

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 2 March 1994

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS

Mr CARR: My question is directed to the Premier. According to figures obtained by the Opposition under freedom of information, is the real number of people waiting for hospital beds in New South Wales now more than 45,500 - the highest in the State's history? Have nearly 10,000 of these people been waiting for more than six months for desperately needed operations? What does the Premier propose to do?

Mr FAHEY: The Leader of the Opposition is seeking to make an apology for the failed Medicare policies of his colleagues in Canberra. He is seeking to direct attention away from the hopeless failure of the Commonwealth Government to deal with health. That was never more apparent than it was last Friday in Tasmania at the Council of Australian Governments, where true competition and government monopolies were the subjects of the day. The farce of health in this country is that every time the Commonwealth Government directs someone away from private health care organisations, which include private practitioners, and into the public hospital system, the taxpayers of New South Wales have to pick up the bill.

Why would the Federal Government not seek to put everyone into the public hospital system so that it would avoid picking up the bill in Medicare as it must do if there is treatment outside the public hospital system? In health care this Government is being very successful. It is picking up the shortfall in facilities that occurred six years ago. Month after month we have seen, and will see for many months to come, new facilities being provided where services are needed by the community. Time and again those facilities are coming on line, as will be seen first and foremost, for example, at Westmead Hospital, where a magnificent children's hospital is nearing completion.

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

Mr FAHEY: That facility will be of tremendous advantage to the community of the west. I have not heard of too many representatives of those in the west actually coming forward -

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

Mr FAHEY: - and thanking the Government for at long last providing that wonderful hospital for the young people of the west. That provision is being made right across the board. Next week at Liverpool the official opening will occur. I know the honourable member for Liverpool will be there and I know he will thank the Government for providing that facility.

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

Mr FAHEY: That policy is being pushed forward by this Government. Where there are most needs, they will be met.

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

Mr FAHEY: The old furphy about beds in hospitals can be heard from the honourable member for Marrickville and the Leader of the Opposition. It is becoming abundantly clear to the community that health is about a healthier lifestyle, about ways in which treatment can be given, and about services provided in the community. Health is not about days spent in hospital. Health is about ensuring that people are treated properly through daycare and then taken back into their community where they are comfortable, and where they can recover quickly, provided back-up is available. The Government emphasises that. Waiting lists such as those described by the Opposition have reduced significantly. The Minister for Health recently issued figures on the numbers waiting.

Mr Carr: All lies.

Mr FAHEY: The Leader of the Opposition plays his little games and continually seeks to alarm the community.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Health to order.

Mr FAHEY: In November 1993 a performance survey of core booking lists was conducted by area and region. Figures are now significantly lower. Reduction has continued to occur almost every month during that period, despite the waiting period for elective surgery. That situation has been reflected by many members of the community coming forward to indicate to their local members - to me in my local area and, I am sure, to many members opposite - that they have noted a marked improvement in those figures.

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

Mr FAHEY: That fallacy is one of the typical big lies perpetrated and pushed by the Leader of the Opposition as he runs around making statements but

Page 65

never following them up. Whenever he makes a statement there is never any back-up on where the money is to come from. With some of the hare-brained schemes he has suggested, is there any wonder there is no money to back them up. Under this Government health care has improved out of sight. Health care is continuing to improve and it will continue to improve for a long time under the excellent stewardship of the Minister for Health.

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

DISBURSEMENT OF BUSHFIRE RELIEF DONATIONS

Mr KERR: My question without notice is addressed to the Premier and Minister for Economic Development. Has he received advice on the progress of disbursement of funds raised for victims of the January bushfires by the Bushfire Relief Co-ordination Committee?

Mr FAHEY: I thank the honourable member for Cronulla for his question on this matter, which has been the subject of a great deal of media speculation. A number of stories have arisen, as they always will when a tragedy of such proportions comes upon the community. After those tragic fires in January - a disaster of

enormous magnitude - we are going through a rebuilding period. This rebuilding period is a challenge which the entire community of New South Wales must meet, and which in my view it is meeting very well. The enormous generosity of the community has been evidenced by donations totalling over \$12 million. The collection has been co-ordinated by the State Bushfire Relief Co-ordination Committee through the Community Disaster Relief Fund Committee. Major charities - including the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Red Cross Society, the Salvation Army, Lions Clubs International and the Seventh Day Adventist Church - have endorsed the principles and processes adopted by the co-ordination committee. Those same principles and processes have also been endorsed by a representative of the Lord Mayor's fund who is on the committee.

As at 28 February, 811 applications for assistance had been received. To date a total amount of \$5.2 million, including Government disaster relief program grants, has been approved for distribution to people suffering personal hardship because of bushfires. This is a high level of disbursement over a short period compared with other State or national welfare disaster relief programs. Considerable media attention has been given to a proposal by some of the bushfire sufferers that a flat rate of \$20,000 be paid to all victims, regardless of whether they have home insurance or other resources.

The committee unanimously ruled out the suggestion of an across-the-board grant of \$20,000, mainly because of the variety of circumstances affecting individual households. Only a certain amount of money is available within the fund, and the payment of a flat \$20,000 grant could severely limit the funds available to those in need in the future. It should be emphasised that permission of the victims is needed for the committee to negotiate with insurance companies in order to ensure the speediest disbursement of remaining funds.

Insurance companies have received applications for relief. To date, approximately \$19 million has been paid out and a further \$23 million has been approved - the bulk of which will be progress payments as the houses are rebuilt. The statistics are somewhat damning: approximately 55 per cent of the victims of this tragedy were either underinsured or uninsured. A shortfall for a lot of people is left when a tragedy of this nature occurs. That is something the community and its individuals need to address.

The suggestion that the bushfire relief co-ordination committee is stalling is incorrect and irresponsible. The committee has a responsibility to ensure that the funds are allocated fairly and according to need, and that appropriate assessment procedures are applied in all cases. That must be done without putting people through the hoops. Anyone who thinks that he has been assessed unfairly is entitled to appeal against the decision.

A number of statements have been issued by major charities. I have a number of those statements with me. The Sydney City Mission expressed concern about public attacks on the committee's work and the gratuitous and ill-informed criticism about the role of the Department of Community Services. The Salvation Army pointed out that whilst an across-the-board payment of \$20,000 may be a quick and simple solution "it could totally ignore the homeless people in greatest need". The Reverend Harry Herbert, who is the General Secretary of the Uniting Church Board for Social Responsibility and Justice, rejected suggestions that a flat grant be made. The Red Cross Society, which contributed some \$3.3 million to the fund, fully supports the processes of the committee.

All these charities are making decisions on how the money is to be distributed; a community committee is making the decisions - the Government is not making the decisions. All these organisations are committed to equitable distribution of funds, and to doing it as quickly as possible. I assure the House that that is the Government's wish and it is my personal wish. I will continue to monitor this situation to ensure that there will be an outcome at the earliest possible time.

I refer to the suggestion of the Opposition for the possible establishment of a select parliamentary inquiry into the January bushfires. As a result of the bushfires a number of investigations have been undertaken by the Government, including the independent coronial inquiry. The Coroner is a professional, independent investigator who has the power to subpoena witnesses and obtain evidence. He can take evidence from emergency service officers, witnesses, and government and industry organisations in open court or by written submission. The Coroner has access to professional investigators and resources. It would be a gross waste of

taxpayers' money to establish a second committee to travel around the State to determine the reasons for the fires.

Page 66

The Government acknowledges that it is necessary for guidelines to be established to maximise the State's ability to reduce the risk of fires and of damage to people and property. This can be done both through the Coroner's inquest and the Cabinet subcommittee which was established by me and is chaired by the Deputy Premier. It is the Government's intention that legislation relating to the way in which we handle fire prevention and firefighting be dealt with in this session of Parliament. Everything that should be done or could be done with respect to both investigating the bushfires and ensuring that the greatest assistance possible is given to the sufferers of the bushfires has been done.

This is a community issue which should be addressed constructively and in a non-political way. That is the way in which the community interest will be served in the long term and in the most effective manner. With respect to the payments that are being made, it is essential that there be an equitable distribution. There is no way that we can deal with this matter quickly. There is no quick fix. It is not something that might be dealt with by way of a whiteboard. The Labor Party is famous for doing this and it has done so in the past. It is important that the Government and the major charities be allowed to get on with this job.

GOVERNOR'S TERM

Mr KNIGHT: My question is directed to the Premier and Minister for Economic Development. Did the Premier's staff tell the *Telegraph Mirror* in early February of plans to replace the Governor and disparage his contribution? Will the Governor's term be extended past August of this year, or is he to be the shortest serving Governor, with the exception of Sir David Martin, since World War II?

Mr FAHEY: I am not sure whether that is an attempt by the honourable member for Campbelltown to establish his tendencies towards the monarchy. Is that part of the purge, moving from the left to the right? Does the honourable member need to show support for the monarchy and seek to establish how much of an all-round player he is in this?

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

Mr FAHEY: The matter in respect of the Governor is one that rests entirely between myself and the Governor. I add one more thing: no person, and I stress no person, has been approached to replace the Governor, whenever his term, or any extended term, may expire.

STATE RAIL AUTHORITY SIGNALLING SYSTEM

Mr O'DOHERTY: I address my question without notice to the Minister for Transport. Has the Minister received the results of the latest inquiry into the State Rail's signalling system? Will he advise the House of the results of that study?

Mr BAIRD: I thank the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai for his question. Obviously this report is the moment of truth for the honourable member for Kogarah and his long-time mate, Mr Vince Neary. As I will reveal in a moment, there have not been too many moments of truth in this whole process when it comes to plans by the Opposition about the State Rail signalling system. It is now clear that the Opposition's constant allegations about unsafe practices and signalling inefficiencies were way over the top in scaremongering.

Honourable members will recall that late last year - after another round of allegations about rail safety by Mr Neary and his official spokesman, the honourable member for Kogarah - a public inquiry was ordered into

the State Rail signalling system. The recommendation by the Ombudsman made no technical evaluation at all. Mr James Early, one of the top signalling experts in the United States, was appointed to undertake this inquiry. I am sure not even the honourable member for Kogarah would dispute his qualifications. Mr Early has had 44 years experience in signalling design and maintenance in the United States and was in charge of signals and communications for the entire Amtrak railroad network for 15 years. After accepting submissions, conducting public hearings, riding with drivers, inspecting signal boxes and taking evidence in camera from those who requested it, Mr Early has completed his report, which I now seek leave to table.

Leave granted.

The findings of this inquiry could not be more explicit. In the report, under the question "Is the Signalling System Safe?" Mr Early states:

I have . . . come to the conclusion that the system, as it currently stands, does provide for the safe operation of trains on the NSW network.

Furthermore, I consider that the New South Wales system is as safe as any comparable railroad in the United States . . .

In some respects, State Rail has implemented procedures which are better than those applicable to Class 1 railroads in the United States . . . I am of the view that State Rail's signalling systems do provide for sufficient levels of safe operation to place them in terms of safety, on a par with other international railroads of a similar size and complexity.

The evidence presented during the public hearings mainly concerned design deficiencies, poor testing, poor record keeping and other legislative unsafe conditions. Mr Early further states:

While these concerns may have had some validity during the 1970s and 1980s, -

And who was in government at that time? The Opposition was.

- they are not warranted in 1994. Equally, statements to the effect that conditions have deteriorated do not stand up against the evidence. Conditions have, in fact, been steadily improving in recent years.

Mr Early concludes by stating:

The New South Wales system is as safe as any comparable railroad in the United States.

Page 67

This world authority on signalling has confirmed what we have known all along; that is that there were problems in the signalling system but those problems occurred during Labor's term in office. This Government has spent \$350 million repairing the damage left by the Labor Government. Many times the honourable member for Kogarah comes into this Chamber with his scaremongering program. An investigation has been conducted by the top signalling expert in the world. That expert said that the New South Wales system is safe. All honourable members know the words "Brian told me so".

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

Mr BAIRD: I am sure the honourable member does not like it. Honourable members run into this House and make allegations and run out. However, if one looks at the questions asked by the honourable member for Kogarah, it would be difficult to find one that has substance to it, or to find anything in terms of substance with signalling. There is no substance in it at all.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much interjection from both sides of the Chamber. I call the honourable member for Campbelltown to order for the second time.

Mr BAIRD: Mr Early made 21 recommendations relating to improving the signalling system and these will be implemented by State Rail as a matter of urgency. I stress that Mr Early makes the point that none of the areas he has identified for improvement represents an immediate threat to persons or property. This is not the first but the seventh independent expert who has carried out an investigation. Mr Neary has made these allegations before, as I have said in this House. Mr Neary would not participate in the last inquiry, the Nelson report. However Mr Neary could not run away from this report. He asked for an extension; he said he was not ready to participate. The Ombudsman said that Mr Neary was to participate and get on with the job.

Mr Neary refused to appear before the Nelson inquiry but in this latest inquiry he was given the final opportunity to put up or shut up. Predictably, he failed to back up his claim. Enough is enough. The honourable member for Kogarah has been exposed for the fraud that he is in terms of the allegations he brings to the House. He loves to come in and -

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

Mr BAIRD: The honourable member will be back. We have had the signalling inquiry and it shows up the lack of credibility of the honourable member for Kogarah. Time and time again the honourable member has made allegations and all honourable members know that this Government has reformed the State Rail system. The allegations made by the honourable member are false.

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

Mr BAIRD: Mr Neary gave public evidence to the inquiry and Mr Early arranged for Mr Neary to accompany him on inspections of three of the largest signal-boxes in the network. The allegations simply had no substance. Before the inquiry there was an attempt to discredit the system. We have this man who conducted an investigation, who took Mr Neary with him, and who said, "Point out all the problems". There was a full investigation. People could have gone to the inquiry and given their evidence in camera had they wished to do so. There was ample opportunity. No evidence was denied him and in his report he said that State Rail provided him with every opportunity to investigate. He was permitted to go anywhere and to talk to whomever he wished. He was presented with each inquiry report, test report, failure report and any other information he requested.

The inquiry could not have been more thorough. It found the State Rail signalling system is not only safe but also compares with the best in the world. The time has come for Mr Neary and the honourable member for Kogarah to butt out and let State Rail rebuild the system that the Opposition left in tatters. The Government has spent \$2.3 billion rebuilding State Rail. The evidence is there and the Opposition knows it. The investment is now paying off because the signalling system has been shown to be safe. Our trains are more reliable and ontime running is at record levels. The time has come for the honourable member for Kogarah to butt out.

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

Mr BAIRD: I quote what the honourable member for Kogarah said in this House on 13 October. He stated:

I can assure honourable members in this House that unsafe practices in the Sydney rail signalling system are still happening . . . I repeat that rail safety is in doubt.

Let us have no more of this. There have been seven inquiries. The Government brought the top signalling man here to conduct a full inquiry that lasted for many weeks. He investigated all aspects and the final conclusion was that our system is safe. The Government is rebuilding the system from the top to the bottom.

The rebuilding program is a program of which each and every member on the Government side is rightly proud. The Government is building a better railway system, which the Opposition left in tatters.

PRISONER SMART CARD INITIATIVE

Mr WHELAN: My question without notice is directed to the Premier and Minister for Economic Development. Will he extend the \$5 prisoner phonecard initiative to law abiding low income families and homeless young people? Can he assure the House that the prisoner phonecard system cannot be abused by using it to traffic drugs in gaol or for any other illegal activities?

Mr FAHEY: It is not a phonecard, it is a smart card. They are described as smart cards - and that is terminology that is used in the industry - because they

Page 68

are geared to specific numbers. In the case of the trial that has been carried out for several months at Parramatta Gaol the cards relate to specific numbers of the families of the prisoners involved. Everyone knows that this Government has never been soft on crime. We know, of course, what Labor had in the way of policy relating to prisoners. The legacy of Rex Jackson is alive and well.

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

Mr FAHEY: Prisoners did not need to keep contact with their families when Rex Jackson was around. They could just walk out any time they liked and go and meet with their families.

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

Mr FAHEY: We all know that this is the party that played to the rules that were corrupt.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs to order.

Mr FAHEY: The trial in respect of the smart card has been taking place for several months at Parramatta Gaol because it is recognised that even prisoners have families and, if we are to continue to ensure that there is a chance for members of that particular family to keep in some contact with one another, there is a need to recognise the ways in which that might occur. Are we saying that if a man goes to gaol he is no longer a father, he no longer has a right to have contact with his son or daughter? This Government is not heartless.

The trial of the smart card was designed to ensure that it is very narrow in its application and in the manner in which it can be used. It is one of a number of issues and initiatives that have been raised in the International Year of the Family to ensure that we are capable of addressing the true meaning of the word "family" within a community - that support group, that need to have contact, even when it relates to prisoners.

It is a trial but there is one point that the honourable member for Ashfield raised in his question which I assure him is under further consideration as an extension of the initiatives in respect of the International Year of the Family and that is a way to ensure that contact remains between children and their parents. It relates to kids who have left home. They might be described as street kids, they might be described as being away from home and living in circumstances where contact with their families has been broken off. I believe that is worthy of pursuit. I assure the honourable member that it has been under consideration for some weeks and that I will continue to consider it in an attempt to find ways and means of providing a smart card for the kids who are out there on the streets -

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

Mr FAHEY: - who may not make contact with their families and for whom having a little card in their pockets might just be the catalyst that makes that happen.

WATERFRONT DISPUTE

Mr BECK: I address my question without notice to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works and Minister for Ports. Has he received advice on the effect of the waterfront dispute on the ports of Sydney and Botany, and on the trading reputation of New South Wales?

Mr ARMSTRONG: As honourable members would know, the Australian Stevedores waterside workers have now gone back to work after three weeks off the job. I say at the outset that all the benefits which have accrued to New South Wales port users from the reforms introduced by this Government are at risk as the result of that strike. In recent days at the Council of Australian Governments conference in Hobart the Prime Minister has been making great capital out of the fact that the Federal Government is leading the nation in the new age of economic reform for the elimination of restrictive practices in the professions and monopolies in State Government trading enterprises.

Mr Whelan: They do not believe it.

Mr ARMSTRONG: The shadow attorney general says, "No one believes them". That is right, no one believes the Federal Government. It is a pity Mr Keating and the Federal Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr Brereton, were not as keen to protect our trading reputation and solve the waterfront dispute. Because the dispute involved their mates, they were quite happy to let it drag on without taking any action. When they acted, it was too little too late, and the action was totally ineffective.

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

Mr ARMSTRONG: While Australia's international trading reputation was hanging in the balance, the Prime Minister showed more interest in defending his own pork-barrelling. Honourable members can take that however they like.

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

Mr ARMSTRONG: The port of Sydney was effectively tied up for the best part of a month and the ability of New South Wales to trade effectively was, and is, being jeopardised at the very time our nation is supposed to be reaping the benefit of economic recovery. Undoubtedly this threatens our hard-won reputation as a reliable trading partner. This morning many honourable members would have heard news reports of how much damage has been done to our international reputation as a result of this three-week strike. It is being claimed that the three-week strike has cost us three years in terms of international goodwill. With 50 per cent of the stevedoring work

Page 69

force on strike, the ports of Sydney and Botany have almost become choked with delayed cargo. Nearly 2,000 import and export containers are still held up on our wharves, together with hundreds of tonnes of general cargo.

To give honourable members some indication, the delayed export cargo includes 11 containers and 89 reefer boxes of frozen meat, eight containers of vegetables and six containers of oranges. Those commodities are vital exports so far as New South Wales and Australia are concerned. The most important thing is that many of those products were destined either for new markets or for markets which have recently been opened up. Our capacity to trade on a continual reliable basis has been immediately destroyed. In addition, 20,000 tonnes of salt and 300 rolls of newsprint which were urgently needed by industry are being held up.

If this disgraceful state of affairs were not bad enough, a total of 28 ships had to be diverted or were otherwise held up because of the strike. It will be many weeks before shipping schedules are back to normal and backlogs of cargo in the ports of Sydney and Botany are cleared. Since 1988 New South Wales ports have undergone an unprecedented improvement in performance through a major reform program initiated by the New

South Wales Government, much of it led by my predecessor, the present Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads. The three ports of New South Wales have been transformed from inefficient bureaucratic monoliths into highly efficient, commercially driven business enterprises which are responding and responsive to customer needs. Last year the New South Wales Government reduced port charges by 9 per cent and did not spend one cent of public money to do so. On the other hand, after spending \$450 million to reform the waterfront, the Federal Labor Government still has not got it right; it still cannot and will not deliver. If it had done so, the waterfront dispute would not have occurred in the first place.

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

Mr ARMSTRONG: After \$450 million has been spent by the Australian Labor Party, New South Wales has undergone a debilitating strike. I know members opposite do not like it.

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

Mr ARMSTRONG: The fact is that their party spent \$450 million worth of taxpayers' money. For what? For a three-week strike that has done irreparable damage to Australia's reputation in new and traditional markets.

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

Mr ARMSTRONG: In comparison, the New South Wales Government's achievements in New South Wales are clear for everyone to see. Those achievements are backed up by the application of business-based financial performance tests to the port authorities. In real terms, port charges are lower now than they were ten years ago. The operations of New South Wales ports are meeting or approaching international performance benchmarks. Unfortunately, the ability of the New South Wales Government to influence a full return to work by the stevedores was constrained because the Maritime Workers Union is a federally registered union, and reform of stevedoring has always been the responsibility of the Commonwealth.

Many people - port users, the general public, international customers, members of international governments - are asking why it is that after all the promises and the goodwill that has been created in Sydney in recent years by the New South Wales Government's lowering of port charges, the Federal Government, after having trumpeted so loudly about its industrial waterfront reforms, failed the test when the real pressure was first applied. It failed the first test. Once again the Labor Party could not and did not deliver and, indeed, did not look as though it was particularly keen to deliver. It ran when the heat was applied. There was no performance and no real commitment to perform. That is the history of the Australia Labor Party at both State and Federal levels. Disputes such as the recent waterfront dispute cannot be allowed to continue. Although the 55 employees have returned to work, the dispute must be resolved quickly and in a highly public manner so that the Government can commence to restore the goodwill it has been able to create in the ports of New South Wales since 1988.

BARRINGTON TOPS AND WERRIKIMBE WILDERNESS DECLARATIONS

Ms ALLAN: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for the Environment. Did the Minister say on Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio that he would press ahead with new wilderness declarations over Barrington Tops and Werrikimbe? What is the timetable for these declarations?

Mr HARTCHER: The Parliament has been in recess for three months. Members of the Opposition have had all the opportunities in the world to think up real lines of attack on the Government. What do honourable members hear? Wilderness declarations have been referred to in all the newspapers.

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

Mr HARTCHER: The possible replacement of the Governor has been referred to in all the newspapers.

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

Mr HARTCHER: Every question that Opposition members come up with has been taken from newspaper clippings of the past two or three

Page 70

days. That is the state of the Australian Labor Party in New South Wales. Opposition members wandered around the press gallery last week and talked it up - "Come along next Wednesday, we will really have the Government on the ropes, the Government will be really reeling". What have they done? They have produced newspaper clippings. This is the Australian Labor Party 1994.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much interjection from both sides of the Chamber. I call the honourable member for Bankstown to order.

Mr HARTCHER: In the past three months the Government has continued its policies for the benefit and welfare of the people of New South Wales. The Australian Labor Party has had a really good holiday. In the last session of the Parliament not a single day passed when members of the Opposition could have gone home after question time and said, "We beat them today". After every question time there was a loud cheer from Government ranks, "We killed them once again". That will obviously continue for the rest of the year, because the Opposition has filled the first question time of the year with this week's newspaper headlines. Well done! It is absolutely staggering.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Smithfield to order. I call the honourable member for Cronulla to order. There is far too much interjection from the Chamber. That does not do any credit to the Chamber and its deliberations. In the latter part of the Minister's answer he has strayed from the relevance of the question. I ask him to return to the question or to resume his seat.

Mr HARTCHER: Part of the heavy questioning today has come from the member for Blacktown. She asked me about remarks I made on Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio some three weeks ago in answer to a question asked by an interviewer. We have all had these interviews. They go on for 15 minutes or for half an hour, and then the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, or whatever radio station it is, plays only five seconds of it in the bulletin.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will not tolerate that type of interjection. I call the Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs to order for the second time. I ask all members to exercise a certain amount of decorum.

Mr HARTCHER: That is no reflection on the ABC, which provides an excellent service; it is simply a statement about the way in which radio interviews are conducted in this State. I was asked whether there were further wilderness nominations before the Government. Wilderness nominations - as everybody in this House surely would know now, if they did not know previously - are not made by the Government; they are made by interested persons or interested organisations. Of course, the Government has considered a number of nominations.

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

Mr HARTCHER: Further wilderness nominations have been made for areas such as Barrington Tops, the Deua extensions, Budawang, Werrikimbe and New England. All of those areas have been the subject of public consultation or are on public display, and will come before the Government in due course. That is the simple answer I gave to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and that is the simple fact: that sooner or later

a government - this Government or some subsequent government - will have to consider them. It will be the Fahey Government or the Fahey Government mark II. No one in New South Wales has any doubt about that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Bligh to order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

Mr HARTCHER: The Leader of the Opposition has a 27 per cent popularity rating; he is now rising rapidly in the charts. He is now really spinning high in the public's estimation. After six years as Leader of the Opposition, his rating has crept up to 27 per cent. That is what the people of New South Wales think of him. They think he is the Ghandi of the gutless.

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

Mr HARTCHER: The Government has before it, through its consultative process, further nominations for wilderness, and they will be assessed and determined in due course.

POLICE COMMUNITY SAFETY PROGRAMS

Mr BLACKMORE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services. Will the Minister advise the House of the Government's progress in ensuring the safety of the community, particularly through programs at the local level?

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

Mr GRIFFITHS: I thank the honourable member for Maitland for his very important and timely question and commend him for his continuing interest in, and contribution to, the safety and welfare of the citizens of this State. I also welcome three ladies from Brooklyn Park in the United States of America, who have come to see this outstanding member make a real contribution in this House. Yesterday we saw a desperate attempt by a desperate Opposition leader to shore up his rapidly fading position. He mouthed meaningless platitudes and empty rhetoric to cover for the fact that Labor is soft on crime. This is not empty rhetoric; it is real action. Today I announced a major initiative that rightly

Page 71

recognises not only the crucial role that our police play in community protection but, more importantly, acknowledges the enormous contribution that each and every member of our communities can make in providing a safe environment for our children, our families and our neighbours.

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

Mr GRIFFITHS: That initiative comprises three major steps. First, we have adopted a safer by design program, under which the Liberal Party-National Party Government is making specially trained police available to draw together all available local knowledge and expertise to ensure that we do not inadvertently create an environment that encourages crime. The development proposals, which are still on the drawing-board, will have the benefit of expert advice on features such as lighting, landscaping, accessibility and visibility. Potential crime problems will be identified early and avoided before anyone becomes a victim. That means that the community, in partnership with police and local government, will have a real say in limiting violent crime in the future. This initiative is happening now. The first police community safety liaison officers have completed their training and are now in place. This initiative goes further than looking only to the future; it also addresses the present.

The second major initiative turns on the formation of complementary local community safety committees. The committees will comprise local representatives from the major government departments such as police, community services, local government and health, as well as representatives from all community organisations.

Their charter is to seek local solutions to local problems, to co-ordinate resources and to capitalise on the cohesion of the community in a united stand against crime. They will be responsible for carrying out community safety audits, identifying crime black spots, devising solutions and implementing action to fix those problems.

The contrast with the Opposition's empty words could not be more striking. A pilot operation of the community safety committees is now under way, with seven communities ready to participate. Clearly the Opposition is not interested, but those communities are Manly, Fairfield, Marrickville, Gosford, Wollongong, the Blue Mountains and Waverley. I am sorry that the honourable member for Coogee is not in the Chamber to hear this. It is a measure of the enormous interest and enthusiasm of the communities involved that they have embraced this initiative so wholeheartedly. I congratulate them. That support is a tribute to the spirit of civic responsibility which is so typical of the citizens of this State.

The final phase of the Liberal-National Party Government's approach is the introduction in a few months' time of a statewide community safety council. It will bring together in a co-ordinated way a range of public sector and private organisations to pool their talents and resources in the drive against crime. The needs are clear. Local communities are crying out for a say in protecting themselves. This Government has heard them and is responding. Our objectives are very clear: to make our streets safer for our families, our friends and our neighbours. Our targets are clear: the thugs, hooligans and cowards who prey on the rest of society. In contrast to the hollow words of the desperate Labor Party, the Liberal-National Party Government has listened to the community. It has seen the need and is acting now to provide grass roots answers where they are most needed. The choice is clear. Labor has always been soft on crime and allowed crime to flourish, but this Government has demonstrated the will to make our streets safer and to give the community a real voice in that process. This Government does not tell the community what it will do; it listens to the community and acts in the best interests of the community.

NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AND WILDERNESS AREAS INFORMATION

Mr KNOWLES: My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment. Is he aware that the honourable member for Monaro told Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio in Wagga Wagga on 8 February that senior National Parks and Wildlife Service officers deliberately withheld information from the Minister about wilderness areas? Does the Minister share the honourable member's view?

Mr HARTCHER: We now have the -

Mr West: On a point of order. The last part of the question clearly asks for an opinion. In accordance with previous rulings, it is out of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I rule the question out of order. If the honourable member wishes to rephrase it he may be given the call later.

REGIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Mr ZAMMIT: I address my question to the Minister for Small Business and Minister for Regional Development. What action is the Government taking to encourage the growth of employment across the State through the regional business development scheme?

Mr CHAPPELL: I thank the honourable member for Strathfield, who represents Burwood, for the question. The MLC from Burwood was with us in the gallery today for some time. It is an important question about the economic development of the State. Though the State was experiencing economic recession last year, my department had 8,500 inquiries - by telephone or in person through our regional development offices and so forth - about the way in which the Government could help people to underpin their businesses or assist in the

creation of new business, many in country New South Wales. The regional business development scheme and many of the other schemes we operate are proving to be

Page 72

very effective tools in attracting real jobs into the State. In the last few days the establishment of a major feedlot and associated abattoir at Tabbita Lane near Griffith in the far southwest was announced. That is a classic example.

Funding of less than \$3 million from my department will assist with the establishment of 460 permanent jobs in addition to the building up of a high-tech industry providing value-added products from local primary produce. The project will underpin the resurgence of meat processing in New South Wales, one of the key rural industries. The 460 jobs mentioned will be direct jobs provided in the industry but the multiplier effect on the local economy will at least double that number. So we are really talking about 900 jobs. The level of economic activity being supported by my department is a clear example of the commitment of this Government to get real jobs out in the -

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

Mr CHAPPELL: In both the small business area and in the regional business development area we are seeing many runs coming on to the board. Many dozens of grants are being regularly made to underpin real growth in business and real skilling in business to offset some of the immediate costs of developing the far regions of the State and to overcome some of the transport and communication costs of businesses establishing in those areas. When 460 direct jobs - perhaps 900 jobs in total - can be provided in the Riverina, it shows we are building sustainable resurgence in this State. New South Wales is showing its heels to Victoria and South Australia and, despite the folklore, Queensland. The House might note that we have had a number of inquiries from firms operating to our north and seeking to come into New South Wales. We are happy to have them. Total output from the Riverina proposal will be in the order of \$225 million worth of product per annum, with 96 per cent for the export market. This will make a major contribution to Australia's economy. Other industry will develop around the enterprise.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members who wish to converse will please do so outside the Chamber.

Mr CHAPPELL: Each year 150,000 head of cattle will be processed. They will need to be bred somewhere. That will provide direct business to the State's farms. Local farms will have to grow the 350,000 tonnes of feed required. There will be a requirement of 10,000 tonnes of protein meal, mineral supplements and other stock feed additives from primary industry. The annual payroll of \$20 million per annum - and growing because of the spin-off effects - will make a major contribution to the shire of Carrathool. The shire and Griffith Council have been totally supportive from day one. The honourable member for Murrumbidgee and everyone associated with the project in the southeast have given complete assistance. Dozens of industries around the State, in country towns and suburbs, are building thousands of real jobs each year. We are providing jobs in Dubbo, Lithgow, Bathurst, Blacktown and Smithfield - you name the suburb. We have been talking with businesses seeking to boost local employment in all those areas. In the past day or so there has been criticism from the Opposition because the business being supported in the Riverina is substantially owned by foreign interests. That may be so, but if we do not have the capacity in this State or in this country to -

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

Mr CHAPPELL: We must find the capital to invest in our value-adding industries. So far as I am concerned, if more than 460 jobs are involved, I will subsidise the firm involved, wherever it comes from, to provide those jobs. At the end of the day it is the level of economic activity - much and all as we would like the firm to be Australian owned - and the number of jobs that underpin our drive for regional development and small business development. I have had the great privilege of officiating at and opening launches of a number of new products and services, some of which are based on our regional industry headquarter program.

Foreign firms, mainly European, are using Sydney as a springboard into the South Asian and South-east Asian regions. More inquiries are being made as the months go by. The resurgence of the New South Wales economy is such that I believe we can look forward to picking up most of the benefits flowing at present from that economic recovery. The Government has been criticised by the Opposition for subsidising foreign firms but the Government is subsidising local jobs at the plants, on the farms, with the suppliers, in the trucking companies, at the local councils and in service industries in local towns. I am proud to be associated with that program and with the task the Government is carrying out in building real economic strength and depth in New South Wales.

REGIONAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Mr ZAMMIT: I ask a supplementary question. Can the Minister specify some of the regions which will benefit from the measures outlined?

Mr Whelan: On a point of order. This is a ruse by the Government to prevent the honourable member for Moorebank asking, in a rephrased form, a question that was previously ruled out of order. Second, the information requested by the member has already been provided in the earlier answer and no additional information has been sought. I ask you, Mr Speaker, to rule that the previously disallowed question asked by the honourable member for Moorebank be now allowed.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Ashfield has asked me to rule on a matter that is not within the jurisdiction of the Chair. The Chair has never been able to rule on the quality of

Page 73

questions. If it were, many questions might not be asked. The only criteria to guide the Chair in this case are that the supplementary question must come from the member who asked the preceding question and that it must arise from the answer. Whether or not the subject matter of the supplementary question asked by the honourable member for Strathfield was fully dealt with in the previous answer is not for the Chair to determine. It is really for the member who asks a supplementary question to determine that. Equally, if I allowed this question, 10 questions will have been asked and that will mean that the honourable member for Moorebank will not be able to ask before tomorrow a question which he otherwise might ask now. The use by members of the supplementary question procedure as a ruse to prevent a member from the other side asking the last question of the day is a matter for their own conscience.

Mr CHAPPELL: I thank the honourable member for his supplementary question because it gives me the opportunity to state that the specific example I was quoting to the House is but one of many. It happens to be one of the larger schemes, but I shall give other examples. Movement of the Berlei factory to Lithgow brought about 50 jobs and \$10 million worth of investment. Expansion of Riverina Wool Combing Pty Limited at Wagga Wagga meant about 90 jobs and \$62.3 million worth of investment. Expansion of Fletchers International Exports at Dubbo brought 70 jobs and \$25 million worth of additional development to an already very successful rural company. Consolidation of Macquarie Worsteds Limited at Albury is another example. Establishment of Southern Meats Pty Limited in Goulburn resulted in 200 jobs. But not all such examples are out in the bush; many are in the city areas as well. In the lead-up to the Federal election campaign last year a Federal Minister promised \$2 million for a project to clear the entrance to the port of Yamba.

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

Mr CHAPPELL: As soon as the election was over that Minister - never in his wildest hopes expecting to have to honour his promise because he did not expect to win that election - immediately welched on the deal and said that what he really meant was \$2 million as long as the State pays half. That is the level of promises that can be expected from the Opposition: it is happy to make promises but is nowhere to be seen if it has to put money on the table.

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

Mr CHAPPELL: That behaviour has been evident in the recent road show travelling around Australia talking about regional development. Everywhere it went it bleated about what was meant by regional development but did not even know the definition of a regional area. I offer a summary of assistance offered by the Government in a couple of the areas represented by members opposite.

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

Mr CHAPPELL: Last year in the Blacktown electorate the Government offered about \$291,000 in support through 16 different packages to 14 companies. In Bathurst, \$679,000 worth of support was offered, producing 200 jobs. That support includes the Berlei factory example I mentioned previously. In the Heffron electorate, right in the centre of this city, about \$261,000 was offered to 23 companies. In the Smithfield electorate, represented by the pest of the west, offers worth \$277,000 were made to 28 companies. Name any electorate. My department has been proving it is capable of giving real support to small and larger businesses in this State. The Government will support businesses when they come forward, so long as genuine economic opportunity is associated with them and real jobs are attached to them. The Government will put money into about 177 local government areas in New South Wales. The offers I have mentioned are mere examples of the sorts of assistance the Government has been providing.

BILLS UNPROCLAIMED

Mr Speaker, pursuant to sessional orders, laid upon the table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed as at 2 March 1994.

PETITIONS

Capital Punishment

Petition praying that the House will enact legislation to reintroduce capital punishment in extreme cases of murder where there is absolutely no doubt that the offender committed the crime, received from **Mr Windsor**.

Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

Petition praying that because of the public health risk associated with the homosexual and lesbian mardi gras parades, and their offensive and blasphemous nature, the House will take all steps necessary to prevent such future parades through the streets of Sydney, received from **Mr Kerr**.

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**.

Brothels

Petition praying that the Government will not take steps to legalise brothels but will close all existing brothels by enforcing the Disorderly Houses Act, received from **Mr Kerr**.

Shellharbour Public Hospital Children's Ward

Petition praying that the children's ward of Shellharbour Public Hospital be reopened, received from **Mr**

Rumble.

Page 74

Bulli, Coledale and Port Kembla District Hospitals

Petition praying that the present level of services be retained at Coledale, Bulli and Port Kembla district hospitals, received from **Mr Sullivan**.

Berkeley Police Station

Petition praying that Berkeley Police Station be manned on a 24-hour basis and foot patrols be introduced, received from **Mr Rumble**.

Warilla Police Station

Petition praying that more police be allocated to Warilla Police Station, received from **Mr Rumble**.

Home and Community Care Program

Petitions praying that the Home and Community Care program be allocated growth funding in the 1993-94 period consistent with increasing community need, received from **Mr Fraser, Mr Peacocke, Mr Rozzoli, Mr Sullivan and Mr Windsor**.

BILLS WITHDRAWN

Orders of the day for the second reading of the following bills discharged:

Domestic Dingo Protection Bill
Western Sydney (Tree Preservation) Bill
Education Reform (School Violence) Amendment Bill
Post-conviction Inquiries (Quashing of Conviction) (Johann Ernst Siegfried Pohl) Bill

Bills ordered to be withdrawn.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Re-ordering of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Ms Nori agreed to:

That General Business Order of the Day (for Bills) No. 18 (Sydney Heliport Bill) be re-ordered to take precedence on Thursday 3 March 1994.

Notices of Motions: Private Members' Bills

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield) [3.27]: As today is the first day that this Chamber has been operating under new procedures, I ask that the private member's bill, notice of which was given this day by the honourable member for Heffron - which naturally is not on the paper - be reinstated and be permitted to be debated tomorrow.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am not prepared to accede to the request. The honourable member for

Ashfield approached me earlier today. I indicated that I would give some latitude to his advice; he indicated that he did not think latitude was deserved because people should know. I point out to the honourable member for Heffron that she will suffer no loss in time if she gives notice of the bill tomorrow. The re-ordering of bills for tomorrow has taken place, so there is no further opportunity to get it on for tomorrow. Therefore, the bill will not come on before the following week in any event. There is no loss occasioned to the rights and privileges of the honourable member.

Mr WHELAN: My point was that there were no private members' bills for tomorrow apart from the one proposed and moved by the honourable member for Heffron. As you have ruled that out, Mr Speaker, there is no private member's bill.

Mr SPEAKER: It was a notice of motion; the honourable member is quite right.

Mr Hatton: On a point of order. On almost every occasion that the honourable member for Ashfield has spoken honourable members have not been able to hear what he has said. I ask that the Chair intervene in circumstances such as that so that the honourable member does not converse in such a way that we in the back of the Chamber cannot hear. The honourable member should speak into the microphone.

Mr SPEAKER: The point raised by the honourable member for Ashfield, on which he was quite correct and I was mistaken, was that the notice of motion of a private member's bill given by the honourable member for Heffron was the only such notice of motion. I apologise. We are all still getting used to the new procedures. I mistakenly thought that a motion for re-ordering of Orders of the Day (for Bills) had affected the opportunity that the honourable member for Heffron had available. In view of my error, I extend an indulgence to the honourable member for Heffron and indicate that the matter she raised will be taken as being on the business paper.

REGULATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Twenty-fourth Report

Mr Cruickshank, as Chairman, laid upon the table the Twenty-Fourth Report of the Regulation Review Committee, dated 29 March 1994.

Ordered to be printed.

SENATE VACANCIES

Joint Sitting

Motion by Mr Fahey agreed to:

That the House meet the Legislative Council for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose persons to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignations of Senator Kerry Walter Sibraa and Senator Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop.

Message

Motion by Mr Fahey agreed to:

That the following message be sent to the Legislative Council:

Mr President -

The Legislative Assembly having resolved to meet the Legislative Council for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose persons to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignations of Senator the Honourable Kerry Walter Sibraa and Senator the Honourable Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop, requests the Legislative Council to name the place and hour for such meeting.

Legislative Assembly
Sydney, 2 March 1994.

K. R. Rozzoli
Speaker

Page 75

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Precedence of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion, by leave, by Mr West agreed to:

That the relevant standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow general business to take precedence of the Address-in-Reply debate from 9 a.m. until 2.15 p.m. on the last sitting day of each week until the adoption of the Address in Reply.

WILDERNESS PROTECTION POLICY

Consideration of Urgent Motion

Mr CARR (Maroubra - Leader of the Opposition) [3.33]: I move:

That this House condemns the Premier for creating two and a half months of confusion on wilderness protection policy; for failing to consult before making the 23 December announcement; and requires him to gazette the proposed wilderness areas by 12 April 1994.

On 23 December the Premier wanted a Christmas present. It could not be about health, because the hospital waiting lists are the longest in the history of New South Wales. It could not be about education, because New South Wales has the largest class sizes in Australia. It could not be about transport, because the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads has announced every possible scheme 12 times, and the media would not believe the Premier if he announced it again. So that little possum, the Minister for the Environment, had to be pressed into service. He had to scurry down with his little plans and his little maps. It all began with this document I have in my hand. Look through this elaborate green folder and you will see that one after another of the wilderness areas have stamped on them "declared". Guy Fawkes, declared. Washpool, declared. And so on.

I thought I had declared Washpool when I was Minister for the Environment six years ago. This document gives away the whole fraudulent nature of this exercise. Washpool had been declared a wilderness area six years ago. I know how the Minister for Transport feels having worked very hard only to have the Premier come and take all the credit. Minister, you have my sympathy. The Premier, who had been responsible for announcing that these declarations had been made, suddenly shifted gear. Suddenly, these were not declarations; they were only proposals. As the issue unravelled, proposals became too strong a word. It had to be watered down. These declarations, then proposals, had become mere matters for consultation.

It was all the Premier's work, no one else's. As he said of himself to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "I've got the best policy brain in the coalition". Looking at the rest of them, I suggest it is an arguable contention. This exercise is all about how the best policy brain in the coalition handled this matter of land use planning. When the man with the best policy brain, ticking away over there like a first generation computer, is presented with a problem on land use planning, what does he do? It is all a matter of history: all hell broke loose. The first comment was from the honourable member for Monaro, "I've notified the National Party I will resign from the Government if the declarations are gazetted".

The honourable member for Burrinjuck said in the *Australian*, "Mr Fahey is one of the weakest leaders I've ever seen in my time in the coalition". Bravo! Has the honourable member now changed his mind? He is not changing his mind, John. He is sitting behind you. Then, in the true spirit of Christmas, there was a lull for three days as Government members retrieved the puddings, hats and streamers. On 28 December the honourable member for Dubbo rattled into life when he said, "The Deputy Premier has been toadying to the Premier on this wilderness issue and helping him to pamper to the green basket weavers in metropolitan electorates". What a nice lot they are! And this was in the backwash of Christmas spirit.

So it went on. There was only a pause in the brawling when a real and genuine crisis involving land use and management in New South Wales, the bushfires of January 1994, intervened. Members of the coalition, having the best policy brain in the coalition, should tend it for a moment, and see that it is ticking over. No sooner had that immediate battle against bushfires been won by men and women in the field, by the courage of many and the dedication of thousands, that these Liberal and National politicians were at it again. The honourable member for Monaro told the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "I am unmovable. I am unshakeable. I am immutable on this issue". It was pure Churchill. They went on and on.

The brawling reached its peak in the *Land* newspaper with the Deputy Premier publicly declaring, "Mr Hartcher's comments lack credibility". The Deputy Premier of his own Government condemning him in public in the pages of an occasionally read newspaper? Unheard of! Of course the key to this is the credibility of the greatest policy brain in the coalition, the Premier himself. From the December announcement to the February resolution, the Premier emerges from this issue utterly bereft of credibility, utterly without believability, utterly without principle. The pattern was there from the beginning. Look at the wilderness maps; a bizarre collection of squiggles, holes and indentations with only one abiding principle: if there is any competing interest, wilderness protection has the lowest priority.

Thus we have the greatest joke of all, the Macleay Gorges wilderness area, cut into two by a trail and with four major holes cut out of the middle. That is wilderness protection. That is land use planning under this Premier.

That is what happens when the greatest policy mind in the coalition gets set to work on maps to protect the environment. These contortions are a far cry from the definition of wilderness in the 1976 Hillman report, which stipulated a core area free of major indentations. With regard to consultation, for example, only 49 copies of the wilderness assessment reports on Deua were distributed. This is how the greatest policy mind in the coalition sets to work

Page 76

about involving the community, including his coalition, in land use planning. Twenty of those copies went to members of the Cabinet, which left a handful for distribution to the wider community. That is what they mean by consultation.

The fact is that we have to accept the following principles in respect of wilderness. First, we ought to protect it. And, yes, we ought to use the Wilderness Act to do it - not because we want a "feelgood" announcement at Christmas time, but because it is right and because we believe in biodiversity - and grant it equal priority with other uses. Second - and here I agree with the honourable member for Tamworth - there must be consultation before major land use decisions such as wilderness declarations are made. The policy framework must be clearly enunciated, with meaningful public input and participation.

Third, we should be protecting wilderness in the context of an expanding national parks system that provides for all recreation uses. Instead, in 1992-93, under this Minister, new park dedications fell to the lowest level for any year since establishment of the parks service in 1967. They even did better under Askin. Fourth, adequate resources must be applied to wilderness management as well as to the interface between wilderness areas and other land uses. On each of these principles this Government's bungling attempts have failed. This is truly a mess created by a Premier who boasts he is completely without vision. "Vision is bull dust", I bowdlerise to prevent an argument," he told the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Vision is bull dust? Only a Premier without vision could have got us into this fix. This Parliament must put him on notice.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai to order.

Mr CARR: This Parliament must say to the greatest policy brain in the coalition, "Clear this mess up and do it by 12 April. Make a decision and stick to it. Properly consult the community, and above all protect this State's remaining wilderness areas".

Mr FAHEY (Southern Highlands - Premier, and Minister for Economic Development) [3.42]: The author of the wilderness legislation has spent eight minutes on a matter that he pretends to be so concerned about that he is taking the time of the House today to move a motion to censure me. Eight minutes was as good as he could do. In that time he relied entirely on quoting from various newspapers and various members of the coalition without presenting any valid argument for the motion he has put before the House for deliberation.

It is very clear that the Leader of the Opposition is nothing but a pretender when it comes to seeking to portray green credentials. He was a pretender in 1987 when he brought this legislation forward, and nothing has altered since that time. Certainly today's performance will do nothing to increase his credibility on this matter because he has failed to recognise the very sections of the Act he is responsible for bringing before this Parliament. Those sections of the Act make it abundantly clear that there is a need to ensure that a wilderness area truly comes within the concept of wilderness, the concept of some pristine, untouched area of bushland.

Just as important, section 8 of the Act makes it abundantly clear that existing interests cannot be ignored. It was clear to the former Minister for the Environment, when these matters were being considered back in 1992 and before, that there was great concern out in the community - in fact complaint from various interest groups, including local government - that insufficient consultation was taking place in respect of matters that were under consideration for declaration as wilderness. Of course, there is no such thing as a wilderness until such time as gazettal takes place. In that regard, the Government has embarked upon a true and proper assessment, through the National Parks and Wildlife Service, of the various nominations that have been made under the Act since 1988.

In terms of that assessment, the proposals that were put forward were considered by the processes of Cabinet and the ministry. Consultation did occur in the course of last year and there was a great deal of input into the assessment of vast tracts of land and what could only be described as an ambit claim on the part of those who nominated in the first instance. If honourable members want to know what the Leader of the Opposition thinks about some of those people who have come forward with nominations, they have only to go back to a quote from the Leader of the Opposition, the then Minister for the Environment, in 1987. This was his opinion of green groups in those days:

Handing over new parks is like forking out chunks of raw meat to ravished timber wolves. They gobble them down in seconds then they look up with lambent eyes and growl about the next course.

Though the Leader of the Opposition seeks to portray to the House today a concern about the wilderness, he obviously is not concerned about what truly might be wilderness. He is not concerned about the existing interests that section 8 makes it mandatory for any government, Minister and director-general of the department to consider in the course of going through the process prior to gazettal. It was clear, right from the beginning of this assessment process, that many and varied people had an interest in the areas across the State that were nominated. Those involved huge parcels of land that in many ways could be likened to some of those ridiculous earlier Mabo type claims that occurred under the proposed Mabo legislation or decision of the High Court.

The Government, in the course of putting forward some proposals after consideration by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and by the Cabinet subcommittee, at all times prior to gazettal intended to ensure that what was put on the table would be scrutinised by those who had a right under section 8 to examine the maps that were there. Notwithstanding the fact that there had been

Page 77

consultation prior to the proposals, it was the intention that there be further consultation in that particular process. Otherwise, why would the Government not have gazetted it on 23 December?

The simple solution would have been to gazette it. Of course, that would have been consistent with the views of the Leader of the Opposition, who, back in the days when he had control in this area, made it very clear that he had no intention whatsoever of ensuring that others might have an opportunity to make a submission on the matter. In fact, he made it clear at that time that he would just go out each year and investigate. In the second reading speech on the Wilderness Bill on 12 November 1987 he said:

Each year we will investigate at least two potential wilderness areas outside the parks system for as long as such areas exist.

The Leader of the Opposition did not wish to, did not intend to and did not consult in the days when he had responsibility in this area. He simply came in with the pen, gazetted, and that was that. Since the proposals were announced on 23 September, the debate has identified a number of matters. First and foremost it has identified a need for proper management of all areas, be they wilderness or parks. There is a need for sufficient resources to ensure that proper management take place. In that regard there is a commitment that there will be resources to ensure that the noxious weeds, feral animals and the bushfires, which are very much part and parcel of our thinking these days, are covered under the resources allocations and the management at community level for these particular areas because they are important.

The Government is now examining thoroughly the process of assessment and quantification. That process will be part and parcel of any gazettal. I assure honourable members that before any gazettal takes place, a management process involving a trust of local people will be undertaken. That process will ensure that feral animals, noxious weeds and bushfires are reasonably contained. The Government will not move before that occurs. In the course of the public consultation process it has become abundantly clear that existing interests - and I include users of 4-wheel drive vehicles and horse trails - are genuine and have been present for countless generations. Those interests will not be ignored when the ultimate decision is made by the Government at the time of gazettal. The Surveyor General must be involved in the process because the boundaries of declared areas must be clearly and unambiguously defined. As the Surveyor General has gone through the process it has become obvious that there is a degree of activity in some of these areas that makes it abundantly clear that it is not possible to describe them as wilderness areas under the definition in section 6 of the Act. The Government is obliged to comply with the Act.

The motion nominates a particular day. I suppose it is a little like saying, "We will not sell the State Bank unless we get \$1.5 billion". That is like plucking a figure out of the air, and the motion plucks a date out of the air. It will not be physically possible for the Surveyor General to go through all of the proposals and survey all of the areas by 12 April. Honourable members are expected to debate a date which is about five weeks down the track and has been simply plucked out of the air for no particular reason. Honourable members are asked to regard that as a sensible approach to wilderness declarations. The surveying will be completed as and when proper consultation occurs and when all who have a right under section 8 to put forward their interests have done so. The Act was clearly designed to give them an opportunity to express those interests before gazettal takes place. Under the former Labor Government they were never given that opportunity. The gazettals just happened. The Government is committed to the retention of wilderness. I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting all words after the word "House" and inserting instead "commends the Government for its commitment to wilderness, for the public consultation process prior to gazettal to ensure existing interests referred to in section 8 of the Act are not ignored, and for its commitment to adequately resource the control of feral animals, noxious weeds and bushfire management in all our parks and wilderness areas."

Under this Government wilderness areas will be declared in New South Wales. That will be done properly, sensibly, and in accordance with the Act.

Ms ALLAN (Blacktown) [3.52]: On 12 November 1987 the then Minister for Planning and Environment, now the Leader of the Opposition, Bob Carr, moved in this House the second reading speech of the Wilderness Bill on behalf of the Labor Government. On that occasion, he said:

... if we fail in the task now before us, if we do not accept the responsibility to protect some of what remains, then we must surely and rightly expect the condemnation of this and further generations.

It is now time, four years later, for us to express condemnation of this Government's inept and dithering handling of wilderness policy. In 1987 members of the Liberal Party-National Party coalition managed to speak for a total of two minutes in a parliamentary debate which in this House filled 40 pages of *Hansard*. Tim Moore, the responsible shadow minister, and Wal Murray, the then leader of the National Party, attempted to deceive both the public and the Parliament. Tim Moore said:

The Liberal Party does not oppose the enactment of these measures.

Wal Murray said:

The National Party does not oppose the passage of these bills.

That was it. Neither member, of course, has had a reputation for being so succinct, either before that particular debate or since. In fact, only the honourable member for Lismore, the Hon. Bruce Duncan, an Independent who had the good sense to leave the National Party, had the courage of his convictions and managed to make a reasonable contribution to the debate. That was the signal of the present Government's commitment to wilderness. Two years later honourable members witnessed the spectacle in this House of the present Minister for the

Page 78

Environment, in the debate on the Wilderness (Private Property Rights) Amendment Bill, a private member's bill introduced by the honourable member for Oxley, remaining silent on a vital bill - vital so far as the honourable member for Oxley was concerned - that would have amended the wilderness legislation. Fortunately, the bill was not successful. At that time the Minister for the Environment was silent.

The silence of the Minister for the Environment has vast significance in this debate. After all, he is the Minister representing the Government in relation to wilderness areas. Despite the contribution honourable members have just heard from the Premier in which he outlined his strong support for this issue, it is quite obvious that honourable members must also have regard to the silence of the Minister for the Environment, not only in debates in this Parliament but also in the public debate that has been raging for the past two and a half months, when trying to ascertain the extent of the Government's commitment to the retention of wilderness. Apparently the Minister for the Environment was incapable of speaking at the joint party meeting held on 15 February, which debated Cabinet's December 1993 wilderness decision.

The Minister for the Environment should not be intimidated by those terrible twins from the bush, who love contacting the media and telling everyone how bad wilderness declarations are for this State. The Minister should not be intimidated on this issue, because he has many friends on this side of the Chamber when it comes to support of wilderness declarations. This issue is important because no matter how passionate the pleadings of the Premier are, as honourable members heard during the past ten minutes, so far as the community is concerned the proof is always in what the environmental spokesperson on the wilderness issue has to say about the issue. Unfortunately, the environmental spokesperson has been silent. During the past two or three months he has allowed these recalcitrant members of both his party and the National Party to make the running on this issue.

The Government's behaviour during the past several months has been inept. It has also been dangerous in terms of an overall commitment to wilderness protection in this State. That is why the motion before the House contains a requirement that the Government immediately gazette the proposed wilderness areas. Many people in the community, as well as in the Labor Party, fear that if the Government prolongs the debate within its party ranks, even fewer wilderness areas will be created than those offered on 23 December. That would be an absolute disaster for the protection of the natural environment in this State. It is important that irrespective of which political party is in office, a real commitment is made to nature conservation and wilderness retention. We in the Labor Party certainly do not want that commitment eroded by the ambition of some members on the

Government's own backbench.

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford - Minister for the Environment) [3.57]: Let us look at the motion - not at the rhetoric, not at the excited exclamations of the Leader of the Opposition, who was in Venice or London when the wilderness debate took place and at the time of the bushfires. First, the motion speaks about the confusion of the past two and a half months. There has been no confusion during the past two and a half months. On 23 December the Government made an announcement. Certain members of the Government have strongly expressed their views about that announcement. That is not confusion. It is simply a demonstration of democracy in an umbrella party that allows a wide range of views and follows a consultative path. That is a matter for the Government. It does not concern the Opposition. It is interesting to note that Opposition members are not in the Chamber while this motion is being debated.

Mr Whelan: On a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order, as the honourable member for Ashfield well knows.

Mr HARTCHER: The next part of the motion relates to an allegation about consultation. Consultation is very significant because when the bill was introduced into this Parliament by the now Leader of the Opposition - long may he remain so - it did not provide for any consultative process at all. On 12 November 1987 he proudly told this House, "The Minister is not required to notify any person before making an order". The Act does not contain any reference to any consultative process and the then Minister, now the Leader of the Opposition, publicly stated that there was no need to notify anyone; it was purely a matter for his discretion. That was exactly what he did.

Of the wilderness assessments determined - and there were very few of them - Bob Carr determined one. In four years he determined one wilderness nomination, and in that one there was no consultative process at all. We have made them all subject to public consultation and we have received thousands of submissions on them. We have allowed for their assessment by the people of this State, and we will continue to allow for that process because this Government believes in the consultative process. Bear in mind that Bob Carr's Act did not provide for consultation. Bob Carr determined one wilderness nomination in four years, and that without consultation. Our policy has been to promote consultation and we have received a total of 15,000 submissions so far. Consultation has been and will be the policy of this Government.

Finally, let me deal with the attempt to impose a deadline on the Government's decision, which is a significant matter. The Act - and I would invite members to read the Act before they vote on this - stipulates in section 8 that any existing interest must be protected. That is quite clear. Any permit, authority, lease licence, occupancy - whether or not arising under an Act; in other words, arising under an Act of Parliament or under common law - must be

Page 79

fully protected. What else are permits, authorities, leases, licences, and occupancies for? Of course they can be protected, and that is what has to be determined.

The Government has made it clear that the Surveyor General is going to assess all claims. He is going to meet with interested parties to examine their claims and see whether those claims constitute an existing interest under section 8. The Government has announced that, as it has announced that in so doing it will follow a process of consultation with the relevant members of Parliament and with relevant interest groups. We are doing what any reasonable government would do: consulting and establishing. We are consulting people who were involved, and establishing whether there is an existing interest within the definition of section 8. That is the requirement imposed upon us by law and that is what we intend to do. So clearly that is something that will simply have to take its time. There is no way that this can be determined within one month. There are 11 areas across the State; there are different interest groups to be consulted; there are different areas to be surveyed. Hundreds of thousands of hectares across the State are involved. I recommend that members look closely at the resolution they will be voting upon.

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

Mr HARTCHER: The Government is committed to a consultative process and to a process that establishes whether there is an existing interest under section 8 of the Act. That is the requirement imposed by law and that is the process that the Government intends to follow through. [*Time expired.*]

Mr HATTON (South Coast) [4.2] I oppose both the motion and the amendment. The motion has an inherent inconsistency in that it seeks to condemn the Premier for not consulting, and at the same time imposes a requirement that the wilderness be gazetted by 12 April. I would be most interested to learn how there can be adequate consultation with the many groups involved across considerable areas of New South Wales, as well as gazettal by 12 April. Quite clearly the amendment moved by the Premier, That this House commends the Government for its commitment to wilderness, is a joke. The Government made a commitment to wilderness; then it came under pressure and withdrew that commitment - and yet it talks about public consultation! If there was going to be public consultation, why was there a backbench revolt?

One of the main reasons that the coalition backbench revolted was that they claimed there was no consultation. Those members - who, of course, are on the same side of the House as the Premier - said, "No, you did not consult sufficiently," and that is why this motion is before the House. People have told me that they have not been consulted about the proposed wilderness declaration in my area. I have had meetings with all groups, and rather than be caught up in the politics of division, I wanted to get some agreement on how we could tackle this problem. There are several areas on which we did get agreement. The first related to the existing core wilderness areas decided upon prior to the Premier's announcement. Most of the groups that I spoke to were happy with them, and so their concept of wilderness was accepted prior to the Premier's announcement.

Second, I wrote to the Minister to say that a proper consultation process ought to be laid down in the Wilderness Act. For example, public meetings should be called in electorates in which wilderness is to be proposed. Also, before the gazettal there ought to be full consideration of submissions and full consultation with all interested groups involved. Third, the consultation process must include a discussion about fire management, management of pest and weeds, and management of feral animals.

A lot of nonsense has been spoken about fires. I come from a wildfire area on the South Coast and represent a vast area south of Bega. There are huge areas there that are wilderness, no matter what the law says. Even if no one does anything, similar access to that provided in the Snowy Mountains national park is not available. The problem is whether you should allow fire trails and access roads into those areas so that people with trail bikes can go in and perhaps start fires. If so, will those trails be in the right spot for use by firefighters? Many fires in this area are caused by lightning strikes in dry seasons such as we have just experienced. Or do you look at some other fire management, which may involve aerial bombing? It is an absolute joke for the Premier's amendment to suggest that there is adequate resource control of feral animals, noxious weeds, and bush fire management.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has nowhere near enough funds to maintain the fire trails, let alone to construct the fire trails or tackle the control of feral animals and noxious weeds. This Government has been in office since 1988 and has done nothing about that. The environmental legislation has not prevented adequate funds being put forward for fire control. Consider hazard reduction and the annual report of the Commissioner for Bush Fire Services, in which he says that carrying out his responsibilities to reduce hazards under the environmental Act of Parliament is not a problem. So we have a lot of politicking here and a lot of nonsense being spoken.

I would like in the last minutes available to me to put forward a proposal that I put to a general meeting: that we should consider establishing another category of land. There are national parks, wilderness areas, and State recreation areas. Why not have wilderness fringe areas and, where appropriate, set up trusts and have proper consultation and plans of management? Already the leases, the licensees and the occupants are protected. The whole question is about access, and sooner or later that question will have to be tackled head

on. There is no doubt that with the growth of off-road vehicles we will need that

Page 80

sort of management. Exactly the same situation arises in Sydney. For years people have parked in particular places, but suddenly find, because of traffic, that they cannot park there any more. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CARR (Maroubra) [4.7], in reply: I am glad that the Government's sense of humour is intact after 2½ months of argument and division on this matter, as evidenced by this delightfully funny amendment. The amendment calls on the House to congratulate the Government on its commitment to wilderness. It cobbled something together to be bowled up by an incompetent, overwhelmed, and underwhelming environment Minister for a feel-good announcement on 23 December, just before Christmas. He cobbled it together in a hurry, served it up, and within hours it started to unravel. The announcement had only been made for a few hours before the Government's backbench supporters started going berserk. The honourable member for Burrinjuck said, "Mr Fahey is one of the weakest leaders I have ever seen in my time in the coalition". The honourable member for Monaro said, "I have informed the National Party I am getting out". The honourable member for Dubbo rattled into life. The Government proposes, in view of the backdown in the face of the backbench revolt, that we congratulate it on its commitment to wilderness.

Ms Moore: It is hilarious.

Mr CARR: It is the funniest thing. On each of the press releases of 23 December "declaration" was stamped. It referred to wilderness being "declared". Within days they had become mere proposals. Then, in the face of a continuing revolt, the word proposal was seen as being too strong and the proposals became only matters for consultation; it was part of the consultation process. The Government now proposes that we sink to our knees and gratefully congratulate it on its commitment to wilderness. The fact is that there is no commitment to wilderness on the Government side of the House. I well remember that when as Minister I proudly proclaimed the first and only Wilderness Act in Australia members opposite came lamely into the Chamber and said one after the other - the shortest speeches on record - "We do not oppose this legislation". That came from Tim Moore on behalf of the Liberal Party and Wal Murray, the honourable member for Barwon, on behalf of the National Party. I do not know where he has been in this debate. I think he is going to retire to shoot pheasants on his property.

Mr Beckroge: Peasants or pheasants?

Mr CARR: Peasants or pheasants. I thought he would have taken a glove in this debate and helped shed some light on it, having declared his support for wilderness legislation in that lame fashion in 1987. Congratulate the Government on its commitment to wilderness indeed! The simple fact is that because of the ineptitude of the Minister and the package he served up to a Premier who had no idea what it was about, the Government went through 2½ months of hell. There was the famous joint party meeting. Madame Blavatsky, the honourable member for Port Macquarie, was chasing a television camera away as she went into the room. There was trauma all round. At that joint party meeting once again the Minister for the Environment sat silent for the whole day with not a thing to say. When the amendment to the Wilderness Act was proposed in the last session of this Parliament he took no part in the debate. It was extraordinary: a Minister for the Environment, responsible for the Act, sitting there and refusing to say anything while an amendment to his Act is debated.

Then in the party room he did not contribute to the debate. He had nothing to say. He left it to the critics of the wilderness. They were the only ones who got a run. The Opposition is grateful for the contribution made to this debate by the honourable member for South Coast. We accept the validity of his argument about allowing an extension of this Government's time to 1 September in the spirit in which it was moved - a desire to resolve this major land use question. For those reasons, Mr Speaker, I seek leave to change the date to 1 September. We are happy to co-operate in that process. The fact is that a government is charged with major responsibility for land use, lines on maps. It ought to operate with a sense of what that responsibility means.

Mr Hatton: On a point of order. There is a procedural problem here. I understand that because the Leader of the Opposition has closed the debate there will not be an opportunity for me formally to move the

amendment, yet the amendment has to be dealt with by the Chair first.

Mr SPEAKER: That is correct. The Leader of the Opposition foreshadowed that he would seek the leave of the House to move to amend the date in his motion. If the amendment is carried, it is immaterial what happens to the original motion. If it is lost, the Leader of the Opposition may then seek leave to amend his motion. If leave is granted by the House, the adjustment may be made to the date.

Question - That the amendment be agreed to - put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 45

Mr Armstrong	Mr Merton
Mr Baird	Mr Morris
Mr Beck	Mr W. T. J. Murray
Mr Blackmore	Mr O'Doherty
Mr Causley	Mr D. L. Page
Mr Chappell	Mr Peacocke
Mrs Chikarovski	Mr Petch
Mr Cochran	Mr Phillips
Mrs Cohen	Mr Photios
Mr Collins	Mr Richardson
Mr Cruickshank	Mr Rixon
Mr Downy	Mr Schipp
Mr Fahey	Mr Schultz
Mr Fraser	Mrs Skinner
Mr Glachan	Mr Small
Mr Griffiths	Mr Smith
Mr Hartcher	Mr Souris
Mr Hazzard	Mr Turner
Mr Humpherson	Mr West
Dr Kernohan	Mr Zammit
Mr Kinross	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Longley	Mr Jeffery
Ms Machin	Mr Kerr

Page 81

Noes, 49

Ms Allan	Mr Markham
Mr Amery	Mr Martin
Mr Anderson	Mr Mills
Mr A. S. Aquilina	Ms Moore
Mr J. J. Aquilina	Mr Moss
Mr Bowman	Mr J. H. Murray
Mr Carr	Mr Nagle
Mr Clough	Mr Neilly
Mr Crittenden	Mr Newman
Mr Doyle	Ms Nori
Mr Face	Mr E. T. Page
Mr Gaudry	Mr Price
Mr Gibson	Dr Refshauge

Mrs Grusovin	Mr Rogan
Mr Harrison	Mr Rumble
Mr Hatton	Mr Scully
Mr Hunter	Mr Shedden
Mr Irwin	Mr Sullivan
Mr Knight	Mr Thompson
Mr Knowles	Mr Whelan
Mr Langton	Mr Windsor
Mrs Lo Po'	Mr Yeadon
Mr McBride	<i>Tellers,</i>
Dr Macdonald	Mr Beckroge
Mr McManus	Mr Davoren

Pairs

Mr Tink	Mr Iemma
Mr Yabsley	Mr Ziolkowski

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

Mr CARR (Maroubra - Leader of the Opposition) [4.21]: I seek leave to amend the date in the motion from 12 April 1994 to 1 September 1994.

Leave not granted.

Question - That the motion be agreed to - put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 47

Ms Allan	Mr Markham
Mr Amery	Mr Martin
Mr Anderson	Mr Mills
Mr A. S. Aquilina	Ms Moore
Mr J. J. Aquilina	Mr Moss
Mr Bowman	Mr J. H. Murray
Mr Carr	Mr Nagle
Mr Clough	Mr Neilly
Mr Crittenden	Mr Newman
Mr Doyle	Ms Nori
Mr Face	Mr E. T. Page
Mr Gaudry	Mr Price
Mr Gibson	Dr Refshauge
Mrs Grusovin	Mr Rogan
Mr Harrison	Mr Rumble
Mr Hunter	Mr Scully
Mr Irwin	Mr Shedden
Mr Knight	Mr Sullivan
Mr Knowles	Mr Thompson
Mr Langton	Mr Whelan
Mrs Lo Po'	Mr Yeadon
Mr McBride	<i>Tellers,</i>

Dr Macdonald
Mr McManus

Mr Beckroge
Mr Davoren

Noes, 47

Mr Armstrong
Mr Baird
Mr Beck
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Mr Causley
Mr Chappell
Mrs Chikarovski
Mr Cochran
Mrs Cohen
Mr Collins
Mr Cruickshank
Mr Downy
Mr Fahey
Mr Fraser
Mr Glachan
Mr Griffiths
Mr Hartcher
Mr Hatton
Mr Hazzard
Mr Humpherson
Dr Kernohan
Mr Kinross
Mr Longley
Ms Machin

Mr Merton
Mr Morris
Mr W. T. J. Murray
Mr O'Doherty
Mr D. L. Page
Mr Peacocke
Mr Petch
Mr Phillips
Mr Photios
Mr Richardson
Mr Rixon
Mr Schipp
Mr Schultz
Mrs Skinner
Mr Small
Mr Smith
Mr Souris
Mr Turner
Mr West
Mr Windsor
Mr Zammit
Tellers,
Mr Jeffery
Mr Kerr

Pairs

Mr Iemma
Mr Ziolkowski

Mr Tink
Mr Yabsley

Mr SPEAKER: The numbers being equal, in accordance with the principles established by previous Speakers I cast my vote with the noes and declare the question to have been passed in the negative.

Mr CHRISTOPHER BARNES HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

Matter of Public Importance

Mr J. J. AQUILINA (Riverstone) [4.31]: I move:

That this House notes as a matter of public importance:

- (1) the report of the Ombudsman concerning the decision of the Board of Studies to withhold the award of the 1988 higher school certificate mathematics marks to Christopher Barnes;
- (2) the Government's response to the Ombudsman's report; and
- (3) the failure of the Government to institute an independent management review under section 48 of the Public Sector Management Act.

The Ombudsman's report on the Christopher Barnes case is a damning indictment of both the handling of the case by the Board of Studies and the failure of the Minister for Education to take the appropriate action on this matter. It is a disturbing picture of the activities of the bureaucracy supporting the Board of Studies, from the denial of procedural fairness to the failure to put forward to the board key evidence supporting the case of Christopher Barnes.

Even more important, this House should note the failure of the Minister in the Barnes affair. At every avenue she had the opportunity to intervene, but she

Page 82

refused to do so. The Minister could have taken any number of steps to speed up justice for Mr Barnes; instead, she left him waiting years and years to receive justice, without one degree of mercy or one degree of consideration. The Minister could have asked the board to review its decision. She could have instituted a fast track special inquiry; instead, she let the case drag on for five years.

The Christopher Barnes affair is a disgrace. It is a disgraceful case not only because of its denial of justice to a man whom the courts found had nothing to answer, but also because of the Minister's lack of action in the matter, her unwillingness to take charge of her portfolio and assume the ministerial responsibility that she quite clearly has and refuses to exercise.

On 17 February the Ombudsman finalised the damning report on a decision by the Board of Studies to withhold the higher school certificate mathematics marks of Christopher Barnes. This report was a response to the complaint that I made to the Ombudsman more than two years earlier - in fact, in October 1991. At that stage it was revealed that, despite the fact that Mr Barnes had been cleared by a court of misprision of a felony - which offence, incidentally, was taken off the statute books in 1989 - relating to the theft of the 1988 higher school certificate, the board still withheld his mathematics marks and, consequently, his higher school certificate.

Even today, the Minister in another place continues to wash her hands of this issue. I have been advised that when the Minister tabled the report instead of providing a full explanation of the reasons for the way she has handled - or rather mishandled - this whole affair, she provided only a few minor platitudes and repeated some statements she had already made to the press. In no way has she provided satisfaction to either Mr Barnes or the public of New South Wales for the way the Board of Studies has mishandled this affair or the way she has continued to run away from this issue.

I have been told that only a few minutes ago in another place Mrs Chadwick refused again to apologise to Mr Barnes for the way he has been mistreated in this whole affair. Instead of accepting the responsibility for what has taken place, the Minister has lashed out in typical feral manner once again and accused the Ombudsman of delaying this matter. I wish to outline the history of this case because the Government would like to deceive us on this issue. I make it quite clear that there was no delay by the Ombudsman with respect to this matter.

The Ombudsman presented an initial report on this matter to the Board of Studies well over 18 months ago; the Board of Studies took something like six months to reply to it. There was then further investigation by the Ombudsman's office. A report was then presented to the Minister, and she took almost four months to reply that she did not want to consult with the Ombudsman's office about this affair. The delay has always been on the part of the Government and the Minister. The delay was not on the part of the Ombudsman's office; it was totally the fault of the Minister and the Board of Studies. It is important to make that clear.

I can pre-empt precisely what the Government will say about this issue. The Government will say that the fault is nothing to do with the Minister; it was the fault of the Board of Studies. The Minister can wash her hands of the Board of Studies. I inform the Minister that she is wrong on this issue. Despite what she has tried to say to the media, and the perception that she has tried to create that she is at arm's-length from the Board of Studies, the legislative link is there. The compulsion upon her to act is there also; the responsibility for her to act is there, and it continues to be there.

Reading the Ombudsman's report is indeed disquieting. For example, it shows how Mr Barnes was denied justice again and again. It shows that the advice to the board on the matter was of an unacceptable standard. It shows also that the board was systematically resistant to any independent review of its decision, continually slowing the Ombudsman from coming to his final conclusion, and questioning his jurisdiction to be conducting his inquiry. After I raised this matter in 1991 it should have taken no more than two or three months to clear up, but it took over two years more. The Minister had the power to intervene. I refer to some of the findings in the Ombudsman's report. Clause 17.4 states:

... the conduct of the Board in denying Barnes' request to appear before it during its consideration of his case was unjust, unreasonable and based partly on a mistake of law.

Page 128 of the report states:

This investigation has raised serious doubts about the Board's capacity to properly carry out this investigation but, far more importantly, the Board in its conduct and submissions during this investigation has shown itself to be so intent on preserving a predetermined adversarial position as to have forfeited any confidence in the Board's ability to objectively assess and reach a fair judgment on evidence before it relating to Barnes' case.

The report continues:

The Board was substantially influenced by the incorrect and misleading material with which it was presented.

In clause 17.1 the report states:

There can be no doubt that (the general manager's) method in presenting material concerning Mr Barnes for consideration by the . . . Board effected serious prejudice against Mr Barnes.

The report continues, in the same paragraph:

The question is whether (the general manager's) conduct was deliberate or the result of incompetence.

Grave accusations indeed, accusations which have warranted an answer from the Minister long before now. After all, the Minister has had this report for months and has done nothing about it. Yesterday the Minister said on the Alan Jones radio program:

There is no mechanism for me to instruct the Board of Studies . . . in legislation in the Parliament. It was determined that the Minister has no capacity to instruct the Board on the awarding or withholding of an HSC.

Page 83

This is a completely incorrect view of the Minister's powers to intervene. The Minister could have taken the following steps: she could have requested the Board of Studies to revisit its previous decision, once anomalies with the decision became an obvious issue of public concern; she could have carried out her function under section 19 to determine that the general method of assessment of candidates for recognised certificates involved an appeal process which was fair and impartial; she could have requested the Premier to initiate a special inquiry under section 82 of the Public Sector Management Act - a short, sharp four to six weeks inquiry which would have brought justice more quickly than the Ombudsman's report. Clearly, in this instance the Government has failed Christopher Barnes, and the Minister has failed the public of New South Wales in this whole affair, bringing into serious question the effectiveness and efficiency of the Board of Studies and its capacity to be able to administer its jurisdiction properly. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI (Lane Cove - Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment, and Minister for the Status of Women) [4.41]: To quote the honourable member for Riverstone, he is wrong, wrong, wrong.

The Minister for Education in the other place has acted entirely appropriately in the conduct of this affair. All honourable members would agree that this has been a sad affair. I recognise that the honourable member for Riverstone has had a strong interest in this affair, but, as I say, the Minister has acted entirely appropriately in the full carriage of this matter.

Let us get some time lines right. First, the report of the Ombudsman, to which the honourable member has been referring, was delivered on 17 February. When the Board of Studies received that report on that date it decided to act quickly and resolved the matter at its meeting on 22 February. The Board of Studies took appropriate action; it decided to grant the higher school certificate and record of achievement to Christopher Barnes. In addition, the board agreed to approve his 1989 application for a misadventure appeal and it has granted his examination marks accordingly. At the presentation the president expressed the sincere regret of the board over the length of time taken to finalise these matters. It should be noted that the delay in the resolution of this matter cannot be solely attributed to the board. The board did reach a decision in 1991 and it was that decision which Mr Barnes disputed and took to the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman's report, as the honourable member for Riverstone pointed out in his speech, took two years to complete. I acknowledge that the Ombudsman's report is critical of the board's capacity to carry out a proper investigation in this case. The report raises serious questions concerning the support and information provided to the statutory board by its bureaucracy. In the light of that, the Minister in another place has already announced that an urgent review will be undertaken into the administrative mechanisms and processes that support the Board of Studies. The review is being undertaken under section 48 of the Public Sector Management Act, the section to which the honourable member referred in his notice of a matter of public importance.

This is in addition to the review that the New South Wales Crown Solicitor has been asked to carry out into the current Board of Studies procedures for dealing with claims of cheating. The principal recommendation of the Ombudsman's report that the higher school certificate should be granted forthwith to Mr Barnes has been acted upon expeditiously by the Board of Studies. The question of disciplinary action has been raised in the Ombudsman's report. It has received some coverage in the media. Again, section 48 of the Public Sector Management Act provides the mechanism for dealing with this. Portfolio officers are acting swiftly on these recommendations and looking at what action might be taken to establish whether there is a case to answer in terms of the Act. It is imperative that this be undertaken expeditiously and fairly and that there be no witch-hunts.

The sensational coverage of this case by the media - in response to the normal carping we have come to expect from the Opposition - has not been in the best interests of Mr Barnes, nor in the best interests of school students in New South Wales. The processes initiated by Mrs Chadwick will ensure a fair and balanced response to all the issues. The honourable member for Riverstone has said that my colleague the Hon. Virginia Chadwick has not fully exercised her powers under the Education Reform Act in relation to the awarding of the higher school certificate. The honourable member talked about ministerial responsibility and suggested that this has not been properly exercised in this case. Unfortunately, the honourable member once again has demonstrated his ignorance of both the intent and the Act, and of the specific provisions of that Act.

I was not present when that Act was debated in this Chamber but I understand it was a particularly vigorous debate. I am surprised that the honourable member does not remember the extent of that debate, which covered all areas of the bill and the resulting Act reflected the outcome of the debate. In particular I draw the attention of the honourable member to certain provisions of that bill. A number of objects are set out and object (e) is:

to provide for the grant of school certificates and higher school certificates and for the accreditation of non-government schools that are competent to present candidates for those certificates.

If one looks at various sections of the Act and who is responsible for what, it will be seen that the Act sets forth the provisions to ensure that the respective roles of the Minister and the Board of Studies are clearly expressed

and clearly understood. Part 4 deals with the Minister's functions and describes those functions which are dealt with substantively in other parts of the

Page 84

Act, and details functions not dealt with elsewhere. That section clearly states that the Minister is responsible for the general method of assessment of candidates for the recognised certificates, for the determination of the nature of information appearing on those certificates, and for carrying out appropriate educational audits and program reviews.

The board, however, retains complete control over arrangements for the conduct of examinations or other forms of assessment for candidates for the school certificate and the higher school certificate and regulates the conduct of any examinations as set forth in part 8 of the Act. The board - and I stress only the board - is empowered to grant the recognised certificates under the terms outlined in the Act. Subject to the rules of the board, the board is also able to refuse to grant certificates. At the request of any person who considers that he or she has been adversely affected by a decision of the board in relation to the award of a certificate, the board is able to reconsider, confirm, reverse or vary that decision. The Act states explicitly in clause 97 that when requested to reconsider such a decision in relation to the board of the school certificate or higher school certificate, the board's decision - not the Minister's decision - in relation to such a request is final.

The recent cases which have received much discussion in the media do not demonstrate any need to review the fundamental roles, responsibilities and relationships so soundly enshrined in the Education Reform Act. On the other hand, the Opposition has suggested that the Government should allow blatant political interference in the awarding of certificates; something purposely and expressly prevented by the Education Reform Act. There is scope, and the Minister has acknowledged that there is scope, for improving administrative procedures and practices in some areas of the board's operations, as highlighted by the Christopher Barnes case.

It has already been announced that those procedures and practices will be reviewed by the Crown Solicitor. As I have mentioned, the Minister has separately announced that a review of the operational support will be provided to the Board of Studies under section 48 of the Public Sector Management Act. The Minister made a statement in the Legislative Council this afternoon on the Christopher Barnes case and the Board of Studies - to which the honourable member for Riverstone has already referred.

This debate should not be concluded without putting on record the achievements of the board. The fundamental achievements of the board are not under challenge and must not be overlooked. When we discuss the achievements of the board we should look at the outstanding leadership it has provided in education in this State. During its three-and-a-half year term it has introduced a whole range of important initiatives. They include the development of high quality courses and support material for primary and secondary education; the assessment of student achievement and the awarding of credentials of international standard to meet the needs of a full range of students; the provision of quality education to the development, dissemination and implementation of education policies and practices; and the registration and accreditation of non-government schools.

It is unfortunate that the Opposition has chosen to take this opportunity to attack both the Minister and the board. The Minister and the board have an outstanding achievement of working for the students of this State, of working for the children of New South Wales. It is typical of the Opposition that, rather than looking at the constructive way in which the board has operated, it has chosen to carp, to criticise and to harass yet again. I reject this particular matter of public importance and I urge the House to look at the work the board has done rather than at the ill-considered remarks of the honourable member for Riverstone, and I reject entirely any implication that the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs has somehow acted improperly in this matter.

Mr J. H. MURRAY (Drummoyne) [4.51]: The Chris Barnes story is a sorry saga of ineptitude and dishonesty and a scandalous disregard by education Ministers from the coalition. It started five years ago when the then Minister for Education, Terry Metherell, fronted an afternoon press conference after the deadline for the evening papers. A *Daily Mirror* reporter who had spoken to him earlier in the day was rather rovable.

Referring to the theft, he called out to Metherell as he came into the conference, "Did you only just find out about this?" The Minister for Education said, "Yes, I have only just found out about this". Yet the Cabinet had spent three or four hours that day discussing this very matter and the problem associated with the theft of these papers.

It all started with Metherell. Then it was found that Metherell had in his hand a report recommending that safe areas such as post offices, banks or police stations should be used to store higher school certificate papers, but the ineptitude of the then Minister for Education was such that he ignored all of that and instead allowed people to put the papers under their beds. In the case of Balgowlah the papers were put in a tin can which was opened by amateurs. That was the first case of the ineptitude of Ministers.

Chris Barnes spent the next five years walking the streets of New South Wales as a marked person, but we know that the Professor of Mathematics at the University of New South Wales, Professor David Hunt, who had analysed Barnes' higher school certificate examination, said the matter was a scandalous case of maladministration. Where does the buck stop? I will tell you where the buck stops. Ask any honourable member on this side; it stops with the Minister. Just talk with the Minister for Police. The university professor said it was a scandalous case of maladministration. He also said:

It took me only one hour to know that Chris Barnes was innocent. I'd never met the man. I didn't know him at all, but in one hour I could decide he was innocent. It has taken five years for the board to still not decide that he deserves the Higher School Certificate. It is just staggering.

Page 85

Not only that, even though a court had decided that this man was innocent nothing was done until the shadow minister for education got stuck into the case and approached the Ombudsman. It is the greatest cover-up, starting from Metherell and continuing with Chadwick, that we have seen in the public service for many moons. More important, the New South Wales Deputy Ombudsman, John Pinnock, recommended that the New South Wales Board of Studies should consider prosecuting its senior employees over the matter and should grant Mr Christopher Barnes the higher school certificate it has withheld for nearly five years.

The Deputy Ombudsman said exactly what the Minister for Education is saying and what everyone out there is saying. The Minister at the table, the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment and Minister for the Status of Women, has read out a text prepared by the board which attempts to exonerate the Minister when, in effect, the Minister is responsible. As I said at the start, it is a sorry saga. Mr Pinnock said the main witnesses in the case against Mr Barnes were "unreliable and unsatisfactory". It was not the Minister who said this; it was the Deputy Ombudsman. He criticised the unreasonableness of the board in refusing to allow Mr Barnes to appear before it and said the board has shown itself to be intent on preserving a predetermined adversarial position.

Mr Pinnock said the board had forfeited any confidence in its ability to objectively assess and reach a fair judgment on evidence relating to Mr Barnes. If that is not the greatest indictment of the action of a public servant who is responsible to the Minister, with whom the Minister is in daily contact, then I have never seen one. In the time that I have been in this Parliament this is the greatest case of injustice and maladministration and yet we have the Minister at the table saying, "No, the Minister is in the upper House and has had nothing to do with this". What we have to look at is the impact - [*Time expired.*]

Mr J. J. AQUILINA (Riverstone) [4.56], in reply: Quite often in these debates I feel somewhat sorry for the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment and Minister for the Status of Women, the Minister in the chair, because in many ways she comes in like a lamb to the slaughter - very poorly briefed on the details of the issues that she is dealing with and quite often with incorrect information. I would like to take her back to the original 30 seconds or so of her statement here this afternoon. Her original claim was that the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs received this report on 17 February.

Mrs Chikarovski: I said the board.

Mr J. J. AQUILINA: The board received this report on 17 February, but as is well known by the board, and as the Minister knows only too well, she had this report back in November of last year and was given until the first or second week of February to agree to a consultation process with the Ombudsman concerning that report. She waited right to the end of the consultation period before she wrote to the Ombudsman saying, "No consultation". If the Minister is trying to have us believe that the Minister for Education had the report but the Board of Studies did not, I would say there is a major flaw in the link between the Minister and this board in the way it operates.

Clearly, there should be a free flow of information between the Board of Studies and the Minister, both from the board to the Minister and from the Minister to the board. If that is not happening, either the Minister is being negligent or the board is being derelict in its duties. One way or the other, that has to change because the credibility of 60,000 higher school certificates every year rests upon the credibility of the Board of Studies of New South Wales. To ensure that that credibility is beyond objection, all of those issues need to be brought into line.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment to order.

Mr J. J. AQUILINA: The Minister said that the Hon. Virginia Chadwick did not request the board to intervene and conduct a review because, although she had the power to do so, she believed it would not be appropriate. That is a total negation of duty. It is true that the Minister did not request the board to intervene, but the point is that she should have requested the board to review this case two years ago to avoid the lengthy delay in securing justice for Christopher Barnes. The Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment has made great play of the terms of the proposed review. She has only just announced that the review will be conducted under section 48 of the Public Sector Management Act.

Yesterday and previously the Minister, in many public statements, did not announce that the review was to be conducted under section 48 of the Public Sector Management Act. That section suggests that if it is inappropriate for a departmental head to be on the review panel the Minister need not invite the departmental head to take part. I have no personal axe to grind so far as individuals are concerned, but this issue has been incompetently handled from the beginning. The public has been justifiably outraged by the way in which this issue has been handled.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment to order for the second time.

Mr J. J. AQUILINA: Requesting the chief executive officer of the ministry to conduct this inquiry when he is a member of the board will not do the Government, the chief executive officer, the Board of Studies or Christopher Barnes any service. Clearly the Government needs to get out from under so far as this issue is concerned.

Motion agreed to.

Page 86

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DEATH OF DIANE KUSAN AND ACQUITTAL OF MARK GIBSON

Mr GIBSON (Londonderry) [5.2]: I speak on a serious issue. Two years ago my electorate was

shocked and saddened by the horrific death of a 15-year-old girl, Diane Kusan. Last week members of my electorate, the people of New South Wales and, probably, most of the people living in this country were outraged by a decision of the Supreme Court that exonerated the person who shot this young girl, a fellow by the name of Mark Gibson. This young man was charged with having shot and killed this young lady at a party at Warwick Farm. A little time after seeing some friends off Diane walked into a room, to find Mark Gibson arguing with another young man named Jason Barretts. Gibson was pointing a rifle at Barretts. He told him to open his mouth because he was going to put the rifle in his mouth and blow his brains out. Young Diane intervened and tried to talk some sense into Mark Gibson, but to no avail. He turned around, pointed the gun at her and shot her. She died a few hours later in Liverpool Hospital.

The court acquitted Gibson, and Diane's family and friends are now asking: where is justice? So am I. Their daughter, sister and friend was shot down and killed at the age of 15. Apparently she died for nothing because, as I say, the court has acquitted this young man. In this instance a young life has been terribly wasted. The jury, which was out for only 90 minutes, spent 40 minutes looking at a video film of the record of interview with Gibson at the police station. After a six-day trial the jury took only 50 minutes to find him not guilty. I urge the Attorney General and the Director of Public Prosecutions to examine this bizarre case, in which something went horribly wrong.

Mark Gibson was initially charged with murder. That charge was watered down to manslaughter. He was charged with causing grievous bodily harm and with a few other minor matters, but was found not guilty of all charges. I honestly believe the legal profession got it wrong. This young man has now been let off. As I have said, the family and friends of Diane Kusan and the general public want to know why. For a jury to take only 90 minutes to reach a verdict in a case such as this is beyond comprehension. It took only a split second for this young 15-year-old girl to be wiped off the face of the earth. It will take a lifetime to heal the suffering and pain of her family and friends.

When this type of thing happens people lose respect for our legal procedures. I urge the Attorney General to examine this case closely. I realise that because Mark Gibson was found not guilty nothing can be done. No appeal can be lodged, but surely this case has to be considered to ensure that this type of thing never happens again. The family and friends of this young lady have come to the conclusion that no one really cares any more. As a member of Parliament, I find it hard to disagree with that. No one who has studied the case of Diane Kusan would disagree with that statement. Someone must have been responsible for the shooting of Diane Kusan.

Mr CAUSLEY (Clarence - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and Minister for Mines) [5.6]: I acknowledge the statement of the honourable member for Londonderry. Undoubtedly the family of this young girl must be suffering tremendous anguish at the loss of their daughter and sister. I daresay the honourable member for Londonderry knows as well as I do that under the doctrine of the separation of powers Parliament has no right to interfere with the running of the court system. I have not been involved in the case and I do not know what the judge's instructions were to the jury. However, one principle of the system of justice that we hold dear in this country is that someone must be proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt. Perhaps that circumstance was involved in this case. I understand the family's anguish and I will certainly ask the Attorney General to have a close look at the case.

BEROWRA CREEK ALGAL BLOOM

Mr O'DOHERTY (Ku-ring-gai) [5.8]: Today is the first sitting day of the year and, therefore, this is my first opportunity to inform the Parliament by means of a private member's statement of my strong concern and the strong concern of my constituents about Berowra Creek. Since I was elected 18 months ago I have raised this matter with various Ministers. However, I have increased my efforts since just prior to Christmas and during the early months of this year when another algal bloom, particularly in the area near Berowra Creek, caused great distress to many residents of my electorate. We are very proud of this waterway; it is one of the finest in Sydney. It plays an important role as a recreational waterway for the people who live not only around

Berowra but all around Sydney. It also makes a significant contribution to important industries such as the tourist industry and the fishing industry. Continuing recurring algal blooms are of great concern to me as the local member, as they are to my constituents.

It is important to note that the algal blooms that have occurred in the area around Berowra Creek are not of the toxic blue-green variety. They are a red type of algal bloom that is toxic to fish and cause skin irritations in humans. Although the blooms are not toxic to humans, they must be eradicated. I have done a great deal of work in the first months of this year to determine the way forward. I should now like to propose some measures and seek the strong support of the Government for them. First, I welcome the initiation of a matter I first discussed with the Government about six months ago, that is, the establishment of a total catchment management committee for the Berowra Creek area under the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust.

Page 87

I once again urge all members of my community to think seriously about whether they ought to take part in that catchment management committee. The committee should establish what use the community wants for the waterway. It is my opinion, and that of many of the people to whom I have spoken, that nothing less than level one, primary recreation contact, will do. That is the highest standard apart from the standard for drinking water. The committee should look at the various sources of pollution in the Berowra Creek catchment area.

I can reveal from my own inquiries that a great many sources of pollution - nitrogen, bacteria and many others - have been logged by the Environment Protection Authority. They include sewage treatment plants operated by the Water Board - they are two significant sources - large septic systems and pumpouts at caravan parks, marinas and other commercial developments. These are all sources licensed by the EPA. There are licensed non-sewage sources such as swimming pools operated by Hornsby Council. A quarry and other industrial plants are also licensed polluters. There are licensed diffuse sources such as agricultural operations. Current and disused tip sites are also of concern. Each one of those needs to be assessed and I urge the Minister for the Environment to have the EPA urgently assess the damage being caused by each of those sources and by urban runoff.

I want to achieve five things. First, I seek the Government's assistance in meeting with Paul Broad and senior engineers from the Water Board to formulate a plan of management and positive achievable proposals for removing nitrates from effluent from the Hornsby Heights sewage treatment plant and particularly the West Hornsby sewage treatment plant. Second, I call on the Environment Protection Authority to set nitrate removal as a goal under the new licence for the sewage treatment plants and set other appropriate water quality standards, level one primary recreation or contact use, for the creek.

Third, I call on the council and the Department of Planning to set achievable development controls and become a model for Sydney in the control of urban runoff for both new and existing developments. Fourth, I again call on people to take part in the catchment management process which the Government is putting in place for the creek. Fifth, I undertake through the processes put in place by the Government to find a way to get money to label and even map stormwater drains. Apparently there is no clear understanding of where all the stormwater drains go. That has to be a top priority, together with the cleaning up of nitrates from sewage treatment plant effluent. I commit myself to continuing to press this matter strongly with the Government so that Berowra Creek can once again return to being the magnificent waterway that we would expect it to be. *[Time expired.]*

Mr CAUSLEY (Clarence - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and Minister for Mines) [5.13]: The Government recognised long ago that clean waterways are a big issue for the State. We have gone a long way down the track to achieving clean waterways. When I was Minister for Water Resources many steps were taken in country New South Wales to keep waterways as clean as possible. Undoubtedly, the city is a problem. The honourable member referred to urban runoff. I think the real issue there is dogs. A lot of contamination comes from the streets in some areas. This issue is being addressed by the Water Board.

The Government has tackled the big issues of water quality. The community must understand that the treatment of stormwater drainage involves a cost. This matter has been neglected for years and years. Most of the problems in the Hawkesbury and Nepean rivers emanate from neglect by previous governments. Nothing was done to make sure that the effluent flowing into the rivers was free of phosphates and nitrates that caused the problem of blue-green algae and other algae. I will refer the honourable member's statement to the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Planning and the Water Board. There is no doubt that the Government has a commitment and will continue to be committed to pursuing the clean waterways program so that we have clean, liveable, waterways throughout the city.

TUGGERAH LAKES MINING

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [5.15]: I am pleased that the Minister for Mines is at the table because my comments are addressed to him specifically. The Minister for Mines announced in December last year that his department would carry out exploration work to establish coal reserves under Tuggerah Lakes and other parts of Wyong shire. The department has already called for expressions of exploration interest from companies wanting to develop new mines or existing collieries wishing to extend their resource base. The ultimate aim of the department is to proceed with mining projects across a broad area of the shire.

Let me say straight out that I am vehemently opposed to any mining under Tuggerah Lakes. Not only does mining represent too great a risk to the stability of home structures in the area; it would spoil the social amenity enjoyed by every resident living near the lake's foreshore, and would threaten to reverse all the progress being made in the Tuggerah Lakes restoration program. I note that that program is very dear to the former Deputy Premier, the honourable member for Barwon, who is also present in the Chamber. Anyone with a knowledge of longwall mining from the Hunter district knows that it leads to unforeseen subsidence, and no studies by the Minister or his department can prove otherwise. It is a simple fact.

Departmental studies can try to estimate the extent of the subsidence but they cannot offer assurances on subsidence to the community because it is impossible for estimates to be precise. At best they have proven to be very poor educated guesses. The people of the Central Coast have already experienced the results of the department's guesswork. The

Page 88

department was certain that there would be no substantial effect from mining near Chain Valley Bay. What followed was years of subsidence that imposed constant suffering on local residents. The new proposal involves an even greater game of chance. The Tuggerah Lakes are unusually shallow and there are no precedents available for the department to use in assessing risk to the ecosystem. The people of the Central Coast do not want to be and should not be subject to a social and environmental laboratory experiment.

Let us look at what sort of hand the Fahey Government would deal to the community. The department can offer no guarantees or safeguards against subsidence. There is no doubt that housing structures would be weakened, residents' safety would be compromised, homes would be devalued and communities would be thrown into turmoil. And there are whole communities at stake - thousands of families from North Entrance through to Long Jetty, Killarney Vale and Berkeley Vale. Then comes the danger of disturbing the Tuggerah Lakes. The Government has already committed more than \$13 million to the restoration program - a five-year program that should be completed in 12 months - and recently announced that another \$2 million would be devoted to catchment management programs. All the money, work, effort and improvements to the lakes are to be put at risk by the decision of the Fahey Government.

This amounts to a shabby, underhand attack on the residents of Wyong shire. People's homes will be crumbling; people will fear for their safety; homes will be subject to falling prices; the local environment will be sullied; and it will be on the head of the Fahey Government. This proposal, like so many others of the Fahey Government, is an act of gross hypocrisy and a breach of important electoral commitments. I have here an election pamphlet from the 1988 State election which was distributed among Central Coast voters attacking the

then Labor Government. It states clearly:

Do you want to have your home wrecked by widespread subsidence of up to 1.9m?

It goes on:

Your home/property is going to be devalued by 40 per cent if the Government is allowed to extract coal from beneath your homes.

There is more:

Labor will sink Wyong! Vote them out and save our shire!

So who would people vote for? The Liberal Party, of course. Why? Because the document states:

The Liberal Party agree with Wyong Shire Council's stand in vigorously opposing total coal extraction within Wyong Shire.

So on a major election issue - one that a Liberal member was voted in on - in a marginal seat where voters were placing great credence in the policies of the various parties, the Liberal Party promised to oppose more mining in Wyong shire. I know that the Minister for Mines is not a member of the Liberal Party, but that is what the Liberals promised. The electorate voted in a Liberal representative. Now, a few years down the track - when the State is strapped for cash because of the waste and mismanagement of successive Liberal governments - the Fahey Government is after the quick buck at the expense of ordinary people. Opposing mining under Tuggerah Lakes is the right policy. I embrace that policy wholeheartedly. It is the policy I will be fighting for on behalf of the people of the Central Coast. I strongly urge the Minister and his Government immediately to abandon plans to permit mining operations under the Tuggerah Lakes waterways system.

Mr CAUSLEY (Clarence - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and Minister for Mines) [5.20]: I am amazed that a member of the Labor Party would make such a statement. I should have thought that members opposite would understand by now that most of their electoral support in those areas comes from the mining industry and a continuation of that industry. I assure the honourable member for The Entrance that nothing will be done to jeopardise the Entrance electorate or its residents. The honourable member should know, having lived in that area for some time, that much evidence and knowledge is available about the effects of longwall mining. In fact, the main northern railway line was mined with full knowledge of what the effects of subsidence might be. That has been done on many occasions, and compensation is available if property damage occurs. The honourable member is displaying his troglodyte mentality by saying, in other words: "Lock the world up. Stop, we do not want progress or income".

Mr McBride: The honourable member for Barwon spent \$13 million on it.

Mr CAUSLEY: We will talk about that. That comment by the honourable member discloses his mentality. The former Deputy Premier, who is present in the Chamber, spent \$13 million on dredging. The honourable member for The Entrance is talking about subsidence ruining the lake. That shows what an idiot he really is.

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I call the honourable member for The Entrance to order.

Mr CAUSLEY: One has to question the intelligence of the honourable member when he brings forward an issue about damage to the lake.

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I call the honourable member for The Entrance to order for the second time.

Mr CAUSLEY: Last year \$20 billion was brought into New South Wales by the mining industry. Yet the honourable member for The Entrance, a member of the Labor Party, is advocating that mining in New South Wales should stop. The honourable member should apologise to his fellow Labor members.

BEDLAM POINT BRIDGE

Mr PETCH (Gladesville) [5.22]: I wish to draw attention to the campaign of lies and innuendo being perpetrated by the Labor Party in the Gladesville electorate about the Government's program for the next 12 months. A classic example is a statement by the Hon. Jan Burnswoods, a member of the upper House, reported in a local newspaper. That statement is the most misleading load of garbage one could ever read. I challenge her to repeat that statement in her Chamber, for she knows full well the repercussions that will follow from misleading the House. The Hon. Jan Burnswoods said that the Government is going to build a bridge from Abbotsford to Bedlam Point in Gladesville. She also said that the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads is telling lies. That attack on the Minister also appeared in another newspaper edition.

The facts are clear. For many years it was the intention of the Labor Party to build that bridge. I refer to the 1987 edition of "Roads 2000", in which the Hon. Laurie Brereton, former Minister for Roads, stated that a bridge will be built from Abbotsford to Gladesville. During that period I and other members of Ryde Council made representations to the Minister in his capacity as shadow minister about what could be done to stop the Labor Government building the bridge. That Government wanted not only to build a bridge from Abbotsford to Gladesville but also to remove all kerbside parking from Victoria Road in Gladesville and to erect a chainwire fence right up the centre of the shopping centre. Labor wanted to upgrade Pittwater Road through to Channel 10 to provide a major north-south connection between Parramatta Road and the Epping Highway.

At that time the coalition Opposition resisted the proposal and fought it down the line. Under this conservative Government the present Minister has given assurances and has also taken an active role in writing to the Drummoyne Council asking it to remove all planning instruments showing a road reservation through parkland for the purposes of a bridge. In other words, the Minister has said to Drummoyne Council that the Government wants that reservation removed, so that if the Labor Party is ever returned to office it will have to go through the full process of an environmental impact statement.

That is a classic example of a pea-and-thimble trick. The Opposition is attempting to suggest that the Government is going to build the bridge and that the Labor Party will be the saviour. God help us if the Labor Party is ever returned to Government in this State, for it will build the bridge and blame the Liberal Party for its policy of building such a bridge. That is an example of the deceit and lies being perpetrated by the Opposition. In September last year I had to tell the House that the Minister had given assurances that no bridges will be built, in line with Government policy. But that was not enough. The Labor Party candidate has been writing to constituents saying that the Labor Party would never allow a bridge to be built because of its terrible effects, such as increased traffic flows that would prove unbearable for local residents.

The coalition has been saying that about the bridge for the past ten years, both in Government and in Opposition. The Labor Party finds it convenient, however, to lift all the Government's arguments and take them as its own. Labor members wrote to a newspaper seeking people's views. It is interesting to observe that not one person living in the affected area wrote to the newspaper. Those who did write letters to that newspaper were Labor Party members from North Ryde, East Ryde and other areas who wanted to score cheap political points against the local member and the Government. Those Labor members did not fool anyone. This is a Labor Party trick to try to con the people of Gladesville, who can expect to see many more such attempts before 26 March 1995. I inform the people of Gladesville and members of this House that the Government is aware of what the Opposition is up to and will be following its actions and lies very closely.

Mr BAIRD (Northcott - Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads) [5.27]: I have noted the comments made by the honourable member for Gladesville. He is absolutely right. The Opposition's statements are more of Labor lies mark III on this issue. During the 1988 election campaign the Opposition made statements throughout the Gladesville area and Drummoyne electorate that the Government is going to build this bridge. Those statements were, and still are, completely untrue. Since that time, the Government has

removed the reservation. I held a press conference in Gladesville to say that the Government is going to remove the reservation, that council could take over the whole reservation area, and that any blight on affected houses would be removed. The Government cannot do anything more than say that the bridge is not going to be built - no way, no how, nowhere. Yet the Labor Party continues to peddle these lies. One can only wonder about the morality of some members opposite who seem able to lie without concern. I make absolutely clear once and for all that the Government is not building, and has no plans to build, this bridge. The Government has removed the reservation, and that should absolutely be the end of the matter. The Labor Party should have had as decent a local Labor member at that time as the present honourable member for Gladesville, who has true community spirit and true concern for the people of Gladesville and their needs. The honourable member raised objections long ago when he was a member of Ryde Council and asked that the reservation be removed.

AUSTRALIAN SHORT TRACK SKATING RELAY TEAM BRONZE MEDAL

Mr MOSS (Canterbury) [5.29]: My most pleasant task tonight is to pay tribute to the endeavours of four young Australians who since last weekend have been fondly called the bronzed Aussies. I am referring to the fantastic achievement at the Lillehammer Winter Olympics of Andrew Murther, Kieran Hansen, Richard Nizielski and Stephen Bradbury, who are known throughout Australia and worldwide as winners of the bronze medal in the

Page 90

men's short track 5,000 metre skating relay. That achievement was most exciting for all Australians. The team made history - the first time Australia has won a medal at a Winter Olympics.

It was also exciting because at these Olympics Australia was up there with the other successful countries; in fact I think we came 22nd overall. On the one hand that might not sound all that good, but when you consider that 66 nations competed at the Winter Olympics, our 22nd placing put us in the top one-third of nations. That is a great achievement in the Winter Olympics for sunny Australia, and we have the men's relay team to thank for that achievement. My constituents and I were doubly pleased because a team of our local boys were successful. I say that because although these young men live in various cities - in fact two of the four skaters live interstate - all of them have trained at the Canterbury olympic rink at different times. In fact Andrew Murtha and Kieren Hansen still train at Canterbury, and Andrew Murtha is an employee of Canterbury Council.

I also want to congratulate the Canterbury rink on the part it has played in the Olympics and on its contribution to skating. The rink has been operating for more than 20 years now, and is currently being upgraded to international standard. It is successful because it is run by a co-operative that I believe is very dedicated to skating as a sport, as an art form and as a recreational activity. The rink caters for figure skating, speed skating and ice hockey. It has a skating club that accommodates all ages and stages of skating. It is a great venue for beginners, advanced skaters and, of course, highly skilled skaters. The rink's success is reflected in the composition of this skating team at the 1994 Olympics, with half of the team coming from the Canterbury ice rink. Steven and Danielle Carr, the brother and sister Australian figure skating pairs champions, also hail from the Canterbury ice rink, and of course the Carrs once again at these Olympics brought great credit to Australia.

All who represented Australia at the Lillehammer Games deserve the praise of this Parliament and I am sure my comments are endorsed by all members. But once again I want to single out the achievement of the men's relay team, who over the years have been very ably assisted by the staff, the coaches and the facilities at the Canterbury ice rink. The relay team has our applause for putting Australia on the map in terms of winter Olympic fame.

Mr CAUSLEY (Clarence - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and Minister for Mines) [5.32]: I join with the honourable member for Canterbury in congratulating the men's speed relay team, which did extremely well. I acknowledge also Kirstie Marshall, who went very close. I am sure that all of Australia was hoping that she could have succeeded in that final jump, after having performed well on her first attempt. For such a

small country that does not have the facilities or the climate of some other countries, whose people are virtually born on the ice and spend most of their time on it, we did very well. Certainly members on this side of the House join with the honourable member for Canterbury in congratulating all those concerned.

RURAL SCHOOL BUS SERVICES

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY (Barwon) [5.33]: I want to refer to the management and operation of the school bus system in New South Wales, which is absolutely critical in rural areas of the State, and which at the moment is suffering from what I suppose is best described as a conflict of interest between two departments. The Public Accounts Committee inquired into this matter and brought down a report some time ago. The Department of Transport is the responsible department in respect of the extension and creation of new school bus runs in country New South Wales, and of course is also responsible for the payment of the operators of those runs. The problem that we are confronted with at the moment is that there is a conflict between the Department of Transport and the Department of School Education. Costs related to the operation of the school buses are met by the Department of Transport, but if there is no alternative use for a school bus, or if there is no school bus, the Department of School Education must pick up the cost of approximately \$12,000 to \$15,000 per child, per year for distance education. I have had a great deal of success with, and have considerable regard for, the people with whom I have been dealing in the Department of Transport with regard to a number of propositions that I have put forward. The problem is really one of funding, because quite often I receive from the Department of Transport the response that in these difficult economic times it cannot meet the costs of creating a new bus service - and this is really the crux of the matter.

We have had reasonable success in extending or varying the routes of bus services, but when it comes to establishing a new bus run to cater for up to 16 kids - say 12 to 16 kids - we come up against the problem of the cost per child. For example, I recently had a case in which a new bus service that was going to cost \$2,428 per child per annum was refused on the basis that it would be too expensive. The parents of the children could of course apply for a private vehicle subsidy, which would have cost \$5,700 per annum for those kids. That is a variation of some \$40,000 in the cost for this service. If that service is not provided, those kids will have to undertake correspondence education, which will cost \$12,000 to \$15,000 per child. So in recognising the needs, we have to remember that irrespective of whether the cost is ultimately met by the Department of Transport or the Department of School Education, it is all government money; it is all coming out of the consolidated revenue pot. The Department of Transport must take into account that if even the cost is transferred to the Department of School Education, ultimately the people of New South Wales still have to pick up the bill.

Page 91

The responsibility for school bus services was originally with the Department of School Education, and I believe that we should seriously consider returning that responsibility, particularly for rural services, to that department, especially because it has a bearing on the adjustment of numbers of kids attending particular schools. One success of the school bus system is that it has allowed the Department of School Education to close a lot of small country schools - and I have no problem with that. However, if some small country schools are closed but the school bus systems are not made available to the children from those schools, the resultant cost will be out of proportion across the whole of the Government budget.

To both the Minister for Education and the Minister for Education I make the very strong suggestion, first, that the management of school buses should revert to the Department of School Education. If that is not suitable to the Government of the day, there must be a much greater co-ordination between the two departments to ensure that we do not have this ridiculous situation of the Department of School Education having to pick up the Department of Transport bill. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CAUSLEY (Clarence - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and Minister for Mines) [5.38]: The honourable member for Barwon certainly raises a very important matter about the school bus system in country New South Wales, which is particularly relevant to electorates on the North Coast, where the population has

been growing by some 4,000 during the past two or three years -

Mr Hatton: And the South Coast.

Mr CAUSLEY: And the South Coast. Enormous pressure is put on some of the bus systems, and there is no doubt that there are conflicts between the two departments. I have had them in my electorate and I am sure that many other members are aware of the conflicts that occur. I will certainly refer to both Ministers the suggestion that the honourable member has put forward, and I hope they may be able to sort out this problem.

ROCKDALE ELECTORATE BUS ROUTES

Mr THOMPSON (Rockdale) [5.39]: I wish to refer to a problem that is seriously disadvantaging a section of my electorate, the purchase by State Transit of the Brighton-Kyeemagh bus lines, which took effect on 21 November 1993. This private service was previously known as route 196; it became State Transit route 479. On its face, it might appear that was a good move - a positive action by State Transit to provide a good service for the people of the Brighton-Kyeemagh area. But the real situation is quite different: instead of providing an improved service, as most would expect, the new arrangements are disastrous for many local people.

The old 196 bus line had serviced the people of Brighton-Kyeemagh for about 70 years. Many people relied upon it as their primary means of transport. When the 196 service was taken over and converted to route 479, the route was drastically altered, and it became simply inaccessible to a large section of the local community. When the matter was brought to my attention I wrote to the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads and to the Kingsgrove depot of State Transit. I sought an immediate review of this service and asked that it be changed and extended to alleviate the difficulties being experienced. On 23 December I received a reply from State Transit which stated:

The purchase of the Brighton Bus line was undertaken by State Transit after a feasibility study. The results showed the route in its previous form was not being operated on full commercial principles, due to the limited patronage in the area. To ensure commercial viability it was necessary for State Transit to alter the route and operate it in conjunction with its route 478 service, Ramsgate to Rockdale via Brighton.

We are aware that alterations have disadvantaged a number of your constituents living in the vicinity of Bestic Street and West Botany Street. However, our contract obligations with the Department of Transport are being met by current route structures in the area.

State Transit agreed to have another look at the position. It said that it would look for a "commercial solution". I emphasise a number of the key phrases in the State Transit letter: "full commercial principles", "commercial viability" and "commercial solution". It appeared to me from that letter - and it was subsequently confirmed through discussions I have had - that the old notion of public transport as a public service is just that: an old notion. That public transport should be accessible or provided at all is out-of-date thinking as far as this Government and State Transit are concerned. If it does not make a dollar, it is not on. The new 479 service does not meet the needs of the people, unlike the former service. I want to see either the old route restored or major changes made to the current one. I shall refer to a few of the letters on this matter that I have received from my constituents. A letter from Mrs Tuntevski from Brighton-le-Sands states:

My husband passed away last year and we have been residents of this area for many years. Now without his support, and my asthma and health bad, my mother-in-law and myself are virtually house bound.

This is a recurring theme. A letter from Mrs Williams states:

I am an old resident of Rockdale, all my life, and now the bus has changed I can't walk to Rockdale as the bus service has finished. I have to get a taxi, which I can't afford. I've had a stroke, and the lady next door is worse off . . . a lot of people are upset, also the Kyeemagh residents are very upset.

A letter from Mrs Lutton of Francis Avenue Brighton-le-Sands states:

I am a severe asthmatic with emphysema and am receiving the pension. I find it is very difficult for me to walk up to the bus as it is uphill to the stop . . . this does not only inconvenience me but there are also a lot of older people who cannot walk to the bus. I am 43 and have a school age daughter who has to leave earlier each morning now to get the bus.

Page 92

A letter from Mrs Dowsett of William Street Rockdale states:

I am a 74 year old pensioner with a bad foot. I used to catch the bus at the corner of William Street and Bestic Street . . . I now have to walk up a hill, cross the busy West Botany Road and up another two blocks to catch the Lennox Street bus.

It is bad enough going, but coming home in the heat, with my shopping bags and no hand for an umbrella, is a bit too much for me. My only alternative would be to get a taxi home, which a lot of pensioners who live on the other side of West Botany Road are now doing.

I could go on as I have received a lot of these letters. At meetings I have had with the residents and with State Transit the recurring theme raised is that public transport should be about serving people; it should not be provided solely on the mean-spirited basis of full commercial principles. This bean-counter mentality is not about serving people - it puts profits before human beings and the quality of life of real people. Now even more people in my electorate are isolated in their own homes. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CAUSLEY (Clarence - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and Minister for Mines) [5.44]: I will take up the point the honourable member for Rockdale is trying to make with respect to full commercial principles. If he closely scrutinises the annual report of State Transit he will find that all of the services within the city are subsidised. There is no doubt that they are not making profits - and they are not intended to make profits. I do not know the circumstances involved with the route he is talking about, but it seems to me from the letters that he read out that disabled people would have the opportunity to avail themselves of community transport. Perhaps the honourable member should look closely at that.

Whilst State Transit subsidises services, there is a limit to what can be done. We cannot go back to the situation where, for example, under the previous Government the railway system was subsidised to the extent of \$3 million a day. There is a limit to what we can do. Obviously, we try as hard as we can to provide services to people, but if the services are not being used it is difficult to maintain them. I will refer this matter to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. I think some of the issues raised by the honourable member for Rockdale were answered in the letter from State Transit, and he has admitted that State Transit is to have another look at the problem. I will refer the honourable member's statement to the Minister.

TRANSFER OF SENIOR CONSTABLE DAVE KELLEY

Mr COCHRAN (Monaro) [5.46]: I speak once again on behalf of the rural community of the Monaro electorate. Senior Constable Dave Kelley has been the livestock officer at the Cooma police station for some years, but under a New South Wales Police Service direction he has been advised that he is to move from Cooma to Sydney. This has caused considerable concern to the rural landholders in that area. I rise on their behalf to plead through the Minister in the chair, the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Mines, for the Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services to review this transfer so that the people in Cooma and the surrounding district can maintain this officer in whom they have a great deal of trust.

I say this with a degree of experience. Senior Constable Kelley has gained a great deal of local knowledge and experience in this particular facet of policing in the Cooma district. Senior Constable Kelley, in his capacity as livestock officer, has to be able to identify the livestock within the electorate in the event of theft,

an accusation of theft, or in the course of his investigations relating to any other theft in the area, whether it be livestock or rural property. It is necessary for him to be able to identify stock by their breed, which he can do because of his understanding of the bloodlines of various stock and breeds in the area - which are identifiable to those of us who work with livestock on a regular basis. With experience one can simply look at a herd of Hereford cattle and know by the bloodlines and the description of the stock which property they came from, without even going into the more specific details of an earmark and a brand.

Senior Constable Kelley has acquired these skills. In addition, he has learned thousands of brands' earmarks and other identifying marks for other livestock, such as horses, within the Monaro electorate. He is a great asset to the community. The community has confidence in its livestock officer and in his ability to identify various stock. The community - I am speaking on behalf of small rural communities, such as Numeralla, Nimmitabel, Dalgety and the surrounding area - fears that if a replacement is found, and it is vital that a replacement is found for Dave Kelley, he will not have that extensive experience.

Therefore, the community will experience a lengthy delay while the replacement gains an acceptable standard of knowledge in which they have confidence. It seems wise to me to leave Senior Constable Kelley exactly where he is in Cooma. He not only has the confidence of the rural community, but also has earned wide respect from all of those he has dealt with in his activities as a citizen. I know there would be a temptation on behalf of the department, and I note with interest some comments of the Assistant Commissioner of the New South Wales Police Service, Alf Peate, in his recent visit to Cooma, that there might not be a replacement if Senior Constable Kelley left. That would be of grave concern to me and I would strongly object.

The role that Senior Constable Kelley fills is very important. His role is vital in these times. Despite the fact that at the moment livestock are at depressed prices, there is no doubt that, in the not too distant future, stud sheep and stud cattle will be worth considerably more than they are today. Livestock will then become a target for thieves in the area. I call on the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries to take these representations of concern to the Minister for

Page 93

Police and ask that the matter be reviewed again with the intention of having Senior Constable David Kelley remain in the Cooma district.

Mr CAUSLEY (Clarence - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and Minister for Mines) [5.51]: I acknowledge the contribution from the honourable member for Monaro. As Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries I support his statements. One of the rare and valuable commodities in country areas is police who have a knowledge of stock; they are few and far between. Honourable members probably would not realise that a lot of stock is duffed every year in this State - it has become quite a business. It is not new; it has been going on for a long time and is a matter of frustration for country people.

Earlier today the honourable member for Londonderry spoke about the unexplained acquittal of an alleged murderer. One thing that frustrates country people is that very few people brought before the court charged with cattle or stock duffing are convicted. Despite cogent evidence, from time to time there seems to be a mentality in the judiciary that it is okay to steal a calf or a sheep - that is part of the Australian mentality. Country people are very concerned about that. Obviously, if the constable is so versed in brands and breeding, he is a valuable asset to country New South Wales. I have approached the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and he recognises the representations from the honourable member for Monaro in this particular matter. The Minister undertook to approach the Commissioner of Police to see if something can be done about Senior Constable Kelley.

KIAMA HEALTH SERVICES

Mr HARRISON (Kiama) [5.52]: I raise once again my concern about the ongoing downgrading of health services to citizens residing in the Kiama local government area. One example of this is an incident

involving a constituent who is a resident of the Mayflower Retirement Village at Gerringong. On 9 December 1993 she was hospitalised on the advice of a local doctor. Mrs Nelson was reportedly taken to Shellharbour District Hospital at 9 p.m. on 9 December. However, at 4 a.m. she was transferred to Wollongong Hospital, allegedly because there were no beds available at Shellharbour District Hospital. Mrs Nelson then underwent tests in the casualty section of Wollongong Hospital, where it was claimed that she would have to be returned to Shellharbour District Hospital as there were no beds available in Wollongong.

Mrs Nelson's daughter rang Shellharbour District Hospital at 9.15 a.m. on 10 December and spoke to the supervisor, who expressed surprise that a 90-year-old woman could be treated in this way. At 9.45 a.m. the supervisor rang Mrs Nelson's daughter and informed her that the reason her mother had been transferred to Wollongong at 4 a.m. was because no one was in attendance at that hour at Shellharbour District Hospital to carry out the necessary tests. I place on record my disgust that residents of the Kiama local government area continue to be told that no difficulty is being caused as a result of the total closure of Kiama District Hospital because Shellharbour District Hospital now serves their needs.

By 10.30 a.m. on 10 December it was ascertained from Wollongong Hospital that Mrs Nelson was expected to now be admitted to Wollongong Hospital. By 5 p.m. that same day the situation had changed again whereby Mrs Nelson was transferred back to Shellharbour District Hospital. This case clearly illustrates the downgrading of hospital services for residents of Kiama and the Illawarra region in general. It is to the shame of this Government that it caused a 90-year-old pensioner to be shunted from one hospital to another, and back again, in the small hours of the morning. I am extremely disappointed that a recent draft strategy for health services in the Illawarra, released on 7 December 1993, ignored completely the citizens of Kiama local government area and the great volume of support to re-open Kiama District Hospital with in-patient and casualty facilities. The needs of Kiama residents were simply brushed aside with a mere cursory reference on page 23 of the draft strategic plan. Under the heading "Community Concerns About Access" the report states:

The lack of local inpatient facilities is primarily a concern for an elderly age group. While older people also benefit from the technological changes that result in a quicker return to normal function and a reduced hospital stay, their recuperation is slower and therefore their need for physical support greater. As well, elderly spouses are less able to offer the necessary support and there is a greater likelihood that the person lives alone. Further, older family and visitors often feel less confident about driving distances and the Illawarra is generally not well serviced by public transport. While post acute care is available to Kiama residents at Shellharbour Hospital, sub-acute and respite care is now only available at Coledale Hospital and David Berry Hospital.

It is a matter of record that the area health services announced recently the total closure of Coledale District Hospital also. That can do nothing but exacerbate the difficulties experienced by residents of the Kiama local government area and the Illawarra region in general in so far as care and attention for aged citizens. Not only is the Illawarra Area Health Service on record as saying it intends to relocate the existing community health services to the former hospital site in Kiama, but a property in Bong Bong Street, Kiama - currently owned by the area health service - is to be sold off, a move which could prejudice the reopening of the Kiama District Hospital by an incoming Labor government.

Examples like the case of Mrs Nelson, an aged resident of a retirement village who periodically needs hospital care, are not uncommon but do not attract much sympathy from this Government or the appointees of the Illawarra Area Health Service. If the Minister for Health chooses to flick pass this complaint, which I make on behalf of Mrs Nelson and her family to the complaints unit, it is requested that he also send them a memorandum that this complaint be the subject of an early investigation and report - not simply buried away for the next two or three years in the manner in which matters referred to the complaints unit are usually treated.

Page 94

Mr CAUSLEY (Clarence - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and Minister for Mines) [5.57]: No one would condone the fact that a 90-year-old person could not find a bed in either hospital. That is a matter all honourable members would be concerned about. From time to time in all hospitals beds are not available, and that is most unfortunate. If the honourable member for Kiama looks closely at the New South Wales Budget,

he would see that the Government has increased health spending every year. The cost of health care in New South Wales is constantly under consideration by the Government.

However, we must look at what is causing the problem. I have had a close look at the cause in my electorate and there is no doubt that some of the problems come back to Medicare. Senator Richardson has admitted that that is where some of the problems lie, although some of his ideologically obsessed mates do not agree. No doubt matters that affect the State Budget have been brought about by Medicare itself. One should look closely at issues relating to home care units, semi-retirement homes, and nursing homes; the many long-stay patients in our hospitals are causing enormous problems with regard to day beds, and certainly with the Budget. Because we do not have nursing homes funded by the Federal Government people are forced on the health system. Medicare appears to be obsessed with private patients. I think all Australians were appalled when the Prime Minister admitted that he does not belong to a health fund. I am sure that he does not have to wait when he needs health services.

EASTWOOD ELECTORATE BUSHFIRES

Mr TINK (Eastwood) [5.59]: I should like to say a few things about the recent bushfire crisis in my electorate and to commend some people involved in very important work in my area and, indeed, throughout the whole of northern Sydney. I remember being in my electorate office - I think it was a Wednesday - when I first became aware of the bushfire crisis. I was idly looking out of my window and suddenly saw what I can only describe as a mushroom cloud somewhere in the distance, hovering over the middle of Marsfield. It was an extraordinary sight. The weather on that day was extremely hot and blustery, and I will never forget that the cloud seemed to come from nowhere and it was unbelievably intense.

I got into my car and went over to look at what was happening. The Eastwood police were already in the area. It appears that the fires, which subsequently spread all over Sydney, started at a place called Browns Water Hole, which is on the border of the Eastwood and Ku-ring-gai electorates, right down in the bush. I regret to say that the fire appears to have been deliberately lit. Unfortunately, that was a feature of a number of the fires that occurred all over the State. It seemed as though people materialised out of nowhere to fight the fires. I would particularly like to place on record my appreciation of the work of the police and to mention in particular Chief Inspector Russell Reid, the patrol commander at Eastwood - I know he is well known to the honourable member for Gordon. I express my appreciation to all the police of Eastwood and the other stations in the northern region.

I will come to the firefighters, ambulance officers and other emergency services people in a moment. The police are sometimes forgotten in these types of emergencies. In fact, they perform extremely important work with regard to crowd control and make very important decisions about who should or should not be evacuated from an area. One of the most difficult judgments that anyone has to make in this type of crisis is who is to be evacuated and in what circumstances. I suppose there is nothing more emotive than trying to remove able-bodied people from houses that they have specially prepared for firefighting purposes. It is well known that if people stay in their houses they have a better chance of saving them, but, on the other hand, under extreme fire conditions that can be very threatening to life. It is a very difficult decision to make. The Ryde, Eastwood and Gladesville police were in the thick of things and had to make a lot of very difficult decisions.

The local fire brigades were also out in force. I remember seeing Kel Law, who runs the Eastwood brigade, at about one o'clock on the first Saturday morning. He is a big, beefy guy, like all fire officers are, and he was literally crying - not through emotion - because he and others had been flat out for five hours somewhere in Chatswood fighting a fire front with smoke so thick they could not see through it; and that was just the way they were. Theirs was an extraordinary effort.

Another matter of interest was the communication situation. On the Friday night there were ten full blown emergencies all running at once, and the police radio system, which is normally able to cope very well with all manner of emergencies, was overloaded. I suppose it would not be very often in the peace time history

of Australia that we would get conditions such as to cause those communication nets to be overloaded. A number of mobile phones were in use but there was a difficulty with reception because of the topography of the areas where the worst fires were. I put these matters to the Deputy Premier's committee. I do not know what the answers are, but I believe they are very important questions that need to be addressed.

I would like to especially mention the Australian Capital Territory fire brigades which came to Marsfield and got straight into the firefighting. I watched what they did and there is no doubt that they saved probably 40 to 50 properties in the Marsfield area. I recall a number of them were under some powerlines that had collapsed and there were some very close shaves. They got straight into the firefighting without any complaint and fought fires for about three days. I and many other members have quite a lot to be thankful for, and to the many people who volunteered and assisted to fight these fires I say: Well done. [*Time expired.*]

Page 95

Mr CAUSLEY (Clarence - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and Minister for Mines) [6.4]: I should like to reiterate some of the statements made by the honourable member for Eastwood about those people who fought in the horrendous fires. Unfortunately, in conditions such as we had, with 42 degree and 43 degree temperatures, it is very difficult to fight such fires. On a number of occasions during the 10 years I have been a member of Parliament I have stood in this House and warned members of certain circumstances that can occur. Those warnings have come from the experience of having spent a number of years in the bush fire brigades and, of course, all of my life in the country.

The real issue that has to be addressed is what caused the fires or what was the underlying problem that fanned the fires. Obviously, the problem is the build up of fuel over a number of years. That is the real lesson we must learn from these fires. The country experience is that one must reduce fuel in times when it is cooler, particularly in the spring and the autumn. During those periods we do not get the savage and hot summer fires that cause such damage. Undoubtedly, many people in those areas threatened by the fires will now realise that during spring and autumn there must be a reduction in fuel so that they are not threatened by horrendous fires during the summer months.

Of course, in Sydney we have marvellous topography which is lovely to live in, but the gullies are very dangerous. Anyone who has dealt with fires will know that, no matter which way the wind is blowing, a fire will always run uphill. When there are savage winds, such as we had at that particular time, with hot fires, a life threatening situation develops. Undoubtedly, while we congratulate those who were involved in the firefighting, we should learn a lesson so that these disasters do not happen again.

[*Mr Deputy-Speaker left the chair at 6.6 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.*]

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS IN REPLY

First Day's Debate

Mr BLACKMORE (Maitland) [7.30]: I move:

That the following Address In Reply to the Speech which his Excellency the Governor has addressed to both Houses of Parliament on opening this session of the Parliament of New South Wales be now adopted by this House:

*To His Excellency Rear Admiral **Peter Ross Sinclair**, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor of the State of New South Wales in the Commonwealth of Australia.*

May it please Your Excellency -

We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, in Parliament

assembled, desire to express our thanks for Your Excellency's Speech, and to affirm our sincere allegiance to Her Most Gracious Majesty.

We beg to assure Your Excellency that our earnest consideration will be given to the measures to be submitted to us, that we will faithfully carry out the important duties entrusted to us by the people of New South Wales, and that the necessary provision for the Public Services will be made in due course.

We join Your Excellency in the hope that, under the guidance of Divine Providence, our labours may be so directed as to advance the best interests of all sections of the community.

It is an honour and privilege to move the motion for the adoption of the Address In Reply to the Speech made by His Excellency the Governor. His Excellency Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair has earned great respect from the people of Maitland and the Hunter Valley. He has been prepared to travel to country communities throughout New South Wales and listen to the concerns of local people. I have had the privilege of accompanying His Excellency and Mrs Sinclair on one of their many trips to the Hunter Valley. His Excellency rightly drew attention to the marvellous community spirit generated in New South Wales during the massive effort to fight the recent bushfires. It was an epic battle as fires raged along 600 kilometres of the New South Wales coast.

My electorate was one of those affected and I witnessed firsthand the bravery of volunteer and professional firefighters alike. In the height of the emergency in the Dungog area I could do little as a member of Parliament but climb on a fire truck and fight side by side with the locals as they tried to save their property. The striking thing about the fires was the sight of complete strangers battling side by side to save the property of someone they had never met. Helicopter pilots put their lives on the line in the most dangerous flying conditions they had ever seen. It was a miracle that there was not a serious aviation accident. Although the loss of any life in these situations is a tragedy, the fact that only four people were killed during these terrible fires is amazing.

One of the incredible aspects of the fires was the way emergency services and firefighting volunteers were co-ordinated to get the job done. Although volunteer and professional firefighters put their lives on the line, hundreds of other emergency personnel also deserve our thanks. Members of the State Emergency Service and police officers were helping evacuate people. Police officers were controlling traffic. Electricity supply authorities were monitoring the dangers of falling powerlines. While the fires were still being fought, officers from the Department of Community Services were already preparing disaster relief measures. The people of my electorate will not forget the heroic efforts of the bush fire fighters or the tragedy that unfolded during the fires.

At two recent functions in Maitland and Dungog attended by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services more than 1,300 people gathered to pay tribute to the great efforts of the firefighters. Although the fires were a national tragedy, they brought my local communities together in a way I have not seen in my extensive time in public life. I was moved by the speed and generosity with which the people of New South Wales - indeed people from around Australia - responded to various appeals for donations to help those who suffered during the

Page 96

bushfires. The recent bushfire emergency underlined again how vigilant we need to be every summer in relation to bushfires.

The Government is sifting through the aftermath of the fires to establish what lessons we should learn. Cabinet has set up a subcommittee, chaired by the Deputy Premier, to undertake a comprehensive review of fire management and related legislation in this State. Following wide consultation the subcommittee will report to Cabinet, which will then decide if any action is needed in this House to better prepare New South Wales for the next fire season. The events of January have jolted the community to a new level of awareness of the dangers of bushfires. We should not let this opportunity slip by without learning the lessons, to see if we can be better prepared when nature next throws together the freak weather conditions that blasted New South Wales in January this year.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the recent fires was the activity of arsonists, who endanger the lives of people in local communities and firefighters alike. The Government has already moved to crack down by imposing tougher penalties for arsonists. This is certainly a direct way of dealing with the sick and troubled people who, for some reason or other, have a fascination with fire or wish to wreak havoc on their local communities. I believe the Government's wider social agenda, especially its focus on the family and the values it instils, will also be important in stopping this sort of anti-social behaviour.

The Speech delivered by His Excellency yesterday to open this parliamentary session outlined the program of a Government that is determined to address the real bread and butter issues confronting the people of New South Wales. His Excellency's Speech was delivered at a time when the people of New South Wales are beginning to see a glimmer of hope after three years of labouring under the Federal Government's clumsy handling of the national economy and the subsequent recession. One of the reasons Australia experienced such a devastating recession was that the Federal Labor Government proved it had lost sight of long-term policy goals. Instead, it is preoccupied with short-term political gimmicks.

The New South Wales Government maintains a commitment to reform and is systematically working through every facet of State Government operations to ensure our government authorities and departments are focused on providing the best possible service to the public. The philosophy of this Government is not economic reform merely to please economists. Our reform of State Government departments and authorities has always been focused on the consumers, the taxpayers of this State. We want to deliver better government services at less cost to the people of New South Wales.

One of the key ways we can better deliver services is to ensure better co-ordination between government departments and between different tiers of government. Government departments tend to operate within their own little patches and do not look outside their own boundaries to establish if community needs are being met. The Premier has taken a special interest in the issue of co-ordination of government services and also in ending the duplication of services between State and Federal governments. This is particularly evident in social policy areas. The Department of Community Services, the Department of Health, the Department of School Education and the Department of Sport, Recreation and Racing may all have a role in youth policy; however, their policies may not always be complementary and they may not always pool resources.

Some local managers of government departments are aware of the benefits of looking beyond the boundaries of their own departments, and I commend them for it. However, the Government is keen to establish service delivery as a focus for local departmental management and better co-ordination with their peers in other portfolio areas and as the tool for improving customer service. Better management by the New South Wales Government frees up money that can then be spent on essential community services. There are plenty of examples of efficiency gains now being passed on to consumers. Pacific Power has lifted its efficiency to the point where industry has received two cuts of almost 10 per cent in the price of electric power in the past eight months. That is real reform that helps industry to create jobs. The consequent cut in production costs is welcomed by heavy industry in the Hunter Valley.

The Government has sold off the Grain Handling Authority to farmers and has cut handling charges for two years in a row. Last year the Maritime Services Board cut container charges for exporters, particularly from the port of Sydney, by 9 per cent. Newcastle is the most efficient coal port in Australia, and the Government is working with other ports to help them reach similar levels of efficiency. I should like to refer to the coal industry to illustrate the Government's commitment to reform and flexibility. The coal industry is experiencing tough times as the demand for coal from Japan drops off. A sluggish Japanese economy and a global drop-off in demand for steel has shrunk the market for Australian coal.

Coal companies from the Hunter Valley have approached the Government looking for new efficiencies that will allow them to continue to operate under these tough conditions. The coal companies believe they can operate the trainlines, haul coal more efficiently than the State Rail Authority and, therefore, lower their production costs. The Government is quite happy to examine the viability of this proposal. A viable coal

industry is vital to the Hunter Valley. It protects jobs and holds communities and families together. I should like to contrast the Government's pragmatic approach to keeping industries alive with Labor's dogmatic, head-in-the-sand negativism. The Leader of the Opposition has vowed to oppose any moves to let coal companies operate trainlines in the Hunter. This is a matter of grave concern to me and to anyone who understands the coal industry in the Hunter region.

Page 97

I think everyone in the region should take note of the Opposition leader's failure to understand economic reality. It must be a chilling thought for the coal industry that this man hopes to be Premier one day. The efficiencies achieved through our ports and across the scope of the Government's operations are now having an impact on business confidence in this State. New South Wales has led the nation in the reform of government trading enterprises. Again, let me reiterate: everyone in the community benefits from these reforms. Without reform and without GTE dividends the New South Wales budget deficit would have blown out to Victorian proportions. Without GTE reform New South Wales would not have been able to retain its triple-A credit rating, condemning future operations to spiralling debt.

Our reform program has decreased GTE debt by 38 per cent in real terms since 1985-86. Our GTE reforms have resulted in GTE charges which have risen by 12 per cent less than the rate of inflation. GTE contributions to the Budget are now six times greater in real terms than they were before we embarked on the reform processes. Just as reform to the third party insurance system in this State made car ownership cheaper, reforms to other forms of government will make it easier for household budgets to balance.

I turn to the family. His Excellency pointed to the New South Wales Government's strong support for the International Year of the Family. I would like to add my support to the International Year of the Family. I would also have liked to acknowledge the presence earlier this evening in the public gallery of my wife, Lyne, and some of my extended family - Susan Arkell, Jill Schaefer and Michelle Bourgerie from Maitland's sister city, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, USA. Areas such as Maitland in the Hunter Valley have traditionally held strong family values. However, social dislocation and economic changes in the past two decades perhaps have diminished the role of the family. I would like to see the family held in high esteem again. It is strong families that are the building blocks of better communities. It is within the family structure that we first learn the values of justice, fairness and personal responsibility.

I mentioned earlier my concern about arsonists and their antisocial behaviour. It seems they must be living in a vacuum, cut off from the rest of the community and the responsibility that community living brings. Arsonists seem to be living their lives feeling empty inside and lacking attention or friendship. I can only guess at the motivation of such people but I suspect that an unhappy or unfulfilling family life is part of the reason for their antisocial behaviour. The actions of an arsonist are those of someone lacking a sense of personal or social responsibility. Such values should be instilled at a young age and I believe that a strong family is where these values are best learnt. I would like to see government programs that make it easier for a family to stay together, work and learn together and thrive.

As His Excellency mentioned, the Government has announced a work and family strategy that recognises the need to combine employment with family responsibilities. It will allow employers and employees to benefit from increased productivity, decline in absenteeism and increased commitment of workers who are able to achieve a better balance between their work and responsibilities. We need to make it easier for parents to care for their children but still take an active role in the work force if they wish. It is not the Government's role to become mother and father to our children; we as parents must take responsibility for them. But governments can become helpful partners for families. Families are our building blocks of the future. They are all about relationships and moulding character, about mutual respect and commitment and about support. As our most basic social unit, the family deserves all the support and encouragement we can give. The Government's response to the International Year of the Family shows how seriously we regard the family.

The Premier has formed an advisory committee on the International Year of the Family to make sure the

Government gets the right feedback on the needs of families. The committee will also provide input to the Government's policy statement on families, which will be unveiled later this year. The Government is keen to see that the International Year of the Family does not simply pass us by. We want to ensure that the International Year of the Family has a real and lasting effect. Again, the theme of co-ordination is apparent in the Government's introduction of family policies. Policies that benefit families will involve every Minister and every portfolio. There will be a co-ordinated response across the Government to ensure families are given the support they need. I am quite excited about the prospects for the International Year of the Family and what lasting achievements can be made for future generations.

The Premier will be chairing the Cabinet subcommittee on the International Year of the Family to ensure that there is a co-ordinated, across the Government response. A number of concrete steps have already been taken by the Government to help families to stay together - funding child care places and emergency housing for families facing severe stress through illness, disabilities or domestic violence. The International Year of the Family is about changing attitudes so that the well-being of families is given top priority. This is an area where every member of the House can have an impact. I will be encouraging all the community groups in my electorate - churches, ethnic groups, sporting and service organisations - businesses, families and individuals to join me in celebrating the true spirit of the International Year of the Family. We must recognise that people can be trusted to take responsibility for their lives and for those of their families. Sometimes some members of our community do need a little bit of positive reinforcement. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I turn to family safety. One of the things I hear as I travel around my electorate is that people are concerned about the safety of their family. They

Page 98

worry about whether their young children can walk to and from school in safety. They worry whether their elderly relatives are safe in their homes. I share this concern, as do my colleagues on the Government benches. I know that the Minister for Police, the Attorney General, the Minister for Community Services, the education Minister and the Premier share this concern. A number of Government initiatives are now under way, some coming on stream this year, to help keep safe the vulnerable in our community. Again, I hark back to the values learnt in the family. Many offenders against the community come from dysfunctional families or have had an unhappy family life. Families are the basic building blocks of our community, and it is in families that many of the social problems facing modern Australia can be addressed.

I have outlined how seriously the Government is taking the resurrection of family values in this State, but there are many other initiatives the Government is taking to protect the rights of people to live unmolested and safe from crime in our community. Only this week the Minister for Transport unveiled a plan to expand the role of CityRail train guards into helping to make our rail system safer. Later this year the Government will release the white paper on future directions in juvenile justice. The white paper addresses issues such as youth crime prevention, legal services for juveniles, the Children's Court and sentencing.

Health and education issues will also be addressed in the context of examining ways in which juvenile offenders can be prevented from entering a life of crime. Another Government initiative was the establishment of the community youth support task force to address the problem of juvenile lawlessness in western New South Wales communities. The Government has followed this initiative with the appointment of two youth services co-ordinators in western New South Wales.

I now turn to the wider policy agenda. The next 12 months will see the policy initiatives developed by the Fahey-Armstrong Government begin to bear fruit. In December 1993 the Premier launched the New South Wales women's policy statement. From that policy launch the Police Service has developed a community safety plan with a view to community groups being able to monitor the personal safety of residents. A great deal of attention has been paid to giving young women every chance of succeeding in our school system. A number of initiatives have been taken across a range of portfolios to improve the access to government services for rural women. The Government has created a flexible and dynamic education system to help our young people cope with the dramatic changes in our economy and workplaces. This year the new K6 English syllabus was introduced, with the emphasis on getting young children interested in reading again.

The Government is committed to further reform of the vocational education and training system. Proposed reforms include improvements to apprenticeships, expansion of employment based training options, the application of national competency standards and resource development to enhance the quality of employment based training. These moves to make education more relevant to the workplace have been applauded in the Hunter Valley, where industry is seeking better trained workers to remain competitive. The flexibility introduced by the TAFE HSC Pathway program has been welcomed by students and employers alike. When I move around the schools in my electorate I see a great deal of resources being poured into improving school facilities.

At Telarah Public School \$383,000 is being spent on the construction of a new school hall. The students, staff and parents of this school have waited years for this hall - something most schools take for granted. I am proud that my representations as local member have led to this project getting under way. Almost \$2 million is being poured into building new schoolrooms at Dungog High School so that old demountable classrooms can be removed. This coalition Government has achieved a great deal since it came to office in 1988, and I am proud to see how much progress has been achieved in the Maitland electorate.

One of the handicaps the Government has faced is catching up on 10 years of neglect of the health system by the previous Labor administration. One need look no further than the health portfolio to see what a sorry state public administration had fallen into under Labor. In my own electorate a new hospital was promised by the previous Labor Government back in 1987. It was an empty promise, and no attempt was made to follow it through. I am proud to advise the House that I was able to follow this project through, and work is well under way on a \$30 million plus redevelopment of the Maitland Hospital. The redevelopment will provide an emergency unit, admission-discharge unit, medical imaging department, central sterile supply and linen handling, an integrated day surgery-operating suite and a medical records unit. Eventually the major work will feature a new 40-bed medical ward, a 40-bed surgical ward and a 24-bed psychiatric ward.

The people of Maitland have received no support from Labor in their pursuit of this vital project. All honourable members heard from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues opposite was a scare campaign based on lies about the privatisation of the hospital. This Government has been very open about its plans for the health system in this State. The Minister spelt out clearly which hospitals were under consideration for joint private sector-public sector development. There was no need for private sector involvement in the Maitland Hospital, but that did not stop Labor from running a despicable lie campaign. As the new hospital grows out of the dust and rubble of the building site, it will become a monument to remind the people of the Hunter Valley about Labor's lies and deceit.

Page 99

I have fought long and hard to get this hospital redevelopment off the ground and have been frustrated by Labor's pointless scare campaign along the way; but all that adds to my sense of satisfaction in getting the project completed. As His Excellency correctly pointed out, the Government is continuing to build on the significant gains already achieved in delivering a high quality, customer-focused health service to the people in New South Wales. It is undertaking a hospital building program made possible only by the responsible management of the State's finances. High priority will continue to be given to the provision of community health services and services aimed at promoting good health and at preventing the development of illness.

The Government's record of achievement in transport reform and rebuilding the transport system can be seen clearly in the Hunter Valley. Over the past 12 months new XPT services have been introduced on the North Coast run, bringing sleeper cars back to this popular route. New Xplorer trains are servicing the northwest of the State through Maitland. This year new high speed Endeavour rail cars will be introduced for the run from Maitland to Newcastle. Over the past two years more new rolling-stock has come on line in this State than under 10 years of Labor. Money is being poured into track upgrading, better signalling and bridge repairs to make the New South Wales rail network efficient and competitive.

After years of neglect under Labor, the Government has committed \$2.4 billion to rebuilding the rail network and attracting freight and passengers back on to rail. In the Hunter Valley, Freight Rail is pouring \$26 million into building 350 new coal wagons. In the Maitland electorate alone, over this financial year, Freight Rail will spend \$3.9 million upgrading coal lines and bridges, and further expenditure is being made on improving Freight Rail's communication network. In the current budget period, \$545 million is being poured into CityRail, while a further \$57 million is being put into improving facilities in CountryLink. Freight Rail is spending an additional \$130 million over the same budget period.

The coalition Government has had to perform a similar resurrection on the State's road network after a decade of Labor neglect. The people of New South Wales have been partners with the New South Wales Government in improving the road network by agreeing to pay the 3 x 3 levy, which has been poured directly into improving the road infrastructure. All moneys collected went back into roadworks, and 60 per cent was spent in country areas. To give an indication of the massive spending on roads across the State, the Maitland electorate alone attracted roads spending of \$6.9 million this financial year. This spending will allow the notorious Dungog-Stroud road to be sealed this year at a cost of \$500,000.

I was pleased to hear His Excellency's comments on the Government's ongoing commitment to public sector reform. The Hunter Valley has often been at the cutting edge of public sector reform, which has helped the region remain the powerhouse of industry in this State. The Government will introduce legislation to corporatise the Sydney Water Board. The corporatisation will be based on the model successfully used in the Hunter Valley. The remarkable efficiencies achieved by Pacific Power in the Hunter Valley have given a major boost to industry in this State. The Government will continue its program of improving the operation of government trading enterprises and reducing the costs of their services to the consumer.

The people of the Hunter Valley have been great supporters of Sydney's push for the year 2000 Olympics. Now that Sydney has the Games, they are very excited about the lead up and the preparations being made for the largest peacetime event the world has seen. I have been appointed chairman of the Hunter Valley Regional Sports Taskforce to advise the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing on the sporting needs of the Hunter region. This committee has bipartisan support. The aim of this task force is to promote sport in the Hunter region and to make sure that all our athletes, from the most junior to the most elite, have the best possible opportunities to excel and to enjoy their sports in the lead up to the year 2000 Games. Our committee will be making recommendations to the Minister for Sport about the needs of athletes in the Hunter region. I am assured by the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing that the grant application process for these sporting assistance programs involves more than a whiteboard and a coloured pen. Indeed, the establishment of this bipartisan committee shows how seriously the Government views matching sports grants assistance with individual athletes in need of support.

As His Excellency pointed out, arrangements for the Games are well under way. The Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games is now meeting regularly. Over the next year the Government and its agencies will be contributing to the preparations for, and ensuring the co-ordination of, all activities associated with the Games. The Government will provide support through the International Sporting Events Council for a number of major sporting competitions to be staged in 1994. A new Institute of Sport will also be established to further enhance high performance sports development in New South Wales. I am excited about being involved in the Hunter Valley Regional Sports Taskforce and welcome the support of members opposite from the Hunter region who are willing to come forward with suggestions for sport in the area. I would like this spirit of co-operation to be further extended. I have been saddened by the Opposition's attempts at every turn, particularly in my electorate, to stymie any advances put forward by the Government. I outlined earlier how the Opposition ran a scare campaign about Maitland Hospital. It brought no credit to members opposite; it served only to scare the sick and elderly in the local community. The negativity and destructiveness of Labor only cause confusion and hurt in our community.

All members of this House welcome the scrutiny the Opposition brings to the Government and its

extensive operations. However, when members opposite devote their energies to running scare campaigns and deliberately misrepresenting the Government's policies they cause a great deal of damage in local communities. There is a great deal I want to achieve in my electorate over the next 12 months. I welcome constructive criticism from members opposite and do not pretend that the Government and its departments and authorities cannot sometimes strive to do better. However, I do not want the Government's initiatives in my electorate damaged by Labor's campaigns of deceit and destruction. Let us put the community first and work together and let the politics come second. His Excellency has outlined a program from a Government with a sound agenda of delivering better government services to the people of New South Wales. The Government's agenda is not reform for reform's sake. It is always undertaken with the view of providing a better service to the public. It has been a great honour to have this opportunity to move this Address-in-Reply motion to the Speech delivered by His Excellency on the opening on this Fourth Session of the Fiftieth Parliament.

Mr SMALL (Murray) [7.59]: I second the motion by the honourable member for Maitland for the adoption of the Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech. I am deeply honoured to be the second speaker in support of the Address in Reply on the opening of the Fourth Session of the Fiftieth Parliament. The citizens of this State are lucky to have such an excellent Governor. Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair has carried out his job with great style, justice and integrity. Governor Sinclair, together with his wife, Shirley, can stand proud of the excellent, rewarding and beneficial results they are achieving in the eyes of the people of New South Wales.

I thank my leader and Deputy Premier, the Hon. Ian Armstrong, and the Premier, the Hon. John Fahey, for giving me this opportunity to second the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Speech. I have had quite a lot to do with His Excellency through his two visits to my electorate, each for a period of three days. The first was in late 1991 and the second in early 1993. To the best of my knowledge the six days that His Excellency spent in the electorate is a record for visits by Governors to the electorate of Murray, one of the electorates established soon after the formation of government back in the 1850s.

On their first three-day visit the Governor and Mrs Sinclair visited the areas of Wentworth, Dareton, Buronga, Gol Gol, Euston, Balranald, Toolebuc and Hay. I must say that the visit caused considerable excitement among the schoolchildren, the schools and shires they visited and the people in the communities that they spoke to. The people of my electorate feel honoured and proud to have as their Governor and Queen's representative a person with such a very warmhearted and homely attitude.

The Governor was kind enough to accept my invitation in early 1993 to grace the electorate again with a visit to Corowa for the centenary celebration of its foundation. It was in 1893 that Sir John Quick moved the motion for federation of the States. Of course it was in 1901 that our Federal Government was first formed. So last year His Excellency was good enough to join in the one-hundredth celebration of not only that event but also the celebration of the one-hundredth birthday of the naming of the town of Finley on 16 November 1893. His Excellency also opened the Deniliquin show in March last year. So, my congratulations to Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair and Mrs Sinclair for the contributions they are making to this State. I wish them well in the future. I sincerely hope that they can continue to play the important role of representing our Queen for many years to come.

I must also say how grateful I am to be a member of this Parliament. This is the coalition's sixth year in government. I look back on the three years prior to that when I was a member of the Opposition as a great learning period before being fortunate enough to be in government. I have the greatest respect and admiration for my predecessor as member for Murray and Leader of the National Party, now the Federal leader, Tim Fischer. Tim has spent some 22 years in Parliament now. Unfortunately, very little of that time was served as a member of the government. We thought that he would be Deputy Prime Minister in March last year, but that was not to be. I look forward to the day when Tim is Deputy Prime Minister.

I would like to refer now to the International Year of the Family. It is strange that it has taken so long for this country, and particularly the world, to recognise the importance of the family in society. Frankly, it is a concept that should not have to be recognised by the dedication of a specific year, because every day, every week and every year is an occasion to celebrate the importance of the family. Nothing can contribute more to

the engendering of respect and the promotion of a work ethic and togetherness than a family. The fact is that Christian parents who live together in a faithful, loving and understanding relationship will raise disciplined and well taught children who will normally find work, even in the most difficult times. Their upbringing and strength of conviction will lead them to become taxpayers and not tax collectors. That has been the basis of a vibrant economy that Australians have been very fortunate to enjoy for the greatest part of the 206 years since European settlement, working together with our indigenous people.

There are many indigenous people within my electorate. Quite frankly, I respect the majority of them because I believe they have contributed well to the electorate, as have all immigrant Europeans and those born within the Murray electorate over those past 206 years. The International Year of the Family is being well recognised by the Fahey-Armstrong Government. Yesterday the Premier launched the International Year of the Family in New South Wales, and I am pleased that the media has got right behind

Page 101

the Premier and given the support that is so vital for the well-being and the teaching of our future generations.

I would like to refer now to initiatives for the ageing. When I was elected nine years ago as member for Murray there was not one nursing home bed in the electorate. Soon after my election a 45-bed private nursing home was built at Moama. I was chairman of the foundation committee for Navrina which, together with an excellent team at Deniliquin, provided or secured the funding to build a 40-bed nursing home at Deniliquin. Following that was a 30-bed public nursing home in Finley, extension nursing home beds for approximately 27 to 30 adjoining the Corowa hospital. Similar accommodation has been provided in the areas of Lockhart, Hay, Balranald and Barham. I am looking forward to the provision of nursing home beds in the Wentworth area. A decision has yet to be made on whether it will be a multipurpose health facility or whether it will be a revamp and improvement of the present hospital with aged care beds.

I would like to emphasise not only the importance of being able to secure Senior Cards for those in New South Wales who reach 60 years but also the establishment of reciprocal rights with Victoria. Murray, being a border electorate, needs to share resources and travel benefits for the ageing, including reduced purchase prices of goods for senior citizens. I will address this matter in a private members' statement tomorrow evening, emphasising the importance of having a national Seniors Card.

I now refer to reforms in irrigation. Three or four years ago the previous Minister for Natural Resources, the Hon. Ian Causley, started a move in the right direction by allowing privatisation of irrigators within the southern irrigation districts of the electorate, as well as in the Wentworth, Coomealla, Dareton and Buronga areas in the Far West. Now, Hay irrigators are able to be privatised. The Hay settlers, as the irrigators have been named, have been privatised and have their own scheme. By the end of the financial year 30 June 1994 it is expected that all irrigators in the southern irrigation districts, which take in Berriquin, Denimein, Wakool and Deniboota, will be privatised. The irrigators are already doing a magnificent job in the way they are dealing with resource funding, utilising it carefully in an attempt to keep down the cost of supplying water to the irrigators.

The Department of Water Resources is also playing its role extremely well, as it has in the past, by looking at the main river streams, the artery of all the waterways, such as the Murray, the Murrumbidgee, the Darling, the Edward, the Billabong, and the Yanco and Colombo Creek systems within my electorate. The department is working towards water quality, flood mitigation and desalinisation of the water in order to provide quality water for South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. I take my hat off to the excellent job the new local management boards for irrigation committees are doing in the Murray electorate, which is Australia's most irrigator-oriented electorate. Together with Tim Fischer, we share the resource management to help our constituents.

I refer to the Olympic Games. Every member of this House, the Government, the State and the nation saw the Olympic Games as a winnable commodity, but we had to work hard to win the bid. We are grateful for the excellent teamwork that has taken place and the tremendous bid that Sydney put forward. The Premier and Minister for Economic Development and the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads were involved in

selling Sydney, and Sydney can stand proud because it has competed with the rest of the world. In the year 2000 we will present to the world a magnificent Games which the world will be proud of, and which Australia will be even more proud of. I know we can do an excellent job.

Australia is a multicultural nation, and Sydney is a multicultural city. I believe that that will greatly enhance the benefits for competitors and visitors from around the world - they will feel at home here. I wanted to do something during the Olympics bid because the Premier asked all members of Parliament to make a special effort and to contribute in order to enhance our bid for the Games. I undertook the challenge; I rode a bike some 3,000 kilometres - in my electorate and then to Sydney. I pay tribute to my wife, who is in the gallery and who supported me at that time. I also thank my son Geoffrey and my family as a whole, Michiel Conallin who rode with me around my electorate, and the six other riders who rode from Deniliquin to Sydney.

We received wonderful support. A 17-minute documentary was made of the bike ride. It was professionally put together with the help of the Roads and Traffic Authority. That documentary went to Monte Carlo with the Premier, Frank Sartor the Sydney Lord Mayor, the Minister for Transport, and one of the bid committee members for the International Olympic Committee delegates to see. If that documentary played any small part in helping us win the extra one or two votes ahead of Beijing, I feel very proud that the western part of New South Wales contributed. Seventeen shires from western New South Wales and from northern Victoria were good enough to write letters of support.

The Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Roads and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport greeted me at Sydney Town Hall. That was an exciting conclusion to the ride. The Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works and Minister for Ports was also waiting at Town Hall, as was the honourable member for Murwillumbah - whose wife is sitting in the gallery tonight. We were very pleased about that. Consequently, we can now get on with the job.

It is possible that children who are now at school will be able to compete in the Games, if they are selected. Other children will be able to visit Sydney to see the Olympics. Most children will never have

Page 102

the opportunity to travel overseas in their lifetime to see an Olympic Games event, but many of our children will have that opportunity in Sydney. In 2000 children may be able to participate in either the sporting events or the opening or closing ceremonies. They will be able to show their achievements, willingness and ability.

I refer now to agriculture, which has always been the money earner for Australia, particularly New South Wales. We could say that New South Wales is the power-house of Australia because of its high population and enormous resources. However, I am disappointed to think that agriculture and mining have been overridden by tourism. Thank goodness we had the tourism income of some \$8 billion last year. It is sad that all the resources we have in New South Wales - the resources produced on the land or in minerals taken from the land - have fallen well behind the asset-adding value that we used to secure as export income from our local commodities. I look forward to the day when our farming community and mining industries receive the true reward for the hard work that was needed. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

People in Australia are hurting at the present time, particularly in my electorate, which is the most farmer-oriented electorate in New South Wales. It is closely aligned with the electorate of the former Deputy Premier, the honourable member for Barwon. I say that because neither of us has large regional cities in our electorates; we have a series of small country towns. Mine is very much a farming electorate.

Agriculture, irrigation, and the resources from the earth are things that we have to enhance. I blame the Federal Government bitterly because of its open policy, particularly on free trade. Whilst we have a free trade policy and a corrupt world market, the farming community will never have the opportunities and rewards they deserve. I look forward to a change of Federal Government so that we can have a change of direction. That would greatly enhance the rural sector and farming sector. The benefits will then flow on to manufacturing and employment in the large urban areas.

I refer to the environment. Judy and I had an opportunity to go to China last November with seven other members of the Parliament. We were honoured to visit Guangdong province, as it is our sister State. I had not been to China before. China has 1.2 billion people, and is slightly larger in land mass than Australia. But we have only 17.5 million people, and it is much easier for us to care for our environment than it is for China to care for its. If we had 1.2 billion people in Australia our environment would suffer severely.

It is marvellous to see the way that all in Australia are pulling their weight generally; through the schools, with the assistance of teachers and parents. The farming community is very strong in conservation, and today we stand proud that we are definitely making positive inroads to improving our environment. We will all continue to improve our environment because we now understand how to manage it better. We want to hand this country over to our children and their children in such a condition that they can live and work within the environment and have a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle. It is great to see Australians being so active in wanting to improve the environment and to care for it as well.

Some transport areas still concern me. The transport system within the larger metropolitan area is fairly priced. To travel around Sydney is reasonably priced, and the same can be said of the major centres of Newcastle and Wollongong. However, in country towns there is little or no public transport. Recently huge improvements have been made with CountryLink, which, where there is no rail service, conveys passengers to the main Sydney-Melbourne line by bus, or by train where there are rail links. That is a great benefit. The problem is fuel prices. The Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Roads and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport is also endeavouring to address that issue with country members who are desperately attempting to achieve a greater equalisation in the price of fuels. Country people are suffering from the high price of fuel.

Today there is a variation in fuel prices. The honourable member for Broken Hill would be well aware of the high cost of fuel. Approximately 90¢ a gallon in old terms, or 20¢ a litre, is the difference between the price of petrol in Sydney and most country areas. That is too big a difference. The maximum variation in the cost of freighting fuel to the furthest point one could go - probably the centre of Australia - would not be more than 7¢ a litre. By comparison there is only 2¢ difference in most parts of New South Wales. Therefore, the high cost of transport to country areas is creating a further problem for country people, who do not always have the choice of modes of transport that are enjoyed in large metropolitan areas.

I have problems with the Roads and Traffic Authority at grain harvest time, particularly during the rice and wheat harvest, with regard to the authority testing the trucks that cart the grain. I accept that the RTA officers who do the testing need to ensure that vehicles are roadworthy and registered, and that loads in excess of the legal limit are not carried. However, a better testing method needs to be determined so as not to delay the movement of vehicles at harvest time. It is an unfortunate and unwanted circumstance where a great deal of anger occurs during a pressure period, between the officers of the RTA and the drivers and farmers. I appeal to the Minister, who has written to me on this subject-matter, to find a better way to ensure that vehicles are safe, that the load limits are legal, and that the vehicles are registered.

There have been severe fires within the coastal regions of New South Wales, and certainly in the Sydney-Newcastle-Wollongong area, and we are all very proud of the brave men and women who fought fires under extreme difficult conditions. Over the past three or four years my electorate has also suffered

Page 103

from floods. I pay tribute to the volunteer emergency service people who have put so much time into controlling and fighting the floods and helping people who have suffered in those circumstances. People in my electorate have had the misfortune of being moved from their homes, sustaining damage to their homes and losing their assets. The recent bushfires also created these unfavourable conditions.

Fires are devastating. I have fought many grass fires, and I commend those who fought fires in bushland, under adverse conditions, earlier this year. I respect those firefighters for the risks they took and for the lives they saved. The Government is proud of the magnificent job they have done. I compliment the police in my electorate; they do an outstanding job. I do not know of any bad policeman in country areas; we can all be

proud of them. They are easy to get on with, but they have a job to do and naturally they are not always respected by the community for doing it. Police are put in a difficult position and they do their job well. I pay particular tribute to the police force and the emergency services people in the Murray electorate.

On Monday I faced preselection in my electorate. I give a vote of thanks to all of the 124 voting delegates from the Murray electorate who travelled as far as 550 kilometres - the majority between 200 and 300 kilometres - to come to Finley for the Murray electorate council meeting and for the preselection prior to that. I am honoured to have been chosen, amidst competition, in that preselection. The main thing was that I won. I express my gratitude for all that support. However, I still have to win the next election, with the help of all my constituents.

I also thank my family - our eldest son, Richard; our eldest daughter, Robyn; our youngest son, Geoffrey; and our youngest daughter, Julie; together with my wife Judy - for the wonderful support they gave me. Judy is an unpaid member for Murray and always travels around the electorate with me, for which I am grateful. She stands right behind me with strength and conviction. I also pay tribute to my electoral secretary Mrs Faye Falahey and her assistant Mrs Marilyn Hussey, who have done an outstanding job. I would not be the member for Murray without support from my family and the electorate staff. They have been outstanding. I pay tribute to the media, which members depend so much upon for the service they provide. I speak of the media within the country region, which I find are very fair and do their job well. I am honoured to second the Address in Reply. I pay tribute to His Excellency Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair and Mrs Sinclair. I look forward to their holding their offices for a long time to come. I wish them both good health and happiness, and I look forward to serving in this Government for many years to come.

Mr CARR (Maroubra - Leader of the Opposition) [8.29]: After your words, Mr Acting Speaker, and those of the honourable member for Murray, I really must say that I find it an intolerable breach of protocol that officers of the Premier's Department planted in the media early last month stories of disaffection in relation to the performance of the Governor, and a suggestion that he was not to be given another term. In the *Daily Telegraph Mirror* on 3 February it was reported that one senior official said it was extremely unlikely the term would be renewed. What appalling speculation to be engendered about the position of the Governor by officers of the Premier's Department. The report continued:

While the Governor had performed his ceremonial duties without fault, there was a feeling within Government that it was time for a change.

The unnamed sources went on to speculate that the Governor had adopted a low profile in the job. I find that particularly insulting because one only has to cast a casual glance at the vice-regal notices to know that the approach of Rear Admiral Sinclair to his job has been far from low profile. He could not have approached it with more energy and more enthusiasm, especially when it has come to the important task of visiting rural New South Wales, something that the honourable member for Murray quite graciously acknowledged.

I wish the Premier's Department were as gracious. I think this is an appalling breach of protocol; I do not think there is any precedent for it. I do not think any previous Premier would have allowed this appalling speculation about the position of the Governor. If the Governor is not given a second term, he will be - with the exception of his immediate predecessor, Sir David Martin - the shortest serving Governor in the post-war period. That speculation is unsavoury, followed by the speculation in today's press, and it really should not take place.

I am pleased to speak to this debate because it gives me the opportunity to highlight the positive policies that this State needs compared to the anaemic policies outlined in the speech read yesterday by the Governor. The program for a Labor government has been developed against the failure of this Government to seize the opportunities for jobs and growth offered by Australia's economic recovery. The Australian economy is recovering from the worst recession in the post-war period. The tragedy is that because this Government lacks the energy required for the job New South Wales will not be seizing the opportunities that recovery offers to enhance its position in health and education, quality of life and regional development. Those opportunities will

not be seized; those opportunities will not be exploited - because of the failures of the Government.

It is so obvious that New South Wales needs a more dynamic approach to chasing jobs and investment in competition with the other States. The creation of real, lasting jobs will depend on how well each State maximises the opportunities provided by this recovery. New South Wales has been left behind by the high growth States of Queensland and Western Australia. A Labor government will therefore embark on an aggressive new strategy of competition with the

Page 104

other States. A new ministry of finance and State development will ensure co-ordination of financial, economic and industrial policies.

Whenever a serious new investment opportunity is identified, my minister for finance and State development will convene a top level big team. The teams will go after investment with tailor-made packages, including time-limited planning and environmental approval processes, pre-negotiated enterprise agreements, negotiated contracts with government trading enterprises for both services and charges, the development of complementary commercial arrangements with other New South Wales firms, and appropriate public infrastructure commitments. We are serious about this State retaining its investment and getting new investments.

Recently, when I heard that the Ford plant at Homebush was closing, I headed straight out there and talked to the workers and union officials. I was there at the gate of the plant to talk about this loss of part of our manufacturing base. Where was the Premier at that time? He was sipping chardonnay at Fort Denison to celebrate the advent of Miss Saigon. As Peter Robinson remarked in the *Sun-Herald*, if ever there was a government intent on the frivolous approach to the State's development, this is one. Where is the interest this Government has shown in the welfare of the manufacturing sector?

Our colleague the honourable member for Murrumbidgee appears like Banquo's ghost to remind me of the fate of the fruit cannery in Leeton, under this Government. Despite legislation in this Parliament, it has received no allocation to enable the essential restructuring of the firm. The last fruit cannery in this State has been allowed to go under because the Government is not interested in the opportunities for value-adding and exporting Australian products into Asian markets.

The Government spoke about its obligations in the International Year of the Family. Let me start with what I believe is the most fundamental obligation after the generation of jobs: the delivery of a safe environment - an environment that is safe for the older person who wants to go shopping in a shopping mall without any danger of harassment by teenage gangs; safe for shift workers using public transport after hours; and safe for older people living in their homes, sometimes with some trepidation. People want a safe environment and they are entitled to have that as one of their aspirations.

Among the positive proposals of the Labor Party are tougher bail conditions so that sex offenders cannot harass their victims, and so that if they do they will be arrested and jailed immediately; and a new approach to domestic violence that means that the victims and the children in domestic violence cases are not the ones thrown out of the family home. The assumption ought to be that they stay in the family home and that it is the basher who is out there looking for alternative accommodation. We ought to be writing into our policies that in cases of domestic violence the offender has to pay, or have his social security payments docked to pay, the cost of all that flows from that domestic violence case.

There ought to be resolute government backing for teachers and principals on all school discipline matters. I am tired of having to speak to teachers and principals who believe that this Government is refusing to stand behind them when they are enforcing a disciplinary policy in the school. They know the paperwork is too involved and the procedures are too detailed to enable a prompt response to problems that threaten an effective learning environment in schools. The Government, despite prodding from the Opposition - especially from my colleague the shadow minister for education - has failed to come to terms with the challenge of school violence and of protecting schools as effective learning environments.

We in the Opposition are talking about more effective deployment of a police presence in circumstances in which, for example, unruly crowds are dispersing at closing time from hotels. We are talking about effective deployment of police to counter crime and to deter crime. We are committed to a school education package, to penalties for gang crime, and after-school, hot-spot police patrols to disperse gangs. We are committed to a safety stations program, with 24-hour staffing, floodlighting and video surveillance at key rail stations to improve the safety of public transport. All these policies are a response to the demand from the community that governments act to see that our environment is rendered safer.

Let me come to education. It is very clear and will be made increasingly clear in this House over coming weeks that the school system is still suffering from the Government's action in withdrawing 2,500 teachers from the classrooms. Labor is committed to restoring those teachers, not according to any pre-existing formula but according to a new formula that is targeted at lifting educational performance in the early years of schooling. The Opposition is committed to ensuring that the restoration of those teachers is directed at high schools in poor areas to provide after-hours homework and study assistance and extra higher school certificate tuition.

The Opposition's commitment to reinstate 2,500 teachers over four years is tangible evidence of its determination to lift education standards. In the first year of a Labor government the equivalent of 625 extra teaching positions will be restored to the classrooms to achieve those educational improvements. A new policy on school languages will be introduced that will expand opportunities for learning community languages in primary schools - that is, the languages of our great migrant communities - and increase the proportion of students studying languages for the higher school certificate. The futile policy of making compulsory a token 100 hours of languages spread over years 7 to 10 will be acknowledged as a total failure, an exercise in educational fadism, and will be abandoned.

We reject as totally unsatisfactory the reduction in school cleaning hours that followed inevitably from the privatisation of the Government Cleaning Service. We warned the Government about it; we predicted it;

Page 105

it has come to pass. Teachers, students and principals are now scouring garbage bins and dusting classrooms. What about schools as learning environments? That is what they are there for, and that is what they ought to be protected as. New South Wales ought to have a government committed to ensuring that our schools are kept clean and hygienic. In short, the Opposition will restore equity as a key goal in education. We will lift the status of the teaching profession. We will recruit teachers from the top 25 per cent, not the bottom 50 per cent, of higher school certificate graduates. What a reflection on this Government that in education its most notable achievement has been to preside over a reduction in the entry standards of teachers! What an appalling reflection on the degradation of schooling since the Metherell years!

In government we will begin planning for new cross-regional rail links, light rail and heavy rail in the Sydney basin. What a contrast with the policy of this Government! Its only interest in a transport strategy is new tollways. The beginning and the end of its thinking on transport is more tollways. We are committed to serious planning for additional rail links in the Sydney basin. Among those we have studied are a cross-regional link between the main north line and Parramatta, which is, of course, the demographic centre of Sydney, and a rail line from Glenfield to Badgerys Creek. An early decision will be made on either the airport rail link or an additional track on the Sydenham-Redfern line.

The fact is that Sydney's population growth will require an additional 20 trains at peak hour, but at the present time there is no space for them on the congested city circle rail system. If the system is not expanded, families of Sydney's greater west will be forced to buy additional cars, in some cases a third or fourth car. In the decade and a half ahead this threatens an environmental catastrophe as pollution in the Sydney basin begins to grow markedly again after decreasing in the years of the late 1970s and early 1980s. On environmental grounds and on grounds of social fairness the Opposition is committed to a reliable, secure and affordable public transport system. As well we are committed to that system being safe, a system that shifts workers and that women can use after hours with a feeling of confidence and safety. Using the provisions of the passenger traffic Act 1988, we will expand private bus services, especially in poorly serviced areas such as western

Sydney, the Central Coast and the Illawarra. We will co-operate with the Federal Government on joint strategies such as the National Rail Corporation, the National Road Transport Commission, ports policy and waterfront reform.

Let me say something about the need to cut the waste and mismanagement that has been a part of this Government since the Greiner years. Only on Monday we exposed the tremendous rot on unused office space. Eleven floors in the State Office Block are unutilised, empty. The old Department of Education building in Bridge Street was vacated in June 1990. It has remained empty to this day, while its staff are being housed in private rental accommodation in the Sydney central business district. The pathetic defence of the Government is, "Oh, there are occupational health and safety problems with the sites that have been vacated". That is the only defence the Government has. It has never been able to substantiate that claim. The fact is that its waste, as exemplified by the Department of Education building lying vacant for all these years and 11 floors of the State Office Block lying vacant for months, is a scandal. That is only one example of the waste and mismanagement that continue under this Government. Honourable members will hear a lot more about the waste associated with the senior executive service, which we will cut by at least 33 per cent. The use of consultants by government agencies ought to be cut by about a third.

Mr O'Doherty: Who will do the work?

Mr CARR: The honourable member for Ku-ring-gai asks who will do the work. The public servants, who are forced at the present time to clean up after the consultants, will do the work. The costly refurbishment of government offices will end. Honourable members should talk to ordinary public servants about the scandal in the senior executive service. Those public servants are forced to work harder to make the senior executive service look better. For years the Government argued against our proposal to do away with cluster directors in the Department of School Education. For years the Government argued that cluster directors, an extra layer of bureaucracy, were needed. The Government has now adopted our policy of phasing out cluster directors.

In relation to the environment, a Labor government will give legislative force to the 20-year \$7 billion clean waterways program, which has been cut to ribbons by this Government. People are paying more for water than they ever have in the past. None of the promises made by this Government of cheaper water as part of a user-pays policy or environmental pricing policy has been made a reality. As a result ordinary consumers are entitled to be angry that they have not seen the environmental improvements promised by this Government in return for paying higher water rates. We will give statutory force to those environmental improvements. That is merely another example of how under this Government people are paying more than they ever have in the past but are receiving less. An ordinary family in this State is \$1,600 a year worse off because of the increased taxes and charges over the past five years of Liberal government.

What have they got for it? They have the longest waiting lists for hospital services in the history of this State. They have the largest class sizes in Australia. They have the lowest spending per student of any school system in Australia. They have a string of unkept promises for environmental improvements that were all supposed to result from the \$80 a year environmental levy. They have a chronic mess in the Water Board. So they ought to be furious with a

Page 106

Government that is charging them more for services that have been allowed to diminish more than ever in the past.

Today the *Sydney Morning Herald* tried to report Labor's initiatives on law enforcement as being somehow a return to the 1950s policies of lock them up and throw away the key. That is an absurd distortion. It ought to be emphasised in this debate that we are promoting policies that focus on crime prevention and deterrents to crime and not simply discredited policies of longer sentences. The classic example of this is our innovative approach to juvenile justice. A Labor government will introduce into New South Wales the New Zealand system of juvenile justice, which brings offenders before a conference that includes police and, where they desire it, the victims. Greater provision will be made for non-custodial corrective programs, and offenders will be asked to negotiate a contract at that conference requiring them to compensate their victims. The advantage

of this approach is that it provides restitution to the people who have suffered. People who have had their cars or motor bikes stolen will be compensated. At the present time the only compensation they get, dubious as it is, is knowing that the offender has been put in a juvenile institution. We will also establish a minor offender's punishment scheme as an alternative to court processing, using informal discussion to determine sanctions, including reparations or community work.

The major objective of the initiative is to ensure that sanctions imposed upon juvenile first offenders promote reintegration with the community and the offender's family. Juvenile cautioning programs based on the Wagga Wagga cautioning pilot program will be expanded statewide. This is an innovative approach and I resent the distortion in the *Sydney Morning Herald* this morning that somehow we were adopting an old-fashioned, conservative law and order policy. We are prepared to be innovative in achieving policies that promote crime prevention.

There is an overwhelming case for a parliamentary committee to review the State's preparedness for bushfires. There is also a need for a State environmental planning policy to prevent further residential expansion in areas that will be chronically at risk from bushfires - outlying ridge tops and western facing escarpments facing bushland. Ninety per cent of bushfires are the result of arson. We will legislate for greater penalties and ensure better police intelligence to counter arson. Let us see that we get better funding for agencies such as State Forests and the National Parks and Wildlife Service to enable the hazard reduction about which there is consensus in the community. And let us see that the firefighting equipment and technology in New South Wales is updated to overcome the embarrassing gap between our level of technology and that provided interstate.

Several State government departments can look forward to a reorientation with a change of government. For example, consumer affairs will no longer be a gimmick department looking for killer toys in show bags but a department that provides effective consumer protection with a focus on access to consumer claims tribunals, consumer information on product labelling, public awareness and dispute resolution in building disputes. We will also ensure real competition between conveyancers and solicitors and monitor the progress brought about by deregulation of real estate fees. We will also maintain proper supervision in the motor vehicle repair industry.

In Aboriginal affairs our focus will be overwhelmingly to lift the level of health care, education and training in the Aboriginal community. As a further token of our serious commitment to and interest in crime prevention we will deal with Aboriginal offenders in a new process that involves representatives or elders from Aboriginal communities able to participate in our minor offenders diversion scheme. The presence of community elders will make offenders more aware of their circumstances by acknowledging the presence of respected members of the Aboriginal community and the possible application of the laws of their own people.

We will ensure alternatives to imprisonment are more widely used, especially in view of the statistics revealed late last week which show that despite all the work of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody the percentage of the prison population comprising Aboriginal people has become higher. The Public Works Department will have a new mission under a Labor government: to achieve conservation policies through efficient energy management of existing government buildings; to reduce energy costs; and to apply financial evaluation methods to select best design. Let us see that government buildings provide benchmark standards. It is clear that under the Fahey Government the ministry for the status and advancement of women has simply had an expanded public relations role. A Labor government will give it a determining role in funding decisions affecting women.

Mr Kerr: Franca Arena would go along with that.

Mr CARR: Let us see how women go in the Vacluse preselection for the Liberal Party.

Mr Kerr: Better than Franca has gone.

Mr CARR: No, you have a choice. You have some women standing. We will see how they go in the Vacluse preselection. In the meantime we have a woman candidate, the Mayor of Waverley, standing for the seat. The Government had its opportunity with the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, which has one woman out of 15 members - and she did not come from New South Wales. The Government found her in Queensland. I think her capacity for organisation and public persuasion is shown by the fact that she failed three times as a Liberal candidate for Federal Parliament and was defeated as Lord Mayor of Brisbane. That is a pretty good measurement. We will appoint a minimum of three additional women to the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games -

Page 107

Mr Hazzard: Bring back Ros.

Mr CARR: Did I hear someone raise Bronwyn Bishop's name? In conjunction with women's legal centres, we will protect the victims of sexual violence giving evidence against their attacker in court. We will make it mandatory for all police recruits to undergo training in sexual assault and domestic violence issues. We will restore and properly resource specialist sexual violence units and child mistreatment units in the Police Service and the Department of Community Services - the frontline services the coalition disbanded years ago and pretends to be reinstating because it is the International Year of the Family. That is how serious the Government is!

The Commonwealth has ratified, and every State except New South Wales has endorsed, the United Nations convention on workers with family responsibilities. We will show our commitment to families by immediately endorsing this convention. The program I have set out is the program of a government that would be demonstrating activism and energy. The speech the Governor was required to give yesterday is replete with references to addressing problems, calling for discussion papers and, above all - the recourse of a do nothing government - setting up more committees. The public of New South Wales is entitled to say, "We are a State that requires better than that. We are a State that deserves better than that".

Dr REFSHAUGE (Marrickville - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [8.57]: I join the Leader of the Opposition in condemning Government members for undermining the office of the Governor. Whether we should have a Governor is a very different matter, but while we have a Governor we should not be using the office of the Premier insidiously to undermine his position. What will the people of Nyngan say when they see their hero being undermined by members of the Premier's office? I believe that that is not just a breach of protocol; it shows the shallowness and the viciousness of the silvertails from the North Shore. There is no doubt that they tried to find an excuse for an election after the Olympic win, which we all welcomed. But when the message came back that there is a law this Parliament has passed that there can be no early election, the insidious campaign to undermine the office of the Governor was started by the rabble opposite. There is no doubt that a hero of the status of His Excellency deserves, in his own right, better treatment.

When Government members undermine the office of the Governor they really show their true colours. They have no interest in democracy or good order; all they have an interest in is their own advancement, and getting political mileage. Obviously, there is no way the people of New South Wales will trust them again with government. The speech the Governor delivered contains the Government's plans for health almost at the end - after referring to the sawing of softwood logs. Health is one of the most important issues at State level. No wonder the people of New South Wales are crying out for a change of government when there is no new commitment, no new direction, no recognition of the problems in the health area. There are four short paragraphs full of unbelievably offensive rhetoric of customer focus. Somehow the lot opposite have decided that the caring relationship between doctors, nurses, health workers and patients should be overthrown and patients should become customers.

Mr Amery: Paying customers.

Dr REFSHAUGE: The honourable member is correct, for that policy fits in with the Government's

intention to have no public hospitals but to privatise the lot. The Government undoubtedly wants to get rid of our public hospital system. First, it tried to privatise the whole system. However, after a most effective campaign launched in this Parliament we stopped the wholesale privatisation of the public hospital system. But the Government continued to privatise. Before the last election the Government was forced to agree to no more than four such hospitals, but it is now trying to find ways around that agreement. Recently, attempts were made to privatise what had been the North Sydney Community Hospital, which is now known as the Centre for Bone and Joint Disease. Despite all assurances, that hospital - a public hospital in its own right - is again up for privatisation because the Government will not adequately fund it.

It is not as if money is not available. The Government has a number of problems in the health area. First, it will not spend money allocated by the Parliament. The Auditor-General's report this financial year states that the Government, under accrual accounting, had a surplus of \$134.5 million in health. All members would know where some of that money, even if allocated on a totally per capita basis, would make a massive difference to the health system used by their constituents. However, members opposite are so gutless they will not tell the Minister that people are waiting in pain to gain admission to hospital. Today the Opposition released the true waiting list figure - 45,500 patients are waiting to get into hospital. That is the largest number ever. Five years ago, on the Government's own figures, 28,000 people were waiting to be admitted to hospital. The Government has almost doubled that figure in five years.

Members have witnessed the stupidity of the Premier in his attempts to blame Medicare. Medicare has been going for 20 years. What can members opposite say about the last five years of this Government's administration under the same national health program? It is the Government's underspending and policies that are increasing those waiting lists and denying people what they can and should get under the effective national scheme, Medicare. Members opposite should look further than the number of people waiting to get into hospital. They should look at the number of people who have been waiting more than six months. The Minister says the average waiting time is about a month, that waiting times have not become much longer, or only by about a week, and that is not much to worry about.

Page 108

An examination of the range of high figures for those waiting more than six months for admission shows that this year almost 10,000 people are in that category. Some have been waiting for more than 12 months. The Minister says there is no crisis in the private health care systems and that the Government's policies are working. Persons awaiting admission, and their families, know the Government's policies are not working. Those policies include underspending in health and closing hospitals - 17 or 18 hospitals have been closed or downgraded by the Government. Members opposite say that is good for the health care system, but those patients say it is not. The Government also decided it needed to close 5,000 public hospital beds. The Government is happy to have more private hospitals developed and to privatise hospitals, but its own policy is to close 5,000 hospital beds. How can the Government get more people into hospital by closing 5,000 hospital beds?

The Government tried by pinching part of Labor's policy, but it should have pinched the lot. The Government moved and eventually commenced day surgery after the Opposition announced that was the way to go. In most places throughout the world about 50 per cent of surgery is done on a daily basis. The Government is working so slowly that it has not even achieved 30 per cent day surgery. But the Government has thrown people out of hospital early without support services being available in the community. Everywhere the Community Health Service and the Home and Community Care Service are saying regularly that the Government has a policy of discharging patients at five, six or seven o'clock on a Friday evening, yet those services lack the staff or facilities to look after those patients on a weekend. If the Government wants to use good quality Labor Party policies, it should use the lot, including boosting those community services and increasing HACC and community services funding. The Government should not close hospital beds in the face of ever growing waiting lists. Obviously, it does not understand the problems with the health care system and has no commitment to improving it.

Particular aspects of the health care system deserve special notice. For many years the Government has said that accident emergency is not a real problem and that the only real problem is that too many people are seeking that service and therefore it is their fault. What does the Government say to a young child with asthma who has to wait two hours to get attention for an asthma attack? What does the Government say to a patient with an infected throat abscess requiring immediate intubation who has to wait two, three or four hours because accident emergency is too busy? What does the Government say to ambulance drivers, assisting those suffering stroke or heart attack, who when seeking a hospital have to bypass hospital's accident emergency because facilities are full? Are the Government's policies really working when it is closing beds and making it more difficult to get patients out of accident and emergency centres? It is about the time the Government realised that its policies are failing.

First, the Government should spend available money, and stop hoarding and spending it on its consultants, its senior executive services and its fripperies. The Government should start spending that money on real service delivery where it is required, such as in the health care system. Second, the Government needs to spend more money on the health care system. That was acknowledged by the Federal Government in the last Medicare agreement, in which this State was given \$100 million extra every year for the full term of the agreement. Yet this afternoon the Premier tried to blame everything on Medicare. This State Government signed the Medicare agreement. If the Government did not like it, it did not have to sign. However, not only did this Government sign the agreement, but also it agreed to its principles. In addition, at the Health Care Ministers Conference the Government said that Medicare is good and is here to stay, and that the Government has no problems with it. The Premier, who has an old style incredibly dopey brain, has lost his neurones because he cannot even remember what year it is. He is trying to fight battles that are 20 years old. Medicare is here to stay. His Government has signed the Medicare agreement and has agreed to its principles.

Even the Minister's counterpart in Victoria, the Hon. Murray Tehan, said that Medicare is a good thing, it is here to stay, it is off the agenda, and Victoria is not tinkering with it any more because it actually works. Even the Australian Medical Association says Medicare is here to stay. Perhaps the Minister for Health could tell the Premier that he has signed the Medicare agreement and agreed to it, that he thinks it is a good thing and has agreed to Medicare principles. Perhaps once the Minister has educated his Premier he could get back to looking after the health care system. Some of the issues not raised are probably the major issues facing the people of New South Wales and their health care system. Health care is not just a matter of providing a comprehensive public health system, public hospitals, community health centres and HACC; it is also about looking after safeguarding our environment. Certain health care areas are designed specifically to safeguard our environment.

Some weeks ago I raised the issue of removing health and food inspectors from their central role of making sure that the food we buy and eat is safe. The Government suddenly decided to get rid of the inspectors and threw them out into the regions, changed their name and put them into public health units. That single act quite clearly dramatically reduced the number of prosecutions. It led to there being almost no prosecutions for the adulteration of food and unsafe food processing. What do we see in the newspapers today? We see the Government getting upset about food sold in service stations that might have infections in it which will cause diarrhoea or other diseases. Why has it taken until now to find that out? Because the Government got rid of all the food inspectors; they have all gone. It is the Government's policy to get rid of the people who are supposed to be protecting our health and safety; it disbanded the food inspectorate. Potentially poisoned food is now for sale at service stations.

Page 109

The litany of disasters is lengthy. We need to look at a true alternative, worthwhile policy. That is where Labor not only has the guts to deliver the quality, but has the vision of what to do and how to do it. We need to spend the money the Parliament allocates, not keep \$135 million squirreled away. We need to spend the money that is allocated. We need to increase the budget of health; put a real focus on health. We need to stop this wholesale closure of hospitals and hospital beds.

We need to stop the massive closure over Christmas and the New Year. It is true that between Christmas and New Year it is quite reasonable for there to be a wind down, but that wind down should not continue until February and March. Some of the beds that were supposed to be Christmas closures are still closed today. We are told that they are Christmas closures because people want to go on holidays. Do we have a full-time health system or a part-time health system? Under the Government we will have a part-time health system for ever; under Labor we will have a full-time public hospital system - emphasis on full-time and public.

We also need to make sure that we focus on the protection of the environment and the protection of people in areas such as the food inspectorate. We need to get away from the privatisation model which has the customer focus and is trumpeted by this Government. We need to get back to the fact that patients are patients and they need care. The patients are not there to go around and trade; they are not there to find out who has the best deal in neuro-surgery, who has the best waiting list, or whatever. We have to make sure that caring is put back into the health care system.

We have to get away from the madness of the privatisation route, the American route, that the Government wants to go down. It is doing over the people of New South Wales. There are currently 45,500 people waiting to get into hospital; 10,000 of them have been waiting over six months. The Government sits back complacently. In the Governor's Speech health was almost an afterthought - it came in second last. The Speech says that we are doing very well, no change is required and we are doing okay. We are not doing okay - a lot of people can tell the Government that. I take this opportunity to welcome the new head of the health department, John Wyn Owen from Wales. He was the head of the health department in Wales. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

John Wyn Owen is well known and respected in the public health field. I hope that his experience and commitment will blossom in New South Wales. Although, when we see those who are involved from the Government side we wonder whether he will have a chance to do what we know he is able to do. I have a major concern: the purchaser and provider split that is so prevalent in the United Kingdom at the moment. I hope that he has clearly heard that, so far, neither side of this House is keen to move down that track. I welcome him. It is a difficult job to take on. I hope that he will come here and stay for a long time. He will bring his wisdom and expertise to the health department and make significant changes.

I refer to my electorate of Marrickville and some of the concerns that my constituents have been raising about the actions of the Government. It is not often that we find a little patch of dirt being brought to the attention of this Parliament. There are two very small parks in Erskineville which are owned by the Government - they are right beside the railway line. They have been used for years as public parklands. Many honourable members who drive through Erskineville regularly see that there is no parkland available there. The two very small pieces of parkland owned by the State Rail Authority are maintained by the council and the residents who actively use them.

This mean-minded Government is planning to flog off those pieces of land. It wants to put buildings on them. Honourable members might want urban consolidation as a good policy, and certainly we do, but the Government should not start in Erskineville where it is so urbanly consolidated that people have to take turns to turn around. A few granny flats could be built on the leafy North Shore, where there are massive backyards. I would not get the honourable member for Wakehurst too excited about granny flats.

One would not have even thought that the Government would notice these two plots of land. Their value would be pretty small in real estate terms. Local residents have repeatedly tried to see the Minister - he will not even see them to discuss the matter. He is determined to flog off these pieces of land, to deprive the kids of a bit of open space - and they are pretty poor kids in that area. We all need our lungs to breathe. These are the lungs, small as they are, of Erskineville. The Government is trying to snuff them out.

It is these little issues that make an enormous difference. It is about time we started to look at places such as the Erskineville parks. I refer also to St Peters park. It is hardly a great, exciting piece of land. But surreptitiously the Minister for Planning has decided that St Peters park can be flogged off to the Federal

Airports Corporation for the Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport. Many Government members who fly into the airport, coming back from their overseas jaunts - every time they can get out of the place, they will - fly over the people who live in St Peters, Tempe and Rockdale. The planes drop their fuel on those people and the noise disrupts their lives.

What is the Government trying to do? Those people have a difficult enough time. Government members are laughing. They sit up there in their leafy groves and laugh at the people they fly over, poison with kerosene and destroy their hearing. There are schools in that area which have to stop teaching as the planes fly over - and Government members laugh. That is the measure of Government members - they laugh at the poor people who are forced to live there; those people do not have much of

Page 110

a choice. There are cheap rents and cheap housing there, and they have very little. The Government starts to take it away from them.

It is the little people of New South Wales who are the important people of New South Wales; it is the little people of New South Wales who the Government treads over time and time again with its hobnailed boots; it is the little people of New South Wales who we will stand up for. Government members do not even know where the Erskineville parks are, but they laugh themselves silly in the Parliament about the poor people of Erskineville. Those people will not forget that, and their friends and colleagues throughout New South Wales will not forget the laughter of Government members.

The other issue relating to this land use is the Government's plan to take away the planning powers of local government in the inner city. Unquestionably it is sometimes a slow process for proposed development plans to be dealt with by local government. The procedures need to be sped up. The people required to make those decisions are elected members of the community. They face their electorates every four years and if they have been making lousy decisions they are thrown out. The Government is trying to take away the planning powers of local government and give those powers to faceless bureaucrats who make decisions behind closed doors, do not face the people, and do not have to live with or understand the repercussions of the planning decisions they make.

This anti-democratic process is in line with the attitude frequently demonstrated by this Government. It is uncaring, leaving everything to the private sector, with no role for the public sector. It intends to remove responsibility for planning from elected representatives and give it to faceless bureaucrats - and certainly pay the consultants on the way. There is no worse government than one that does not care. The downgrading of health is evident from the order of precedence it was given in the Speech delivered by the Governor, which lacked substance, and the failure to recognise the major problems in the health care system, and the laughter heard in this House and every Minister's office when there is discussion about the residents of Erskineville. They laugh themselves silly about it. Those residents will never forget that. Government supporters seem to suggest that removing the democratic process is good for people. Labor has strong, positive alternatives. Labor Party members are not afraid to say that they have a vision for the future and that they have a passion to achieve that future. Labor stands for something; unfortunately Government members stand for nothing except themselves and obviously every one of them will fall at the next election.

Dr KERNOHAN (Camden) [9.22]: I am delighted to have this opportunity to contribute to the Address in Reply to the Speech that His Excellency Rear Admiral Peter Ross Sinclair made yesterday in another place. I pay tribute to the job that His Excellency has done over the period that he has been Governor. I am absolutely amazed that I am able to say that I agree with something said by the Leader of the Opposition: that the Governor showed energy and enthusiasm for his job and had a high profile in the community. I agree with that comment. However, I cannot understand the hypocrisy of the Labor Party, which denigrated the future of the Governor in a recent newspaper article. Members opposite do not believe in governors; they want to get rid of them and make Australia a republic.

I am amazed that Labor Party members seem to believe what they read in newspapers. One of the first things I learned when I became a member of this Parliament was to look at newspapers, read them with interest,

then go and find out the truth. However, I am hopeful that His Excellency will continue for many years as Governor. Last year in the Address-in-Reply debate I spoke at length on many subjects mentioned in the Governor's Speech, in particular their relevance to my electorate. I intend to update the status of the situation in my electorate. First I shall update the figures relating to the Camden electorate. On 3 February the electorate had 43,300 constituents. The quota for any electorate is 38,584; therefore, Camden is 12.33 per cent above the quota. Indeed, the electorate has 17.01 per cent more people than it had when I was elected in 1991. I have the largest electorate, in terms of population, in New South Wales. The closest to me is 5.7 per cent over the quota.

The Labor Party was so desperate for there not to be a redistribution - because it did not want the electorate of Camden to have its proper quota of constituents - that its members went around touting for people. They were getting numbers of people to register in areas of decreasing population so that they would not be out of kilter. They need not have worried because sometimes women can do the impossible; they are good at looking after people. Women can cope with the extra numbers. I am not speaking for myself alone, but also for the Chief Secretary and Minister for Administrative Services, who has the third largest constituency, with 5.63 per cent over her required quota. We can and will look after our constituents and we will be re-elected at the next election in March.

This increase in the population in the electorate is perceived to be a problem. However, the growth per se is not necessarily the problem, for we know it has to happen. The problem is the rate at which the increase is occurring, the lack of amenities and facilities and the time it takes for the deficiency to be remedied. I was pleased at the announcement of the allocation of \$2.5 million through the developing areas assistance scheme for sporting facilities in the rapidly developing areas. I hope that some of those funds will be granted to a needy group in my electorate.

The major issue about which I spoke in last year's debate was planning urban renewal and infrastructure - to which the Governor referred in his Speech. It is heartening to realise that urban renewal

Page 111

projects in Ultimo, Pyrmont, Eveleigh, Transit West and Honeysuckle are proceeding. They will remove in small part the pressure on my electorate and other electorates on the outskirts of Sydney. One of the major issues that led to my election as a member of Parliament was the proposed urban development in the Cawdor region. I am pleased that the Government has seen the light and determined that the area should not become part of the urban development program. The region should not have 16 lots per hectare, for it is basically a flood plain. I am grateful that last year the Premier announced that the Government did not intend to proceed with that urban development. That area has been returned to the hands of the local council.

A review is under way at present of virtually all developments in the southwest sector, especially in the Camden region. The review will determine what will happen at South Creek, Camden, Narellan, Elderslie, Harrington Park stage one, Spring Farm, Cawdor and other areas of potential development. Under what is called the Camden urban land strategy a technical steering committee has been set up under the chairmanship of the Department of Planning. The committee includes representatives of Wollondilly Council, Camden Council, the Department of Housing and the Water Board. I look forward to receiving a copy of the report of the committee on what should happen to the area. That report is due in April.

While speaking about housing, I should mention that \$2 million was allocated this year towards pensioner and family housing in the Camden electorate, particularly in areas of Camden proper - Mount Annan, Picton, St Helens Park and Tahmoor. This is very nice, but we still have a very big problem with pensioner housing. The number of one-bedroom units required for our aged community is increasing as our ageing community is getting bigger and bigger each year. I would excuse members who find it difficult to believe that the date of the Housing Commission lists for Camden for a single bedroom pensioner unit is November 1985 and that in the Picton-Tahmoor region it is November 1988. My constituents could die before they get into a single bedroom unit. It is slightly less for bed-sitters, but it is still a few years behind. Eleven units will be provided in Picton, plans for which are before Wollondilly Council at the moment. But this is not enough.

I have a problem which might be slightly different from the problems encountered by most members. Perhaps members representing electorates in nice places along the east coast of Australia have the same problem. They are preferred places to live. Camden is the preferred place in the southwest sector, hence we have applications for people to come to the Camden electorate from all over the southwest sector, with the result that residents who have lived in Camden for 60 or 70 years cannot get a home. So I have been lobbying very hard, and will continue to lobby very hard, for more pensioner accommodation in my electorate.

In terms of the local environment, the Governor spoke about environmental issues currently affecting our waterways and the plans for them. Last year we had the establishment of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust, a most important factor as the Nepean River runs through the electorate. Today the Minister for Land and Water Management, the Hon. George Souris, called on local people to form catchment management committees to help the trust. There are to be five of these local committees formed for the five different areas of the Hawkesbury-Nepean. This is a good indication of the consultative process that my Government is going through and how we look for input from the local community.

In my Address-in-Reply speech last year I talked about my survey of the Camden community and the fact that air pollution was one of their major problems and fears. It is great that there has been the announcement of initiatives to reduce on-road vehicle emissions, because my area is polluted by Sydney, not by the local conditions per se. It is a matter of land forms, winds, topography and the smog from Sydney going out to sea and blowing over the Camden area at night. It is also a fact that our Government is continuing its program of air monitoring and that there will be a real estimate of the actual problem of air pollution in our area.

Continuing with the environment, one of the things that I have been lobbying for since I was elected is a sewerage scheme for Picton. I have talked loud and long of the problems of the Picton community and the lack of sewerage, and the pollution of the Nepean River and subsequently the Hawkesbury by effluent from septic tanks. The supplementary environmental impact statement for the Picton sewage works went on display last month. The gazettal of the amendment to the Clean Waters Act, which will permit the building of this sewage plant, is imminent.

If we have the environmental problem solved - and I am sure we have - the Picton sewage works scheme will go ahead. The Minister has assured me that funding schemes would not delay commencement of this work, once the environmental impact statement has been accepted and the plans made. This will be one of the occasions where the people of Sydney will see something for the special environmental levy that they have been paying. This will be a very positive way in which this money will be used, and it is not for the main sewerage works; it is for the extra cleaning up of the effluent from those works that that money will be used and hence it will help clean up the Hawkesbury-Nepean.

The next thing on my list is a sewerage scheme for The Oaks. This is another area which has septic tanks that are polluting streams and, in this case, polluting Warragamba Dam. I have been lobbying for this scheme to proceed. Many types of plans have been drawn up. I am hoping that an environmental impact statement will be on display by the end of this year so that this project will commence - once again

Page 112

a very environmentally sound project. The wilderness situation has been a matter of great discussion recently. Of course, honourable members would have heard me lobbying against the declaration of the Kanangra-Boyd wilderness in my electorate.

This proposal has been deferred because it cannot be considered in isolation to matters concerning dam safety and flood mitigation works at Warragamba, but I believe it should be rejected completely. This area covers the selections that were given to the early settlers of Burratorang Valley. They had their major holdings in the valley, and these were lost when the valley was resumed for Warragamba Dam. Many of their children grew up in Burratorang Valley and have their heritage there. They live in Camden - they are getting older all the time. They have occasional access to the area via Water Board catchment and Yerranderie. Some of them even stay in private holdings nearby, but they need to have four-wheel drives to get in and get around. The Catholic bush workers also have a lodge in this area. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

This matter should be further considered and rejected. Our national parks should not only protect the environment for animals and species of flora, but they should be there for the people to enjoy. I was very pleased to have the Dharawal Reserve declared this year. It is in the O'Hare's Gorge at Wedderburn and is a marvellous and beautifully scenic area. It was not possible to declare it a national park, because of the coal leases underneath it. Advertisements have been published for a trust to manage the reserve and people have put their names forward. The trust will include representatives of CALM, the Water Board, Aborigines, and community members, who will have their own special input into the running of the reserve.

There have been major problems with transport in my electorate. The more people in a highly developing area, the more problems there will be. There have been few complaints from general commuters from the Campbelltown-Camden area to Sydney. Those few complaints have been about extended times of journeys as a result of the new timetables. However, with the new timetables and the red rattlers gone, that is not too bad. Problems occur, however, on the Southern Highlands line, where reliability is less than 8 per cent compared with the average reliability of 92 per cent in Sydney.

My Government has promised new Endeavour trains, which will be great. They will have air-conditioning, carpets, tinted picture windows, and cloth fixed seats. They cost \$4 million per two-car set, and the first delivery will be on 8 March, when trials will commence. By 10 July there will be 10 cars, and a new timetable will be introduced. Originally it was proposed that there be a shuttle service to Campbelltown which would connect with the electric trains to the city. However, the commuters are not very happy because they currently have three through services each day each way, and State Rail has compromised to give one through service each way in peak periods and one in off peak. I intend to lobby the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads and State Rail to improve the proposed service.

An upgrading of facilities at Campbelltown station has been promised, which is important not only for commuters who change trains there but for those who travel by car to Campbelltown station from other parts of my electorate. I propose to lobby for those improvements to be expedited. They will include lifts so that the elderly, mothers with children and the disabled have easy access to trains; they will include car spaces and toilets for the disabled, more cover over platforms, toilets on platforms two and three, closed circuit television for improved security, and better passenger information.

State Rail appreciates the problems for people in my electorate and what it is like to be a commuter coming to a tatty, down-trodden, horrible looking platform stuck in the middle of nowhere. It has upgraded many of the stations in my electorate and will continue to do so. An upgrade of Picton station has recently been completed at a cost of \$230,000. The station now has modern facilities but it has been possible to preserve the character of the heritage building, and the station is a picture. I congratulate the staff at Picton on the landscaping they have done, which was organised by the stationmaster.

Bargo station will also be upgraded and fire damage repaired at a cost of \$700,000. Stage one will be completed this year and will include an all-weather canopy and improvements to platform height. Stage two next year will include a 30-space commuter car park, closed circuit television and landscaping. There will also be upgrading at Douglas Park, Menangle and Menangle Park with platform reconstruction and improvements to amenities. The upgrading is expected to commence and be completed in 1994. My Government appreciates the problems of train commuters in my electorate. However, I will be pressing for the airport link which has been mentioned and which will no doubt be constructed in time for the Olympic Games. That will obviate the necessity for a doubling up of the tracks at Sydenham, provide an extra service, and speed up the passage of trains from my electorate to the city. I will be lobbying strongly for that link.

The M5 missing link will run from Casula to Prestons. The Hume Highway, which runs parallel to the missing link, carries 70,000 vehicles a day and is congested in peak periods. The link will be an important part of Sydney's road network and will give good access to southwest Sydney. The provision of the missing link - which will open in September this year - will allow access to Camden Valley Way, the Hume Highway, Moorebank Avenue and Heathcote Road, something I have lobbied for since the M5 was first mooted, as access

to Heathcote Road was not available then. Jobs have been provided in the Liverpool district because of that construction and people using the link will not pay a specific toll for it. Indeed, the existing toll profile has been changed and is better than that first proposed. The toll would have

Page 113

been \$2.50 now as it was based on the consumer price index, or 9 per cent, whichever was greater. It will remain at \$2 until March 1996 and future increases will be linked to the CPI.

Next I will lobby for an extension of the M5 through to Sydney. I believe the environmental impact statement is coming on display in April. The preferred option extends the M5 to Cooks River and connects it with Southern Cross Drive and South Dowling Street in a proposed eastern distributor. It will slash travelling time from my electorate and will be a boon for commuters. It will not only reduce delays and be faster but it will be a much safer trip to Sydney and will have minimal environmental impact because of the proposal to put a 2.5 kilometre tunnel under the Wolli Creek area.

I have also been lobbying for the removal of the railway crossing on Narellan Road. This year the Government allocated the money, and planning is under way for it. That must be achieved as soon as possible. Level crossings in urban areas are ridiculous - and that area of Campbelltown is urban. It is 200 metres outside my electorate, but a significant number of my constituents use that crossing to get to Campbelltown. The Government is also looking at the problems on Appin Road, and a study was undertaken of coal traffic from Picton. This problem is still unresolved, because the option that would please everybody would cost \$40 million, whereas the total package for roads in my electorate is only \$5.9 million. I also acknowledge the construction of a pedestrian overbridge over Narellan Road to link two new suburbs.

I turn to education. The Minister has recognised the problems in my electorate. A new school will be constructed at St Helens Park at a cost of \$3.5 million. Stage one is almost complete, and work has commenced on stage two. The new school will be great for the people of St Helens Park. The problems of the old bush schools have been recognised. Stage one of The Oaks school program of four kit classrooms has been completed at a cost of \$400,000. The construction of stage two, which will consist of additional administration, staff facilities, and a library, will commence in April of this year. At Oakdale, stage one of four kit classrooms is complete. Work has commenced on stage two, the administration and library facilities. At Appin two kit classrooms will be constructed.

Large amounts have been spent on maintenance in other areas: Rosemeadow, Ambarvale and Thomas Acres. Planning is proceeding for a new library at Picton primary school and the upgrading of the administration area and technology and applied studies facilities at Camden High School. An amount of \$2.2 million will be spent there. Elizabeth Macarthur High School will be enlarged and upgraded to cater for 1,000 students. These facilities are necessary in my electorate. The Government is seeking a site for a new school at Buxton. A permanent site is being sought for a new school at Wilton. I am lobbying for a second high school in Wollondilly and for halls for some of the old schools in my electorate, such as Mawarra and Camden South.

I should like to congratulate police and emergency service personnel and members of the volunteer services who were involved in fighting the January bushfires. My constituents were very lucky because none of the major fires affected them, but about 260 of our volunteer firefighters helped to fight the fires. I congratulate not only those volunteers but also members of the Police Service, the fire brigades and the Ambulance Service who helped. I look forward to the comprehensive review of bushfire management that the Cabinet subcommittee is carrying out. In my maiden speech I spoke about the problems of policing in Camden. Since I have been a member of this House I have undertaken a great deal of lobbying of the Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services. The Oaks now has a two-man station. Picton now has 24-hour policing and Camden is fully manned up to authorisation. Police are on the beat and are also examining licensing. *[Time expired.]*

Mr CLOUGH (Bathurst) [9.52]: I have been a member of this House for many years. I have made many trips to the Legislative Council Chamber to listen to various governors outline the programs of governments that they probably did not support. I wonder why governors such as Sir Roden Cutler, Sir James

Rowland and our present Governor are forced year after year to go through the charade of outlining programs that say a great deal and eventually mean very little. It is typical of the loyalty that they owe to the position they occupy that they do so without fear or favour. I have had only one close meeting with the Governor. I found him to be a very understanding person, a person who knows exactly what is going on. I was somewhat surprised to learn that perhaps he may not be re-appointed. However, that is a matter for the Premier and I hope that he gives consideration to retaining Admiral Sinclair in office.

A number of significant matters were mentioned in the Governor's Speech. Those matters included the mining sector, which makes up an important part of my electorate. The western coalfields produce probably the best steaming coal in New South Wales. The industry has gradually grown. Prior to my entering Parliament in 1976 the industry was exporting a very small amount of coal. The industry now exports in the vicinity of six million tonnes per annum from the Lithgow district. There is unrest in the coal industry because of prices available in Japan for our coal and the apparent lack of direction by both the Federal and State governments to the possibility of establishing one selling authority and the reason for establishing such an authority.

Coal is a finite reserve in New South Wales. John Maitland, the General President of the United Mineworkers Federation, pointed out in an interview on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation this week that in 1984 Japan was paying \$US40 a tonne when the Australian dollar was worth ¥220. Today the argument is about paying \$US40 a tonne and the Australian dollar if worth ¥74. The Japanese are almost three times better off. I am reminded of things that used to occur when our coal salesmen went to

Page 114

Japan. Without mentioning the individuals involved, Lithgow had two major production firms: Austen and Butta and Coalex Pty Limited. The Austen and Butta representative would talk to the Japanese and they would offer him a particular price. The Japanese would say to the next representative, "Well, you want so and so, but Mr So and So has indicated that he can supply coal at a lower price". So the trading off of one against the other went on.

I fully support what the coalmining unions have been doing in recent weeks, because I believe that only that type of action will bring home to the Federal Government particularly, and to State governments as well, that if our coal asset is to be disposed of, it should be disposed of on a regulated basis, thereby obtaining the greatest benefit for our country. For years the coal unions have been asking for the establishment of a coal authority so that Australia will have one selling agency for coal. I fully support that point of view. Australia should not be put in the position of giving away a resource. We should not bend to pressure put upon us by the Japanese, who say, "Well, if we do not buy it from you, we will buy it from South Africa, we will buy it from Canada, we will buy it from Brazil", or somewhere else.

It is up to the Japanese to make a considered assessment of the quality of the coal and the cost to them of transporting it to Japan. If the Japanese decide not to buy our coal, there is ample scope to use that coal in the very large power generation industry in this country. Coalmining and power generation are two of the major industries in my electorate, and facilities relating to those two industries are located around the city of Lithgow and in the Lithgow valley. I believe that coal has been the major reason the economy in Lithgow has remained reasonably buoyant throughout the recession from which we are now starting to emerge.

I noted with some concern comments by His Excellency the Governor about the introduction of new trains that will go into every sector of New South Wales except the Central West. The Central West will get no new vehicles. They will be used in other areas but not beyond Lithgow. Consideration is being given by the State Rail Authority - but nothing will be done prior to the next election - to terminating at Mount Victoria many of the trains that now operate into Lithgow. People will be forced to travel by bus to Mount Victoria and, of course, Lithgow's train services will be drastically reduced. That follows the pattern of decimation of rail services that has occurred in my electorate since the Greiner Government came to office in 1988. Train services in the Lithgow electorate have been reduced to such an extent that only two trains operate through the city of Bathurst. The XPT goes to Dubbo every morning and comes back every night, and the *Indian Pacific* goes through Bathurst twice a week.

The Government recently spent \$1 million upgrading the railway station at Bathurst. It looks terrific but there are no trains. The station is staffed between 9 a.m. or 9.30 a.m. and 6 p.m., despite the fact that all the bus services now operating instead of trains leave prior to 9 a.m. so that people can go to Sydney and back in the one day. When the buses arrive back at night the station is not staffed. The problem has been overcome by using the signalman at Bathurst East box to man the station when the stationmaster is not on duty, and there are probably sixteen hours of the day when he is not on duty. Recently the State Rail Authority made an announcement through the Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing, for whom I pray every evening as my opponent at the next election. He has evidenced an interest in my electorate and I dearly hope that he is not frightened off by some of the advice he is getting to run elsewhere. I warn the honourable member for Burrinjuck not to start moving into my territory. He should not worry about the Minister going to his electorate; I want him in my electorate.

Mr W. T. J. Murray: You are being naughty, Mick.

Mr CLOUGH: I know. The honourable member for Barwon and I have been members for a long time and a fact is a fact to us. The announcement was made by the gentleman in the other place. The amount of \$4.5 million is to be spent in upgrading the railway tracks between Tarana and Bathurst. The dogs are barking that the double track will be cut back to one track and the \$4.5 million spent in re-organising things. One little thing has happened along the road that nobody seems to take into account: nine signalmen at Wallerawang will lose their jobs. And this is from a Government promising that employment will be encouraged in country areas. Four station staff at Tarana will lose their jobs. They will join the five members of the signal staff at Bathurst West station who have already lost their jobs.

I believe governments of all parties, including our Federal Labor Government - I use that term advisedly - and the coalition Government in New South Wales should maintain employment levels in country areas at all costs. Jobs are not easy to get in country areas. This brings me to the Bathurst railway workshop. It was established by a Labor Government in about 1981-82. At one stage it had 150 to 160 employees carrying out a wide range of functions. Today it has 55 all told, including administration and supervision staff. They have only one task: the repair of coal wagons and a similar type of wagon used in freight services. The re-organisation signalled through the Minister for Transport will involve that function of the workshop closing and being moved to Goulburn, which is in the Premier's electorate. I do not attribute any political motive for it being moved to the Premier's electorate. Bathurst workshop will be responsible for the maintenance of locomotives. None of the 55 staff there are trained in locomotive maintenance. The Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing said that 100 additional new jobs will be established there but nobody has told us what will happen to the 55 people there. The Minister said that there will be no loss of jobs; they will just be transferred to other locations - end of statement.

Page 115

The transfer of a railwayman, particularly a long-serving railwayman, at Bathurst is not just a case of picking him up from one place and dumping him in another. He has a home on which a mortgage is being paid. Hopefully, he has a wife who is working, but she may not be. He has children going to a school. Just saying that they are going to be relocated is most unsympathetic. I assure my friend the honourable member for Barwon that that is one of the reasons I want this man as an opponent. Those things are remembered by communities. A railwayman will decide that the trauma of selling his home, or trying to sell his home, and buying another home at a distant location, his wife losing her job and shifting the kids mid-way through a year or a term is not worth the trouble. He will take a redundancy. Nobody gets sacked but redundancy is available. Hundreds of people on the railways in Bathurst have lost their jobs and received redundancy payments. They could not take the chance of not paying off their homes, and they were on the dole a week later.

In the last few months the Government Cleaning Service branch in my electorate has been sold. The contractors that have taken over the work have retained all the permanent staff but some casual staff have been

lost. Some staff have been transferred from one school to another. The numbers at the schools they have been transferred from have not been made up. A friend of mine, a school cleaner with the former Government Cleaning Service, innocently told me when I was talking to her the other day that the headmistress at the school she worked at is a very decent person: she gets the kids to clean up so that the cleaner can do the work in the time allocated to her. This situation was bound to arise under a private contractor taking over the service, which was making a profit.

I now turn to health care in my electorate. The regional office at Bathurst was closed and 52 jobs were lost and the Evans Area Health Board has been established. The Minister promised that the re-organisation would mean that \$30 million in savings would occur. There are more chiefs on the Evans Area Health Board than there are red Indians in America. By the time all the additional salaries are paid the savings will be very little indeed. In Lithgow at the moment a community committee is endeavouring to build a community hospital. Why would a community committee be endeavouring to build a community hospital? Because the people believe that successive governments have failed to provide them with adequate hospital facilities in Lithgow. The committee is hoping to reach agreement with the Government on a framework that would permit it to build a community hospital that would be operated by the community. If that is the only way we are going to get a new hospital at Lithgow, that is okay with me, because a few safeguards are built in. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Government is trying to build this hospital in Lithgow and will pay \$7 million over three years, if and when it makes the decision to go ahead with the project. I have indicated to members of the committee that I support the project on the basis that the Government underwrites the \$17 million loan that the community would have to raise in the event of failure, in unforeseen circumstances that are not yet evident, of the community company to take over the hospital and run it as a public hospital. The private sector will be involved. I believe that part of the hospital could probably be negotiated. The third and most important condition I put to the committee before it receives my unequivocal support is that the Government must give an undertaking that in the event of the community company failing to maintain that hospital - run it, make sufficient profit to pay off the loan and keep it working in top class condition - it must not hand it over to a private operator. That is the crux of the matter. We do not want another Port Macquarie-style project in the city of Lithgow.

The ambulance communication centre at Bathurst went by the board a couple of months ago and is now at Dubbo. The whole western sector of ambulance control is at Dubbo. I have to be truthful and say that I have had only one experience of the new arrangement. That occurred at a football match where I was doing some work last Friday night. A player was badly injured. We rang 000 and explained that the injured person was at Bathurst. The 000 service connected us to Dubbo. Dubbo asked where we were. They wanted to know who was making the call, and I told them. They said they would get an ambulance to us. The ambulance arrived within five minutes. Despite my objections to the shifting of that ambulance communications centre, on this occasion it worked. I have no complaints at this stage, but I assure the Government that when I do it will know about them.

Twice in this Chamber the Minister for Transport has said: "We are going to give a contract to Clyde Engineering to build locomotives, and that will cause 223 jobs to be created in Bathurst. The honourable member for Bathurst is shaking his head and saying this will never occur. He is wrong". But he is right, because that never occurred. That proposal was shifted again to the Premier's electorate. I believe it was a political decision. I return to my earlier comments about the reason locomotive maintenance is being shifted to Goulburn. With the operation of the national rail freight organisation, as soon as the link between Melbourne and Adelaide is converted to standard gauge we will see the demise of the western line, unless the New South Wales and Federal governments recognise that rail freight must be encouraged and built up to keep that link open.

At present trains are running from Brisbane to Adelaide and Perth through the backblocks, passing through the Sandy Hollow link, up through Dubbo to Narromine and Parkes and further out that way. I believe that the national rail freight organisation will probably run some trains directly between Sydney and Perth but will not operate traffic between Brisbane and Adelaide via the western line. It is imperative that the western line be

kept open and maintained. It is imperative also that the New South Wales Government should encourage additional rail freight on that line and get off the roads some of the trucks and buses that currently are causing such concern.

Page 116

Last week the Minister responsible for the Department of Conservation and Land Management was in the Bathurst electorate with the Minister for the Environment. They were talking about investigating the extension of a national park into the Gardens of Stone area, which happens to sit right on top of a coalmine. That coalmine will have a neighbour to the northwest of it in years to come at a place called Airlie. A national park should not be established in that area. I have opposed it in my own party. I have opposed it locally and I will continue to oppose it at every level I possibly can. Damage to the Gardens of Stone by coalmining is minimal. The need for an additional coalmine in the Capertee district is extremely urgent. Capertee is a village on the outskirts of greater Lithgow which has very little industry and work available to it. Like many other towns in country New South Wales it is dying.

Mr Humpherson: What about the Colong Foundation?

Mr CLOUGH: Who are the people of the Colong Foundation? If the honourable member is a subscriber to the Colong Foundation, he has my deepest sympathy. That foundation writes to me regularly and sends me its little whats-its-names. I open the little white wrapper and read that it is from the Colong Foundation.

Mr Chappell: What do you do - bin it?

Mr CLOUGH: I put it in the bin. I have no problems with that whatsoever. If the honourable member for Davidson is a supporter of that foundation, he has my sympathy. He raised that; I did not mention it. It was his decision to speak about that foundation.

[Interruption]

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Rixon): Order! The honourable member for Bathurst has the call.

Mr CLOUGH: I make allowance for the honourable member's youth and the fact he has only just got here. He is like a raw batsman who is sent in to open the batting. I was away from New South Wales at the time of the bushfires but my family was very closely affected by them. My daughter lives in the Davidson electorate. She is probably the only Labor voter in the area. She was threatened by the bushfires. As I watched the various television reports in Western Australia, my confidence was inspired by the fact that the Commissioner for Bush Fire Services, Phil Koperberg, was in charge. I have known Phil Koperberg for more than 20 years. He was fire controller for the Blue Mountains City Council when I was an alderman on that council. At that time he demonstrated that he had a knowledge not only of bush fire fighting but also of controlling fuel build-up and controlled burning off during the winter season. I pay the greatest possible tribute to all the brigades. The Western Australians came over here when I was in their State. The Premier attended their send-off, which had much hype attached to it. They all did a magnificent job. The fact that life was lost was not anyone's fault. Tragic events occur and people are caught out in bushfires. I must admit that the advice I have always relied on over the years, which is if your home is on fire stay inside, was found to be wrong on this occasion. We lost people who stayed in their homes.

I pay tribute to the volunteer fire brigades, the police, the State Emergency Services, the rescue teams, and everybody who was involved. The Forestry Commission men in my area wrote to me asking why they were not brought in. I had to explain to them that we had to have some reserves somewhere. That asset could have turned to ashes very quickly. They had to be kept on guard. I pay the highest possible personal tribute to Phil Koperberg. He is a most efficient, most knowledgeable and most effective bushfire commissioner of New South Wales.

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY (Barwon) [10.21]: I join with honourable members who have recognised the great work of the Governor, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair, in his term and in his Speech at the opening of Parliament on Tuesday. The Governor's Speech touched on the conservation movement in New South Wales and the conservation of our resources, particularly the conservation of water and the requirements of water within our State.

My speech tonight will refer to the environment and the water west of the range in New South Wales. It is a subject with which I am very conversant. That area has enormous problems with regard to water resources. The coastal areas have their own particular and peculiar needs. They have as much demand for water east of the range as we have west of the range. In the half hour available to me tonight, I do not intend to get into the problems east of the range; there are enough problems west of the range.

Australia is the driest continent. There is an enormous requirement to preserve and conserve our water and to maximise its efficient usage. Everyone is affected by water supply; everyone is involved in the usage of water - the rich, the poor, industry, the farmers and all categories of farming, the producers of food, the housewives, the professional people, the coalminers, et cetera. They are all dependent in some way on water; no one can live without an adequate supply of water. Over the years governments have recognised that need and have built dams in our catchment areas. They have built dams for the purposes of supplying stock and domestic water to people west of the range. The dams also provide for additional production on what is extremely fertile land west of the range. All that is lacking in so many cases is indeed that very precious water. One of the most indefinable statements we have to confront today is: what and who is a water user? I believe it is impossible to define. When we look at the dams around Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, we realise that there are many variables in the term water user.

All of our dams were built for specific purposes and uses: the Snowy Mountains and the dams that have been constructed down to the Hume weir, and on down the Murray River, the Burrinjuck Dam on the

Page 117
Murrumbidgee for the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, the Wyangala Dam on the Lachlan, the Windamere and Burrendong dams on the Macquarie, Glennies Creek and Glenbawn on the Hunter, Split Rock and Keepit on the Namoi, Copeton on the Gwydir, and Pindari on the Severn. Times have changed. More and more people are making demands on water supply, making demands on the flows from our dams, making demands on how the water is to be used.

Above all else, we need to recognise that although times may have changed the reasons for the construction of those dams have not. All the dams were built to produce, to create, and to develop living standards for the people of this State. As the honourable member for Bathurst said, the Crown's expenditure on those dams created jobs - and jobs are hard to get in the bush. These dams have led to the development of much of western New South Wales. If these dams were taken away, a vast number of the population of, and vast quantity of production in New South Wales will be taken away.

All our great city dams have been built for a specific purpose. But before any of these dams were built, nature controlled our river systems and, to a large extent, it still does. Over the years we have had the creation of water courses, wetlands, dry rivers and blue-green algae. When Captain Phillip arrived in Sydney he recorded the red line, which was an algal line on Sydney Harbour. Over the years we have seen floods, droughts, and wetlands drying up; we have even had holes in the ozone layer; we have had the El Nino; and we have had the greenhouse effect. All of these things are a part of nature and have gone on for ever and a day, long before the dams were built.

We have had to deal with the problems of the day. In my area the Gwydir watercourse, west of Moree, and the Gingham and Big Leather watercourse - enormous watercourse and wetland areas - were taken over almost entirely by water hyacinth. That almost led to the destruction of the hundreds and thousands of acres west of Moree. Over the years the Macquarie Marshes have dried up - in the normal process of any wetland. In those early days we did not have the Menindee Lakes, nor the great demand to supply the lakes with water.

Nature created all of those things. Today it is doing exactly the same thing it has always done.

When we have built dams people have thrown up their hands and said "Whoopee, we have an El Dorado, we have created a new living standard, we have produced a lot of money and we are doing all sorts of things". We have seen the production of tobacco come out of Pindari; the fruit of the MIA; the cotton of Copeton; the electricity from the Snowy. We have seen the production of almost everything on the Murray River. We have seen a dam built on the Namoi for reasons no one knew, and we have seen the area develop into a major cotton area.

As a result of these dams being built people have invested; jobs have been created; risks have been taken; Australia has prospered; coal has been washed; cotton and fruit produced; and cities have grown. Good seasons have seen full dams and everyone has been happy. We have seen the hyacinth removed; the Macquarie Marshes destroyed; the Murray salted up. And all these things have happened in good times.

We have also seen what happens when the Murray is dry. People have prospered from the investments and labours of those who have become producers following the construction of dams. Suddenly they decide it is their right to take over the management of our river systems. Those who think they know everything about the management of the river systems are now saying, "You dreadful people who have produced so much in this nation, who have used the resources of this nation to produce, you have destroyed it all". They fail to realise that nature is doing today what it has done for hundreds of years. There has been no rain. I defy anyone to achieve good production without rain.

The development of towns has led to the pollution of water supplies. Authorities have been set up in an attempt to solve the problems caused by the pollution of town water supplies. When rivers are fenced off from stock the animals are unable to gain access to the river systems to have a drink of water. An attempt is being made to change the usage purposes of the dams. The level of pollutants in the river systems will increase when the volume of water flowing down the rivers decreases. When the only flow in the rivers is from septic sewage of course there will be 100 per cent pollution of that river system. Of course the level of pollution will vary as the seasons change.

Inevitably blue-green algae will occur, but the solution for the control of blue-green algae is for the river systems to run following rain. The blue-green algae will then disappear, as it has done for hundreds of years. I defy man to change that basic fact of nature. The solution is not to pour another heap of chemicals into the river to get rid of the algae: the solution is rain. Fortunately none of us has control over rain. Action is being taken to sectionalise river management by putting grand environmentalists in charge of the new environmental order so that these people who, it is suggested, know all about our river systems can take charge of them. Where were they when the river systems had no dams? Exactly the same problems existed then as exist today.

Where were these people when there was no Copeton Dam and the hyacinth west of Moree was feet thick and hundreds of thousands of acres were inundated by hyacinths? We did not hear a word from them. We heard the pleas of those whose lives were being destroyed; fortunately, as a result of action by a few people, the New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian governments - as well as the Commonwealth - provided funds. However, it was the landholders who got rid of the weed. The dam was built about that time and has led to an enormous change in that area. For example, agreements were made that there should be free flow in that area. At present the agreements are not being honoured. I do

Page 118

not suggest that the region should revert to being a complete wetland as it was in the past, but at least everyone should agree that those who live below the dam are entitled to help. The river systems should not be used as a plaything but should be managed for the benefit of the State.

Who destroyed the Macquarie Marshes, and why? Why is Menindee Lakes virtually dry today? I suggest that the excessive demands of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the failure of the Department of Water Resources to properly manage our river systems are the reasons that those things have happened. For example, two enormous dams, Burrendong and Windamere, were built on the Macquarie River system. There

has not been a decent flood in that area since 1976, yet there is still 20 feet of airspace at the top of Burrendong Dam in case a flood occurs in the future. The waste as a result of that management system for the provision of water down the lower Darling into Menindee Lakes is a disaster. Action should have been taken yesterday - not left until tomorrow.

No maintenance is carried out of the bypass channels, the north and south channels of Macquarie Marshes, to allow surplus water into the river system. The Macquarie Marshes have literally drowned; they have never dried out in the last 10 years, because they have been blocked off and have harboured every noxious weed and animal one could name - they were in their thousands. The great natural wetland has been destroyed. It is no longer natural. The water once spread over hundreds of thousands of acres. The water that has evaporated would have been of enormous benefit to the lower Darling River below the junction at Walgett and through to the Menindee Lakes.

Those circumstances are horrific enough, but today we find that the Department of Water Resources has put out a tender for licences for more irrigation. This whole process of management has to be balanced. There is no way that the Government can say to the people in the north of this State that they have to supply 30 per cent of the needs of South Australia through Menindee Lakes. We must not destroy the Namoi, the Gwydir, the Macintyre systems by allowing total mismanagement of the Macquarie system to meet a need in the Menindee Lakes. The proposals which were originally put forward two years ago were nothing short of a disaster course. We must put together a management structure that is balanced, recognising that not only is the water coming from those four systems but that there is a major source out of Queensland. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

We have seen a very big flow come down the Moonie River out of Queensland. That is all part of the management structure and it must be utilised. Recently we saw a transfer of a licence from the Murrumbidgee to below Menindee Lakes in the Smith Tandou operation. It has always been the principle of this State that the transfer of licences between river systems is not allowed. The basis for that has a sound foundation. It should never have been allowed to happen. The argument was that the Tandou licence would be supplied because, as a result of it going from the Murrumbidgee, water would be made available through the Murrumbidgee to service South Australia; and therefore Smith had taken his water out of Menindee Lakes. That was quite okay because one thing was balancing the other. If there was enough water in the Murrumbidgee system to contribute to the South Australian effort, why was it not put through that system and so relieve the Menindee Lakes contribution years ago? There is no need to close Smith out of it; there is water that is capable of being put through to the Murrumbidgee out of the snow to service South Australia.

Surplus water is available in the Murrumbidgee to service South Australia without destroying Menindee Lakes, which is what is happening at the moment. The management structure has deteriorated to such an extent that the northern part of the State will literally have to subsidise the southern part. So far as I am concerned, that is not on. We must look at the whole management structure and not just at an individual river system. The Murray-Darling Authority is now being pushed as the great manager of our water systems. The management structure comprises a lot of people and there are about four lots of commissions, authorities and groups in the scheme. Some fine people have done a lot of work in the area, but the problems in the Murray River system have not been solved.

Salt slugs still go down the Murray and on to irrigated areas. The pollution problems that towns along the Murray face are not new. They are being addressed, but they have existed for a long time. If someone suggested to me that the Murray-Darling Authority was the great saviour of the river management structure for the northern part of this State I would say to him that he should look at the job that has already been done. That authority has enough in the south to keep it occupied for many years to come. However good a job it is doing in that area, the problems will continue for a long time yet. The dams in the north were created for the specific purpose of irrigation; they were not created as a supplementary water supply for environmental purposes.

There is a gross overload in the licensing structure of all dams that are fed by the Lachlan, the Namoi, the Gwydir and Macintyre rivers. That is a fault of the government of the day. The Department of Water Resources decided to change the definition of the word "property" as it applied to properties in the northern part

of this State. I created and chaired the United Gwydir Valley Water Users Association. Seven groups of people belong to that association. Its constitution states that if there is one vote opposing a motion, that motion should be lost. We created within that river system a management structure that covered the marshes and wetlands of the west - a structure that was totally acceptable to the people in the area. It is there for all to see. There would have been no overlicensing in that area.

Page 119

As a result of the change of the definition of the word "property" landholders were able to lease and subdivide their properties. They presented bodgie applications and created gross overlicensing in that area. There is now a major problem in the northern part of the State. The problems will not be solved by imposing controls and measures that will destroy the people who have invested in and developed those river systems. We must not limit those people only to the dams; we must not say that they cannot take free-flow water from those dams in order to enable 20 per cent of that water to be used for environmental purposes. All these crazy problems have been created by government action. The problems will be solved only if the Government recognises that a balance must be maintained.

The basic water allocation is six megalitres a hectare. I do not know for how long people will have an allocation of six megalitres a hectare because of overlicensing in this area. The usage of free-flow water is critical if we are to maintain production in the north of this State. It is as critical for the operations of this State as is BHP. Without those river systems this State would be in a sorry state. The proposition is pure and simple. At present there is an allocation of six megalitres a hectare. We need to build into that provision a six megalitre a hectare free-flow allocation. Once that 12 megalitre a hectare allocation has been met the remaining water can go down the river system. By doing that we will be replenishing underground water supplies. With the free flow of water throughout those rivers from the Barwon right through to the Darling there will be no blue-green algae.

The rivers from Mungindi to Collarenebri and through to Walgett will be free of any problems. If we fiddle about with these rivers and take water out of the dams, we will create the biggest problems that this State has ever seen. That basic 12 megalitres a hectare allocation must be implemented. The restructuring of the Macquarie is essential to obtain a balance between north and south, from Queensland to Menindee. We cannot look at this problem in isolation; we have to take into account the whole system. In my opinion, South Australia should be serviced by the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Snowy rivers. I firmly believe that, if a large quantity of water is passed down the Murrumbidgee, it will more than compensate for the water that is required from Menindee Lakes. The lakes area can then be used for the purpose for which it was originally intended - a water supply for the west - for Broken Hill and the northern areas. The Murray River can service those people below Menindee Lakes.

We now have a great system. Total catchment management committees were created for a good and worthwhile purpose. They were not created as a means of determining water distribution throughout New South Wales; they were created to ensure that the water in our river systems was kept clean. Total catchment management committees are now involving themselves in the water management system and they have no right to do so. The North West Total Management Catchment Committee, which covers the Namoi, Gwydir and Macintyre river system, is opposed to the construction of dams let alone the management of that system. It ought to keep its bib out of it. The management of our water systems must remain the responsibility of the Department of Water Resources and the organisations responsible for them. Total catchment management committees should do what they were established to do. The environmental movement should not come in on the grouter and try to take over the management of our water supplies. We never heard from that movement during the years of the big floods; we never heard from it when people's lives, homes, properties, fences and crops were being destroyed.

There was never a peep out of them as the water systems of the wet years did the damage that they did. Now, because there is a problem in the dry years, the total catchment management committees are coming in like parasites and attempting to use public opinion to create a circumstance to once again destroy the production

that is so necessary for the north and northwest of this State as well as the whole of Australia. No problem is insoluble, but the problem must be looked at in totality and not as an individual river system. There is a block in the north that must be looked at as a group and a block in the south that must be looked at as a group; and there is the problem of South Australia that must be supplied with water.

Let us create a balance between those two groups and make the necessary commitment to South Australia, because if we do not manage it, there is no way the water can be dragged back out of the sea and utilised for production in any other parts of this nation. There is one chance, and that is when the water goes past. If we do not use it then and maximise production, we have lost it. As I said at the commencement of this contribution, it is crazy that this driest of continents will not be adequately supplied with water.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Beckroge.

SENATE VACANCIES

Joint Sitting

Mr Speaker reported the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to meet the Legislative Assembly in the Legislative Council Chamber on Tuesday, 8 March 1994, at 3.30 p.m. to choose Senators in the place of Senator Kerry Walter Sibraa and Senator Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I direct that the joint sitting with the Legislative Council in the Legislative Council Chamber for the election of Senators for the Commonwealth of Australia be set down as an order of the day for Tuesday, 8 March 1994.

House adjourned at 10.54 p.m.
