch on the success of the 3 x 3 program that has provided opportunities across New South Wales for improvements to roads that otherwise could never have been built. In my own electorate there are a number of examples of these improvements, of which everyone in the electorate is pleased, especially improvements occurring on the road from Albury to the Hume Weir on the eastern side of the city. That road has been dangerous and was neglected for many years, but now at last it is being improved. The work that is occurring will be of great benefit to all of us. It will ensure a higher degree of safety on this road in future.

I should like to refer also to the toll roads in western Sydney and to point out how successful they have been, how popular they are and how important they are to the people of those areas, despite the doom and gloom preached by many people when those toll roads were first proposed. I have no doubt at all that people living in western Sydney are delighted to pay the small toll that is involved to have access to high standard roads which save them so much in fuel costs and travelling time. I look forward to more toll roads being built so that precious government resources can be spent on other projects of upgrading and improving roads.

I should like to say a few words in praise of the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Bruce Baird, and what he has achieved in that portfolio. The reduction in a short time of losses on the railways by \$1 million a day and the introduction of much new rolling stock and many improved types of trains for country services are great achievements. I look forward, as do all people in southern New South Wales, to the commencement of the XPT service to Melbourne. That service will provide an updated, comfortable and fast journey between Sydney and Melbourne that will win customers back to rail, as well as providing sleepers for those who need them. For medical reasons many people need to travel by train but find that they cannot sit up for long journeys. The new Xplorer and Endeavour trains will be of great benefit to people in country areas. The achievements in rail transport are a great success story and the Minister and the Government have much to be proud of so far as rail transport in this State is concerned.

I should like to comment on the new school provided by the Government at Jindera, which is just north of Albury. The former school at Jindera was growing rapidly and all the buildings were of a temporary nature. Last year the new school was opened and it has been a great success. It has provided a wonderful new level of comfort for the teachers, the staff and the students. Everyone in Jindera is delighted with the new school; it has been a major step forward for the town. The new school

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will be one of the factors that will ensure that Jindera will continue to grow and be able to provide even better services to the people of the area as time goes on. Some important education initiatives have been taken in the Albury electorate. Kandeer school in the electorate caters for children with behavioural difficulties. Rather than isolate them and cast them out of the system, Kandeer and the understanding and highly-trained staff give those young people a second chance at education. The school has been extremely successful in rehabilitating them and returning them to the mainstream. Many students without a school such as Kandeer would have simply ended up on the education scrapheap.

Albury also has a special reading recovery program that has captured the imagination of parents and school staff alike. The program identifies children with reading difficulties and gives them special help to catch up to their peers, thus enabling them to return to their mainstream classes as quickly as possible with new reading

skills and a completely new attitude towards education. The citizens of Albury, in association with the Charles Sturt University, are also developing a mathematics recovery program, which I am sure will be equally as successful and important to the education of our young people as the reading recovery program. Another matter that greatly interests me is the possibility of flexible hours at some high schools. Some schools are working with TAFE colleges to provide access to courses for their students and have grasped the concept of flexible school hours. Some students begin at 8.30 a.m. and others continue in the afternoon after normal school closing times.

They now have the opportunity of attending TAFE colleges and becoming involved in constructive and valuable courses that will give them a good basis for future study. It is interesting to note that the people involved in designing these courses are providing what they call stepping-stone courses so that people who now begin certificate courses at TAFE can gain credits which will take them on to diplomas or university degrees. So, people can keep upgrading their qualifications. Even though they begin a course at a reasonably low level, they can expand their horizons and step up through other courses and finally obtain degrees. That gives many people in the community opportunities for the future that they otherwise would not have. I congratulate the staff at the TAFE institutions and the schools in my electorate who are involved in these experimental but important facets of education.

His Excellency referred also to the problems related to domestic violence in our community. Domestic violence worries me and I am sure it worries every other member of this place. It cannot be allowed to continue without government intervention and every possible effort being made to minimise and, if possible, prevent these domestic violence cases that so distress us all. I was delighted by His Excellency's emphasis on the need for the support of family life. In my view that is one of our community's most important foundations. I am concerned about things that undermine family life. I am particularly concerned about the violence one sees on television, and I know that all other honourable members are as well. I am pleased that the Government is interested in these matters and is preparing to take some positive steps for the benefit of all of the people of New South Wales, particularly the children involved, who generally suffer the most. I have welcomed this opportunity to contribute to the Address-in-Reply debate. Once again I congratulate His Excellency on his excellent Speech, and I congratulate the Government on the initiatives outlined in that Speech, which will be of benefit to us all.

Mr SHEDDEN (Bankstown) [7.56]: I am delighted to have the opportunity to reply to the Speech made by the Governor, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair, A.O., outlining the Government's program for the third session of the Fiftieth Parliament. May I say also that tomorrow I will be delighted to welcome His Excellency to Bankstown when he makes an official visit there. Like all members of the Opposition, I was amazed by the lack of reform and vision of this lacklustre Government, which is led by a Premier who has basically gone into hibernation, a Premier who leads a Government without discipline, a Premier who refuses to make hard decisions, a Premier whose hardest decisions so far have been selecting teams on the John Laws program to win the rugby league competition, while the harder decisions of running this State remain with those on the sidelines.

One could refer to many concerns about the Government's current budget program, but possibly the most startling aspect would be the Government's so-called \$550 million addition to the capital works spending program, which, according to the Governor's Speech, will create real jobs, stimulate the economy, improve community facilities, and supposedly create 18,000 direct and indirect jobs across the State. In reality, that figure would be more like 8,000 to 10,000, but honourable members can now see in the Treasury statement a declaration that within seven months, or with about 55 per cent of the 1992-93 financial year having passed, only 39 per cent of this year's \$2.6 billion capital works budget has been spent.

It has recently been disclosed by the Premier that the Government will reduce the public sector work force by 10,000 this year. That shows the Government's real credibility. I wonder what is behind the Government's decision to hold back spending on the capital works program. I wonder whether the intention is to maintain high unemployment during the Federal election campaign or whether the Government is concerned about the possible blowout in its deficit from \$2.2 billion to any figure towards the \$3 billion mark. I turn now to health -

an important issue at the present time in this State - and quote the Governor's reference to health at page 16:

My Government puts people first in health care. It is seeking not only to improve people's choice between public and private health services, but also to encourage pride in what is already recognised as a world class health system.

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Southwestern and western Sydney will not have a world class health system, because during the past three years this Government has closed or is about to close nine public hospitals in metropolitan Sydney and it is worthwhile putting those hospitals on the record. They are: Parramatta Hospital, closed; St Joseph's Hospital, Auburn, closed - now a palliative care centre; Lidcombe Hospital, about to close; Canterbury Hospital, about to close; Western Suburbs Hospital, Ashfield, about to close; Marrickville District Hospital, closed; Balmain Hospital, about to become a palliative care centre; Eversleigh hospital, Petersham, about to close; and Glebe hospital, closed. I quote again from the Governor's reference to health. He said, "Even though financial and clinical resources are scarce, they are being moved to areas of population growth in Sydney's west and south".

Within a very short time Lidcombe Hospital will close. Lidcombe Hospital in southwestern Sydney is a 430-bed, acute care, modern, technical hospital. When it closes, the whole southwestern area of Sydney, as well as many areas throughout the State of New South Wales, will lose special services. Lidcombe Hospital is the only hospital in southwestern Sydney which provides aged care services, and it is very sad to see those services disbanded and spread around the rest of the metropolitan area. Everyone knows that Concord Repatriation General Hospital, now run by the Federal Government, will come into the New South Wales health system on 1st July. The handover of that hospital from the Federal Government to the State system will involve \$1.3 billion, and I believe that \$200 million of that \$1.3 billion is for new hospitals or the refurbishment of old hospitals. However, at this stage the State Government has not indicated where that \$200 million will be spent.

Bankstown Hospital will be upgraded by 130 beds to a general hospital in the southwestern area but that hospital is supposed to take over the work associated with the closure of Lidcombe Hospital because 40 per cent of the people in the Bankstown area attend Lidcombe Hospital. Bankstown city has a population of 160,000 and by 1993 60,000 of those 160,000 will be over the age of 65. The upgraded Bankstown Hospital will have 30 aged-care beds to service that population, but it will have limited rehabilitation and diagnostic services. Everyone knows that once people over 65 have been 30 days in a public hospital, they cannot remain there except under extreme circumstances. Stroke victims, people with broken limbs and the like - common afflictions suffered by people over the age of 65 - will be either sent home or sent straight to nursing homes. That is the situation faced by southwestern Sydney.

To further consolidate that problem, the actual bulk funding for the \$72 million upgrading of Bankstown Hospital will come from budget cutbacks associated with the running of Lidcombe Hospital during the next few years. If Lidcombe Hospital is to supply the money out of its working budget to develop Bankstown Hospital, it will close within three years because it could not possibly operate the services required by the community during that particular time. When the 430-bed Lidcombe Hospital is closed in three years' time, Bankstown Hospital will have to carry that burden, but it does not end there. The Government will also close at least 26 surgical and medical beds associated with Bankstown Hospital. A community of 160,000 people will be served by a 280-bed hospital during the period between when Lidcombe Hospital closes - by 1995 - and when Bankstown Hospital is upgraded, which will be somewhere around 1998 or the turn of the century.

It is quite clear in my mind what will happen. On 1st July when Concord hospital comes on line, 130 beds will come on line at the same time. The community believes that when Concord hospital comes on line, another 700 beds will be immediately available. But that will not happen, because 130 beds will possibly come on line on 1st July, but 500 beds will not finally be available at Concord hospital until 2005; and because of the burden faced by Bankstown Hospital in the period between Lidcombe Hospital closing in 1995 and Bankstown Hospital being refurbished by the turn of the century, patients will be sent from Bankstown to Concord. My constituents will have to take three different modes of transport to get to Concord hospital. That is the situation

faced in western Sydney regarding health services between now and the turn of the century, and no doubt further - a very sad situation.

I am pleased to note that the Minister for Community Services is present in the House. That will avoid the necessity of my making an appointment to discuss with him the serious issue of family and community services. In his Speech the Governor said, "The family performs the critical role in our future and therefore requires our collective support". That is not the case with the Government's Home Care Service. Many thousands of aged people in Sydney, Newcastle and throughout the State are no longer eligible for the services provided by that organisation. I was surprised to note that, in an article in the December issue of the *Home Care News*, the general manager stated:

There was also growth in handyperson and personal care. Once again this growth was achieved at the expense of housekeeping, which dropped from 59.5 per cent to 56.1 per cent. While all Home Care staff understand that the decline in housekeeping has undesirable effects on many of our customers, it is clear that we are successfully targeting our service to people with high needs.

Why was the Home Care Service established? It was established to provide a service for aged people in their homes, those unable to perform heavy housework. Such assistance enables the aged to remain in their homes longer, thereby avoiding the necessity for them to be placed in hospitals and nursing homes. That has not happened in Bankstown. Many aged and handicapped people should not have had the service cancelled. I have

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checked the Federal Government's funding grants associated with the Home and Community Care program and there is provision for adequate growth funding. I have also studied the Government's budget for general community care and home care, and there is adequate funding associated with the Home Care Service. The Government has now found new programs for Home Care Service funds. Greater priority has been given to handyman services and personal care, at the expense of a cleaning service. That is happening in all areas where there are ageing communities. In the electorate of Bankstown, about 1,200 aged people received assistance from the Home Care Service. Recently, approximately 200 of those people had their assistance cancelled. Elderly people in Bankstown fear a visit from the Home Care Service assessor.

Mr Longley: How many new recipients are there?

Mr SHEDDEN: I will be pleased to tell the Minister, because he should hear about it. I will give honourable members an example of what has occurred. The Home Care Service has advised an 85-year-old man who has had a triple bypass as well as a knee replacement and who is caring for his 82-year-old wife who is suffering from dementia, that it will not do heavy housework, such as vacuuming and ironing, but will change the washers on the taps. This will create a situation where elderly people in their own homes and units who cannot do basic house cleaning will be unable to cope and will finish up in nursing homes or hospitals. I hope the Minister will take note of what I have had to say about the Home Care Service in Bankstown. The Governor referred to transport, particularly rail transport, in his Speech. He said, "For the rail industry, the Government will promote competition, greater efficiency and responsiveness to customer needs". [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

During question time this afternoon honourable members heard the Minister for Transport say that the CityRail commuter patronage has decreased by 6 per cent because of the recession. The recession may be responsible in some small measure, but the decrease is principally because the CityRail commuter service is horrible. The electorate of Bankstown is serviced by the Bankstown and Chester Hill lines. Trains that are running behind schedule are given what are called transposition slips that emanate from the central control officer at Sydney and indicate to station masters at relevant railway stations that those trains are permitted to skip stations. Commuters may be waiting on a station for a train due, say, at 8.10 a.m. If the train does not stop at that station, commuters are obliged to wait for at least 20 minutes, and sometimes half an hour, for the next train.

Honourable members can imagine how commuters feel when waiting for a train and the service they

normally catch roars straight through without stopping. Does the Government believe that commuters will tolerate that situation for very long? Of course they will not. They will find another more convenient way of travelling to work. The rail service is far from efficient. To add to the inconvenience, passengers on these trains in question would not be aware that the train may bypass the station at which they want to alight. These passengers are carried on to other stations where they must alight and catch another train back to their original destination. Things are not good with CityRail. That is why people are not using the CityRail service at the moment. Honourable members need only talk to commuters or to CityRail staff to understand the despair and frustration of CityRail employees and commuters in general.

Honourable members who listen to radio reports each morning will hear that all trains are arriving at Central on time. For some fascinating reason they all arrive on time. Listeners to Alan Jones' morning radio program may hear him say, "My God, that Bruce Baird has CityRail running well. The trains are never late". I have issued an invitation to the Minister to travel by train with me from Chester Hill or Bankstown and see whether we arrive at Central railway station on time. It is common knowledge among commuters and CityRail staff that any train that arrives at Central Station within 10 minutes of its scheduled arrival time is classed as being on time.

The Minister for Community Services and Assistant Minister for Health, who is in the Chamber, would not know much about this beautiful rail service because he lives on the North Shore and travels to town each day in a big white car. He would not understand the problems in western Sydney. I say quite frankly to the Minister that it is a little sad that more people in the Government do not come from the real world. The entire ministry either comes from the North Shore or the eastern suburbs. We all know where there are cutbacks in government services, but members of the Government look at consultants' reports and efficiency reports and say to their executive staff, "This looks okay. We will put this into operation". They do not understand the real problems associated with living in western and southwestern Sydney. They never will.

Mr MORRIS (Blue Mountains) [8.21]: I wish to respond to the Speech made by His Excellency, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair, A.O., Governor of New South Wales. I have the privilege of representing one of the most beautiful areas in Australia and in the world.

Mr Shedden: Your electorate has received about half a billion dollars since 1988.

Mr MORRIS: Yes, to compensate for 12 years of Labor government when only \$46 million was spent in the region. When this Government came to office my electorate was in a state of disrepair. The money that has been spent by the Government might be called catch-up money. The Government has implemented extensive programs but much more needs to be done. We are seeking

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world heritage listing for the area. Work has been undertaken in this regard by several Ministers, including the present Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing, the Hon. Robert Webster.

This financial year 1,100 properties in the Blue Mountains will be connected to sewerage services at a cost of \$11.3 million. The Blue Mountains sewerage tunnel, which is among the seven wonders of the world, is being completed in three stages - from Winmalee to Faulconbridge, from Faulconbridge to Hazelbrook and from Lawson to North Katoomba at a cost of \$6.8 million. The Valley Heights sewerage diversion will cost \$2 million and the upgrading of the Winmalee treatment plant \$5.1 million. The Cascade treatment plant at North Katoomba has been upgraded at a cost of \$8 million. When these projects have been completed the Blue Mountains will have one of the world's most efficient sewerage systems.

In 1996 the sewerage transfer scheme and backlog sewerage program will be implemented to improve our sewerage system and clean up our waterways. In 1980, when the Water Board took over responsibility for the Blue Mountains region from local government, there were 11 independent sewerage systems each with its own treatment plant, network of reticulation systems and pumping stations. The systems were inadequate and outdated and were causing significant pollution of the rivers and streams which run into the Warragamba catchment and ultimately into Sydney's water supply. When the present Government was elected in 1988 its

stated objective was to return streams in the Blue Mountains to drinking water quality. An \$80-special environment levy was imposed to fast-track that work, with almost one-quarter of the levy being spent in the Blue Mountains. The major part of the program is the construction of the 39-kilometre sewerage tunnel, which is 15 times the length of the Harbour Tunnel. When that tunnel is completed in 1996 it will bypass six out-dated sewerage treatment plants and allow the connection of more than 3,000 previously unsewered properties.

All sewage from the Blue Mountains will be taken via the new tunnel to a high-tech treatment plant at Winmalee. The Faulconbridge section of the tunnel was completed in 1991. The 9.5 kilometre Hazelbrook phase was completed in August 1992 at a cost of \$24 million and the next stage is about to begin. Last year 619 properties were connected to the sewer at a cost of \$11.2 million. The Government has already completed major improvements to the water supply for Medlow Bath, Blackheath and Mount Victoria. In 1992-93, \$8 million will be spent on the new water treatment plant at Cascade. That plant is almost ready to come on line. Today, when I returned to my electorate to attend the funeral of a dear friend, I was informed that the plant has not yet come on line. Staff in my office are receiving complaints about dirty water in the area.

When this Government came to office the Water Board introduced a waste basin for Katoomba. Macrophyte beds were installed in Vale Street, a back street in Katoomba. The project, which has been funded through the special environment levy, has been received with considerable interest by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Blue Mountains City Council. Dry weather urban run-off is collected from the catchment in a retention pond where trash is intercepted and in which heavy solids settle. The run-off is then pumped to the first of two wetland ponds containing an extensive coverage of aquatic plants. The plants take up nutrients from the run-off and trap particles of matter. The water then flows to the second pond where open water allows ultraviolet disinfection of the bacteria. The water is then returned to the creek. Preliminary results of intensive sampling and analysis over the past two years show that bacterial reduction is one of the strengths of this treatment. Phosphorous and nitrogen levels are also reduced. The quality of stormwater also appears to improve when diverted through the ponds. I congratulate Water Board technicians on this initiative.

I turn now to roads. Sydney has a population of four million people. For many years the road to the west has been a disgrace. It still is. It is only by good luck that more people have not been killed in bus accidents. Honourable members will recall the accident recently on the Linden Bends when, tragically, one lady was killed. The Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works and Minister for Roads has seen fit to spend \$5 million on this black spot. That funding was urgently needed. The road will be widened on those critical bends. This extensive roadwork is expected to give the road a life of 20 years. To improve the entire road would cost \$50 million, but I realise that money has to be spent in other areas and that the Blue Mountains has already had a good share of money spent on the Woodford Bends.

I would like to tell the House about the progress of the Woodford Bends. The work on the railway bridge is progressing well, and, when the bridge approaches have been constructed, the concrete beams which form the bridge deck will be lowered into position. This should take place in about August this year. In the middle of the year the new eastbound carriageway will be open to two-way traffic between Woodford village and Bulls Camp. The road that is being built will consist of four lanes, and because the traffic will use two lanes and work has to be completed in one section before the other section can be used, the work will be costly and the progress slow. I congratulate the Roads and Traffic Authority engineers for their efforts in this regard. The project is long overdue. It is being funded, at \$32 million, by the 3 x 3 levy, and the Minister has seen fit to allocate \$9 million to the project this year. The amount spent on the project to date totals in excess of \$16 million.

Each day the State Rail Authority transports about 13,000 rail passengers from the Blue Mountains electorate. About 8,500 travel to Sydney

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to work while others travel to Sydney for the purpose of education, shopping and a range of other activities. This year \$1.5 million has been spent on rail signalling between Emu Plains and Katoomba. Signal cables have been renewed between Mount Victoria and Lithgow; electrical systems between Valley Heights, Linden and Lawson

have been upgraded; and many other initiatives have been taken by the Minister. This week he announced a further \$3.9 million to lay 15,000 concrete sleepers, improve track drainage and continuous weld sections of rail. On occasions crossing the mountains can be a perilous exercise. With an elevation of 54 feet from Penrith to Mount Boyce and 3,800 feet over a distance of 45 miles, the building of roads and railway tracks is hazardous. The Minister has announced that a further \$1.9 million will be provided to improve signalling in the lower mountains and to replace outdated equipment, some of which is up to 80 years old.

The upgrading of railway stations in the Blue Mountains has been truly spectacular. The park and ride station at Springwood, which cost \$1.4 million, caters for 104 cars. A number of smaller car parks have been constructed at a cost of between \$50,000 and \$60,000 each. All the car parks are well lit, which is helpful for commuters on cold and dark winter nights. The local people have become involved in the beautification of railway stations. Each year gardens are planted and a competition is held. This year's competition, which was keenly contested, was won by Lawson railway station. The flowers and gardens at Wentworth Falls, Lawson, Katoomba and Mount Victoria were out of this world.

The Blue Mountains, for about eight months of the year, is an extremely cold area. When the Government came to office, there was a severe shortage of assembly halls for the youngsters in the region. This year three assembly halls will be built: one at Blackheath, one in north Katoomba and one in Leura, at a cost of about \$550,000 each. I commend the Minister for Education for those capital works. A block of land has been purchased at Wentworth Falls for \$1 million and it will be used as the site for a TAFE college. The first stage of this project will cost \$11.9 million and the laying of bricks and mortar is expected to commence in the first week in June. The TAFE will accept students from 1st January, 1995. The three-stage project will cost \$31.9 million. I thank the Minister also for her initiative in that regard.

The Minister for the Environment has allocated \$750,000 to the conservation hut at Wentworth Falls. This will house the world-renowned paintings of Reinis Zusters which have been donated to the Crown. This beautiful tourist attraction will be opened by the Minister in May. Visitors will be able to look out on the beautiful scenery of the Jamieson Valley while enjoying a cup of tea and a piece of cake. An amount of \$70,000 will be provided from the special environment levy for the restoration of Fairy Dell, a beautiful area behind the Springwood shopping centre, just three minutes from the town. An amount of \$110,000 is being provided for the regeneration of bushland at Nellie's Glen. In years gone by, engineers attempting to enter the Megalong Valley caused great erosion, which has been neglected for many years. Through the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the local Commonwealth Employment Service unemployed people have done a great job regenerating native flora and fauna in the area. The Mount Boyce slip of many years ago can be seen from Hampton, and with \$64,000 to fund the project, things are progressing very well. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I am sad to inform the House that last week I lost a very good friend, Bill Jensen, aged 78 years. Bill ran the Leura Gardens Festival for 20 years and raised almost \$1 million for the local hospital - in fact \$20,000 short of \$1 million. That money was used to purchase equipment and it brought many garden lovers to Leura from around the world and Australia. Bill will be sadly missed. The Minister for Health has tried to bring Bill's dream to life by rebuilding the hospital's children's ward. The Minister has provided \$600,000 towards that project; Bill's committee is providing \$300,000. It is hoped that the Premier will open the hospital in November and will dedicate it to Bill. He was certainly a wonderful man.

This year funding of \$400,000 has been granted for the Westmount Co-operative, which provides drug detoxification services and operates a therapeutic community and halfway house. The Blue Mountains Women's Health Centre also will benefit from funding. The Blue Mountains electorate consists of 26 towns scattered along approximately 65 kilometres of road and on long mountain ridges. Not many bus or taxi services are available for people of all ages who live in the region, including parents with children who have to attend school, businessmen who take the family car and park it at the railway station and older people who retire to the Blue Mountains.

An amount of \$82,800 has been received for community nursing services, a matter in which I take much interest. The money is being put to good use by Mrs Flynn from the Lawson Home and Community Services

Centre. The Blue Mountains electorate is prone to bushfires. Devastating fires occurred in 1956, 1968 and 1976. The area has tremendous bushland growth which generates about 25 tonnes of debris to the hectare. Problems have been experienced by the city council with controlled burning to reduce the hazard, but those difficulties have been overcome. The Government has allocated \$1 million for the construction of an emergency services centre for firefighting vehicles and to accommodate emergency services. Construction will take place in three stages over the next four to five years.

When fires start they burn rapidly. The eucalypts give off a gas which explodes. Fire balls

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can jump ahead of the actual fire. On a bad day it is truly frightening to see Mother Nature's anger. The 26 voluntary bush fire brigades in the area have more than 1,300 members, who do a wonderful job. I put on record the appreciation of Government members - and I am sure of Opposition members also - for the effort those volunteers put into their work. If they had to be paid for it, it would cost the State millions of dollars. Emergency service volunteers are also involved in searches for people who get lost in the mountains. I take my hat off to those men for the services they provide and to the women who give back-up service by providing food and drinks for the volunteers while they are away from their homes, often for many days at a time. A grant of \$158,900 has been set aside for the two Meals on Wheels services in the electorate, one at Springwood and the other at Katoomba. Those funds will be wisely spent over the next 12 months. For some of the older people who live in the mountains Meals on Wheels volunteers provide the only hot meal they get during the day.

My wife and I soon will be staging a variety concert, at which I will recite poetry. The Premier has granted \$500 towards that function. Local bus and taxi companies will provide a transport link from the trains to the venue. I congratulate Pearce Omnibus Pty Limited and Grahame Barker for their kind offer to transport people to the concert. We expect approximately 1,500 people to attend. The compere will be Bill Collins - Mr Movies. Noni Hazelhurst and many other artists will appear, as will the Blue Mountains Grammar School choir and St Columbus Catholic School choir, to entertain old people who find life a little difficult. I am looking forward to that function. The Blue Mountains has many attractions of great historic interest. I am pleased to note that the Hon. Robert Webster has announced that \$100,000 will be made available from the National Trust grants towards restoration of the Norman Lindsay Gallery. Norman Lindsay, one of Australia's great artists, lived in a small sandstone cottage at Faulconbridge. The money will be used on conservation work and repairs to Norman Lindsay's former residence.

Anyone who has visited the Blue Mountains electorate will recall the old Woodford Academy in the sleepy little village of Woodford where the stage coaches used to stop. The academy buildings, which are in a colonial Georgian style, are in disrepair and \$150,000 has been provided for their restoration. The academy has remained largely unaltered since the 1880s. Approximately \$220,000 from the area assistance scheme has been spent on various communities in the electorate. North Katoomba is located on a ridge in the Blue Mountains. Many young people with families reside in the area and are extremely pleased that \$53,000 has been made available for the provision of a demountable building for the local pre-school. Youth projects in the mid mountains have received a vote of \$58,700 for the development of services for 12 to 18 year olds. A lot of trouble has been experienced with youth in Hazelbrook and Lawson, quickly growing areas of the Blue Mountains, with a population of 12,500. The money will be invaluable for it will be spent on the youth of the region.

The disability recreation project, which will cost \$52,000, will develop activities for socially isolated people with intellectual disabilities. Also, \$27,600 has been allocated for a HIV-AIDS co-ordinator to help the People Living with AIDS Centre. More than 1,000 people with AIDS live in the Blue Mountains electorate. I have enjoyed the five years that I have been a member of this Parliament. Nick Greiner and John Fahey have been very good to the electorate of Blue Mountains, which attracts about three million tourists a year. The Fairmont Resort, a five-star hotel, employs more than 300 people. The tourist industry is the big employer in the Blue Mountains electorate, which I am pleased to represent. It extends to Jenolan Caves and almost to Oberon, where it adjoins the electorate of my good friend and colleague Mick Clough at the Lett River. The electorate includes the historic village of Hartley, three coalmines, and farms that produce cattle, fat lambs, wool and apples. It is an extremely interesting electorate. I have a fair amount to do with the Blue Mountains City

Council and the Greater Lithgow City Council.

We have achieved many wonderful things in the valley, including a new bridge over Cocks River and resealing of the important road that runs into the world renowned Kanangra Valley. That area, which has a large number of farms, has had a great influx of what we call Pitt Street farmers, people coming from Sydney and buying up farms. With the new expressway they can travel to their jobs in the city in an hour and 40 minutes to two hours. The Hartley area is changing. This beautiful area must be kept in pristine condition so that it can be enjoyed by visitors from around the world and by residents and used as a playground for the four million people in Sydney. On behalf of the people of the Blue Mountains it gives me much pleasure to have replied to His Excellency's Speech.

Mr MARKHAM (Keira) [8.50]: I am pleased to make a contribution to the Address of His Excellency Rear Admiral Peter Ross Sinclair, Governor of New South Wales, delivered on 24th February in the Legislative Council Chamber. I refer to a number of points made by the Governor outlining the Government's program for 1993. At page 16 of his printed address, referring to indigenous people, the Governor said:

To mark 1993 as the International Year of Indigenous Peoples, my Government will provide funds for special events for the State's Aboriginal communities.

The Office of Aboriginal Affairs will ensure a co-ordinated and co-operative approach for government agencies in relation to Aboriginal issues.

That is well and good. It is an admirable objective this year. We should be looking at the plight of
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Aboriginal people and at what has occurred over many years but, more importantly, in recent years. The life chances of Aboriginal people in New South Wales in many respects has declined in the past five years when measured against small improvements that have occurred in some other States of Australia. The truth of this proposition can be shown in many areas. Perhaps the most serious obstacle to Aboriginal advancement in New South Wales is the way in which our criminal justice system is stacked against indigenous people. This tragic situation was brought out in the open by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. However, it must be said that the New South Wales Government still has not examined the scope of the problem in delivering justice to Aboriginal people in this State. The first - and notably the most basic recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody - was that imprisonment must be used only as a sanction of last resort.

Though the Government has endorsed that recommendation on paper, the real situation has become much worse. Since 1989 imprisonment rates for Aboriginal people in New South Wales have grown faster than those anywhere else in Australia. The clearest comparison is with Queensland, which in mid-1989 had only three fewer Aboriginal prisoners than New South Wales - 412 as against 415. Two years later, in mid-1991, there were almost twice as many Aboriginal prisoners in New South Wales as there were in Queensland - 664 as against 346. This alarming increase in Aboriginal imprisonment in New South Wales is so large that it cannot be accounted for by various minor causes. It graphically represents a failure of government policy. The failure of the New South Wales Government to advance Aboriginal affairs was the subject of criticism in the Ombudsman's final report on the crisis of poverty in Toomelah, tabled in the Parliament last November. The Ombudsman found that the Office of Aboriginal Affairs had not been performing up to a reasonable standard of proper administration. I do not blame the Office of Aboriginal Affairs because it knows it is a rudderless organisation without real direction from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in this State.

The New South Wales Government has failed dismally to respond with humanity to the Human Rights Commission's initial report about the poor living conditions of the Aboriginal communities at Toomelah. The failure of the Government to provide essential services to Aboriginal people in need is part of a broader pattern of indifference towards the life prospects of the original Australians. In the past four years I have said in this Chamber on many occasions that even though Toomelah was highlighted following international exposure, many other communities suffer the same appalling conditions. A number of years ago, when the report of the

investigation was tabled, this was still a fact of life. Aboriginal people in New South Wales will not be able to advance without a strong commitment from government to change the very depressing realities of the present. Such a commitment is sadly absent from the Government's legislation and financial program for this session of Parliament.

It is not accidental that the task of addressing the plight of indigenous people was put at the end of the Government's outline of policies. This is reflected in the Government's stubborn refusal to re-establish a professional ministry of Aboriginal affairs. Even the Northern Territory has finally recognised the necessity and is moving swiftly to address problems of the past. The New South Wales Government has provided a total of \$200,000 for special events to mark the International Year of Indigenous Peoples in 1993. These funds will not go far towards establishing a new partnership with indigenous people, the objective identified by the United Nations for this year. Aboriginal people have criticised this objective as falsely implying that the old partnership merely has to be updated, whereas the task of Aboriginal advancement is really to create qualitatively new relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. These relationships can only be based on equity and mutual respect, not on paternalism and indifference. Those are legacies of the discredited policy of trying to eliminate the survival of Aboriginal culture through assimilation. Thankfully this country at long last, right across the length and breadth, within governments and oppositions, is starting to recognise that.

What is most lacking in the Government's brief outline of its policies towards indigenous people is any indication of the actual improvements necessary for Aboriginal advancement in New South Wales. It is to be hoped that the Government will commit itself to a whole range of specific goals to be achieved in the near future. For example, the green paper on future directions for juvenile justice in New South Wales has adopted a key objective with the aim of ending the overrepresentation of Aboriginal juveniles in detention centres by the end of 1995. This is possible, given appropriate humanity, good will and sensible policies. The Government's present policies are far from suitable as the proportion of detained juveniles in New South Wales who are Aborigines have remained at more than 20 per cent for the past five years, whereas only 2 per cent of young people in New South Wales are of Aboriginal descent.

What is needed is a fundamental change of direction towards community based rehabilitation centres which give Aboriginal juveniles a chance to learn valuable skills instead of locking them away and depriving them of any hope for the future. The Government claims to be implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. On the occasions I have raised this issue in this Parliament I have raised the question of when a full and wide-ranging debate on the implementation of those

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recommendations will be conducted. Yet the Government has not made one statement of concern about the continuing high rate of those deaths in New South Wales. Since the royal commission closed its investigative door on 30th May, 1989, 33 Aboriginal people have died in custody throughout Australia and no fewer than 10 of those deaths have been in New South Wales.

The proportion of Aboriginal deaths in custody that have occurred in New South Wales since the royal commission is 30 per cent, which is double the 15 per cent rate of the 1980s. The proportion of Aboriginal deaths in custody occurring in New South Wales prisons has increased markedly, although the two most recent deaths happened in police custody. The Government has provided no assistance to the families of the 25 Aboriginal people who have died in custody since 1980. In contrast, the Victorian Government at least funded a three-day conference with these families in 1991 so that they could discuss their feelings about the royal commission. That has not occurred in New South Wales. The families of those who have died in custody in New South Wales have not had that opportunity to ask questions or look for support. The Government has now acknowledged that the Aboriginal people must be involved in monitoring the implementation of the royal commission's recommendations. Such monitoring requires a substantial program of consultation with Aboriginal community organisations about particular problems, otherwise the farcical situation will remain.

At the time of the "Cop it Sweet" exposé of police practices the Government claimed to have implemented recommendation No. 60, which states that police must stop physically and verbally abusing Aboriginal people. I assure the House that has not happened anywhere in New South Wales. Such a claim cannot be treated

seriously and can only lead Aboriginal people to conclude that the Government is not interested in addressing the problems the royal commissioner highlighted. At a conference of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology in October 1991, Hal Wootten, the Royal Commissioner into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody during that period of time, expressed concern that the Government was merely paying lip-service to some key recommendations aimed at overcoming the distrust which Aboriginal people have of police. He noted that rates of imprisonment and arrest of Aboriginal people in New South Wales and Victoria have risen and said, "It is all very well for people to say they support the recommendations, but what are they going to do about it?" What is the Government going to do about it? When will we have a full and open discussion in this Parliament about what is going on? In all fairness, one would have to be concerned at the response.

Two particular areas of concern are the discriminatory use of the Summary Offences Act against Aboriginal people and the failure of the Government to address the inadequacies of the existing procedure through which Aboriginal people can get complaints against police investigated. The recent Amnesty International report on Australia, "A criminal justice system weighted against Aboriginal people", noted that in March 1992 the President of the Law Society of New South Wales, John Marsden, wrote to members of this Parliament about the inappropriate nature of the Summary Offences Act stating that members must be aware of the way this law is arbitrarily applied to control sections of the community, particularly Aboriginal people. It is hard to believe that the Government is unaware of widespread community concern about the need to stop arbitrary arrests of Aboriginal people. Why then does it not act by repealing the Summary Offences Act? Because of its indifference to the suffering and oppression of the indigenous people of this State.

One of the most detailed and important recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was No. 226, which is that the processes for dealing with complaints against police need to be urgently reviewed. The commission recommended new legislation based on a number of important principles. In the Governor's Speech there was no recognition and no forewarning that these types of programs would be put in place in this Parliament in the next few months. The commission's first recommendation was that complaints against police should be made to, be investigated by or on behalf of, and adjudicated upon by a body or bodies totally independent of police services.

The situation in New South Wales is that Aboriginal people can lodge complaints with the Ombudsman against particular police for racist or abusive conduct, but the adjudication of all such complaints is merely a matter for internal police investigations, and we know where that leads us. There is no provision in the current set-up for any accountability of the nature of those investigations because they are not conducted by an independent body. The quite detailed proposals made by the royal commission in this recommendation clearly envisaged the creation of a new independent authority, which would involve Aboriginal people and would have the power to call police to answer questions at a public hearing of a complaint. When we speak to people such as Arthur Murray and Ray Jackson from the Aboriginal death watch committee and we listen to and note their frustrations that nothing is being done to address those problems, is it any wonder the Government is ridiculed within the Aboriginal community on the assessment and implementation of the recommendations from the royal commission?

Such a new system of investigating complaints would facilitate a substantial increase in trust and mutual respect between Aboriginal people and officers of the criminal justice system. The Government in response to the royal commission endorsed this recommendation, but claimed that it is fully satisfied with the existing set-up. Clearly the Government, along with many others, has not fully

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understood the meaning and significance of this recommendation. One is forced to conclude that the policy of the present Government is based on an outdated attachment to the status quo rather than a genuine attempt to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in New South Wales. There are many other areas in which the Government's policy towards Aboriginal people is based on indifference and neglect instead of a concern for humanity.

It is regrettable that the Government has not made proper use of commissioner Wootten's original report which outlined a whole host of problems that urgently need to be addressed in New South Wales. One

important issue highlighted in this report is the increasing problem of a generation of young Aborigines who have grown up in communities and in circumstances where traditional fields of employment have been cut off and no others have been substituted. They have grown up without experience of work, and in many cases have developed a subculture in which alcohol has a destructive role and individual achievement is not respected. Commissioner Wootten clearly stated in 1991:

It is urgent that opportunities for constructive work be provided. The greatest opportunity for this particularly in rural areas is in Aboriginal enterprises and the success of these depends on a real transfer of resources into Aboriginal hands.

What has the New South Wales Government done to achieve this? A further field of indifference towards Aboriginal needs in New South Wales is the Government's failure to act substantially to protect sacred sites. In this area, as in some others, New South Wales is now lagging well behind the Northern Territory. In this Parliament two years ago the Minister for the Environment, Tim Moore, introduced legislation to try and address that same problem. That piece of legislation was forwarded to a committee to look at what could be done to recognise the rights of indigenous people so far as their land was concerned. I am absolutely appalled that no mention is made of that committee's report in the Governor's address. The honourable member for Strathfield was chairman of that committee. The report of the Legislative Committee upon the National Parks and Wildlife (Aboriginal Ownership) Amendment Bill 1992 gave every member of the Parliament - not the Government - an opportunity to do something positive in the International Year of Indigenous Peoples in this country. When issues were raised about time constraints the present Minister told that committee:

I haven't turned my mind towards the idea of separate pieces of legislation for separate parks . . . What does concern me though - and I take on board what Mr Markham has just said - is that it's taking an awful long time to get something that was promised to these people in April 1991 in place, and while it might satisfy Mootwingee, it is going to, therefore, mean if we have separate items of legislation we will be going through a very long process.

[*Extension of time agreed to.*]

That committee was able to produce a report containing a bill that was totally supported by the committee members and, I believe, would be totally supported by this Parliament. If the Fahey Government wants to show the Aboriginal people that it is prepared to do something and prepared to lead, it should take that committee report on board and produce the bill to this Parliament in the near future. A writer in a recent book entitled *Aboriginal Involvement in Parks and Protected Areas* has called the situation in New South Wales an embarrassment and observed that:

It is ironic that whilst the Northern Territory is so remote geographically from the site of European occupation in Australia and whilst its Aboriginal population has been proportionately less affected, the arrangements it has made with its Aboriginal residents for their participation in national parks show a far greater degree of recompense and reconciliation than does the New South Wales proposals.

This writer thought it was obvious that justice might demand recompense and reconciliation which is in some way proportionate to the nature and extent of damage, dispossession and alienation, rather than the reverse. We have an opportunity to address this issue in a positive manner. I call on the Premier, the Government and the Parliament to have the intestinal fortitude to bring forward this legislation as soon as possible. I have no doubt that my colleagues on the committee - members of the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party and the National Party - would support what I am saying. The committee travelled extensively and listened to many people.

Many Aboriginal people support the report. They want the Parliament and the Government to do something about it, and they want it done now. I should like to mention the High Court's recognition of Aboriginal prior ownership of Australia as set out in the Mabo case. That case has irreversibly put the difficult issues of justice and compensation for the dispossession of Aboriginal people on the national political agenda. It is sad that the New South Wales Government has not appreciated the importance of the Mabo ruling, particularly in view of the historical burden that Aboriginal people in this State have been forced to bear.

The characteristic response of the New South Wales Government to the continued and, in some areas, increasing suffering of indigenous people in this State has been one of indifference and neglect. This is a response which, whatever the intentions of those members responsible for the current policy, can only make things worse. Instead of seeking to mask inaction with a few vague platitudes, the New South Wales Government should recognise and act upon the sound advice about Aboriginal advancement given over 20 years ago by the late Charles Rowley. He warned simply that, "The longer the delay, the greater the likely costs for remedial measures, irrespective of questions of justice". No policy is more irresponsible than one of neglect. I should like to relate to the House an experience I had recently when I was able to attend a meeting in Coraki, the home town of the honourable member for Vacluse.

Mr Jeffery: Did you let the local member know that you were going there?

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Mr MARKHAM: I would not let the honourable member for Vacluse know that I was going to Coraki; it is totally outside his electorate.

Mr Jeffery: No, I said the local member.

Mr MARKHAM: The local member, Bill Rixon, the honourable member for Lismore, was in attendance at the meeting that was called by the local Aboriginal land council to discuss the sewerage works. The local Aboriginal land council represents the Box Ridge Mission Aboriginal settlement. I was absolutely appalled by what I saw. I was there three years ago and things have not changed one iota in that time. Families live within 100 metres of a sewerage plant. The odours are absolutely obnoxious. It just happened that on the day we were there trying to solve this problem the wind was blowing in the right direction.

The arguments being put forward are whether Richmond River Shire Council should provide \$20,000 and the Public Works Department should provide \$20,000 to undertake an investigation on how to overcome the problem. As far as I am concerned, that is a waste of \$40,000. What they must do is relocate the sewerage works that were built 25 or 30 years ago. Today it would not have been built where it is, but in those days, 20 or 30 years ago, no one worried about an Aboriginal community or about an Aboriginal mission. The attitude was: the land is there, so let's shove the sewerage scheme there - and that is what happened.

What I am saying, and what the honourable member for Lismore heard me say on that day at Coraki, is that the sewerage works must be moved. The people who live at the mission have a restriction on where they can build their houses. They pay \$760 a year in rates, yet cannot build on land they own because they are within a 400-metre radius of a sewerage scheme. The Public Works Department indicated it was prepared to foot the bill of \$20,000 but Richmond River Shire Council was hesitant about providing that money. As far as I am concerned they should be forced to provide the money so that a survey can be done. I know what the results of that survey will be. I believe that \$1 million should be forthcoming, half of it from this Government and the other half from Richmond River Shire Council, to totally relocate that sewerage scheme. This is a scandalous situation in this State. There would not be one person in this Chamber or one non-Aboriginal person in this State who would put up with that situation.

Finally, I would like to make one or two comments about the coal industry. The Government does not look on the coal industry as a policy area because not one word was mentioned about it in the Governor's Speech. But I have a copy of a survey conducted by the New South Wales Coal Association that basically tells us that no one in New South Wales knows what the coal industry is all about. This industry is one of the biggest revenue raisers in this State and in this country. It is probable that half the members of this House would not know what a lump of coal looks like or what to do with it, but that is in line with general community thinking about the coal industry. On 17th February the Department of Mineral Resources held a conference in Lithgow. Meredith Hellicar from the Coal Association said at that seminar that we have to be more outgoing in making sure that the people of this State know more about the great coal industry that supports the economy of

this State and allows it to tick along.

The aim of the conference was to explore ways that the coal industry could promote itself. The seminar was officially opened by Tony Haraldson, Chairman of the New South Wales Coal Association. The Executive Director of the Coal Association, Meredith Hellicar, chaired one of the sessions. Wayne McAndrew, who is an official of the United Mineworkers Federation in the western coalfields, asked why the federation was not invited to attend the seminar to discuss and publicly promote the coal industry. Why did the department exclude the organisation at the very heart of coal production in this State, that is, the United Mineworkers Federation, from participating and putting forward its point of view? Honourable members must find that strange, as I do. This Government needs to speak very closely with the bureaucrats who run that department and ask why the Department of Mineral Resources has done a great disservice in excluding our union - and I say our union because I am a member of the United Mineworkers Federation.

Mr Jeffery: It is quite obvious.

Mr MARKHAM: What does the honourable member mean, "It is quite obvious"? Is he a member or any organisations?

Mr Jeffery: I was a member of the Public Service Association for many years.

Mr MARKHAM: They would not have him now. Howie Fisher, President of the Western United Mineworkers, said:

The Department of Mineral Resources have done a great disservice in excluding our union and throwing in their lot with the coalowners. It is to be hoped that in future that this policy changes and the information seminars reflect the industry's overall perspective, an essential precondition to making them effective.

What is the use of having a conference on an industry when the very workers who produce the bulk of the coal in this State are excluded? [*Time expired.*]

Ms MACHIN (Port Macquarie) [9.20]: Before I commence my contribution to the Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech, I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr Speaker on his landmark achievement of 20 years' service in this House. Typically, it passed relatively unnoticed. However, that does not make the Speaker the father of the House; I believe that honour goes to the honourable member for Charlestown, who is one of the few members of

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what we call the old style. He is a decent bloke, even though he plays on the wrong team. He is always fair and pleasant in the House, even though he might debate vigorously, which, sadly, is not the case with all honourable members.

I should like to address some remarks in response to the Governor's Speech - which I thought was an excellent outline of the Government's agenda for the Autumn Session of this Parliament - by way of, first, looking at issues in my electorate of Port Macquarie and, second, looking at some broader issues which are of personal interest and concern. My electorate of Port Macquarie is relatively small by country standards. It includes the towns of Port Macquarie, Laurieton, Kendall, and Wingham, the villages of Harrington, Coopernook, Lansdowne, Moorland, part of Comboyne and - I will not say that I am saving the best until last, because that would upset the other towns - Lord Howe Island, largely due to the hard work of the former member, my colleague the honourable member for Oxley.

My electorate is one of contrasts. It is in the country but in many ways it is very cosmopolitan; it looks to be thriving but below the surface many are struggling; it looks modern but in fact the town of Port Macquarie is very old. After the settlement at Sydney and I think in the Hunter, Port Macquarie was the next port to be settled and it has a very long history. Sadly, not a lot of it is in evidence now but the local historical society does a terrific job in working with what is available and ensuring that its heritage is not forgotten. Port

Macquarie has a contrasting population: there are many people who are very wealthy and many who are what we would call poor and on fixed incomes; it looks a vibrant community but there is a high proportion of elderly people, so it presents many challenges; it is rural in some parts, but very urban in others. My past 18 months or so as member for Port Macquarie have been lively for a lot of reasons, some of which would be obvious to this House.

Much has been achieved since the election of a coalition Government to represent Port Macquarie and all the other seats it holds. I refer to a vast improvement in the road system; the large roundabout on the Pacific Highway, and the extensions north and south of it; the work currently under way at Herons Creek which will add a further dual carriageway to the highway; double lanes recently added at John's River; double overtaking lanes between Wingham and Taree; and a large number of 3 x 3 projects carried out under the auspices of local councils. Health funding on the North Coast has increased by a record margin - up 13 per cent in real terms - representing a shift from hospitals in areas where the population is declining to areas where the population is growing rapidly, namely the North Coast and the western parts of Sydney, which includes your seat, Mr Speaker.

A second air carrier has come into Port Macquarie and many other country ports around the State, providing a big boost for both business and tourism. Facilities such as the regional sports stadium - again I have to pay tribute to the hard work and the groundwork done by my colleague the honourable member for Oxley in helping to obtain a total of \$350,000 of government funding for that major project - plus a whole range of other sporting and recreational facilities funded by the Government. A number of train services have been re-introduced under the auspices of CountryLink - a total of \$125 million worth of investment in country rail services, including the return of sleepers and an additional daily train service from Sydney to Grafton.

Public housing has increased, particularly for the elderly, and recently I had the privilege of opening another 37 units for pensioner residents, many of whom had actually moved from bigger houses where only one person was occupying a three-bedroom house. That has in turn freed up other houses for larger families. They are just a few examples of the Government focusing its priorities on the basics. But much remains to be done to improve the facilities of my electorate and the well-being of the people who live there.

The matter of key concern to me, and I believe to my constituents, is jobs. I think that would be the key concern for every Australian today except Paul Keating, who is desperately trying to run away from the issue. Youth unemployment is 51 per cent in the mid North Coast region, which is an absolute disgrace, and I am amazed that Labor representatives can hold up their heads and be brave enough to go out on the streets with such an appalling record. The general unemployment rate is more like 16 per cent to 25 per cent, compared with a national average of 11 per cent, which is bad enough in itself. Many things will depend on a change of Government at the Federal level, and our colleagues at the Federal level - my leader Tim Fischer and the leader of the Liberal Party, Dr John Hewson - are to be commended for their courageous campaigning.

I believe the Australian people want a change of government and I believe that the coalition will win the election on 13th March. Such a win will turn politics on its head because never before has an agenda outlining proposed new taxes been published almost two years before an election. However, I think it can simply be addressed by asking whether anyone believes that the tax system we now have is fair or is working? Much of what the Government will do at a State level will depend on who is in power in Canberra in a few weeks' time.

Recently the Premier had a country Cabinet meeting, after which he announced the establishment of an embassy, I think he called it, for targeting the central west region, the Parkes area. The aim is to promote that region in Sydney and to assist in development and decentralisation issues. I drew to the Premier's attention by correspondence, and I do so again tonight, the need for that sort of attention to be given to the North Coast, and possibly even

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more so than the central parts of New South Wales. With all due respect to the people in the west, the population there is fairly static, which is not the case with the population on the North Coast; it does not have the unemployment problems the North Coast has, nor many of the infrastructure problems. I urge the Premier,

the Cabinet and the Government to look at strategies to be adopted for the North Coast by way of financial assistance, where appropriate, for things such as infrastructure assistance for transport and communications.

The Federal Government has a big role to play and I think the North Coast will receive a big boost from a change of government. The current review of the Tourism Commission is of great interest to my electorate. Tourism is one of our major industries, if not the largest single industry, worth in the order of \$200 million a year. Naturally the residents of the Hastings are interested in the results of that review. My constituents are hopeful that any funding shakeup will recognise the successful planning which has occurred in the Hastings district; that the Government will adopt a policy of backing winners and helping communities that have a proven track record of helping themselves, achieving the tourist visits that get the runs on the board and keeping that community going.

The second most important issue in my electorate would be housing. Despite continued building and the work that has been done, there is still a huge demand for housing due to migration and the low socioeconomic status of a large proportion of residents in my electorate. We need to come up with new solutions which look at different types of accommodation and different types of construction. We need to place a greater reliance on the private sector in the rental of private buildings. Community tenancy schemes can get people into homes quicker. At present the average person who comes into my office and does not have an urgent case can expect to wait about five years before he or she receives accommodation. I do not know how these people survive in the meantime. That would have to be the second most common problem that is raised with me that falls within the purview of the State Government - the most common being local government matters, unfortunately.

The third matter that I think is of great importance to my electorate is planning. The North Coast is fast running out of land, yet people still want to live there. Earlier I was asking my colleague the honourable member for Oxley about population projections. The Department of Planning has said that by the turn of the century or by the year 2001, one million people or more will be living on the North Coast; more than double the number of people living in Tasmania. Huge problems will arise in coping with that influx of people: providing roads, transport, housing, sewerage services, water and so on. People in small country towns such as Wingham are starting to run short of residential blocks. I am concerned about disputes over land use both for urban purposes and resource use such as forests and quarries for much needed road base materials and the like. Unfortunately, we have a trend in this country where third parties seem to hold greater sway in the courts than do the applicants or the people who may need these services and facilities. Where will we go to provide houses for these people and the jobs and materials that they need to continue their lives?

Another important issue that has been touched on by a lot of other members is health. It was interesting to hear members of the Australian Labor Party run through a litany of horrors - waiting lists and an elderly patient who has been knocked back five times for an operation. The honourable member for Penrith talked about people waiting at different hospitals in her region. She might care to take up those matters with Brian Howe, the Federal Minister for Health, who recently said there is no crisis in Medicare. That would have to be one of the greatest understatements in the whole Federal election campaign. Perhaps she would like to tell that to some of my constituents who have waited four, seven, 10 or 18 months for their operations. Later statistics show that 870 people are waiting for operations at the Hastings District Hospital, yet members of the Australian Labor Party tell us that we should wait until the end of the century before we build another hospital.

One of the most cruel examples of the failure of Medicare is the number of elderly people who cannot get dentures and dental treatment. They cannot afford to go to the private sector because it is expensive and they cannot get dentures quickly through a hospital. A local hospital has a waiting time of three years for new dentures. So these people live in great discomfort and pain. They use old dentures that are painful for them, or they go without teeth at all. Yet members of the Australian Labor Party tell us that there is no crisis in Medicare. It should be pointed out that dentures are not funded through Medicare, so any hospital that provides them has to obtain money from the State Budget.

Mr Bowman: Why do you not supply more funding?

Ms MACHIN: Listen to Einstein, the honourable member for Swansea. Where does he suggest we should get the money from? Should we borrow some more money, or perhaps manufacture it? What a stupid suggestion!

Mr Bowman: We need proper financial management.

Ms MACHIN: We have seen what the financial managers opposite have done; it is just fantastic. We have seen where we rank on the international scale. We are sliding month by month. Members of the Australian Labor Party have said that the health system is great. The honourable member for Swansea says that we should put more money into the health system, but he wants no efficiency savings. Honourable members opposite do not want any private sector

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involvement for public patients, they do not want any closures, and they do not want any changes. They do not want a casino at the power station - they want it closer to the Australian Labor Party property in Sussex Street - and they do not want slot machines at the casino. How are we supposed to fund the health system? Hypocrisy knows no bounds. Incidentally, for the benefit of honourable members opposite, I point out that the development application for the new Port Macquarie hospital goes to council on Monday. It is anticipated that it will be passed, I am sure after lively debate. Construction will start in a matter of weeks and patients will be in the hospital by the end of 1994. This contrasts with the suggestions of honourable members opposite to hang in there for public money, whenever it might become available, and patients might get into the hospital by the year 2000.

Transport remains an issue in country New South Wales. The lack of public transport has always been a problem. Community transport services do a great job on limited money. I hope the next round of applications is more successful than the most recent round. I commend the local bus services also for their willingness to help and to address the need for public transport. I have tried, so far without success, to have one peculiar glitch in the system addressed. People who take a coach from my area to Sydney get on in Lake Cathie or in Port Macquarie, go to Sydney and come back. If they live in Lake Cathie or Laurieton, which is south of Port Macquarie, they cannot get off the coach there. They actually have to go past their town, get off in Port Macquarie and go back. Because of a historical position, certain routes were granted specific stops which are part of the licence. People must get off in Port Macquarie; they cannot get off in the town in which they live, even though the bus goes straight through it. That is ridiculous.

I will again raise that matter with the Minister for Transport and Minister for Tourism because so far his department has failed to address it. Likewise, I have raised with him and with his department changes to the school bus system, under which contracts are now issued not on the basis of each student paying but on the basis of each coach paying. Only one coach is used where two coaches were used in the past. That means that kids have to get on the bus a lot earlier. In some rural parts of my electorate primary school students have to catch the bus at 7.20 a.m. and travel for over an hour. They do not get home until 5 p.m. That inferior service is not acceptable. Again, I expect the department to review that matter and to improve services for those constituents.

Earlier one honourable member referred to the Home Care Service and to aged services. There is an enormous problem on the North Coast, which has a higher than average proportion of people over the age of 65. By way of example, in the Great Lakes region - I just happened to see figures for this area - in the late 1980s there was a 65 per cent increase in the number of people over the age of 65 living there. That has caused huge problems for our health services and, in particular, other social services. Recently a constituent of mine, a little old lady living in Wingham, was upset because the Home Care Service could not afford to mow her lawn. I sympathise with her. But it made me think about what is happening. Why could not her neighbour mow her lawn in a small country town like Wingham?

What is happening to society when an old lady in a small, tightly knit town such as Wingham has to go to a government agency to have someone mow her lawn? That is a telling sign of the way society is drifting and the way expectations have changed. We used to help one another. We used to help ourselves. I think all of us - Australian Labor Party members more than Government members because of their philosophical viewpoint - are

guilty of fostering a huge dependence on the State. As members of Parliament we say to members of the public, "Come and see me. I can fix your problems." We advertise ourselves, promote ourselves and then come into this Chamber and talk about our huge workloads. In part we have ourselves to blame. If we are to look after all people in the community we have to start moving away from the expectation that the public purse can always pay, because fewer and fewer people are paying or have the capacity to pay. Hence this Government's support for the voluntary movement, its desire to fund it and its desire to fund many programs through it. The voluntary movement delivers better value for money and better quality of care. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Governor spoke in his Speech about the family. I was happy about that. As I am starting a family - I hope with some success - I have a vested interest in the family. I commend this initiative and, in particular, the celebration of Family Week later in the year. Most of us would agree that the family is one of the most important institutions, if not the most important institution, in society. I do not believe it is as recognised or as supported as it should be. Unfortunately, anomalous groups in society tend to get the lion's share of attention, dollars and government support. Just after Christmas I was in the United States of America and saw a lot of the festivities surrounding the presidential inauguration. I remarked that the only group of people who did not have some ball, festival or concert were those who were married with children and in a job. Everyone seemed to be engaged in some sort of festivity, but not those ordinary people. Sadly, I guess the two-parent extended family is not the norm; it is becoming the exception.

I hope that in Family Week ways of bolstering the family and the family unit can be examined, to keep them together and support them. For example, the ways in which the role of a parent - usually the woman - who chooses to stay at home may be enhanced. Too often that position is discounted as inferior, even by my own generation. People tend to think that to be of value, work must be performed outside the home. Women or men who choose to stay at home and raise children -

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which I believe is probably the most responsible and valuable job in society - do not receive the credit they deserve. During Family Week those people should be honoured and methods of solving some of the problems in the system should be examined.

An examination needs to be carried out on breaking the cycles of domestic conflict and abuse, as well as helping school students understand how to be decent parents further down the track. Some students unfortunately - or fortunately perhaps - become parents while they are still at school. I personally think that is a bit young. Many of these students do not have role models, they do not have the support at home, and there is often repeat behaviour, which many honourable members deal with in their offices. Young people should be taught to deal with financial situations. Statistics show that the cause of most conflict in domestic situations is financial strain and hardship. Child care should be examined constantly, not only in Family Week. I do not believe enough child care is available. The Federal Government made a lot of grand promises some time ago but so far has not delivered, particularly with child care for women who need to work.

Mr Bowman: It has been vastly expanded.

Ms MACHIN: Talk to some of the people who work in child care and find out what the truth is, or to people trying to find child care positions. More emphasis needs to be placed on work-based child care. The Parliament is dragging the chain, although it is now looking at some form of child care. It would appear that the best option will be a development in conjunction with the redevelopment of Sydney Hospital, but that is in the future. As the leading institution in New South Wales, the Government should have done something before this. This is also a broader issue in encouraging more women to run for Parliament. Currently there are nine women in this House, and there is a better proportion in the upper House, and, sadly, there are very few Parliaments around the world where the proportion is higher. In Norway about one-third of the members of Parliament are female and not so long ago the Prime Minister there was a woman. In the United States, which has had affirmative action and other programs much longer than in Australia, there is still a similar proportion in the lower Houses, currently six to eight per cent females. It is a shame, as members opposite have said.

Part of the reason for the small proportion of females in Parliament is due to the structure and the lifestyle of politics. I am experiencing this myself. For me to have a career in politics and to occupy a country seat means that I am apart from my family for about half of the time. That is not a particularly happy situation, but we have to put up with it; it would not be much easier for the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Assistant Minister for Education. She lives close to the city, but she has a heavy workload. However, she can probably go home to her family on most evenings and have breakfast with them in the morning, whereas country members cannot. I should not be sexist about it. This affects my other colleagues in the National Party and of course all members representing country seats.

If a greater representation of women in the Parliament is desired, some structural problems need to be addressed. One problem is that the working day starts at 8 o'clock in the morning, by the time meetings are attended, and finishes at 11 o'clock at night. Many female members have spoken to women's groups about these hours. These women have said they would not perform a job entailing such hours because they cannot find child care positions. There are very few places that provide child care for those hours. Also, problems are created because there are no guarantees of the hours that the House will sit. That is one of the major hurdles for women entering politics. History shows that around the world women who succeed in politics have had their families and are established and older, or they remain single. Hopefully that will change.

Finally, I would like to discuss the issue of parliamentary reform, which was raised by the Governor. He spoke about the charter of reform. I am very concerned about the trends in the Parliament and if members of the Opposition were honest, they would also be concerned. Although it is convenient for Opposition members for the Parliament to be the way it is - to be able to introduce various bills and to have almost all of Thursday devoted to private members' statements - the role of government is to govern. It is not the role of the Parliament to govern. I am sure that if and when the numbers change, a few other changes will be made. It is not good for the State that the Parliament and the Government are being frustrated as it has been over the past year or so. It was very aptly summed up by Mr Michael Wilkins in the *Sunday Telegraph* last Sunday. He said in his comment about State politics, among other things:

... by stifling legislation (there still are Government bills stagnating from last year) and introducing other bills which the Labor Party will support to score political points, the Independents are failing to look to the future. In the process they are doing irreparable damage to the concept of government.

That is a very true statement, as is being realised by more and more people. I hope common sense will prevail. I doubt if things will change all that much, which I find extremely disappointing. However, I appeal to some of the more sensible and rational Independents - there are two of them - to think about the role of the Government and the Westminster system. Our Westminster system is based on the premise that a government has the right to govern. The Executive Government has certain powers. It is all very well for the honourable member for South Coast to talk about the Westminster system when it suits him and it works to his advantage when introducing legislation and moving motions. I believe he is abusing those very powers that he has

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wielded as a big stick in the past. I thank the House for the opportunity of putting on the record some of the issues that concern me. We have a challenge ahead of us, on the North Coast in particular. It is a privilege to represent that area. I commend the Governor on the program he has set out and I look forward to participating in that program in the coming months.

Mr PRICE (Waratah) [9.47]: I express some concern at some of the statements made in His Excellency's Speech to the Parliament. On the first page of the Speech the Governor said, in paragraph 4:

The State budget reflects my Government's view that good financial management is not an end to itself, but rather a means of improving living standards and social welfare in a sustainable manner.

If that was put to the community at large, a very different point of view would arise as to its attitude to what the Government's policy has done and has meant to many of them personally by way of reducing services or increasing the cost of services. I would like to cover a number of areas that will demonstrate the concerns in

my electorate in particular, in the larger area of the State, and certainly in the wider Hunter region, which I am proud to represent. An environmental levy has been applied in the Hunter region for the costs of the Hunter area sewerage scheme. During the 1988 election that was said to be a no-levy scheme but within a few months it became an annual levy of \$35, indexed to run for 25 years. The local members had asked that country pensioners receive the same considerations as had been applied to the metropolitan area. The Minister of the day granted that wish and promptly extended the time to pay from 22 years to 25 years.

Within two years of that \$35 charge being applied, after only two indexation periods, suddenly the levy shot from a sewerage levy to an environmental levy, and was again indexed, but this time it was \$69 a year. So the \$35 did not get too far with indexation; it went to \$69 in two years. That phase has remained, with indexation applying for the next 22 years. What do the people of the Hunter see for the environmental program proposed by the corporation? Some sewerage improvements have been made but they were planned. My colleague the honourable member for Swansea and his constituents were the main beneficiaries of that scheme, which I fully support. Sewerage should be available to as many residential areas and villages as possible. When the \$35 levy was indexed it was acceptable, but at \$69 and increasing, how many years will have to pass before the escalation means that the rate of the levy exceeds the cost of water, bearing in mind that the Hunter Water Corporation is the only instrumentality of its kind in the State that has a user-pays component. As usual the Hunter pays, pays and continues to pay. That is good financial management for the Treasury but not necessarily good for my constituents or the constituents of my colleagues.

Extra funds are being raised to be used, as the Sydney Water Board environmental levy has been used, apparently, to directly fund the dividend payment by the corporation to the Government. All honourable members are familiar with the debacle over the \$100 million that was transferred from Sydney Water Board to Treasury. It was only after browbeating and much publicity that the Government finally agreed to transfer property of equivalent value to the Sydney Water Board. Is the Hunter Water Corporation to be subjected to the same set of rules? I hope not. If that happens, the cry from the north will be loud, demanding a similar result. Should there be a change of government federally - I do not believe there will be, but if it is accidentally foisted on us - I understand that the GST will apply also to water rates. Will it apply to the levy? Will there be an indexed levy that is subject to a further 15 per cent? Will the water charges be subject to 15 per cent? Will the rate component be subject to 15 per cent GST?

Mr Peacocke: No.

Mr PRICE: The Minister has answered part of the question, but a significant part of those charges will be subject to a GST of 15 per cent. In a struggling area - and people in the Hunter region struggle as hard as anyone else in provincial New South Wales - that will be a major impost and one that will not be appreciated by the community and the users of the water supply. Later in the Governor's Speech I note the following:

The Government will undertake a program of reform to give citizens greater choice and control over the goods and services they receive from the Government. This will be done by injecting greater competition and responsibility for performance in schools and colleges, in hospitals and health services, in community services, in the legal system, in transport, in the supply of water and sewerage services, in the supply of power . . .

I have mentioned water and sewerage services, but I would not even start to deal with power. Let me deal briefly with teaching. Less than four years ago the Government unilaterally removed 2,500 teachers from the system. This year, with the changing school environment, it will have to re-employ 800 teachers. Suddenly the money can be found for that. That says something about financial management. The sales of education property have not been all that good. The Government has shown extraordinary flexibility by being able to recruit 35 per cent of the teachers who were dismissed and put them into schools throughout the State. If that is injecting competition and responsibility for performance, a better explanation is necessary. I hope sooner or later one will be given, but the position has not been satisfactory so far as the education community is concerned though those job opportunities are welcomed. To me it demonstrates mismanagement and poor planning which, in this day and age are inexcusable.

What did the Governor say about the Legal

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Aid Commission? He said: "The Government will streamline the Legal Aid Commission and make it more efficient and accountable and ensure that it operates within its means". He did not say anything about expanding its area or that it intends to cover the areas that were dropped out over the past few years. The Speech says nothing about the additional money or assistance to meet the needs of people who cannot afford to defend themselves or to take action when they have been grievously disadvantaged by others. That is a scandal that needs correction, and it needs it now. The sooner the Government acknowledges that fact, the better.

The Legal Aid Commission has decreased its services. For various reasons it has denied the opportunity for justice to many people. I hear regularly in my office of instances, particularly in regard to family law, where one partner has received legal aid and the other has been denied it, though both may be on a form of social service. That is inexplicable and unacceptable. I hope the Government does more than simply make a two-line comment on the provision of legal aid for the people of the State. The Victims Compensation Tribunal also is mentioned in the Governor's Speech. I recall a press report recently of a comment made by the South Australian Attorney General in regard to a national charter for victims of crime.

I have a quotation from the *Australian* of early January this year. The charter was presented to all Attorneys General at their most recent meeting. I understand from the *Australian* of 27th January that the report was accepted and that all States will be considering a national charter for victims of crime. Victims of crime have not received the support in this State that they have in South Australia. I hope that the New South Wales Attorney General will give serious consideration to the national charter and that we as a nation can have common legislation to provide for people who, through no fault of their own, are victims of serious crime, either directly or indirectly. If that happens, some of the existing anomalies will be rapidly corrected.

If time permitted, I would speak further on that subject, but I have a number of matters I wish to raise. It is important that the Government take note of the proposed charter and take action. In my electorate is an organisation known as Vocal, a victims of crime organisation which supports parents, relatives, dependants and people who are direct victims of crime. That support team has had considerable input to the Government's committee system. I hope that better arrangements can be made for victims of crime. At present prisoners are released without victims being made aware of their release and no mechanism is in place to give the victims that advice. This matter has been discussed before, but nothing has happened. If these matters have to be firmed up legislatively, that should be done. Let us give everyone in this State a fighting chance to protect themselves and receive true justice. The Governor's Speech makes significant reference to public works, in the following terms: "The \$540 million addition to capital works spending in 1992-93 is creating real jobs, stimulating the economy and improving community facilities". That sounds great, but why has \$540 million not been spent so far this financial year? Why the slow release of this money?

The underspending of funds affects jobs and community amenities. The Governor said that additional money is available, yet figures released by Treasury - the Government's own experts - show that more money has been held back and at this stage is not available for expenditure. Something is radically wrong. The Government should look to its laurels if it is the champion and protector of the people. Early in his Speech the Governor stated that "good financial management is not an end in itself, but rather a means of improving living standards and social welfare in a sustainable manner". This is yet to be reflected in policy at the grass roots.

In my electorate a number of problems have been experienced with the construction of a railway station at a little suburb next to Newcastle University called Warrabrook. For this purpose the Federal Government, through the Minister for Land Transport, the Hon. Bob Brown, has allocated \$2.5 million. To date that money has not been used and it has been recommended to Government that it not be used. Many people at the university and the Warrabrook estate area are disappointed because they are relying on the implementation of that service. Funds are available, and if the Government needs to cut its cloth to suit that amount, then it should do so. This may mean relocating the facility to a more advantageous position, locating it on the site provided by the city council under the Warrabrook local environmental plan or bridging part of the wetland to allow access to the site. That money should not be placed in jeopardy of sliding back into the Commonwealth

coffers.

The four-lane F1 Freeway, soon to open at Minmi in my electorate, will merge with a two-lane marginally upgraded county road and a network of council streets. As of last month no one had approached Newcastle City Council to inquire whether the road could cope with additional traffic. In November streams of traffic travelling interstate via the Pacific Highway will pour into that area, cause mayhem on the road and destroy what is left of the lifestyle of rural people in that location. The portion of the New England Highway that will take traffic from the F1 Freeway to the Pacific Highway at Hexham Bridge will isolate the suburbs of Beresfield, Tarro and Woodberry. The volume of traffic will be such that residents will be unable to enter into or exit from that suburban network. The Federal Government has recognised the problem and offered \$2.35 million to help build a grade separated intersection.

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The State Government has rejected the offer on the basis that it does not have any money. Statistics reveal that at least one person is killed each year at that intersection. It is recognised by the police as being the worst traffic black spot in the lower Hunter. Tail-end accidents go on ad infinitum. Because the New England Highway becomes the national highway past Lochinvar and Branxton, and the Pacific Highway carries the largest volume of traffic of any highway in the State, that is a major problem the Government needs to address. A reallocation of funds may be necessary but denial of funds is a disaster; it sentences my constituents to death, and I cannot remain silent on that. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

A number of my colleagues and the honourable member for Port Macquarie spoke about health issues. In spite of the Governor's comment, health is in crisis in New South Wales. Since this Government came to office Wallsend, Parramatta, Kiama, Marrickville, and Glebe hospitals have been closed. Also, Lidcombe, Canterbury, Western Suburbs and Balmain hospitals are to be closed. I am informed Prince Henry Hospital will be severely disadvantaged by the loss of 100 beds. Of course, the net gain is to the John Hunter Hospital and in the transfer of Concord hospital from Federal Government to State ownership. Concord Hospital will be transferred along with \$1.3 billion to be paid over five years, with an additional \$200 million for health provisions in hospital structures around the State. On page 51 of the annual report of the Department of Health there is a financial statement with a bar chart showing that the Hunter Area Health Service is 2.6 per cent over budget. John Hunter, a high-tech teaching hospital with 492 beds, opened three years ago. It now appears to serve the function of a general referral hospital and manages to collect most of the referred patients from the north of the State at the expense of people in the Hunter area because their waiting list appears to grow longer.

Casualty services in the Newcastle region are provided at John Hunter Hospital and the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. John Hunter Hospital was designed as an accident and emergency hospital not a casualty hospital. Honourable members who know the difference will understand my concerns. This means 350,000 have to rely on one real casualty hospital - the Mater - and a jumped up facility at the John Hunter Hospital. That is frightening. The casualty ward at the Royal Newcastle Hospital serviced the entire port, a number of industries and tourist facilities in the city. This ward is now closed. Because people still recognise it as a casualty hospital, to stop people using it the hospital closes at 9.30 p.m. I know this because my wife, who has been a patient there for the past week, advised me that it would be locked. Staff have to enter and exit by arrangement with security. So, people should not fall ill in Newcastle - it would be a problem for them if they did.

The Newcastle region is hopelessly underfunded and will remain so until a reallocation of funding throughout the entire system is implemented. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will propose legislation I hope to ensure an inquiry that will demonstrate clearly that a reorganisation of funding is required in this State. I could speak also about a goods and services tax and its impact on health. If \$30 to \$32 is required to take a sick child to hospital and then receive a refund of 75 per cent, unless people are insured not many will visit the doctor or a hospital for advice and treatment. The referral of patients to John Hunter Hospital is overloading the system. The waiting time for public patients in the immediate service area is increasing.

A reduced in-ward recovery time may appear to be super efficient, but advice suggests that as a direct result of this, the readmission of, in particular, older patients has increased dramatically. There are interesting reports on that issue. Readmission rates are high among children aged zero to 17 for seizure and headache. The group readmission is 4 per cent and readmission to the John Hunter Hospital is 11.8 per cent - a significantly higher number. There are similar figures in respect of many bowel procedures - the average group readmission rate is 4.8 per cent, whereas the readmission rate at John Hunter Hospital is 13.4 per cent. The group readmission rate for DNC cannulisation and radio implants for malignancies is 7.7 per cent but 31.8 per cent for John Hunter. What is wrong at that hospital that it should have so many readmissions? Why are we told on one hand that the system is superefficient and then told quite blandly on the other that readmission rates for most complicated procedures, particularly for the older age group, are significantly higher at that hospital than anywhere else in the State? It is an absolute scandal that will not be tolerated by my constituents and will be raised again and again until significant corrections are made to ensure it does not recur?

I turn now to the impact on the health system of the closure of Wallsend hospital. That hospital had 180 beds, of which 120 were in service when it was closed. I am advised by a number of medical practitioners and by at least two visiting medical officers that the Hunter Area Health Service currently is about 180 beds short in hospitals in the Newcastle region. I am told the Hunter will get more beds. At Christmas 12 beds were opened at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, but then something strange happened: there was a Christmas close-down and the closure of 25 beds. Two weeks ago a circular was issued stating that 25 acute care beds would again be closed from the end of March to the beginning of May. The effect of that is that between December and the beginning of May 25 acute care beds at that hospital will be out of service for 10 weeks, but the Government's comment is that it has opened 12 additional beds. If that is described as an addition to bed numbers, I am sure the situation will become more unpleasant as time goes on.

What about the wonderful proposal to open 36 acute care beds and convert them to psychiatric beds in public hospitals? I see no reason why the medical profession cannot make a decision that will

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allow psychiatric treatment in a public hospital, but another 36 acute care beds will be taken out of a system that is already stretched and demonstrably short of beds. These sorts of decisions must have some sense to them but I see little evidence of that at this stage.

Money is always a problem. The Mater Misericordiae Hospital receives money for providing pacemakers to three categories of patients - those receiving service pensions through the Department of Veterans Affairs, private patients and public patients. However, the annual allocation of those funds at that hospital runs out after one month; the allocation at John Hunter Hospital lasts precisely four months. Patients should be advised to seek their pacemakers at another hospital, perhaps in another State, but they should watch out in Newcastle because they will not get the service they are paying for. Services have been whittled away. For a variety of reasons 800 staff have been made redundant and services have been reduced. I give full marks to those staff members who have remained. They are doing a sterling job under terrible circumstances, but that is not good enough when essential equipment is not available for them to do their work.

Last week my wife, as an orthopaedic patient with a bad disc needing traction, entered hospital four days before the right belt for her waist size could be supplied to which weights could be attached. She kept the bed warm for four days, at cost to the State, but treatment did not commence during that period. The nearest belt was at the John Hunter Hospital. When I asked could I go out in my car and get it I received the response: "No, Mr Price, you cannot do that. You have to wait until we have an ambulance coming with an emergency transfer. They will bring the belt in with them".

As a member of Parliament I do not expect more privileges than might be given anyone else. My wife is a staff member but she did not want to make any particular claim to privilege. But how do old age pensioners get on when they are confronted by these difficulties? It is not true that services are improving in provinces. These serious problems need to be addressed and corrected now. I wish to refer to an article in today's *Newcastle Herald* entitled "Extra funding for cataract operations". Kurri Kurri hospital - and there are five hospitals in the Waratah electorate - is to receive initial funding of \$100,000 to increase the number of cataract

operations. How long will that additional funding last, at \$1,000 an eye? Most people have two eyes. The additional funding will assist 50 or 60 people at the most, but I do not know what that will mean for an area the size of Newcastle and the Hunter. The article, under the subheading "Paediatric specialist expected soon", further states:

Dr Smith said yesterday that the position had been advertised and he hoped an appointment would be made soon.

He was hopeful that additional funding would be forthcoming from the State Government's tertiary services enhancement program, which would pay for the additional staff specialist position.

A replacement could not be obtained after a staff member resigned from what is claimed to be the newest, most efficient high-tech hospital in the State, which qualified people should be clamouring to join and serve in? No wonder there is a crisis in the north. Why are bed costs cheaper there than those in any other area of the State - or so I am advised - yet funding is abysmally low and still \$25 million behind. I do not know where the Governor received his advice but he was poorly advised. If he thinks that clever management by the Government is saving the State, what is it supposed to be saving it from? I can find no evidence of progress to support the comment made by the Governor in his speech that good financial management is not an end to itself but rather a means of improving living standards and social welfare in a sustainable manner. It is about time priorities were reordered so that money is allocated where it should be spent.

Debate adjourned on motion by Dr Macdonald.

CRIMES (REGISTRATION OF INTERSTATE RESTRAINT ORDERS) AMENDMENT BILL

Message

Message received from the Legislative Council requesting that the Crimes (Registration of Interstate Restraint Orders) Amendment Bill transmitted to the Legislative Assembly for concurrence during a previous session of the present Parliament, not having been finally dealt with because of the prorogation of the Legislature, be now proceeded with under the Assembly's standing order in that behalf.

PRE-TRIAL DIVERSION OF OFFENDERS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Message

Message received from the Legislative Council requesting that the Pre-Trial Diversion of Offenders (Amendment) Bill transmitted to the Legislative Assembly for concurrence during a previous session of the present Parliament, not having been finally dealt with because of the prorogation of the Legislature, be now proceeded with under the Assembly's standing order in that behalf.

STANDING COMMITTEE UPON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE

Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Hazzard) reported the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr Speaker

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

That leave be given to Legislative Council Members of the Joint Select Committee Upon Police Administration to appear before and give evidence to

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the Legislative Council Standing Committee Upon Parliamentary Privilege in relation to its inquiry into the disclosure of in camera evidence taken by the Joint Select Committee Upon Police Administration.

The Legislative Council requests that the Legislative Assembly pass a similar Resolution.

Legislative Council
3rd March, 1993

M. F. Willis
President

House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.
