

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 16 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

COMPOSITE CLASSES

Mr CARR: I ask the Premier whether approximately half the primary schools in New South Wales have composite classes involving kindergarten children? Is this a breach of the guidelines of the Department of School Education? Since he became Premier has spending on public schools fallen by approximately \$200 per pupil in real terms?

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

Mr FAHEY: The Leader of the Opposition has continued to spread the story that composite classes are a deterrent to good and proper education. Representatives from a school in my electorate that has 11 children from kindergarten through to sixth grade have come to me constantly since I first visited them. Their greatest concern was playing in team sports.

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

Mr FAHEY: The age ranges of those children and the size of those children created some difficulty in getting a cricket team together that could do all the things that a cricket team of 11 might be able to do. But the school representatives pleaded and pleaded with me, as many other school representatives have, to maintain that peer role that applies to composite classes in smaller schools. All the statistics show that there are no drawbacks to the progression of primary schoolchildren who have attended schools with composite classes. Children who come out of primary school composite classes proceed and excel in education in secondary school. But when one is bereft of all ideas, when one has a composite group - such as the Opposition, and a composition that defies all imagination, when it comes to the Opposition -

Mr Gibson: A good cricket team.

Mr FAHEY: A good cricket team; it is nice to hear from the honourable member for Londonderry. I hope the Opposition has a good cricket team out of all that lot, because it has nothing that is good at anything else.

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

Mr FAHEY: As I have indicated clearly, when it comes to composite classes in primary schools there is

ample evidence to show that those children proceed in a manner that allows them to excel in secondary school education and tertiary education as well. The Leader of the Opposition persists with this fallacy and many other fallacies, including his support for the honourable member for Liverpool, which is clearly not there. Time and again we have total disarray from the composition opposite.

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

Mr FAHEY: A situation arose in the past 24 hours, but the honourable member for Liverpool, to his credit, was not the slightest bit interested in seeing this House delayed yesterday for several hours on a motion that never had substance. However, it is obvious that is not the way the Leader of the Opposition saw it. He wanted another opportunity to come in here and make a joke of the Parliament, which he does consistently.

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

Mr FAHEY: That is the only thing he does well.

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

Mr FAHEY: He makes a joke of the Parliament.

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

Mr FAHEY: He overruled the honourable member for Liverpool, who showed good common sense on that occasion. Subsequently, on the "7.30 Report" last night, he ruled out the concern expressed by Opposition members in respect of police in this State when they called for a royal commission. But what happened this morning? The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who is also under threat, said on Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio, "We are getting closer to that royal commission". That was his view. One has to ask who is leading the team over there? Who is leading the composite class on that side of the House?

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

Mr FAHEY: Is it Peter? Is it Bobby? Or is it Andrew? It is very difficult to know.

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

Mr FAHEY: It is very difficult, because they have no idea about what is going on. They are interested only in disruption. I do not have the specific information before me, but I will pass it on to the Leader of the Opposition at a later time.

Page 807

GRANTS COMMISSION AND COMMONWEALTH FUNDING TO THE STATES

Mr TURNER: I address my question to the Treasurer and Minister for the Arts. Is he aware of statements by the Queensland Treasurer about proposals of the Grants Commission affecting Commonwealth funding to the States? Has he received advice on the ramifications of the proposals for the New South Wales share of Commonwealth financial assistance grants?

Mr COLLINS: I am aware of comments made in recent days by my Queensland colleague. Those comments remind me of a cartoon I saw in a now defunct newspaper, the *National Times*. It showed a family driving towards the Queensland border -

Mr Gibson: Joh and Flo.

Mr COLLINS: The honourable member remembers the cartoon. It showed a family driving towards the Queensland border and a sign on the board said, "Turn back or giant cane toads will eat your children". *Aesop's Fables* are alive and well in Queensland.

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

Mr COLLINS: I would be quiet on this one, because if members opposite do not come on board and adopt what I am about to say they will be in even more serious trouble than they are already.

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

Mr COLLINS: *Aesop's Fables* are alive and well in Queensland.

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

Mr COLLINS: The chief storyteller is the Queensland Treasurer, Keith de Lacy.

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

Mr COLLINS: He has been spreading fairy-tales about the latest Grants Commission report. I can see the Leader of the Opposition on the edge of his seat, ready to jump in support of what I am about to say. The Grants Commission recommendations will reduce the annual \$1.1 billion subsidy that New South Wales currently provides the smaller States. I appreciate the silence of those opposite. Mr de Lacy knows as well as anyone that specific New South Wales public sector pay packets do not come into the Grants Commission's considerations. He has said that Queensland has been asked to pay for the salaries of senior bureaucrats in New South Wales - a total fallacy. But he does not let the facts get in the way of a good bedtime story.

The giggles were subsiding when Mr de Lacy claimed that Queensland was subsidising New South Wales for tariff protection. Mr de Lacy said that he got his figures from the Economic Planning Advisory Council - he did indeed, but the figures he used to make his most recent claim came from EPAC paper No. 20, to be precise. It was published in June 1986. A few things have happened since then; there has been some water under the bridge in New South Wales.

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

Mr COLLINS: A few things have happened since Mr de Lacy dug those figures out of the archives in the Queensland Treasury - there has also been a change of government. This Government has attacked vigorously the enormous problems left behind by 12 years of Labor maladministration. According to the Queensland Treasurer, it is Queensland that is subsidising New South Wales, not the other way around. About the only thing Queensland does not claim to subsidise in New South Wales is the mardi gras. But enough of Keith's fairy-tales; let us look at the facts. The facts are these: in 1942 the States gave the Commonwealth control of income taxing powers as a temporary wartime measure. The States are compensated through the payment of financial assistance grants, but the distribution is disproportionate. In 1993-94 New South Wales will receive \$630 per person, compared with \$872 per person in Queensland and \$903 per person in Western Australia. This is Canberra's idea of balancing the States' revenue.

If one looks at the situation that would arise if the funds were distributed according to the level of income tax paid by the residents in each State, it becomes clear that New South Wales and Victoria provide an annual subsidy to Queensland alone of \$750 million. That is a current figure, not one from the ancient history of Queensland or EPAC paper No. 20 of 1986. Queensland's financial arrangements are beautiful one day, extortionate the next. Victorians will tell us that Queensland is the only place where the Victorian Government spends money. The people of New South Wales enjoy spending their holidays on the Gold Coast. Why not? We paid for it. The taxpayers of New South Wales have paid for Queensland hospitals, roads and schools.

New South Wales is saying that time is up; it is enough. This State will not subsidise smaller States any more. There was a time when Queensland needed the financial assistance of larger States, but that time has long gone. Queensland likes to tell us how grown up it is economically, but it still wants us to pay its rent, electricity, education and health care. Queensland is like the self-sufficient grown child who refuses to leave home. But that will not stop the Queensland Premier and Treasurer from arguing in Canberra next week that the Grants Commission recommendations are unfair. The Queensland Government is expecting a fair hearing from its Federal friends.

Let us take a closer look at some of the Grants Commission recommendations. The latest report follows a major review in 1993 which recommended

Page 808

a reduced share of Commonwealth funds for Queensland. In effect, the commission decided that the New South Wales subsidy provided to other States was too great. Canberra accepted those recommendations. The commission, in its latest report, identified a number of serious errors that benefited Queensland in the previous year. First, errors by the Grants Commission in previous assessments amount to approximately \$68 million. Second, updated data showing a change in the composition of Queensland's population amounts to about \$44 million. Such changes are matters of fact and should not be in dispute. There are no grounds for Canberra to reject the Grants Commission recommendations.

Mr de Lacy says that the latest proposals will cost Queensland \$47 per person. It has been costing New South Wales residents a lot more than that to provide suntan subsidies to Queensland over the years. The current funding imbalance means that New South Wales residents each pay more than \$150 in additional tax than they would if Commonwealth funds were distributed fairly. In short, each time people put petrol in their cars in New South Wales they are helping the Queensland economy; each time employers meet their payroll tax commitments, they are doing their bit for Queensland. I do not know as much about football as the Premier, but I now understand why Queenslanders are called the maroons - they ought to blush because of the amount of money they get from us. No wonder they call New South Wales the blues, after all they have drained out of us.

But Queensland spends the money so well. In New South Wales we worry about meeting the demands of new suburbs in western Sydney. In Queensland they have more important things to do, like pouring money into airlines that cannot fly and running Indy car races around the Gold Coast. And Keith de Lacy tells us that we could balance our budget if we adopted the same spending disciplines they have in Queensland. Let us get one thing straight: Queensland is not a hardship case and it should not be treated like one by Canberra.

Queensland's gross State product per capita has increased by more than \$250 in the year to September; its taxes per capita have increased by more than \$100 in the past two years, but it still expects New South Wales to pay. If we take the interstate welfare out of Queensland what are we left with - a coconut with no milk; a Mirage with no guests. Mr de Lacy can whip up an alarmist giant cane toad storm as much as he likes, but there is no defensible argument to support the continual subsidisation of States such as Queensland and Western Australia by New South Wales and Victoria.

In attacking the Grants Commission's proposals Mr De Lacy is overlooking the big issue, the fact that his mates in Canberra are for ever drawing the purse strings tighter. Increasingly funds from the Commonwealth come with harsh conditions attached. Since 1977 the untied financial assistance grants to the States have fallen by an equivalent of \$3.7 billion per annum. Mr De Lacy is quibbling over the pieces of the State's funding pie when, thanks to Canberra, the pie is shrinking all the time. He should look at the bigger issue. We say that the Grants Commission has got it right: this State is entitled to every cent that has been recommended and a great deal more. It is about time that the Queensland Government grew up and left home and stopped expecting States such as New South Wales in particular to keep subsidising Queensland.

SCHOOL CLASS SIZES

Mr J. J. AQUILINA: My question is addressed to the Premier and Minister for Economic Development. Did his Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs publicly state on 21 February that there is a "staffing policy of one teacher to 25 pupils in primary schools"? Why then is there a class of 36 pupils in a school in the electorate of Gladesville? Will the Premier personally intervene to rectify this class overcrowding?

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

Mr FAHEY: I did not know that the honourable member for Riverstone had preselection problems as well. For the past two weeks members with preselection problems have been given the questions to ask in an attempt to develop their profiles. If the honourable member for Riverstone were really serious about detailed statistics, he would address the question to the Minister in this House who represents the Minister in the upper House.

BREAST CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs SKINNER: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. What action is the Government taking to combat the incidence of breast cancer in New South Wales?

Mr PHILLIPS: I thank the honourable member for North Shore for her very good question. With some of the concerns that are being raised about western Sydney today I would have thought that it would have been one of the first questions from the Opposition. I would have thought Opposition members would have forgone their usual stunt of raising a matter of public importance or an urgency motion to deal with this important issue. But no; they are prepared to go on the radio but they are too gutless to confront the issue in Parliament.

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

Mr PHILLIPS: I will explain why they are too gutless to ask a question on this issue. What plans were in place for cancer therapy and radiotherapy services - breast cancer services - for the people of western Sydney when we came to government? Absolutely zot, zilch, nix - whatever you want to call it. There was no far-sighted plan whatsoever. My predecessor, the Treasurer, as Minister for Health,

Page 809

introduced a plan. The only way to approach health issues is with sensible long-term planning. The department, the college of radiology and a whole range of experts in the field devised a plan for the development of radiography services around the State. A prime issue in the treatment of breast cancer is access to services. Radiotherapy services are also important to people suffering other forms of cancer. A five-year plan involving \$54 million was introduced in about 1990.

If Ros Kelly were handling and distributing it, she would use a whiteboard and all the money would go to Labor seats. Are we putting the facilities into Liberal seats? No. We are determined to provide sensible planning. We have created three centres of excellence in radiotherapy since coming to government. One is in the Illawarra, at Wollongong. The second one is at St George Hospital, in the seat of the honourable member for Kogarah, the seat of my colleague Brian Langton. I hope that helps his preselection. It is part of the \$200 million redevelopment at St George. The other centre is not on the North Shore; it is at Liverpool. A brand new cancer therapy centre is currently being constructed at Liverpool. At first it will contain two major machines, with a third to follow a year later. We are not talking about tinpot little machines costing \$100,000; each of these centres will cost from \$11 million to \$17 million to establish. This Government has established three major centres.

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

Mr PHILLIPS: We heard the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on radio saying that the Government should move rapidly to replace and repair the machines in the current institutions. That is one of his plans.

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

Mr PHILLIPS: When we came to government there were three linear accelerators at Westmead. We have added an additional brand new linear accelerator to make four, increasing the capacity by one-third.

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

Mr PHILLIPS: This Government has replaced two of the three outdated machines at Westmead with new machines, to increase those services. I appreciate that the people of western Sydney are desperate for improved health care services. During 10 years of neglect in health care services very little was done for the people of western Sydney. Certainly no plans were in place when the coalition came to office in 1988. We know there is \$300 million for a children's hospital and \$80 million for the Nepean Hospital - in the electorate of the honourable member for Penrith - and that \$200 million was allocated for a brand new development, including the Caroline Chisholm Women's Hospital at Liverpool, within the electorate of the honourable member for Liverpool.

Those are the sorts of services the Government is delivering, and will continue to deliver, for the people of the west because they need it. Some outrageous remarks have been made over the past 24 hours about the type of breast care services that the women of western Sydney are supposed to be receiving. In Westmead Hospital, women have access to one of the largest and leading cancer therapy centres in the State, and they should use it.

Mrs Lo Po': What is the waiting time?

Mr PHILLIPS: I hear from a member of the Opposition, "What is the waiting time?" I apologise if there is a waiting time at Westmead Hospital, but I cannot build at Liverpool a \$17 million radio therapy unit with two linear accelerators and finish it before the end of 1995 when 30 per cent of people going to Westmead come from Liverpool.

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

Mr PHILLIPS: That is the type of service the Government wants to deliver to the people of western Sydney so the people of the Nepean have a centre of excellence. I want to emphasise that stupid comments are being made by some doctors and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, such as, "You can bung those radio therapy machines and linear accelerators anywhere" - these multimillion dollar pieces of equipment - as if we could put them all over the place. Up until recently Victoria had one such machine. Sydney has a number. Three additional units have been placed at centres of excellence. New South Wales has the best network of that type of care of any Australian State.

These units cannot be installed at every hospital; they must be provided at centres of excellence because we must look after women and make sure that they have access to the best options available, be it surgery, radio therapy or other medical treatments that will help them with their cancers. Women with breast cancer need counselling as well. To extend these services for the treatment of all other cancers one must have this equipment at centres of excellence. Members who jump up and down saying they want the latest equipment in their hospitals should think again. Their suggestion goes against all professional advice. The \$54 million five-year plan is on track, on time and will be completed on time.

Dr Refshauge: Too little, too late.

Mr PHILLIPS: Too little, too late? What garbage from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. His Government did absolutely nothing about providing these services.

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

Mr PHILLIPS: Let us see how good the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is when it comes to diagnosis. In this Parliament this week the issue arose about a wonderful plan called second opinion - part of the Opposition policy. I have since found out that one

Page 810
of the better known cricketers in this Parliament, a member of the press gallery, split the webbing between his fingers at a recent cricket match. He went to the medical clinic, got it stitched up, strapped up and went away. The injury was very painful. This person, a fairly diligent and hard worker in this place, had his fingers bound together because of the pain. He went to one of the doctors in this Parliament, whom I will not name but he sits on the other side of the House, and asked for a second opinion.

The worker said, "What should I do?" The opinion was, "Look, it's all right; it's not broken; it's not fractured. Keep moving it up and down". A few days later it was so painful that he returned for a third opinion. What did he learn? The fingers were fractured. That is the type of opinion and policy development we hear from the other side. It is time to move on with the development of radio therapy in this State and to come up with the next five-year plan. To do that, today I announced establishment of the radio therapy working party, which consists of 10 specialist experts from within radio therapy and health planning, which is essential in sensible health planning matters. The terms of reference are: first, to develop the next phase of the radio therapy strategic plan 1996 to 2001; second, look at the future development of radio therapy services, because they are always changing; and, third, to prioritise the competing proposals in this particular area.

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

Mr PHILLIPS: That is the way to do sensible health planning in this State and the way to make sure that the people of this State receive the best health care being delivered in Australia.

COMPOSITE CLASSES

Mr DOYLE: My question without notice is to the Premier and Minister for Economic Development. Is the Premier aware that Umina Public School, on the Central Coast, has a kindergarten composite that spans three grades? Does the school also report that its basic skills test results are below average? Will the Premier intervene to ensure adequate staff are appointed?

Mr FAHEY: In the 12 years that Labor was in government up to 1988 it devised a fantastic little scheme to maintain the size of classes in TAFE colleges. It centred around the size of the classroom.

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

Mr FAHEY: The deal was done with the Teachers Federation to ensure that there was no way that we could get more than 15 adults into certain TAFE classes. The Opposition built classrooms to a size that would not allow more than 15 people to be accommodated in those classrooms. That is how good the Labor Party was in controlling adult class sizes. Many technical and further education college classrooms all over the State have no flexibility or capacity to take in additional adult students, simply because brick walls were put up. That is how the Labor Party controlled class sizes when it was in office. I am quite happy for the honourable member for Peats to visit my electorate so that I can show him some schools, where the teachers, parents and students are more than pleased with composite classes.

1994 AUSTRALIAN MOTOR CYCLE GRAND PRIX

Mr KINROSS: I address my question without notice to the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing. Has the Minister received advice about the preparation and status of the 1994 Australian Motor Cycle Grand Prix? What economic benefits are expected to flow to western Sydney from the staging of this event?

Mr DOWNY: I thank the honourable member for Gordon for his question. Like a number of other members on the Government side, the honourable member for Gordon has demonstrated a deal of interest in Eastern Creek and a knowledge of motor sports in general. While the honourable member was asking his question about economic benefits for Eastern Creek, the honourable member for Auburn interjected and said, "none". Honourable members are about to find out what economic benefits accrue from races at Eastern Creek, particularly the motor cycle grand prix. I am more than aware that on this side of the House, and, I dare suggest on the Opposition benches, there is a great deal of support for Eastern Creek and in particular for the motor cycle grand prix. Of course, one person in this House hates Eastern Creek. He will not have anything to do with Eastern Creek because he is anti-sport and anti-fun. He knows nothing about sport and he is anti-western suburbs also.

Mr Fahey: Where was he last Saturday?

Mr DOWNY: The Premier asked, "Where was he last Saturday?" At the opening of the Sydney national athletics centre. He was invited to pay tribute to one of this country's greatest athletes, Betty Cuthbert, but he never turned up. He did not have the decency to -

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

Mr DOWNY: He did not have the manners to put in an apology.

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

Mr DOWNY: Last week in this House I said that I did not care whether Eastern Creek produced a large profit because it pays its way as a community facility, particularly for the people of western Sydney. I stand by that statement, but I think it is only fair to tell honourable members about another means by which Eastern Creek pays its way, and that is with the staging of the motor cycle grand prix.

Page 811

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

Mr DOWNY: When Eastern Creek hosted its first Australian grand prix in 1991, economic impact research undertaken by Reark Research Pty Limited showed the event had brought in \$12 million in additional income to businesses in New South Wales. A conservative estimate of the income to be generated by the 1994 grand prix is \$18 million, but the amount is likely to be much higher because this year 105 racing teams will be undertaking a week long practice period at Eastern Creek and extending their stay from the usual five days to 12 days. This will more than double the amount of money spent by international and Australian teams on accommodation, meals, fuel and other goods and services. New South Wales businesses, and particularly those businesses in the western Sydney area, will benefit significantly from this extended stay.

We are also anticipating an increase in public interest in the 1994 grand prix. The Australian race is now the first race on the international circuit and will set the scene for the rest of the series. In addition, on the Friday and Saturday nights of the event, Coca-Cola is sponsoring two major concerts at the excellent venue at Eastern Creek. With bands such as Hunters and Collectors and Baby Animals signed up to perform - and I am sure the younger members of this House know who I am talking about - many more people will be attracted to Eastern Creek over the weekend. Other events to be staged at Eastern Creek, apart from the 125cc, 250cc and 500cc bike races, include a touring car challenge between Wayne Gardner and Alan Jones, both former world champions - and I am not talking about the radio personality, I am talking about the former Formula One champion - a 100-metre football dash involving first grade players from all football codes; a four-kilometre foot race with top Australian runners; a celebrity challenge car race with high profile media and sporting personalities; and a corporate challenge race involving major companies such as Konica, Streets, McDonalds

and Carlton United Breweries. Also there will be an aviation display, a sports and leisure expo and an Olympic Games display. It is not just about motor cycle racing. It covers the whole gamut of sport and entertainment.

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

Mr DOWNY: What is most important, in keeping with sport and with this Government's commitment to provide access to the raceway, ticket prices to this top international event are very reasonable. They range from \$5 for children and pensioners to \$65 for a three-day adult season pass. In fact, even the Leader of the Opposition should be able to afford a three-day season pass to Eastern Creek. Organisers have no doubt that they will reach their estimate of 80,000 people this year. Ticket sales today are expected to reach \$560,000, which will exceed the total sales for the entire event last year. There are still nine days to go and we expect far more tickets to be sold than were sold last year.

Another encouraging factor is that for the first time a significant number of Victorians have booked into the Eastern Creek camping ground this year. We might even see Jeff Kennett trundling up the Hume Highway with his two-man tent and camping in the Eastern Creek camping ground. He knows what a great event it is. He is trying to take it away from us. Importantly, corporate support for this year's grand prix has been tremendous. Corporate sales have more than doubled over the past year, which is once again proof that Labor's lies about Eastern Creek have been ignored by business and by the community. To reinforce my point, I will mention a few of the companies that support the grand prix at Eastern Creek raceway. They include: Carlton United Breweries, Coca-Cola, Qantas, Castrol, BMW, ICI Dulux, General Motors Holden, Dunlop, Olympic, and even Streets Ice Cream. They, and hundreds of other companies, will be supporting Eastern Creek. These are the companies that the Leader of the Opposition tries to court at the big end of town. They certainly do not see Eastern Creek as being a waste of time. They certainly do not see Eastern Creek as an -

Mr Langton: On a point of order: I submit that it is a gross abuse of question time to use it for corporate advertising.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Treasurer to order.

Mr Langton: I ask you to direct the Minister to answer the question or else resume his seat.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved. There is certainly no precedent for the matter raised by the member for Kogarah. However, I am concerned at the length of time that the Minister has taken to answer the question and I ask him to conclude his answer as speedily as possible.

Mr DOWNY: The 1994 Australian Motor Cycle Grand Prix at Eastern Creek will be even better than the 1993 event, which was judged the best event in the series. New South Wales has made the grade and hit the heights. It no longer needs to prove itself on the international scene; it no longer has to prove itself to insignificant politicians such as the Leader of the Opposition. New South Wales has the best grand prix. Eastern Creek is a motor circuit of which all honourable members should be proud. On the weekend of 25-27 March New South Wales will prove once again why it can do things better than any other State.

CASTLEREAGH PUBLIC SCHOOL COMPOSITE CLASSES

Mr GIBSON: My question without notice is directed to the Premier and Minister for Economic Development. Is he aware that Castlereagh public school in Sydney's west has every class a composite class? Has the school reported problems with literacy and numeracy? Does this reflect the Government's vision of education? If it does, what does he intend to do about it?

Mr FAHEY: The answer to the first question is no. The answer to the second question is: I have not

heard of any report. As I indicated before, if honourable members opposite are serious about education and serious about the details of every school or any school in their electorates, they might direct their questions to the Minister who represents the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

MILK IN SCHOOLS - PILOT PROGRAM

Dr KERNOHAN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Mines. Will the Minister advise the House of the progress of the pilot Milk in Schools program introduced recently in the Wollongong area? Will the program be extended?

Mr CAUSLEY: I thank the honourable member for Camden for her question and her interest in agricultural affairs. As honourable members would know, she is a pre-eminent veterinarian in New South Wales and obviously has a keen interest in this subject. The Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs and I had the pleasure recently - in fact, just over a fortnight ago - to launch the Milk in Schools program at Woonona school on the South Coast. Most honourable members would remember a scheme that operated in this State from 1951 to 1974 of free milk in schools. Probably most of us would remember that the milk sat out in the sun for some time and sometimes -

[Interruption]

Sometimes it was blancmange, yes, instead of milk. Honourable members would also agree that at that time the milk was a great asset to the students who attended those schools. I remind honourable members opposite that the school I attended at that time, because it was a country school, had many composite classes. I can assure honourable members that that was so; and if they doubt the results achieved, they should consider some of the qualifications that came out of those schools. Many members here attended small country schools with composite classes and obtained an excellent education.

Research conducted by the milk industry has shown, quite alarmingly in fact, that the diets of 18 per cent of boys and 27 per cent of girls contain only 50 per cent of the calcium that is necessary. It would be clear to everyone who understands anything about health that calcium is a very important mineral, particularly so far as girls are concerned at a later age. There is no doubt that milk in schools is a very important part of the diet; and, of course, it is a very important part of agriculture in New South Wales. Honourable members often talk about the value of agriculture and export earnings for New South Wales from agricultural industries, but they may be surprised to know that the dairy industry has the highest value of product exported out of the State. The reason is the very high value-added component. The dairy industry has penetrated many Asian markets and is of tremendous value to the New South Wales economy.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Cabramatta to order. I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order.

Mr CAUSLEY: As I said, the Minister and I had the pleasure of visiting a school on the South Coast which is in the electorate of the honourable member for Bulli. He did not turn up, although he was invited.

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

Mr CAUSLEY: It was a great pleasure to see children enjoying the cartons of milk. The program exceeded all expectations. In the first week of the scheme 12,000 cartons of milk were consumed by students at 77 primary schools in the area. In the third week consumption increased to 18,000 250 ml cartons a week. It is obviously a very popular program. Unlike the program in the years between 1951 and 1974, the pilot program does not provide free milk. White milk is sold for 40¢ and flavoured milk for 60¢, but the big point is that the dairy industry has agreed to put refrigeration in schools. Therefore the milk sold to students will be refrigerated; it will be of nutritional benefit and also guaranteed to be cold enough.

The House should congratulate the milk industry. Obviously, it has its own interests at heart, because if children drink milk at an early age they might continue to drink it. That would be of obvious benefit to the industry. I do not think the industry would walk away from that; but the children of New South Wales will also benefit. I might say that I tried to teach the Minister for Education how to milk a cow, which was of great interest to the children.

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

[Interruption]

Mr CAUSLEY: The honourable member would not even know what a cow looked like. He would probably kiss the wrong end, as usual.

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

Mr CAUSLEY: The children were delighted to learn how to milk a cow. Some members opposite would also gain skills if they learned how to milk. The fact that the children learned about the industry and where milk comes from was a delight to them. They enjoyed it very much. This scheme will obviously be of great benefit to the children of New South Wales. The dairy industry intends to extend the scheme so that schools right across the State will have the benefit of refrigerated milk at a reasonable price. I am sure the Minister for Health will be interested in the scheme because in the long term it will be of great benefit to the health of future generations of New South Wales residents.

Page 813

GOVERNMENT SCHOOL ENROLMENTS

Mr A. S. AQUILINA: I direct my question without notice to the Premier and Minister for Economic Development.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members on the Government benches will remain silent while the question is asked.

Mr A. S. AQUILINA: Has the percentage of students attending government schools in New South Wales fallen to 72 per cent, the lowest figure recorded this century? Did the Premier's party state in 1987 that this is "the basic test of public confidence in State schools"? Answer that!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The Chair does not regard with any great degree of amusement the tag attached by the honourable member to his question.

Mr FAHEY: That question is the most significant contribution ever made by the honourable member for St Marys in this House. At long last he has come to life and asked a question in a way that showed real spirit and emotion. I am impressed. Today a number of questions have been asked about composite classes, statistics, et cetera, in relation to education. During question time considerable research has been undertaken on the Government benches by a number of members to assist in relation to this matter. The conclusion reached is that considerably more members on the Government benches were educated in composite classes than on the Opposition benches. That is just one more reason why the coalition is in government.

SERVICE INDUSTRIES EXPORTS

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY: I address my question without notice to the Minister for Small Business and Minister for Regional Development. Is the Department of Business and Regional Development involved in a study to increase the exports of the service industries? What is the potential for the State in encouraging more exports in this area?

Mr CHAPPELL: The honourable member for Barwon obviously understands the great economic value of service industries to Australia. In August last year I announced that the New South Wales Government would contribute \$100,000 to the Austrade consortium overseeing a million-dollar study into Australia's high potential service exporters. The consortium comprised Austrade, the New South Wales Department of Business and Regional Development, and several other private and public sector organisations. The aim of the study is to build on the recent Australian Manufacturing Council-McKinsey report on elaborately transformed manufacturers by giving due recognition to the services sector as a growing part of the domestic and export economy. This report on the services sector will be as significant as the McKinsey report was for the manufacturing sector.

The survey findings to date have identified the major opportunities and constraints faced by service exporters. The survey has also analysed the implications of government policies and business practices and, when the final report is released by the Prime Minister, which will probably be in May, will make recommendations for the promotion of the growth of services exporters. The survey is vitally important because so far little formal research has concentrated on the services sector, which is recognised as contributing to an improved balance of payments for Australia, and as comprising two-thirds of domestic production. This survey will, for the first time, show the potential of our non-traditional exports to enhance our total export performance.

The preliminary findings have revealed the enormous potential of the services sector for Australia and, in particular, for New South Wales. Services represent more than 65 per cent of gross domestic product and provide more than 30 per cent of the value-added component of our exports. It is estimated that eight out of 10 Australian workers are employed in service industries. The services sector is growing faster than the economy as a whole and is the only sector in which Australia improved its trading position relative to other industries over the decade of the 1980s. Although Australia accounts for only 2 per cent of the global market, it is still ranked among the top 20 service exporters in the world and, after Japan, is the major service exporter in the Asia-Pacific region. There is obviously great potential for this market to be further developed. It is estimated that during the next five years about 200,000 additional jobs will be created in the services sector.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member for Blacktown wishes to conduct a conversation, she should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr CHAPPELL: I do not think the Opposition is terribly interested in the growth of jobs in this State. I repeat that it is estimated that during the next five years about 200,000 additional jobs will be created in the services sector. It is my intention to ensure that New South Wales will receive the great bulk of those new jobs. The data from the 1,400 respondents to the survey has shown that revenue from the services sector increased from \$23 billion in 1987-88 to \$32.3 billion in 1992-93, and is projected to increase to \$52.7 billion in 1997-98. Austrade figures on Australian services exports to the Asia region have shown export growth faster than any other region since 1988, with exports increasing by 14.4 per cent over the period to \$1.8 billion, which is double the rate of total service exports.

There is evidence that small to medium companies are more successful in their penetration into Asian markets. That applies to the services sector, as it does to all other sectors. Typically, advisory services with fewer than 20 employees are making the greatest inroads. Small to medium business operations are most able to quickly respond to the needs of the market-place. The types of services identified by the study include professional

and financial services, building, health, education and tourism, vocational training, mining and energy, and environmental management, in addition to telecommunications, information technology and leisure services,

which are obviously recognised. All respondents to the services survey report that exports have been, and are likely to continue to be, an increasingly important part of their operations.

Of crucial importance, and perhaps surprisingly, is that most of the overseas revenue generated is repatriated to Australia. In 1987-88 about 60 per cent of that revenue was returned. By 1992-93 this figure had increased to 75 per cent and is projected to remain at least at that level. A third of all respondents reported that export sales of services were more profitable than domestic sales. That raises the importance of giving ongoing support to the services exporters to reach into the global market-place. The constraints on the growth of the surveyed companies were increased competition, which was identified by 82 per cent of respondents; lack of finance, which was identified by 69 per cent; distance to markets, which was identified by 69 per cent; and lack of market information, which was identified by 67 per cent. Of all of these constraints, lack of finance was rated as an important constraint or as absolutely preventing entry into international markets for almost half of the respondents. Clearly, the survey will need to investigate these constraints further before its final report. It will be in these areas that major implications will be revealed for both Federal and State government policy setting.

In the lead up to the final report more information specific to service industries in New South Wales will come to light. But already the study has revealed that our computer industries are some of the fastest growing in the services sector, with a demonstrated growth rate during the period 1987-88 to 1992-93 of 16.4 per cent compound annual growth in revenues and 8.6 per cent compound annual growth of employment. Against these already impressive figures, the performance of the New South Wales industry is even more impressive. Revenues grew at almost 20 per cent per annum over the past five years and employment grew at more than 13 per cent per annum. Through our information technology and telecommunications policy, the New South Wales Government has successfully attracted 40 per cent of Australia's advanced telecommunications technology and more than 50 per cent of the nation's research and industrial capacity in communications technology and software systems.

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

Mr CHAPPELL: We are clearly out in front and we must ensure we maintain our leading position.

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

Mr CHAPPELL: There is no doubt that this study, in which our Government is proud to participate, will point out clearly the opportunities for young Australians. It will look also to making a statement on strategies on how future Australian service exports can be increased. The challenge for all Governments is to look at how their programs can better target and support service exporters in their quest for further overseas markets. This Government will look at identifying impediments to export growth, future service exporters and global market opportunities and ways of eliminating these impediments. I expect that all honourable members, even including those on the Opposition benches, will be interested to see the outcome of that final report.

[Notices of Motions]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Londonderry to order for the third time. I warn all honourable members that the calls to order recorded during question time apply until the completion of the taking of formal business. If honourable members want to stay in the Chamber for the rest of the day, I suggest they bear that in mind.

PETITIONS

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 Hartcher**.

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 prisoner committed the crime, received from **Mr Windsor**.

Serious Traffic Offence Penalties

Petition praying that the House review the laws relating to road accident fatality or grievous bodily harm and institute severe penalties, received from **Mr Newman**.

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**.

Public Housing Tenant Water Charge Liability

Petition praying that the House reject the proposed amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act to charge public housing tenants for water consumption, received from **Mr Rumble**.

Triple-antigen Victim Milvi Jalajas

Petition praying that triple-antigen victim Milvi Jalajas should receive compensation, received from **Mr Rumble**.

Page 815

Shellharbour Public Hospital Children's Ward

Petitions praying that the children's ward of Shellharbour Public Hospital be reopened, received from **Mr Harrison and Mr Rumble**.

Aged Health Care

Petition praying that the House ensure that admission to public hospitals is based on medical need, that hospitals are located conveniently for elderly people, that community health services needed by elderly people living at home are expanded, that a moratorium is placed on the closure of hospitals, and that the privatisation of hospital and other health services is stopped, received from **Ms Moore**.

Steel-jawed Leg Hold Traps

Petition praying that the House legislate to ban totally the manufacture, sale and use of steel-jawed leg hold traps in all areas of the State as they cause great suffering to all animals and birds, both target and non-target, caught in them, received from **Ms Moore**.

Warilla Police Station

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

Woolloomooloo Police Station

Petition praying that additional police be allocated to Woolloomooloo Police Station, received from **Ms Moore**.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Consideration of Urgent Motion

Mr CARR (Maroubra - Leader of the Opposition) [3.24]: I move:

That this House condemns the underfunding of education by the Government and calls for increased education spending in the forthcoming State budget.

A Premier in the 1990s ought to display a keen personal interest in the State school system. This Premier has failed that test, as his answers in the House make very clear. He is a Premier not aware that composite classes have increased by 40 per cent under this Government; he is a Premier not aware that in many cases these composite classes are educationally inappropriate. This is what one would expect of a Premier who boasts that he has no vision. Every statistical indicator from any official publication available confirms that education is a low priority of the Premier, who regards vision as a dirty word. Whether it is the proportion of the State economy devoted to public education, the spending per pupil, or the pupil-teacher ratio, the clear picture is that education spending is contracting.

One fact alone makes this point. Since this man became Premier, spending in our schools has fallen by \$200 per student in real terms. This House must never forget that it was this Government that withdrew 2,500 teachers from the school system. The Fahey Government has entrenched that educationally disastrous decision. The simple fact is that spending on education, measured in this way, is now even worse than it was under the dreaded Terry Metherell. In fact the burden has been shifted to the parents. What has happened to school fees while class sizes have increased and the number of composite classes have increased by 40 per cent? School fees have increased by 35 per cent in the past two years alone.

Let us examine just how badly the Government's education funding record is. New South Wales has the worst funded school system in Australia, either on spending per student or as a proportion of the State's economy. New South Wales has the highest pupil-teacher ratio in the country, a ratio which has increased since 1988. Compared with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, New South Wales has lower spending per pupil, lower spending as a proportion of the economy, and higher pupil-teacher ratios. New South Wales continues to have the lowest retention rate of any State. Since 1988 the proportion of students - this is the key indicator - attending public schools has fallen to 71.9 per cent. That is the lowest ever recorded.

In 1987 the Liberal Party said that this figure was the key test for how a public education system is performing. The lowest proportion of students is opting to go into the State school system. The basis for these statistics, all documented carefully by the Opposition, includes the OECD publication "Education at a Glance", December 1993; the Australian Education Council statistical index, published in January 1994; "Schools Australia", 1993, from the Australian Bureau of Statistics; and New South Wales Budget information, New South Wales Budget Estimates, from 1990 through to 1994.

Today I can reveal the results of the Opposition's survey of more than 250 primary schools. This is the survey that the Government tried to stop; this is the survey it told principals not to respond to. Let us look at the results. It clearly shows the effects in our classrooms of starving the education system of resources. The survey shows that half of all primary schools have a kindergarten composite class. This is despite an official

departmental policy. I refer to the Department of School Education November 1990 publication "The Organisation of Primary Schools", which states that "The allocation of staffing to schools should ensure that kindergarten classes need not be combined to form composite classes". That is the official guideline; that is the policy in the system. The survey shows that a half of all primary schools have a kindergarten composite class. The Government says that it is fine; it says, "You've never been better off in the school system".

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

Mr CARR: Let me tell the House that too many of those composite classes have more than 30 kids in them. The Government says that the official guideline ought to be 25 - no more than 25 kids in any composite class. Today the Opposition will produce

Page 816

documentation that will show that the reality in the classrooms is that there are up to 34 kids. In fact, in 42 per cent of schools there is one class over the maximum size of 30.

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

Mr CARR: The largest class in New South Wales, containing 36 pupils, is in a school in the electorate of Gladesville. More than a third of primary schools in this State have classes above the maximum agreed class size of 30: 30 per cent of Hunter schools, 35 per cent of Central Coast schools, 50 per cent of Canterbury-Bankstown schools and 70 per cent of schools in western Sydney have classes of 31 or more. More than 10 per cent of schools have a composite class spanning three or more grades. Whatever defence of composite classes the Government chooses to construct, it cannot persuade parents that it is acceptable to have a composite class spanning three or more grades - three or more chronological ages in the one classroom.

Implementing a policy which has classes spanning three or more age groups with more than 30 kids in it is turning our schools into educational slums. All this flows from the Government's policy of reducing teacher numbers. At the start of the Metherell era 2,500 teachers were withdrawn from the school system. That loss has never been made good. Forty-seven per cent of inner west classes are composites, and several schools are made up entirely of composite classes. The Government is having composite classes now accepted as par for the course in our school system - the norm, not the exception. An inner-city Newcastle school has three composite classes each spanning three grades.

Another Hunter school has a four-grade composite class. This is what flows from having a Premier who boasts that he has no vision. He demonstrated today in question time that he has no views on education, no commitment to the school system in this State. A Central Coast school, on our survey, has a kindergarten composite spanning three grades. It reports literacy and numeracy problems and poor basic skills test results. It reports that "large class sizes in the junior grades are making the job increasingly difficult". A western Sydney school has 30 or more students in all its classes. While the Government is delivering less to students, parents are being asked to pay more.

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

Mr CARR: School fees have risen by 35 per cent in the past two years according to a survey published last month by the federation of Parents and Citizens - 10 times the inflation rate. Many public schools are now charging exorbitant fees: Sydney Boys High \$450, North Sydney Boys \$250, and Manly High \$275.

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

Mr CARR: The Government is playing on the fiction that fees are compulsory, even though its own Education Reform Act states that "the instruction provided at government schools is to be free of charge". Parents are still being asked for fees even for compulsory subjects such as physical education. It is no wonder that the Liberal Party has failed what it described in 1987 as "the basic test of public confidence in State schools". In 1987 the Liberals committed themselves to increasing the proportion of students choosing

government schools.

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

Mr CARR: The Liberal policy said that the "outflow of students to non-government schools must be arrested". That was what was released in June 1987 and passed for an education policy by the late, unlamented Terry Metherell. Since 1988 the proportion of students in public schools has continued to fall. In 1993 it was the lowest level recorded this century. Such is the damage that the coalition has done to public education that in the middle of the recession 13,000 more people than in Labor's last year in power were prepared to pay private school fees. When the Opposition raised the issue of school funding at the start of the school year the Minister came out with a series of inaccurate and misleading defences. These are comprehensively rebutted in the document the Opposition is releasing today. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI (Lane Cove - Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment, and Minister for the Status of Women) [3.34]: Rarely have we seen such hypocrisy in this House. Rarely have we seen such laughable statements as have just been made by the Leader of the Opposition. To stand in this House and to somehow suggest that this Government does not have the best interests of the students of this State at heart, to somehow suggest that this Government has walked away from education when Opposition members know that it is this Government that has spent the time, spent the money, put the commitment into the people of New South Wales and the children of New South Wales because we believe in providing quality education to the children of New South Wales.

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

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: The Leader of the Opposition has again tried to make out a case which is completely and utterly false.

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

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: The Opposition is not telling the truth yet again. The Leader of the Opposition is misleading the House and the public about funding for schools, about composite classes, about any matter that one would care to raise in the

Page 817

education system. He is an absolute disgrace and the people of New South Wales should hold him accountable at the next election, if he manages to survive that long. The people will not give him an opportunity to ruin education in the way that it had been ruined prior to the coalition coming to government. I wish to put on the record a couple of facts. Education funding in real terms has increased for the fifth consecutive year in this year's budget. The Government has now allocated \$4.9 billion to education, training and youth affairs. That is almost 22 per cent of the total of the 1993-94 State Budget. I shall give a breakdown of the figures.

The Department of School Education will spend \$3.425 billion on schools. The remainder will be spent on preschools and other teacher services. TAFE funding has increased by 3.5 per cent to \$982 million, which is a further rise on last year's increase of nearly 10 per cent. On capital funding, we are building more schools because we recognise the need to provide facilities for the children of this State. Where are those schools? A capital allocation is going into the electorate for the honourable member for Campbelltown this year. This Government is putting the facilities where they are needed. We recognise that Campbelltown is a growth area.

The Leader of the Opposition said bitterly that under this Government composite classes have increased dramatically. Let us get the facts straight: over the past five years the proportion of composite classes has remained remarkably constant. It was approximately 29 per cent in 1989 and it is now 30 per cent. The Leader of the Opposition complained that composite classes are somehow educationally damaging to the children in them. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to talk to principals and parents of children in

composite classes to find out what they think of them. The only people concerned about composite classes are people who have never had experience of them and who are stirred up by people such as the Leader of the Opposition. He suggests that by putting children in composite classes we are somehow diminishing their educational achievement and their ability to receive quality education.

Parents whose children have been in composite classes state that they are stimulating and exciting and their children do well in them. The suggestion that composite classes somehow undermine the education of the children in them is a complete farce. The Leader of the Opposition should speak to people rather than parading in this House waving the results of a survey that he has cooked up with all his friends in the Teachers Federation. If he bothered to talk to the parents of children in the classes he would find out that they are not the bogey that he is making them out to be. He is the only person who is undermining anything in relation to the educational chances of the students in such classes. The Leader of the Opposition talked about a number of other issues. He referred to retention rates. It must be clearly understood that New South Wales has achieved its highest ever retention rate - 80 per cent.

Mr O'Doherty: A vote of confidence.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: As the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai says, it is a vote of confidence in the education system. Our young people acknowledge that New South Wales is providing opportunities in education that are not available in other States. This State introduced the pathways and the vocational education and training programs. This Government acknowledges that not all young people will attend university and, therefore, school must be made relevant for them. We need to make school education part and parcel of their lives as subsequent members of the paid work force. This Government has provided the opportunities. It has taken education out of the bad days when Labor was in office and has made education relevant to young people in this State. It will continue to do so. The Government will continue to look at ways of making the education system more flexible, and of allowing young people to take up opportunities to ensure that they are educationally qualified and capable of entering the work force, and that they understand what will face them when they leave school. This is the Government providing the opportunities to the young people of New South Wales.

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

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: Only the carping of the Opposition is undermining that process. The constant haranguing by the Opposition that somehow education in New South Wales is not right is the only action that is undermining education in this State and causing our children harm. The Leader of the Opposition pretends to be concerned about the children of this State when he has no interest in them at all and is only interested in making cheap political points. A further issue raised by the Leader of the Opposition was staffing. The staffing policy has not changed since 1989. The ratios aimed for are one teacher for 30 students in primary schools and one teacher for 25 students in secondary schools.

In order to achieve those ratios, the Government acknowledged the need to address questions of staffing and has actually put 1,200 teachers back into schools. The Government announced that a further 100 kindergarten and first class teachers are going back into the system this year. That process is taking place at the moment, interviews are being conducted and those teachers will be available to go back into the education system in second term. If there is a problem, the Government will do something about it. Government members will not make cheap political points and cheap political capital out of a perceived concern. We do something about it.

In question time today we had the farce of members of the Opposition standing up one after the other asking the Premier about a particular class in the member's area. If those members were really concerned about those issues and were not interested in trying to make political points or scoring political capital, they would have raised those concerns with the Minister, as do members on this side of the House

Page 818

when they have a concern about education. What did Opposition members do? They stood in this House and

pontificated and played games, which is typical of the actions of Opposition because it is not interested in results, achieving change or solving problems. They are only interested in playing political games. They do not help the children of New South Wales.

Mr O'Doherty: They abuse their constituents.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: Exactly. Opposition members abuse and use their constituents. If Opposition members have a complaint about education, if they really believe something is wrong, they should stop playing their games in this place and talk to the Minister or to me. I promise that I will take those concerns to the Minister. We in the Government are proud of what the coalition has achieved in education and we will continue to work for the children of New South Wales. We will continue to provide the resources that the education system needs - resources that have increased remarkably in the time we have been in office. We will continue to ensure that we look after the children and provide sensible and real education in this State.

Mr J. J. AQUILINA (Riverstone) [3.44]: Once again the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment, the Hon. Kerry Chikarovski, was sent into this place, like some wind-up doll, to defend the Minister for Education. She did not have any issues, facts or details. She was constantly looking at the clock to make sure that she actually used up the 10 minutes debating time available to her in the hope that no one would accuse her of running out of things to say in that time. What she said was absolute rubbish. She said nothing at all of relevance. She quoted no facts and no detail, giving us no opportunity of knowing what is going to happen into the future. Where is the Premier to defend his famous vision, or lack of it? Why is the Premier not in the House defending his public education system? He is nowhere to be seen because he knows his Government's totally inadequate funding of New South Wales public schools is totally indefensible.

The Minister had the hide to say Opposition members should approach the Minister for Education and tell her our problems. I will tell the House what the Minister for Education said when Opposition members wanted to find out about problems in their schools. The Minister told the directors of our schools to send letters to all principals forbidding them answering survey notices. I have news for the Minister: a number of those principals defied the Minister, despite the fact that they knew if their situation became public -

Mr Schultz: Name them.

Mr J. J. AQUILINA: I have their responses here. See these forms? Not one or two but hundreds of forms from hundreds of schools in New South Wales.

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

Mr J. J. AQUILINA: Each and every one of them conveys detail about primary and secondary schools in our State. The detail is damning of the Government and damning of the Minister in regard to the facts of what is happening in public education. Whatever facts the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment wants to use, they are damning of what has happened under the coalition Government since 1988. Much has been said about composite classes, and I shall say a little about them in the three minutes I have left. All one needs to do is look at the chart of precisely what has happened. In 1988 there were 3,500 composite classes; in 1994 there are 4,800. That is 1,300 more, which represents a growth of 42 per cent. What about the sizes of those classes? Some composite classes in this State have 30, 31 and 32 students and sometimes spanning three grades, in one case there were four grades. All we need to do is look at the guidelines of the Department of School Education on composite classes. A document dated February 1989 produced by the Government entitled "Evaluation Study of Composite Classes in Primary Schools" states:

Aspects specifically to certain Years:

- (j) A K/1 combination is particularly difficult for teachers because two different tasks are required of them: to settle kindergarten children into school routine and to teach Year 1 children the various school subjects. The two tasks are often incompatible.

Another item under the same heading states:

- (k) Composite classes are not suitable for Year 6 children who should be prepared for high school and not held back by the presence of younger children.

Mr Rixon: Rubbish!

Mr J. J. AQUILINA: The honourable member for Lismore says, "Rubbish". This document is produced by the department of your Government and you are calling its evaluation rubbish. Another document produced by the department entitled "The Organisation of Primary Schools, Executive Summary", dated November 1990, states:

Allocation of staffing to schools should ensure that:

...

- Composite classes levels should not exceed 25.

I have with me evidence of thousands of composite classes exceeding not only 25 students but in many cases 30 students. It is a ridiculous situation. The Government is condemned by any criteria. Funding for public schools in New South Wales has dropped dramatically in the past five years. New South Wales now has the highest pupil-teacher ratio in the country. In fact, this State is 7 per cent below the Australian average in funding of public education on a per pupil ratio. Whatever facts are used, the issues are in black and white, tabulated by independent data, in many cases provided by the department. In all cases the data damns the department, the Government and the Minister because of the lack of concern for public education.

Page 819

Mr RIXON (Lismore) [3.49]: This Government can be proud of the increase in funding it has provided for education since it came to office. There have been no funding cuts to schools. In fact, the coalition Government has increased funding for schools in every budget since 1988. A record \$3.4 billion has been allocated to schools in the 1993-94 State Budget. The Commonwealth Grants Commission report on general revenue grant relativities in 1993 found New South Wales expenditure per pupil was ahead of Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania. Each year additional teachers are appointed automatically to cover any additional enrolments. Last year 800 additional teachers were appointed; this year, on top of the retention rate increases, an additional 188 teachers were appointed. In 1993 the number of teachers totalled 47,444.

As a teacher of 28 years' experience, a teacher who has taught in small schools, start schools, slow learners and high schools and who currently has five children in schools and one about to go to school, I am shocked and disgusted with the way Opposition members judge education standards. Numbers of teachers and funding, even though we have set new records, have nothing to do with education quality. The number of teachers has nothing to do with quality, but the standard of the professional training of those teachers does. I taught in high schools from 1968 to 1976.

Mr Bowman: You did not learn much while you were there.

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

Mr RIXON: I learned how to keep under control slow learners like the member interjecting. During the term of office of the previous coalition Government funding was spent on maintenance in schools, resources in schools and professional education of teachers in schools. What happened in 1976? All that went out the window. Professional standard training for teachers went down the mine. Maintenance in schools went down the mine. Construction of new schools went down the mine. Labor set a record of which anyone would be ashamed. Opposition members showed then just how much they really cared about educational standards. Let

me explain again. Since 1988 this Government has ensured that professional training for teachers, the resources that they work with, the environment in which they work - that is, the buildings and the equipment - and, finally and most important, parental involvement have received the sort of funding and attention that they deserve.

Opposition members can visit any schools in their electorates and they will find that teachers are receiving professional training, maintenance is being done, and new schools are being built. There is more parental involvement than ever before. Opposition members are judging educational standards on the numbers of teachers rather than the quality of the teaching. They say that has nothing to do with it. They cannot even get the amount of money that is being spent right, because more money is being spent now than ever before. Let us look at some of the things this Government has been doing. More than \$314.1 million has been allocated for capital works and maintenance in schools this year.

In special education, obviously an area that the Opposition does not care about, a record \$243.1 million has been allocated as part of an education plan, including the allocation of \$340,000 for special activities for gifted and talented students. One has to look at each group of students and make sure that they are looked after properly. The Government has increased funding for rural education and a whole host of other areas. Members of the Opposition make a great fuss of composite classes, but any teacher who knows their work makes sure that every class they have is a composite class. Every good, professional teacher makes any class a composite class. Each child should receive individual attention for its special needs. Well trained teachers with resources and parental involvement make sure that happens. New South Wales offers choice, flexibility and world-class standards. The Opposition's motion is ridiculous. It is nothing more than a cheap attack from a party desperate to attack the Government on education. I repeat: there have been no funding cuts. [*Time expired.*]

Mr J. H. MURRAY (Drummoyne) [3.54]: Schools in New South Wales and especially those in the inner west are facing major staffing and pupil difficulties. Honourable members might ask why. I will tell them why, because the man who thinks "vision is bullshit", that is, the Premier of New South Wales, is just not interested in education.

Mr O'Doherty: On a point of order: I should have thought that a word of that nature, which is clearly offensive to me, to the honourable member for Cronulla and the honourable member for Lismore, and I am sure to you, Mr Speaker, should be ruled out of order and that the honourable member for Drummoyne should be brought into line.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Whether a word used in debate is unparliamentary depends very much on the context of the debate in which it is used. In this case the honourable member for Drummoyne is quoting something that appeared in a recent edition of the *Good Weekend* magazine, and as a quotation and in that context it is perfectly acceptable.

Mr J. H. MURRAY: The Premier of New South Wales is not interested in education, and the end result of that is underfunding of education by the Government. The honourable member for Lismore gave us a litany of his teaching stints in New South Wales schools. He may be a great educationalist, but he proved today that he knows nothing about economics. This education debate is about funding and staff numbers. The honourable member for Lismore says there is no correlation between funding and staff numbers. There is a major correlation. It has nothing to do with gross amounts of money spent. It is all to do with per capita money spent. That is the key to this debate and he conveniently forgot to underline that matter.

On a per capita basis, New South Wales has the worst funded schools in Australia. More than 42 per cent of schools have class sizes above the agreed maximum of 30 students. The source for those funding figures is the New South Wales Budget

Page 820

Papers. Spending per pupil per capita in public schools in New South Wales has declined. It has not increased, as the Government would want us to believe. Since this Premier took over the job it has declined by

about \$200 in real terms, according to the authoritative documents from the Treasury. New South Wales now spends less per pupil than any other State. It ranks eighteenth of twenty Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. In terms of the gross State product of school education, New South Wales is 18 per cent below the average of other schools.

In the past month I have had an opportunity to visit every school in my electorate. I do this every year. I find the morale of the teaching staff in every primary school and the one high school in the Drummoyne electorate is at rock bottom. It is so low because of two factors. The first is the number of staff taken from those schools. Those teachers, in their first year out, are being forced to teach composite classes. In my electorate 48 per cent of schools have composite classes. Many of those classes are being taught by first year out teachers. It is just not good enough. Teachers have taught under a system where they did not have that high a proportion of composite classes. They have taught in high schools that normally had 80 teachers; now they have 68. Those teachers know the difference between what is required in a high school and what this Government is giving them. That is why it is important that this motion be brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition. We must have a decent education system in this State, because the society in New South Wales is based on a well educated group of people.

Mr CARR (Maroubra - Leader of the Opposition) [3.59], in reply: It is no wonder people are saying that education is hurting the Government. It is no wonder that the Premier's press secretary has been scuttling around, tracking down the Minister's press secretary to say, "You are going to have to improve your act. You are going to have to improve your performance". This State is handicapped by chronic underfunding of education. It is no good this lame Minister saying, "We spent \$X billion; we spent \$Y billion". Comparisons need to be made. If honourable members examined spending per student, they would see that spending per student in public schools in New South Wales has declined by approximately \$200 in real terms. It has decreased by \$200 per student since this Premier came to office.

Mr O'Doherty: Is that another Labor lie, Bob?

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

Mr CARR: It comes from an interesting source - the New South Wales Budget Papers. Do honourable members opposite suggest that the Opposition has fabricated the Budget Papers?

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

Mr CARR: That information was extracted from the Budget Papers. The Government should get that clear and do something about it. New South Wales spends less per student on public schooling than does any other State.

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

Mr CARR: The Government can say that is a Labor lie but it is contained in the 1993 report of the Australian Education Council on which the Government is represented. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has ranked New South Wales eighteenth out of 20 in respect of per capita spending.

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

Mr CARR: What is the result of that underfunding? It is contained in the school survey released by the Opposition; it is in that story, the 40 per cent increase in composite classes since the coalition Government came to office. It is no wonder the Government sent a direction to school principals saying, "Do not respond to the Opposition's survey"; it is no wonder it threatened staff with the sack if they responded to the Opposition's survey. The Government says there is nothing wrong with composites. What a position to be in, when the New South Wales Premier sails in, oblivious to the guidelines of his own education department. Here are the

guidelines of the department and they say that composite classes should not exceed 25. There should be no more than 25 students in a composite class.

Opposition members have quoted numerous examples of composite classes well above 25. The guidelines say that it is difficult when a teacher is given a composite involving kindergarten children. They are the guidelines from the Government's education department and the Opposition has today listed numerous examples of composite classes that breach those guidelines. The Government should not attempt to defuse this by entering into a generalised argument about composites, good or bad. The fact is that they are educationally inappropriate as they are being applied.

The Premier has less interest in education than does the Premier of any other Australian State; he has less interest in education than has any Premier in New South Wales history. For goodness' sake, even under the Askin Government there was a perfunctory interest in education. Askin at least could find the energy to create an education commission, to talk to teachers, and to say the appropriate things about the equality of education. The Premier has no such interest. His only response to Opposition questioning today was to say, "Come to my electorate and I will show you composite classes". There was no defence of them; no argument as to where they are or are not appropriate; no argument about whether they should involve kindergarten kids; no argument -

Mr West: On a point of order: it is clear that in his reply the Leader of the Opposition is addressing matters that were dealt with during question time and which are not matters raised during the course of debate on the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to reply to only those matters raised during the course of the debate this afternoon.

Mr CARR: Thank you for your prudent and wise counsel, Mr Speaker. The whole theme of this debate is the missed opportunities for children in the
Page 821

school system as a result of the Premier's inertia and lack of commitment. For children it means missed opportunities; learning difficulties not identified; disappointing results in basic schools testing; and literacy and numeracy not tackled in the early years of schooling, when they ought to be tackled. They are paying the price for the Premier's lack of interest and for the Government's underfunding. [*Time expired.*]

Question - That the motion be agreed to - put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 49

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

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

Noes, 47

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

Pair

Mr Ziolkowski	Mr Fahey
---------------	----------

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS IN REPLY

Seventh Day's Debate

Debate resumed from 15 March.

Mr BOWMAN (Swansea) [4.14]: I want to canvass one or two matters in my contribution to the

Address-in-Reply debate. The first, and perhaps the most significant for the future operation of this Parliament, is how to manage the way that the Governor's Speech, which outlines the Government's program for the coming session, is delivered. I make it clear that I do not want to denigrate the role played by the Governor or to minimise its importance. However, I want to outline what I regard as a more valuable role for the Governor in this process. It strikes me that to require the Governor to read out a written script prepared for him by the Government like a schoolboy or schoolgirl diminishes his dignity. That is most unfortunate. I am perfectly well aware that what happened most recently has been happening for some time and has been the practice of many governments. I am not suggesting that this Government is at fault in the way it manages this process, but I suggest it is time for all members to have a sincere look at what happens and to consider whether the process is any longer appropriate.

If the Governor were to preside over the ceremony and be given an opportunity to say whatever he deemed appropriate, the role he plays would be far more effectively recognised than at present with His Excellency merely relaying other people's words to the assembled throng. I believe that sight is no longer of interest to many people. It is a dead routine that has ceased to move or interest people; and, frankly, it is only the parade of policemen on their horses and a little bit of music that interests the public. There should be significant interest in what the Government has to say about its program. It would be far more appropriate for the Premier to make a speech following an introductory speech by the Governor on a matter of his choosing. The debate could then ensue in a more realistic context.

Frequently people believe the myth that the Governor's words are really his own, that they are somehow sacrosanct, and that it is not sporting to comment adversely upon the propositions put by the Governor. It seems to me that this is a useless hangover from the days when Australia was a monarchy in which the monarch was the chief executive. It is the sort of hangover that causes people to feel increasingly bored with the whole process and to lose interest in the operations of Parliament when they should be taking a more active interest in the opinions of all members. People are often said to be appalled by some of the behaviour

Page 822

that occurs in Parliament. I think there is some truth in that. However, far more often people are frightfully bored by what happens.

Instead of there being an emphasis on what options and proposals might be put forward by the Government and what criticisms and counterproposals might be put forward by the Opposition, there is excessive attention to ceremony. Frankly, the ceremony would not be shown on television screens because of people's interest in it but simply because of a feeling of respect. In so far as that respect is for the institution of Parliament, for His Excellency the Governor and his wife - and, I suppose, for all community operations - I can understand television channels and newspapers giving time and space for coverage of the matter. People are really not interested; most of them are bored rigid. It is time members honestly addressed this matter and asked themselves whether there might not be a more appropriate way of opening this Parliament - either in the way I have suggested or in some other way.

I suggested - I think in my last budget speech, or it may have been my last address-in-reply speech - that there did not seem to be any very good reason for the Parliament to be always opened in the Legislative Council, which is still inappropriately called the upper House. The upper House! It seems to me that it is quite anachronistic to refer to the Legislative Council as the upper House, as it is frequently referred to. It is inappropriate, surely, that members of the Legislative Council should be called the honourable X, Y, Z or whatever. I have no objection to Ministers, judges or other appropriate persons being called the honourable so-and-so, because they play a very special role. It also serves as a reminder to them that they are expected to be not only competent and assiduous in the discharge of their duties, but also - and absolutely primarily - to be honourable; to honour their oaths of office; and to honour the people whom they serve.

Would any sensible person really think that members of the Legislative Council - however hard working, conscientious, intelligent and reasonable they are - have some role that is especially important and different by comparison with a member of the Legislative Assembly to justify their being referred to as the Hon. Mary Smith or the Hon. Joe Blow. Once again, it is a pointless hangover from the past. I have suggested to various

councillors - I have not always been applauded for the suggestion - that their standing in the community or recognition and acceptance would be greater if they were to jettison the prefix "honourable". Is there any reason whatsoever that people from this House should always troop over to another place for the opening of Parliament. Perhaps there is, but I have never heard anyone suggest a reason, except to say that it has always been so.

There was a time when it could be said that slavery could have received the same kind of justification. Slavery had existed for centuries. It could also have been said that at the beginning of this century women had not voted in Great Britain and most other countries, and why should they vote? Neither slavery nor the prevention of women from voting is a proposition that any one would try to defend. Not even the most reactionary person on the Government benches would dare to defend either of those practices or those attitudes for a moment. The fact that something has been done previously is no guarantee that it ought to continue to be done. A vibrant society's idea of satisfactory functioning should be that those things that no longer seem appropriate to be done ought to be revamped. We ought to reconsider the whole process of the opening of Parliament.

I suggest that a number of changes could be made to emphasise that the Legislative Council is not an upper House and special importance should not be placed on its operations or any kind of ceremonial respect accorded to it. It is a charade to think that the role of His Excellency the Governor - very valuable though his role is - is one of delegating authority to a person called the Premier to map out a program of legislative change and administrative action. I suggest to all members that we seriously ask ourselves these questions that have often been considered unaskable: why are things done as they are done and how might they be changed for the better? If we did that, people outside these walls might be more readily engaged in what happens, might find the whole process more meaningful, more credible, and perhaps New South Wales might be governed a little better?

I have mentioned some of these matters to people who take an interest in public affairs and I have not found them affronted by such suggestions. Most people say, "Well, t'was ever so. It has always been done in this way. Perhaps it ought not be, but I do not think any change is possible". I challenge the Government in particular, but not it alone, to give some consideration to the way that parliamentary sessions are opened. I am not suggesting that they should be dull, that the magnificent horses be taken away or that they not be considered matters for celebration. It should very properly come to the notice of people in this, on the whole, very fortunate State that Parliament has again resumed and that they will see matters canvassed with great freedom and in such a way as to give them a greater opportunity to know what is occurring and to consider the alternatives.

Too often parliamentary sessions have been looked upon by the Government as a regrettable necessity. I found it embarrassing to be asked by people around the electorate, "When is Parliament resuming?", or "When is Parliament going to resume?" Some people were thinking that it might be 1 April rather than 1 March. It has become painfully apparent that the Government does not want Ministers to answer questions; does not want Ministers forced, as the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment and Minister for the Status of Women was forced today, to answer charges that are undeniably true. The Government does not want the Premier to be asked questions about education in such a way as to surprise him - although he should not have

Page 823

been surprised - into having to acknowledge by his body language and his faltering words that he does not give a damn about education, that he is not interested in education, that education is a terribly boring thing and that he would rather go and watch the football or the cars at Eastern Creek. I certainly do not denigrate for a moment those who watch the football or go to Eastern Creek, or play tennis, golf or marbles.

It is an extraordinary state of affairs that the New South Wales Parliament meets so few days, and that when the Government is forced, by the pressure of events, to bring everyone back here, Ministers are clearly unwilling to say anything; they do not want to discuss things, just hope to get through it so that they can scuttle back to their ministerial offices and ride around in their cars. They want to avoid the close scrutiny and discussion that very properly and necessarily takes place. The number of days that Parliament meets in New South Wales is a fraction of the number that many parliaments in the world meet. That is disgraceful. It is a

large part of the reason this Parliament is not held in the respect it ought to be.

If any member opposite says, "Well, there are Labor Governments that do not have Parliament meet on enough days", I will not disagree that does happen; but that does not relieve this Government of its responsibility on this occasion and in this year to give the people of New South Wales - not just the Opposition - an opportunity to see that all matters that ought to be canvassed are discussed in sufficient depth. If more serious and sensible discussion took place there might be greater understanding in the community of how the Parliament and, in particular, the Government handle difficult problems. It may be that the media would then give Parliament more than a superficial coverage.

I say these things very sincerely. I believe that a great many members of this House - perhaps all of them - in their heart of hearts think that it is time there were some changes. But there is such an inhibition about change to procedures in this place that many people tend to throw up their hands. That is most unfortunate. Parliaments throughout Australia are calling upon managers to manage better, and upon workers to work better. Most of the procedures that have been established in order to encourage or even force people to manage better, or to work more efficiently so that this country can compete economically and become a clever country, have been accepted with very good grace.

The lives of many people have been seriously disrupted by the tremendous rate of structural change in our community. Right across the spectrum people have been called upon to make adjustments and readjustments at a more rapid rate than at any other time in my life, with the exception of the period during World War II. I believe that most of that change has been necessary. Unfortunately, most of the pain people have had to suffer has been necessary, at least in the short run. It seems hypocritical for Parliament not to look at its own procedures and its own way of operating and consider restructuring itself. It is absolute humbug if parliaments say that the community must change, even though that involves short-term pain, so that the result will be a more efficient means of producing goods and services in our community, with this country becoming more internationally competitive, et cetera.

I conclude with some questions directed not just at the Government: is this Parliament internationally competitive so far as its procedures are concerned, the number of days it meets, and the real opportunities it gives backbenchers to have their say? Has the Government anything to be proud of? Has it advanced things in any respect beyond the situation that prevailed in 1988? The number of parliamentary sitting days seem to be fewer. As the election approaches the Government seems to fear parliamentary sitting days even more. I believe the Government will lose respect further with people unless it shows more boldness and more genuineness in operating the Parliament so that issues can be rationally and comprehensively discussed. [*Time expired.*]

Ms MACHIN (Port Macquarie - Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Roads, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport) [4.34]: I welcome this opportunity to participate in the Address-in-Reply debate. Unlike the honourable member for Swansea, who has just left the Chamber, I commend the Governor on behalf of his Government for setting out such a comprehensive program and showing the people in a very transparent way what we intend to do over the next year. I am intrigued at the approach of the honourable member for Swansea. He spent 15 minutes telling us that we do not spend enough time in Parliament and that we should sit more often, but in all of that time he did not touch on one issue which he feels is so important that we ought to sit more days so he can debate it. I should have thought that if he felt so strongly about the matter, he might use some time in this wide-ranging debate to canvass the issues he feels we are missing out on.

I hold the view that Parliament should be open and accountable, but equally I do not believe the taxpayers want us sitting here for the sake of it just so that we can say that we sat more days this year than we did last year. Parliament should sit to do business and to pass good legislation. Otherwise, members should be out in their electorates looking after the people. That is where I would rather be. Given the experience of question time in the last three weeks, I would have thought that most of the Labor Party would prefer not to be here too. Members opposite must be feeling pretty bruised after the hammering they received in the House over the last

few days. It is showing! The bruises are becoming obvious; Opposition members are looking a little bit shaky. I do not know why the honourable member for Swansea is so keen to be back here, because I am sure a lot of his colleagues would not share that view.

Page 824

I would like to touch on some of the things raised by the Governor in the context of my electorate before I discuss some of the issues that we are looking at in my portfolio. My electorate is my prime responsibility, as I think it is for everybody in this House. Whilst I feel very privileged to be a Minister, at all times I am conscious of the need to look after those electorate issues as my first responsibility. There are a number of things the Governor touched on in his Speech that are of particular interest to my electorate and to many members of the Government, such as our primary industries and our forest industries - the subject of much debate over the Christmas break. Though I was not involved in some of the discussions about wilderness areas, because that does not pertain to my electorate, the issues I want to refer to are similar issues - responsible forest use and resource security.

These matters have long been on the agenda of the timber industry, which plays a major part in the economy of my electorate. Of course, it is an important industry on the North Coast and throughout New South Wales. It is the single largest decentralised industry in New South Wales. The timber industry offers a great opportunity so far as import replacement is concerned, so long as there is balance in the arguments and so long as the Government puts in place appropriate resource security legislation. I hope that Opposition members who recognise the importance of this industry and the jobs of the workers involved will support that legislation when it is introduced. One of the backbones of country life is roads and road funding. The Government has a very proud track record on road funding. In its first term in office it put in place the 3 x 3 levy, and that has since been extended.

The 3 x 3 scheme has provided funding for a huge amount of new road building work around New South Wales, as clearly reflected in the work undertaken in the Port Macquarie electorate. I refer to major improvements on the Pacific Highway that I am sure do not go unnoticed as travellers drive from Sydney through to Queensland. The addition of two sections of tollway, as the motorway commences, will enhance that work. Currently environmental impact statements are under way on two sections of the proposed motorway, one in the electorate of my colleague the honourable member for Myall Lakes and the other in the electorate of the honourable member for Murwillumbah, in what will be the Chinderah bypass. Much of the pre-planning has already been done in connection with those roadworks. The two sections of tollway will first link into the upgraded Pacific Highway. Work will continue on that at a cost of something like \$100 million per annum, as it has done now for several years. Those roadworks will also tie into any future tollway proposals and developments as they come on line. I hope that project proceeds in its entirety.

I believe a tollway is a reasonable proposal - it is cost effective, efficient, and cheaper for the travelling public, based on the proposed prices, and a tollway obviously provides better driving conditions. This is a major project. The cost of the total project will be close to \$6 billion for that road from Newcastle to just over the Queensland border. The Government has opted to test the market by completing two stages now, with a view to completing the other five stages or so that will make up the total motorway in the not too distant future. Much roadwork is being undertaken by local government areas in all electorates, and again my local government area is no exception. Councils are being given specific and non-specific 3 x 3 funding grants to undertake work in their own right and at their discretion around their municipalities. That has helped the work that councils undertake, and that is appreciated by the ratepayers and the taxpayers.

School education and further education and training featured significantly in the Governor's Speech. Both are of vital importance to the Port Macquarie electorate. I was heartened to receive advice from the Minister for Education a couple of weeks ago that she has approved funding to go ahead with the planning of a new Tacking Point primary school, which is desperately needed. The existing primary school, Hastings Public School, is very overcrowded. It is a lovely school with very high standards. I guess its popularity has been the rod it has had to bear in a sense because everyone wants to go there. There is a lot of demand. There are many

demountables and a large corridor has been converted to make a classroom work space. The overall effect has been to reduce playing space for the children and overcrowd the school to the extent that the staff and students are experiencing difficulties. I hope work on the new school will proceed. I will be leaning on the Minister to ensure that funding is provided so that students will be able to attend the new school in 1996 or 1997.

The Minister also advised of funding for the planning of a new Camden Haven high school. Many people in the community have been involved in considering the options for the existing school, the new school and a joint venture with the local community for the provision of a gymnasium. This will provide a community facility in the Laurieton area which can be used at all hours, not just school hours. That is a sensible approach. I have long been a fan of using such public infrastructure more than we do. The community has indicated its willingness to back such a project by offering to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars if the State Government will participate by committing \$600,000. Once the timetable for the school is worked out the gymnasium will be able to proceed before the school, which I expect to be within the next couple of years.

Other exciting developments in TAFE and university opportunities include stage three of the TAFE college, which is achieving a fine record in a number of its facilities. Its hospitality and tourism schools are earning a fine reputation and people are coming from well outside the district to undertake TAFE studies at Port Macquarie. Having seen the number of the students and graduates in operation at restaurants and tourist facilities around Port

Page 825

Macquarie, I can only commend them for their achievements and the TAFE college on the standard of students it is turning out. Last year legislation was passed for the establishment of Southern Cross University. It will encompass the open learning access centre in Port Macquarie. There has recently been an offer from a private consortium to provide facilities to be leased by a university should it decide to establish a campus.

The ball is now fairly and squarely in the Federal Government's court. If it is fair dinkum about targeting growth areas and providing opportunities equitably throughout the country, it should look very seriously at the proposals coming out of Port Macquarie. It is geographically sensible to establish a campus at Port Macquarie and that would tie in very well with the approach being taken by the new Southern Cross University. I join with my Federal colleague from the area to push the Federal Government to recognise the achievements to date in Port Macquarie in higher education. I urge the Federal Government to provide money quickly so that we can get serious about establishing a campus at Port Macquarie.

The new Port Macquarie hospital has been much talked about in this Parliament for some years but there are many health pressures throughout my electorate. Port Macquarie is not the only major centre, nor the area of growth. Whilst I do not now have the Manning Base Hospital in my electorate, it services part of my electorate and the population growth areas cause similar pressures to those in Port Macquarie. So we should not overlook other high growth areas of the State such as western Sydney and the North Coast. They certainly need their fair share. The new Port Macquarie hospital should be open by Christmas. Currently a maximum of 7,500 people can be treated at the old hospital. The new hospital will be able to cater immediately for 9,000 people. That is a big increase in capacity that is desperately needed.

The community cannot wait in the vain hope of public funding. We know how long it takes to fund public projects at the best of times, and we have just been through almost the worst of times in the recession of the past few years. Having weighed up the arguments, we felt that the community did not deserve to be kept waiting any longer. People will be able to enjoy the facilities of their new hospital in about January next year free of charge. They will be able to go in and out as they would in any ordinary public hospital in New South Wales. In the reasonably short time I have left to speak I would like to touch on a number of aspects of my portfolio. I was very happy to join the Cabinet last year. I am increasingly delighted at having the consumer affairs portfolio as well as assisting in the roads and transport portfolios.

In consumer affairs the Government will continue a range of important activities, with concentration on providing a fair trading environment. I think it is right to take a wide approach through a variety of education initiatives for both traders and consumers; through policing, if you like, poor behaviour; effecting sanctions

where appropriate; and promotion of positives and access to information available through our network of department offices around the State. A number of the projects that have been worked on in the past few years are significant and I will deal with comments made by the Opposition. However, it is pertinent to put on record the types of issues that are being dealt with in consumer affairs. Credit law reform is a major issue for all of Australia. We live in an increasingly national - and international - market. It has become a nonsense not to have uniform credit laws throughout Australia for consumers and industry.

New South Wales led the way in bringing to fruition new uniform credit laws. I pay tribute to my predecessor, the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment and Minister for the Status of Women. She seized hold of the issue in her time as consumer affairs Minister and helped to broker an agreement amongst all States to get the legislation into place. It is expected that a bill providing for this will be introduced soon into the Queensland Parliament. Following that, template legislation will be introduced in this Parliament and other State parliaments. The laws will ensure that all loan requirements are printed in plain English so that customers have a good idea of what to expect. Credit providers will have to ensure that prospective borrowers can afford to repay their loans before they are allocated.

The whole issue of affordability and credit worthiness is emerging as a new area of law. We saw this in the HomeFund debate. The position of people must be assessed before they enter into a loan agreement. Lending institutions will have to provide guarantors with full details of the borrower's financial commitments. The overriding principle of the legislation is truth in lending so that both parties know what to expect upfront and they feel that they are equal partners to the deal. There has been tremendous liaison with industry and consumer groups throughout Australia but particularly in New South Wales and Victoria. I commend the officers of consumer affairs in those two States as well as a number of industry groups - the banking industry and all the finance industry groups that have been represented in our working parties - and the consumer movement for a very responsible approach. New South Wales has been leading the way, driving the process.

I believe the Government's success in consumer affairs really gets up the nose of the Australian Labor Party and that is why Labor members try to make cheap cracks about what consumer affairs really is. The Labor Government failed to deliver. The process has not happened in the past couple of years; it has taken seven years to get uniform credit laws in place. It was this Government that did it, not previous Australian Labor Party governments. Last December the Building Services Corporation was transferred to my ministerial control. I aim to have a number of legislative proposals before Parliament in this session

Page 826

to cover a number of reforms recommended by the Building Services Corporation to deal with a number of reforms recommended by recent inquiries into the Building Services Corporation. They follow extensive reviews of its activities. I guess that they themselves came out of the Gyles royal commission into the building industry, which I think is changing the face of the industry in New South Wales.

The charter of the Building Services Corporation is to represent consumers. But there has been a degree of disappointment, to put it mildly, among consumers that it has not been seen to do that. It has been seen to be partial and too much the captive of the industry. Obviously the industry takes a different view to that, and is entitled to do so. A number of good changes are on the drawing-board, some of which are already happening, such as the move of the BSC to the Department of Consumer Affairs, which sends a clear message about where it should be positioned; a new Chairman was appointed last year; there is a new general manager; and we have launched a new plain English building contract, which has been widely advertised, well received and is simple to understand.

The BSC provided assistance following the bushfires by way of a 008 telephone number to help people gain access to quick advice on how to go about rebuilding, how to contact licensed tradesmen and builders in their areas; and it has waived insurance premiums for fire victims who have to rebuild their homes. Activities planned for the future include improved dispute resolution by removing some of the inherent conflicts of interest that are currently associated with the BSC's one-stop shop philosophy; the resolution of longstanding disputes over the BSC's insurance, some of which go back many years and have caused many consumers considerable anguish; restructuring of the BSC to clarify the powers of the general manager in regard to the board; a launch

of a consumer strategy; a revamp of the inspectorial services; and many other things that can be done without legislative change but which will make it a more responsive organisation that includes much more proactive education for consumers. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I mentioned education earlier in regard to the BSC and consumer affairs. Yesterday the Government launched an educational package for students to teach them about being better consumers. As I have travelled around the State to the electorates of colleagues and generally, I have been keen to encourage traders in particular to attend seminars on fair trading and complaints handling to help them understand their rights and obligations so that they can better service their customers. At the end of the day we have reduced disputes and complaints that have come into my department. Another interesting topic, which has been so since that terrific day late last year, is the Olympic Games. From now until the Games, and indeed after, given the impact they will generate on Sydney, it is important that we protect the trading and service reputation of Sydney and Australia by preventing unfair practices; mechanisms should be put in place to ensure we head them off and make all of those trade and service industries that may be involved in the Olympics well aware of their obligations - what is on and what is not on.

The Olympic Games is a great opportunity for business to demonstrate its ability to produce quality products and deliver high standards of service, whether that be transport, tourism or whatever. This year my department will develop a strategic plan to identify fair trading issues as they might pertain to the Olympic Games, working with other government departments in addressing issues such as the registration of Olympic-type business names, with which we were flooded within a couple of days of Sydney winning the Games bid. We have been working closely with the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games to ensure that fair is fair and visitors do not fall prey to fly-by-night sharks who might want to set up business to take advantage of the Games.

In referring to some of the things the Department of Consumer Affairs is undertaking - I stress it is only a snapshot of many of the important issues to be addressed - I would like to comment on the motor trade industry, particularly in relation to the discussion paper that I hope to release in the next couple of months that looks into all aspects of the retail, resale, repair and maintenance of all motor vehicles. The paper has been prepared and redrafted after a few final alterations. With the concurrence of Cabinet I hope to circulate that review paper to the industry before too long. The motor vehicle industry is a major industry and it is important that we review the laws, which have not been looked at since the mid-1970s, for the sake of the industry, the customers and the market-place to ensure that they are relevant, the degree of regulation is appropriate and any new initiatives that may now be required because of changes in the market-place are comprehensively examined and, if agreed and appropriate, are put into place.

The Department of Consumer Affairs plays a major role in New South Wales activities and government. It has a strong policy focus and has made significant contributions and submissions on things such as electricity pricing, sale of the gas pipeline, the competition policy put together by Professor Hilmer and so on. Of course, HomeFund has been a big issue for my department and my staff has spent a lot of time on it. The rather catty remarks of certain members of the Opposition, particularly those of the shadow spokesman, in regard to the department have not been well received. I am sure they will be long remembered because they are particularly unfair.

It is interesting to consider the comments of the Leader of the Opposition about the Department of Consumer Affairs. He basically called it a gimmick department, which is an absolutely appalling reflection on the people who work within it. They are highly qualified and highly professional people. It is a small department and has a major impact given its relative

Page 827

size to some of its counterparts or bigger brothers in Government. The honourable member for Heffron was pretty quick to be seen by the public whenever something broke, she found a scam, or Mickey Mouse had polystyrene balls inside him that were too small and would be a danger to children. She was pretty quick to get in front of a television camera with a toy or whatever product it might be.

I only assume the Australian Labor Party now views that work as irrelevant and will step back from product safety. Pool skimmer boxes that are a danger to kids will now stay on the market because the Opposition does not put any importance on product safety. Children have been disembowelled by these products because they were not adequately assessed and were not safe, but the ALP does not believe that is all that important. Nor can I presume that the ALP considers lead paint on toys, cots or children's products is important because it too is gimmickry and should be downgraded. The ALP believes cot restraints, baby products, and high chairs should not be looked at because they also are gimmicks - kids should be spewing out of all sorts of appliances because they are gimmickry!

Opposition members should talk to the child safety people at some of our children's hospitals to learn of the injury statistics; they might think again about calling product safety work gimmickry. Opposition members spoke about consumer protection and access to bodies such as the Consumer Claims Tribunal. Again it shows how out of date and out of touch they are. This topic may be debated tomorrow, so I will not pre-empt the debate, but suffice it to say that the Consumer Claims Tribunal is still the cheapest access to justice. Its jurisdictional limit was recently increased from \$6,000 to \$10,000. Usage of the tribunals is increasing, probably much to the dismay of the Labor Party because that blows its private member's bill out of the water. The jurisdictional limit of the Building Disputes Tribunal has increased in the last week or so from \$10,000 to \$25,000 to enable people to make more significant claims to that body.

The general philosophy of the Leader of the Opposition seems to be intervention control of the market-place. It is totally out of step with the Opposition's counterparts in other States when they were in office, and not many of them are left now. The Queensland Government is working well at ministerial council level. Labor suggests things such as price fixing; it wants to go back and talk about eggs and bread and things like that because it is popular. Unless one happens to be talking to the local corner shop, I guess the owner would not like to think that the local member was going to tell him how much he can charge for his eggs and his bread. Some Opposition members look surprised, but the shadow spokesman is on record as saying that the Government should be conducting price inquiries into things like eggs and bread.

I should remind members opposite that it was the Labor Government that deregulated prices of bread and a couple of other commodities. Once again Labor is being totally inconsistent. The focus of consumer affairs in New South Wales is very much on getting the balance right and assessing what is happening in the market-place at any particular time. We do not believe that our activities and policies should be set in concrete because the dynamic market-place is dynamic. Industries such as airline services and transport have changed rapidly in the past four or five years. It is the responsibility of departments like mine and of governments to monitor developments in the economy, changing and fine tuning policies to make them appropriate to the market-place. That is exactly what is being done in consumer affairs. I have much pleasure in heading the consumer affairs portfolio at present. I hope that I will be in a position to do so for some time. I certainly expect to be comfortably in a similar position after 25 March next year. I commend the Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech.

Mr SHEDDEN (Bankstown) [5.0]: I am delighted to have the opportunity to reply to the Speech of the Governor, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair, outlining the Government's program for the fourth session of the Fiftieth Parliament. I am delighted also that, after some unnecessary concern, he has been re-appointed for a further 12 months, which will allow him to continue his work and to continue to meet and mix with the citizens of New South Wales, a job that he does so well.

It is sad that the Governor had to outline such a lacklustre program for a government that lacks vision and a Premier who leads a government without cohesion and discipline. The Governor mentioned in the outline of his Speech the marvellous community spirit demonstrated by the people of New South Wales during the bushfires, and the unbelievable efforts shown by the firefighters, emergency services personnel and volunteers, not only from New South Wales but also from other States. That effort will never be forgotten. Their supreme efforts are sincerely appreciated by all members of this Parliament. At present, health is a critical issue in this State. I quote from the Governor's reference to health on page 17 of his Speech where he said:

My Government is committed to building on the significant gains that have been achieved in delivering a high quality customer focused health service to the people of New South Wales.

He went on to say:

The continuation of the State's commitment to hospital construction will ensure that resources are placed close to where the people live.

Southwestern and western Sydney certainly will not have the resources placed close to where the people live, because over the past four years this Government has closed or is about to close nine hospitals in Sydney, the majority of them being in western and southwestern Sydney. I have put this on record before but I believe it is worth while doing so again. Those hospitals are: Parramatta Hospitals, closed; St Joseph's hospital, Auburn, closed, now a palliative care centre; Lidcombe Hospital, to be closed; Canterbury Hospital, about to be closed; Western

Page 828

Suburbs Hospital at Ashfield, closed; Marrickville District Hospital, closed; Balmain Hospital, now a palliative care centre; "Eversleigh" Home of Peace Hospital at Petersham, closed; and Glebe hospital, closed.

Within a short period of time Lidcombe Hospital will close. Lidcombe Hospital in southwestern Sydney is a 430-bed acute care, modern, technical hospital. When it closes, the southwestern area of Sydney as well as many other areas throughout New South Wales will lose special services. Lidcombe Hospital is the only hospital in southwestern Sydney which provides aged care services, and it is sad that these services will be disbanded and spread through the rest of the metropolitan area. Bankstown Hospital will be upgraded by some 130 beds to a general hospital in the southwestern area. That hospital is supposed to take over the work associated with the closure of Lidcombe hospital because 40 per cent of the people in the Bankstown area attend Lidcombe Hospital.

Bankstown city has a population of 160,000 people, of which 50,000 are over the age of 65. The upgraded Bankstown Hospital will have only 37 aged care beds to service that population, and it will have limited rehabilitation and diagnostic services. Everyone knows that once people over the age of 65 have been hospitalised for more than 30 days they cannot remain there except in extreme circumstances. Stroke victims, people with broken limbs and the like - common afflictions suffered by people over the age of 65 - will be sent home or will be sent direct to nursing homes. That is the kind of health care that the people of southwestern Sydney are going to face.

To further consolidate the problem, actual bulk funding for the \$72 million upgrading of Bankstown Hospital will come from budget cutbacks associated with the running of Lidcombe Hospital during the next few years. If Lidcombe Hospital is to supply the money from its working budget to develop Bankstown Hospital, it will close within two years because it could not possibly operate the services required by the community during that time. Lidcombe Hospital is currently losing professional and technical staff. Those staff are not going to hang around until the hospital finally closes and then try to place themselves elsewhere in the system. It is common knowledge in southwestern Sydney that the hospital will close itself well before 1997 because of that situation. Bankstown hospital will have to carry the burden, but it does not end there.

The Government has closed 26 surgical and medical beds associated with that hospital. A community of 160,000 people will be served by only 280 beds during the period between the closure of Lidcombe Hospital and the upgrading of Bankstown Hospital, somewhere around 1998 or the turn of the century. It is quite clear to me what will happen between the time that Lidcombe Hospital closes and Bankstown Hospital is refurbished by the turn of the century. Patients will be sent from Bankstown to Concord. My constituents will have to take three different modes of transport to get to Concord Hospital. That is the situation faced by people in southwestern Sydney regarding health services between now and the turn of the century, and no doubt further. That is a sad situation - another act of a so-called caring government.

The Governor mentioned on page 2 of his Speech that, "New South Wales continues to lead the nation in

its approach to the needs of older people". This is not the case so far as this Government or the Department of Community Services are concerned. This Government has consistently cut services to the aged over the past four years, with particular emphasis on home care services and its home cleaning service. Many thousands of aged people in Sydney and elsewhere in New South Wales are no longer eligible for the services provided by that organisation because of government cutbacks. This Government continues to blame the Federal Government over its share of home and community care funding, but there continues to be adequate growth in the HACC funding allocations.

Honourable members should look at why Home Care Service was first established. It was established to provide to the aged a service in their homes, for those unable to perform heavy housework. Such assistance enables the aged to remain in their homes longer, therefore avoiding the necessity for them to be placed in hospitals or in nursing homes. Until 12 months ago 1,200 aged people in the electorate of Bankstown received assistance from Home Care Services. Approximately 200 of those people have now had their assistance cancelled. Many sad stories can be told regarding the aged and frail people whose services have been cancelled. Many are now in nursing homes - and this from a Government that continually states that it governs with compassion. What a joke!

The Minister for Transport has a paranoia about announcing new transport projects - some 16 since 1988. One in particular, the airport rail link, has been announced 13 times. Those projects have never been commenced and are never likely to be commenced. Instead of the Minister getting carried away with rhetoric, he should be more concerned with improving the CityRail network service and the on-time running of the trains. Some 12 months ago the Minister told Parliament that CityRail commuter patronage had decreased by 6 per cent because of the recession. The recession may be responsible in some small measure but the decrease is principally because the CityRail commuter service is unreliable. The electorate of Bankstown is serviced by the Bankstown and Chester Hill lines. Trains that are running behind schedule are given what are called transposition slips that emanate from the central control office, Sydney, indicating to station masters at relevant railway stations that those trains are permitted to skip stations.

Commuters may be waiting at a station for a train due, say, at 8.10 a.m. If the train does not stop at that station, commuters are obliged to wait from 20 minutes to half an hour for the next train.

Page 829

Honourable members can imagine how commuters might feel when waiting for a train only to see the service they normally catch roar straight through the station without stopping. Does the Government believe commuters will tolerate that situation for very long? Of course they will not; they will find other modes of transport to travel to work. The rail service is far from efficient. To add to the inconvenience, passengers on the trains in question would not be aware that the train may bypass the station at which they want to alight. Those passengers are carried on to other stations where they must alight and catch another train back to their original destination.

Things are certainly not good for CityRail. That is why people are not using the CityRail service. Honourable members need only talk to commuters or CityRail staff to understand the despair and frustration of CityRail employees and commuters in general. Honourable members who listen to radio reports each morning will hear that all trains arriving at Central Station are running on time. For some fascinating reason, all trains arrive on time. Listeners to Alan Jones' morning radio program may hear him say from time to time, "My God, that Bruce Baird has CityRail running well. The trains are never late". I have issued an invitation to the Minister to travel by train with me from Chester Hill or Bankstown to see whether we arrive at Central railway station on time. It is common knowledge among commuters and CityRail staff that any train that arrives at Central station within 10 minutes of its scheduled arrival time is classed as running on time.

The maintenance of law and order is of great concern to all citizens of New South Wales. No more do people feel confident about their personal safety and security, whether it be in the streets or in their own homes. It has become a sad situation when teenage hooligans, including juveniles, with no respect for law and order and total contempt for the Police Service, basically take over our city and suburban centres at night. Members of the community are horrified to think that that type of behaviour is allowed to occur.

When the coalition came to office in 1988 former Premier Nick Greiner gave a commitment to the people of New South Wales that he would abolish street prostitution. At that time street prostitution was out of control in many areas of East Sydney and on Canterbury Road, in the area encompassing the suburbs of Canterbury and Belmore. After six years of a Liberal-National Government we are still waiting for action to be taken. In the meantime street prostitution has spread to areas on the Great Western Highway, and along Canterbury Road to Bankstown. I am informed that if prostitutes carry on their trade in industrial areas that are not in sight of residential living or a church, the police are powerless to take action. When will the Government take the necessary action to overcome community concern? The Government lacks commitment.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GREENTREES KINDERGARTEN

Mr HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [5.15]: It is with extreme concern that this afternoon I apprise the House of an unfortunate set of circumstances that have arisen in the electorate of Wakehurst. Approximately 18 months ago I was approached by Gail Rowe, the owner of Greentrees Kindergarten in McIntosh Road, Narraweena. At that time I became aware that there was a problem with the lease on the Greentrees Kindergarten premises and that Ms Rowe was seeking alternative premises - hopefully in one of the local schools, but somewhere - in order to provide ongoing continuity for her kindergarten. Approximately 100 children attend the kindergarten, and therefore some 200 parents, all constituents of mine, are involved. Ms Rowe was concerned because she wanted to short circuit or accelerate the tendering process that she had been told she would have to go through to try to obtain premises at Narraweena school.

I investigated this matter and advised her that, regrettably, even though some schools had established in them long day care centres and kindergartens without the need to comply with the tendering process, those centres and kindergartens had been established before the Independent Commission Against Corruption laid down the requirements for public tendering. I had to inform Ms Rowe that she - as did all proprietors of such establishments in New South Wales - would have to follow the normal tendering process. Further, having followed the tendering process, she would be required to apply for premises through one of the local schools, seek the approval of the parents and citizens' group or the school council, and obtain the approval of the Department of Community Services and the local council.

About six weeks ago I was approached by the owner of the freehold of the premises, who advised me that the lease would expire on 21 March and that the owner wanted to resume the premises and had given legal notice to the proprietor of the kindergarten, Gail Rowe. I became very concerned that 100 children of constituents of mine would possibly have no place to go after 21 March. I sent Ms Rowe a letter in which I said that I did not know the legal situation between her and the owner but I said that, regardless of the legal rights or wrongs, all parents who had children at her kindergarten had not been notified of its possible closure.

Either the next day or within the following few days a notice appeared on a whiteboard outside the kindergarten indicating that the kindy may close. My concern is that in the past few days - and particularly the past two weeks - I have been working flat out in an attempt to obtain a satisfactory resolution of this issue. I do not want to see the children of my constituents, small children three years and four years of age, without a place to go. In the middle of all

Page 830

this I was advised - although I had not been told this by the proprietor - that the proprietor was under threat of losing her licence and that as of tomorrow the 28-day period would expire.

I am appalled that I was not told about that aspect. The parents of the children do not appear to have been told that. I am appalled that children have been enrolled this year without their parents being put on notice either as to the licensing question or the question of whether or not the lease will continue. Though I will refrain from saying anything about whether or not the licence should be issued, I raise the question: why did Ms Rowe not tell the parents and put them on notice? In the course of the past 15 minutes I have spoken to the Minister for Community Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for the Ageing, the Hon. Jim Longley, and the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, the Hon. Virginia Chadwick, and I have been advised of all the work that has been undertaken by departmental officers in the past few days.

The good news is that literally 10 minutes ago the Minister for Community Services indicated that he would find \$67,000 to fit out premises at Narraweena school, as hard as that is in the present economic circumstances. Hopefully, a licensed operator will be able to take over the school. The school will have proper insurance, which the children do not have now. That will happen literally within a few days. Even though the kindergarten will close tomorrow because of Department of Community Services and Federal requirements, some hope has been provided by the government departments that have had to intervene in what essentially is a private dispute, insufficient information having been given to the parents.

Ms MACHIN (Port Macquarie - Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Roads, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport) [5.20]: I commend the honourable member for Wakehurst for his diligence as an outstanding local member. He always puts his concerns to the fore in the party room and elsewhere. I sympathise with the parents for what they must have gone through. Soon I may be able to better sympathise with them, because I will be starting to look for kindergartens and other forms of child care. I know how important it is for parents to have continuity and stability of services. I am pleased that the Minister will make some funds available. That is a credit to the logical way the honourable member for Wakehurst has put his case. I hope everything works out. If it does not, it will not be for want of trying on the part of the honourable member for Wakehurst. I am confident that the children will continue to have an outstanding kindergarten. Perhaps one of these days the kindergarten will be called the Hazzard centre.

BOMADERRY COMMUNITY WELFARE FACILITY

Mr HARRISON (Kiama) [5.21]: I wish to bring to the attention of the House my concern about the lack of a community welfare facility in the town of Bomaderry. At present Bomaderry has a population of about 6,500 persons. There is a grave shortage of community facilities and an urgent need for premises to allow for the setting up of a facility similar to the Outreach project presently being established by Shoalhaven Neighbourhood Centre Inc. in East Nowra. The town of Bomaderry is experiencing a rapid population expansion, high unemployment, a low school retention rate and a substantial increase in vandalism of public property. I am aware of a study by the establishment control branch of the New South Wales Police Service that states, inter alia:

Areas of concern are Nowra and Bomaderry industrial areas where large numbers of break, enter and steal offences occur. Assaults and other street offences are of concern, especially on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

The report then describes the incidence of crime as high, with an escalating trend. Members of the Bomaderry community believe these happenings and the general lack of community infrastructure are directly related. They have sought my support for a submission to the Department of Community Services for premises and one full-time staff member to organise such matters as drug and alcohol counselling, family counselling, finance counselling and so on. The great majority of local citizens are hard-working and decent people. A number of them are prepared to act as volunteers and assist in manning a community based operation to give advice and counselling if the Department of Community Services will provide the community premises and a paid co-ordinator.

It is believed that for an outlay of about \$40,000 a year great progress could be made towards providing

young people with a sense of belonging and pride in their local area. It may be that a cottage could be relocated from the Nowra naval base, but if that is not feasible the Department of Housing should be approached to assist by providing an empty cottage. I support fully the citizens of the Bomaderry community who are campaigning for government assistance to address a number of local problems. I could point to a number of interesting statistics so far as Bomaderry is concerned, but I particularly want to read onto the record extracts from a supporting letter from the New South Wales Police Service. In part the letter reads:

As part of our duties Police patrols are carried out as much as possible, however I do not believe that patrols alone are the answer to the problem.

A large proportion of the residents in that area are of low income, if any other than the various pensions, single parent families or involved in a defacto relationship, have no means of transport and no idea of who and where to go for the assistance they need, other than contacting Police when the problem is out of hand.

The letter continues in that general vein. The local citizens who are upset about prevailing conditions in Bomaderry have the support of the local police. The objectives set out by the neighbourhood centre are worthy of support. Statistics in relation to particular regions that are available from the 1991 census undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics

Page 831

demonstrate why favourable consideration should be given to the request for a community welfare facility. The statistics show that 31.9 per cent of the households in Bomaderry have an annual income of \$20,000 or less. That compares with the New South Wales average of 27.9 per cent.

The statistics show also that 13 per cent of the population of Bomaderry consists of one parent families with an income of \$20,000 or less and with one or more dependants. That figure compares with the New South Wales average of 10.5 per cent. The figure for one parent families as a percentage of total families is 22.6 per cent, compared with the New South Wales average of 19.7 per cent. I was interested to hear the comments of the previous speaker, the honourable member for Wakehurst, and to hear that the Minister for Community Services was able, at short notice, to find about \$67,000 to assist young people in the electorate of Wakehurst. I submit that similar and perhaps more pressing problems exist in the town of Bomaderry. I urgently request that the Minister for Community Services give similar consideration to the matter to which I have referred. [*Time expired.*]

GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL

Mr TURNER (Myall Lakes) [5.26]: I wish to draw attention to the need at Gloucester public school for an assembly hall. Gloucester is situated in the hinterlands of my electorate and does not at present have an assembly hall. It has a hall of sorts, which is in fact a shipping container that has been modified to take some of the children and to be used for storage. That obviously does not satisfy the needs of the community and the school. Gloucester is a wonderful, beautiful town, but like any town in the hinterlands the climate is extremely variable. In Gloucester the weather can be extremely hot and extremely cold. The weather can be hot and cold on the same day. It also becomes windy and dusty. The children often have to assemble outside in less than ideal conditions. The school is quite large. It has 453 students and needs an assembly hall.

The assembly hall has a degree of history. On 29 July 1970 the then member for Gloucester, Leon Punch, received a letter from the then Deputy Premier, Charles Cutler, approving the construction of a library, which in those days would have been a forerunner to an assembly hall. Regrettably, that library has not eventuated, although alternative arrangements were made for a demountable building to be used so that the building that was being used as a library could be used for classroom purposes. Since that time five sets of plans have been drawn up for an assembly hall. I understand from the history of events that the first set was drawn up about 22 years ago, so there is a precedent for the construction of an assembly hall. It is probably accurate to say that construction could begin quite quickly as the plans have been in existence for some time and have been modified. The fact that a grant was approved for the construction of a library in 1970 demonstrates a willingness

on the part of government to construct an assembly hall.

It is anticipated that the assembly hall will be used, obviously, for school assemblies and other day-to-day activities associated with students. It will be beneficial in the extremes of climate I have mentioned, and also beneficial for the community. It will be used as a food and general storage area as well as gymnastics. It will certainly relieve the pressure on this school for some considerable time. Gloucester is a proud town. Should the Minister accede to the request for an assembly hall, I have been informed that the community, including the school council, some service bodies and clubs will get behind the project and assist with some of the construction costs. That is a real indication of the spirit of the Gloucester community and the way it works for its own benefit and, in this case, that of the school community and its students.

I hope the Minister will give consideration to the needs of Gloucester. I know there are demands on her for a variety of school improvements. She has done a marvellous job in my electorate in that regard: a new high school has recently opened, a new primary school has recently opened and yet another primary school will soon open. My electorate is receiving support from the Minister. The erection of an assembly hall has a history attached to it. I should like to see the hall constructed, thus providing a benefit to students, staff and the community.

DARLING HARBOUR CASINO

Mr FACE (Charlestown) [5.31]: I should like to bring to the attention of the House a matter of concern to my constituents and, moreover, to the people of New South Wales. I refer to the way in which, to my dissatisfaction, questions upon notice have been answered. I intend no criticism of the Minister for Police; he has to answer the question the way it has been sent to him. However, I remind the House of information I supplied to it as early as 1992 in relation to casino legislation and, more recently, on 9 March 1993 in my speech to the Address-in-Reply debate. This is new information, and it arises because of speeches I made at those times. At the conclusion of my contribution I will ask the Minister for Police - and, more particularly, the Chief Secretary - to initiate action so that I may receive substantive answers to the matters raised and why the person in question is able to continue as he does. I hope the tendering process for the casino has not been compromised. I am very concerned about the process, as are we all, because of the way legislation dealing with the casino passed through this House. First, I turn to the answers given by the Minister for Police about Sergeant Bob Clark in reply to questions upon notice on Tuesday 8 March 1994. The question was:

Has Sergeant Clark communicated in any way, officially or unofficially, with any of the tenderers for the New South Wales casino or their personnel.

Page 832

The Minister's reply, and as I said he can only answer the question the way it was sent to him, was:

I am advised by the Commissioner of Police that Detective Sergeant Clark had advised that he has spoken on one occasion only to a person associated with one of the tenderers for the New South Wales casino, whom he has known as a personal friend for many years. Detective Sergeant Clark further advises that the conversation, to the best of his knowledge, did not involve any matters at all surrounding the New South Wales casino.

I would say to any fair-minded person, it is fanciful that he would not speak to this person when he is out here for that purpose. Obviously, the answer is worded either to mislead or to confuse, but it is certainly not a definitive answer to the question. Who was the friend? I will inform the House, if he will not. I worked in the Police Service and I am aware of the way language can be constructed to mislead. I refer to my speech to the Address-in-Reply debate in 1993 when I talked about the association between Mike Rumbolz and Clark. If Clark, since my speech to that debate, had the temerity to meet with Rumbolz, I can understand his not naming him in the answer. Rumbolz was a former director of the Nevada Gaming Commission and he is now leading counsel for overseas development for one of the tenderers. It would be unbelievable to think that they did not

discuss the casino.

As I said in my speech of 9 March 1993, I listed Rumbolz as one of Clark's closest friends, who denied exports worth \$300 million to the State by locking out an Australian manufacturer. Is this another subtle way of interfering with the process? Has Clark been contacting or speaking to any of the investigative team? I pose these questions, and also whether the Commissioner of Police, Mr Lauer, knows what is happening. I have been raising these matters since 1984. Historically, to remind honourable members of the Darling Harbour fiasco, under the Labor Government three sets of tenders were received for the Darling Harbour casino. Each tender was rejected because of police information, a lot of it untested, and some of it appeared to be factually wrong. However, as the authority was not privy directly to the police information-gathering process, the control division was not in a position to comment that the information was secondhand. Mr Clark's involvement, however, goes back to the original assessment undertaken by the police because of his so-called expertise.

It is interesting that no other person in the Police Department appears to have been anointed to be thoroughly trained in this aspect of gaming. It is a member's right to receive accurate answers to questions and a member should not have to keep rephrasing and rewording question after question. For a police officer to mislead or not answer fully the question asked is a slur on this House. Clark has tried to confuse, having regard to the answers I have received from the commissioner over the years, on the basis that if he does not give enough information it will be difficult to follow the matter through. Let me assure him and the House that I have the intestinal fortitude to pursue these matters; so Clark's idea that confusing the issue will make it all go away is wrong.

I return to the primary question. I am glad that the Chief Secretary is in the Chamber, because I do not want this process, which she has put at arm's length - and quite rightly so - to be compromised. If the person that Clark met was Mike Rumbolz, with whom he has had a long association and who is now senior counsel for a casino tenderer, the Police Department and perhaps the Independent Commission Against Corruption - I do not want to make this into a big issue - and the community should know. What influence does Clark have? In this current tender the police are really excluded from the final decision. It appears as though they give advice only as directed. However, the amount of influence that can be brought to bear is still persuasive. As I have said, his modus operandi in the past has been, "I can't tell you officially about this, but something is wrong. However, we won't put it on paper". That happened in the previous process. I am not suggesting that it has happened now, but one can understand my concern about Clark's association with Rumbolz. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs COHEN (Badgerys Creek - Chief Secretary, and Minister for Administrative Services) [5.36]: I have not heard all of the honourable member's questions because, unfortunately, I was speaking on the telephone upstairs. However, I should like to say that he has put those questions upon notice to me and I will table the answers. The answers are not due, but I have them here. He asked me whether Sergeant Bob Clark of the New South Wales Police Service had any official role with the calling of tenders for the New South Wales casino. I have been advised by the Casino Control Authority that Sergeant Clark has no role in the authority's consideration of applications for a casino licence under the Casino Control Act 1992. In answer to question 3, which he will remember, I have been advised also by the Casino Control Authority that it is not aware of any communication between Sergeant Clark and applicants for a casino licence under the Casino Control Act 1992.

I reiterate once and very clearly that as the honourable member for Charlestown has acknowledged, the Government has been at great pains to establish an independent Casino Control Authority, to assess applicants and to make decisions, and to remove it from the influence of the Government. The Casino Control Authority is an independent authority. Mr Clark is not on the Casino Control Authority and, therefore, would not have any role in influencing the decision of that authority. I will table these answers so that the honourable member can get them more rapidly. I cannot comment on the answers given by the Minister for Police, but the honourable member may take them up with the appropriate Minister. However, I can assure him that the authority is working well and very independently of government. I rely on the authority's answers.

GLADESVILLE ELECTORATE TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Mr PETCH (Gladesville) [5.38]: I have been a member of the Government's transport committee for the past six years and it is always a great pleasure to stand in this House and proclaim the tremendous benefits that have been derived through the modernisation of the transport system in the Gladesville electorate. I refer to the 506 bus service, which runs from East Ryde to the city. Prior to 1988 it was a peak hour service, Monday to Friday; it now runs all day, seven days a week. The recent introduction of fully air-conditioned 14.5 metre buses that run between Ryde and the city has provided additional comfort for my constituents in the Gladesville electorate.

A major problem is the present timetable for those buses. It is no fault of the State Transit Authority. The problem relates purely to the use of the transit lanes by motorists. I travel from Gladesville to the city daily and am in a good position to observe the problems. There is an urgent need for a turn right phase at the intersection of Huntleys Point Road and Victoria Road so that the buses can turn safely and against the traffic coming off the Gladesville Bridge, with a speed limit of 80 kilometres an hour. That is a very important initiative. I ask the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads to give consideration to the installation of a turn right device at those lights.

Another matter that I wish to speak about relates to the use of the transit lane. It is not until one travels through Gladesville and over the bridge that the problem becomes apparent. Traffic through Drummoyne comes almost to a standstill, including the traffic on the bus lane and the transit lane. Three lanes become jammed because trucks and cars with fewer than three passengers aboard use the transit lane illegally. This problem is particularly exacerbated with the slip lane on to the Iron Cove Bridge. Traffic at the moment is travelling along Henley Marine Drive and slipping on to the transit lane because the other two lanes - the legal lanes - are full. In the process of doing so, they form another blockage the full length of the Iron Cove Bridge.

I suggest that there are other areas where traffic can enter legally on to Victoria Road. I refer in particular to traffic coming from the direction of the Henley Marine Drive. They could enter via Lyons Road, Edwin Street or Day Street, where there are controlled traffic lights. Further, I suggest that the Roads and Traffic Authority put a sign on that slip lane at Cary Street saying, "Transit lane traffic only between 6.30 a.m. and 10.30 a.m.", or whatever hours the transit lane is operating. That would compel the traffic to go up to Park Avenue, where there is a set of traffic lights. Traffic entering from Park Avenue in a controlled situation would have the opportunity to get into the right lane, not the transit lane, to cross the Iron Cove Bridge. It would be a simple matter of the police being stationed at Terry Street on the other side of the bridge and regulating traffic. Traffic using the transit lane and not turning into Terry Street as a legal left-hand turn would be in breach of an RTA ruling. I believe that the heavy hand of the law has to come down on those illegally using the transit lane.

I have received complaints that buses travelling from Ryde to the city, which are supposed to take 40 minutes, take an hour and a quarter. That is far too long. It is a great inconvenience to my constituents who rely on public transport. The Government encourages people to use public transport. The most effective way to achieve that objective is to make sure that public transport runs on time. I believe that my recommendations to the House today are worthy of being taken on board by the Minister and the Roads and Traffic Authority. I am delighted that the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Roads and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport is present in the Chamber. I know that she has made a great contribution to the New South Wales roads system. I am relying on her to convey my message to the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads. [*Time expired.*]

Ms MACHIN (Port Macquarie - Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Roads, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport) [5.43]: I thank the honourable member for Gladesville for raising this matter. One thing that is notable about the honourable member is that when he puts up a problem he usually poses a solution. He thinks constructively about issues affecting his electorate, and this matter is no exception. I understand the problems the honourable member has outlined. I have an aunt who lives out that way. She is a good Liberal supporter and one of the honourable member's happy

constituents.

I know how bad the traffic can be when coming along that road. I know how annoying it can be when people abuse the use of the transit lane. I am sure that some of the proposals the honourable member has put forward can be effective, such as better signposting to indicate where the transit lane cuts in or when people may use it. I certainly will discuss this matter with the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads to see whether we can improve the traffic flow in what is one of Sydney's major arteries, and thereby improve traffic times and the quality of life of the people within the electorate of Gladesville who use this road.

FERN BAY REZONING

Mr GAUDRY (Newcastle) [5.45]: For the third time in this House I speak about the Fern Bay rezoning. I bring to the attention of the House, the Minister for Energy and Minister for Local Government and Co-operatives, and the Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing in another place the concerns of many constituents and groups in my area at the recent decision by the Port Stephens Shire Council to approve the application for rezoning. The rezoning application is now before the Minister for Planning. Opposition has not diminished to that

Page 834

rezoning; in fact, it has increased. That opposition is quite notable because of the number of letters and submissions that I and other members have received. They have been forwarded to the Minister for his attention.

Concerns are expressed about the processes by which that rezoning application passed through the Port Stephens Council. There are concerns about pressure placed on councillors of the Port Stephens Council by the developer during the extended process. The application was at first rescinded by the council and then a reapplication was made. There is still concern about the costs of dune stabilisation associated with this development, also about the proposed sewage treatment works and the use of public lands for that purpose. Concerns have been expressed about the financial capacity of the developer to proceed with the application; and about the fact that three-fifths of this land is public land - public land initially involved, through the Minister for Housing, in joint studies but subsequently withdrawn from the studies.

There are concerns about the status of the land. There are long-term concerns about the fact that the public land on the Newcastle Bight is not only environmentally sensitive but also is most appropriate for development into a coastal park. For quite a long time there has been a campaign for a coastal park to be developed in that area. There are also concerns that if this rezoning goes ahead, it will preclude the studies on the Newcastle Bight being undertaken under the auspices of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, which is in the process of developing a management plan for the bight. There is an opinion that the land is environmentally sensitive and that a more appropriate method of dealing with it would be to take a long-term view of its recreational, tourist and scientific values. The management plan should make decisions as to its future.

There is concern that the Port Stephens Council decision may have been made outside the provisions of section 372 of the Local Government Act. The Minister for Local Government and Co-operatives has been asked by many groups to look closely at that, as has the Ombudsman. I emphasise the level of concern in the community with respect to the way in which this application has been proceeded with by the council. I also stress the very complex nature of the environment of the Newcastle Bight. The "Sydney's Future" document, which places emphasis on urban development and the maintenance of lifestyle and living space, and the Federal Government's coastal zone inquiry report published at the end of 1993 show that this is an extremely sensitive piece of coastal land. I urge the Minister - as do many of my constituents - to consider that at this time rezoning is precipitant. There should be proper time for studies of the bight. [*Time expired.*]

MAIN ROAD 84

Mr CRUICKSHANK (Murrumbidgee) [5.50]: I bring attention once again to the shocking state of a road which ends in my electorate, Main Road 84. It runs from the Hume Highway at Binalong, just south of Yass through Bowning, Harden-Murrumburrah, Wallendbeen, Springdale and Temora to Griffith. The road is not too bad from Temora onwards but the condition of the road is of considerable concern these days because it is the shortest route from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area to Sydney. Despite having advantages in the carriage of perishables, rail has almost disappeared and trucks have taken over. The transport industry is highly competitive and trucks have to take the shortest route possible. If the road were adequate it would be the best route possible. The alternatives are south through Wagga Wagga - on the Sturt Highway across on to the Newell Highway through to Wagga Wagga and then to join up with the Hume highway 20 miles east of Wagga Wagga - which is a lot further; or down the Mid Western Highway, which is also much further but a better road. The most direct route is Main Road 84.

The productivity of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area depends upon the horticultural industry and the Sydney market. Honourable members would be aware that an enormous amount of fresh produce is transported overnight to the city every day. After Stockinbingal and Wallendbeen the road becomes windy and very rough, particularly on the other side of Harden-Murrumburrah on the way to Bowning and Binalong. It is so rough that there is a danger of glassware carried on the road being broken. I urge the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Roads and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport, who is in the Chamber, to take on board that the road is causing a very serious stricture in the development of my area.

Many of the soft fruits such as peaches and rockmelons taken to Sydney on this route, in the words of the owners and the receivers of the fruit, end up being almost square because of the roughness of the road. This does nothing to enhance the quality of produce from the area. Over the years the State Government has done work on sections of the route but except for the addition of a few new bridges the sections of road in between are in a state of serious disrepair. The Government must make a bigger contribution to upgrading what is becoming a main arterial road between the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and the markets in Sydney.

Ms MACHIN (Port Macquarie - Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Roads, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport) [5.55]: I thank the honourable member for Murrumbidgee for raising this issue. He is an avid writer on behalf of his constituents. Tonight he has raised one of the key issues that he wishes to address. As we all know, he has also been a strong supporter of fruit growers in his area. I will certainly take the matter up with the Roads and Traffic Authority. Much work on roads is done on a needs basis according to traffic flow. However, it is important that we take into account the impact of transport links on industries. I will certainly pursue the matter with the Roads and Traffic Authority and report back to the honourable member.

Page 835

WOY WOY TRAIN SERVICES

Mr DOYLE (Peats) [5.56]: I bring to the attention of the House ongoing problems for commuters as a result of inadequate rail services from Woy Woy, the continuing failure of CityRail to bring about improvements and to provide a level of rail services adequate to the demands of the population of the Woy Woy peninsula area. The rail service about which I have most recently received complaints from constituents is the 8.01 a.m. service from Woy Woy to Sydney. Passengers complain that of late the train has been of single-deck carriages and overcrowded in the extreme. There is not another train to Sydney for three-quarters of an hour. Despite this, on an increasing number of occasions the train arrives at Woy Woy with a number of carriages prebooked and therefore unavailable for the many commuters who daily rely on the service.

For example, on 23 February the train arrived at the station with three carriages booked. In the chaos that followed many of the train's commuters were unable to board because of overcrowding. Many of those affected were school students and people attempting to travel to work in Sydney. The disruption was not an isolated incident. With increasing regularity commuters from the Woy Woy peninsula are deprived of a regular

and predictable rail service. This is having a major negative impact on hundreds of people. How are employers in Sydney expected to react when Central Coast employees are continually late for work because of late and or unreliable trains? The impact on school students was conveyed to me in a letter from a constituent, Mrs Joan Fenton, of 47 Camellia Circle, Woy Woy, from which I quote briefly:

My daughter and her friend, both Year 12 students at Hornsby Girls' High School, normally catch the 8.01 am service from Woy Woy. Of late, this train has been a single-deck train, and has been severely crowded. There is no further train to Sydney for another three-quarters of an hour.

This morning (23 February) the 8.01 am arrived, with three carriages booked, and therefore they were unable to be boarded by regular commuters to Sydney. The two Year 12 girls, with their large back-packs, were, despite their best efforts, unable to board any of the remaining carriages. They were compelled to wait for the next train, which was about ten minutes late, making them an hour late for school.

Today was a special day at Hornsby Girls' High for Year 12 students, as a special seminar was being held. These two girls were late for the seminar, and may have missed vital information necessary for their studies.

This is just one example of the disruption being caused by the unreliability of the rail service, and there are a considerable number of others. The problems make an absolute mockery of CityRail claims and rhetoric in relation to on-time running and the reliability of Central Coast rail services, especially Woy Woy services. It is past time that Woy Woy gained recognition from CityRail, at least that the station is not just an offshoot of Gosford, a whistle stop on the way to Gosford and other stations further north, but one of the State's busiest rail terminals in its own right. Many of the problems that affect Woy Woy rail services result from CityRail's failure over many years to recognise this fact. I am told that Woy Woy is the No. 7 station in the State in the CityRail passenger network in terms of revenue collection and the number of passengers using the station. That places it only marginally behind Gosford. Why will CityRail not treat Woy Woy and its passengers accordingly? Surely the problem I have outlined is one more reason to have trains originate and terminate at Woy Woy, where the population is. It is obvious that only when this occurs will long-term solutions to the capacity problems at Woy Woy be found.

For decades the rail bureaucrats, the senior boffins, have said that the Central Coast rail line is near saturation point and is almost at the stage where it will be impossible to add extra rail services, and from time to time this happens. The same bureaucrats continually advise that it is not feasible to originate rail services from Woy Woy. That advice has been glibly given to and accepted by a succession of transport Ministers of all political persuasions. Why can this service not be provided? Surely it is time and it is not beyond the wit and resources of CityRail to find the solution and means by which rail services can originate at Woy Woy, thereby belatedly addressing the capacity and timetabling problems that have handicapped the Woy Woy rail service for many years. We do not need a series of excuses; we simply want a solution. This afternoon I discussed this matter briefly with the Minister, who has agreed to have a fresh look at this problem and, I hope, will act accordingly and at least provide some relief for the long-suffering commuters from the peninsula area.

WAYNE MERTON SENIOR CITIZENS CONCERT

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [6.0]: I pay tribute to the many thousands of senior citizens of New South Wales. As we all know, next week is Senior Citizens Week. At this time we acknowledge the marvellous contribution that senior citizens have made to our way of life in New South Wales and Australia. Many senior citizens have endured the world wars, Depression, and periods of economic downturn and have made tremendous contributions to Australia. It was once said that there is no substitute for experience; there is no substitute for things that have been learned - in some cases the hard way. I salute senior citizens. As a tribute to senior citizens I will be holding my annual senior citizens concert in the Baulkham Hills area. I am pleased to note that some 500 tickets have already been taken for this sixth annual concert.

I note the presence in the Chamber of my dear close friends, the honourable member for Gladesville, the

honourable member for Blue Mountains, the honourable member for Gordon and the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai, who will be appearing at the Wayne Merton senior citizens concert. Indeed, the Hon. Beryl Evans from another place will also be appearing. Unfortunately, the Minister for Consumer Affairs will not be appearing but sends her best

Page 836

wishes. Mr John Brogden, former Chairman and President of the New South Wales Young Liberals, will be a great performer. In some respects I am very sorry that a former parliamentarian who appeared quite regularly at the Wayne Merton senior citizens concert, namely former Senator Bronwyn Bishop, will not be available to attend this year. Of course, the former Senator has her own important day on the following day: she is the Liberal candidate for the seat of Mackellar.

Bronwyn Bishop was formerly Bronwyn Setright and was, of course, steeped in tradition as far as singing, the arts and the opera were concerned - she is an outstanding vocalist. Bronwyn Bishop, formerly Setright, is now set right for Canberra. One should not believe what is said in the newspapers: she will certainly be in Canberra as the member for Mackellar and we wish her well. Unfortunately Premier Fahey is unable to attend this occasion, but I have it on very good authority that he will be practising for next year's performance. It is important that people of that stature attend the concert. In years gone by we have had people like Kathryn Greiner, and the Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs was at our very first concert and made a tremendous contribution. This year we will hear from the Salvation Army Veterans Band. The average age of its members is over 70 years.

Mr Petch: They are fantastic.

Mr MERTON: They are fantastic, as the honourable member for Gladesville says. Helen Zerefos will again be the vocalist. Helen is a great performer in Australian show business; she goes back to the days of Bobby Limb. I am pleased to note that a new vocalist, an up-and-coming country and western star, Jane Saunders, who is releasing a compact disc this week, will be one of our guests. John Worthington, vocalist and star from the television program "Home Show", will also be present. Locals such as Anne Furnell, the sister of local councillor Chris Roberts, and Lorraine Brown, wife of Baulkham Hills solicitor David Brown, will be present. All these people are putting forward a great contribution just to say to the senior citizens that we appreciate what they have done over the years. Many donors are involved in the concert. Alan France of the BP Service Station, Dural, is providing a car service and generous donations of petrol as prizes for lucky door winners. Ron Stettler Printing; United Dairies now known as National Dairies; Westfield North Rocks Shopping Centre; Gareth Laylim of the Baulkham Hills Cake Shop; and the Bull and Bush Hotel - the famous landmark of The Hills district, will all be donors for the lucky door prizes.

Baulkham Hills Council has donated the use of the hall; Bella Mode Hairdressing is a generous donor; and the Glenorie Bus Company will provide transport to collect the senior citizens from the various places at which they live. The concert will be a great occasion and I am very proud to be able to organise it. As I have already indicated, we owe the senior citizens a tremendous debt for their contribution to the community. My good friend the honourable member for Oxley will speak at a seniors function on Saturday. He understands the situation. The message he will give that function is a good one. Senior citizens of New South Wales, we salute you. On behalf of members from both sides of this House, we salute you and thank you for your contribution to New South Wales.

Ms MACHIN (Port Macquarie - Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister Assisting the Minister for Roads, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport) [6.5]: I congratulate the honourable member for Baulkham Hills on his enthusiasm and initiative. This concert has indeed become legend. I received his invitation but I was overcome by an uncharacteristic attack of shyness and also lack of talent, which was more the reason. I guess lack of talent has not stopped any of the other participants, so I should not have been so coy about that. The concert sounds like a lot of fun and I know that it always generates a tremendous amount of enthusiasm. It shows a great sense of community spirit. I am sure it will be an outstanding success.

I am reminded by the honourable member for Baulkham Hills that all seniors will receive a free lunch -

presumably the performers as well, who will be singing for their supper, because they deserve it for all their hard work. I wish I had the time to watch, let alone participate. It will be a fun function to attend and it is no wonder that the tickets are in hot demand. I have heard rumours of a suggestion to move the concert to the Entertainment Centre because of its demand. I am sure the Minister for the Arts will consider that suggestion sympathetically, should the need arise. The honourable member for Baulkham Hills will be playing the trumpet. He is a great fan of Frank Sinatra; he is a real individualist. It is most appropriate that he will be playing "My Way". I wish him every success and good fun on the day.

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED CHILDREN

Mr MOSS (Canterbury) [6.7]: Tonight I speak on the lack of support services that are available for intellectually disabled children. I should emphasise that by saying there is an extreme lack of support services for intellectually disabled children in my electorate and in the surrounding areas. The children I refer to are infants under the age of five years. Support services for those children are supposed to be provided by the Department of Community Services. Very little is being provided for children under the age of five years residing in the Canterbury, Leichhardt and Marrickville local government areas. These three local government areas take in the feeder region for the Department of Community Services centre at Marrickville. That centre is just not meeting the demand for services for intellectually disabled children.

Some of the services that are required for these pre-schoolers are physiotherapy, speech therapy and community nursing. Young children particularly require physiotherapy and speech therapy which needs

Page 837

to be constant to be effective. However, the services provided at present are piecemeal to say the least. Last year the centre at Marrickville employed a full-time physiotherapist. When I say last year I should say for three months of the year because she was there only from June to September. Within that time the physiotherapist dealt with 20 children, all aged under five years, from the Canterbury municipal area alone. In all she dealt with about 40 children and I believe there were another 18 from other areas.

She left in September 1993 and it was not until February 1994 that the department employed a locum who left in a matter of days. Obviously the locum found the workload too heavy. The position has been readvertised but it is not to be filled until July. In the meantime, some 40 children are relying on the services of a part-time physiotherapist who works, I believe, only two days a week. Of course, the workload is too much to deal with. Needless to say, it is the children who are missing out. I have also been informed that there is a big problem with the lack of speech therapy programs at the centre. The centre's current speech therapist has to deal with about 50 clients. A part-time locum had been employed, but that position has now been cancelled. The position has been advertised but it will not be filled for another three months or so.

The parents of children who attend the centre have been told that funds have been overspent on group home programs and this is the reason for the lack of services. I do not know if this overexpenditure relates to the department or whether the centre at Marrickville has overspent its allocation on group homes but, whatever the reason, I find it incredible that the Department of Community Services, which has come in under budget for the past three years, should penny pinch with respect to services for intellectually disabled children. If sufficient physiotherapy and speech therapy services were provided to young children, there would be less need for these people to move into group homes in later life. They would have acquired skills from a young age to help them to cope with mainstream society. I appeal to the Government to show some compassion to the families of these children who attend the Marrickville centre by ensuring that more professional staff are available, by providing additional funds for continuation of the staff - *[Time expired.]*

Private members' statements noted.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Tink) left the chair at 6.12 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Reports

Mr Deputy-Speaker, pursuant to section 31 of the Ombudsman Act, announced the receipt of the Special Report to Parliament proposing Amendments to the Freedom of Information Act 1989, dated 17 March 1994, and the Special Report to Parliament concerning Urgent Amendment to section 121 of the Police Service Act, dated 17 March 1994.

Ordered to be printed.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS IN REPLY

Seventh Day's Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [7.30]: In the Governor's address to the Parliament he outlined a wide range of programs and initiatives which are to be undertaken by the Government throughout this year. His Excellency's Speech began with reminiscences of a great event, namely, the winning of the bid for the Olympic Games 2000 - and a tragic event, the destruction of much of the State's bushland and some property as a result of the recent bushfires. He also focused on the initiatives to be undertaken by the Government in this, the International Year of the Family. This year, six years from the end of the decade and the beginning of a new millennium, family values and values of security have been refocused in the community. As Australia recovers as a nation from a bitter and prolonged recession - a recession that we had to have - and as the tragedy of long-term unemployed people continues, we have the responsibility as a community to take a step forward for security.

Parliamentarians have a responsibility to bring communities together because, as concerned citizens, we cannot accept or tolerate a society that moves into a new millennium with the travesty of young people on the unemployment scrap-heap. In this, the International Year of the Family, in addition to the special initiative which the Government will undertake to assist and support all families throughout the State and to reinforce the value of the family as the central organisational unit in society, we must take care that as a community we have both the moral courage and the economic will to tackle the problem of youth unemployment. In an ever changing society, with the constant pressures for increases in economic competitiveness, training and skills are fundamental to the future development of our young people and their ability to take their places in the society of the twenty-first century.

In that regard the Government's program for education and training is extremely important. In my own electorate of Baulkham Hills are many fine examples of primary and secondary schools - public and private - as well as the excellent Baulkham Hills TAFE College. The continued emphasis on funding and improvements in services in educational institutions, combined with the dedication of teachers and the support of parents, means an opportunity for our young people to obtain the necessary skills to face the future. Geoff Miller, the director of Baulkham Hills TAFE College, has advised me that the college has sustained an increase in enrolments of 6 per cent over the 1993 figure. That has been the result of commencing new courses such as an associate diploma in business, microcomputing, spreadsheets, and a certificate of community support.

Approximately 300 year 11 and year 12 students from local government and non-government high schools will this year attend joint secondary school-

Page 838

TAFE courses such as accounts, clerical, hospitality, travel and office computing courses with the college. We also have responsibilities to the ageing within our society and the Government recognises the importance of services to the elderly. I am committed to ensuring that our seniors are provided with the best quality lifestyle in their latter years, following their many years of service to the work force and the community in general. It

will be my privilege once again this year to host the senior citizens concert in the Don Moore Community Centre at North Rocks. Since my election to State Parliament in 1988 the seniors concert has become an annual event. More than 500 people attend the concert each year and it gives me a great deal of pleasure to organise this event as my personal thankyou to the seniors in my electorate.

I know that many honourable members present will be aware of my strong interest in family and community services and I am happy to report to the House that the Minister for Community Services, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for the Ageing has agreed to visit the Baulkham Hills area on Monday, 11 April 1994, to meet with community service leaders and discuss a number of issues. In him we have a kind and compassionate Minister who is prepared to respond to community needs. The Government recognises the distress caused to the community by the current high levels of unemployment and has introduced programs aimed at assisting the most disadvantaged in the labour market. The programs will enable approximately 40,000 people to find work or work related training placements in 1992-93.

The establishment of the Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board indicates the importance of western Sydney as an employment and manufacturing centre. I might also add that, because increasing numbers of residents in my electorate have been born in other countries, I recently invited the Hon. Helen Sham-Ho to visit the electorate to help me explain to the new residents how, in my role as their State member of Parliament, I can assist them with any problems they may experience. My staff also help those seeking employment by assisting with the typing of curriculum vitae and it is good to know that I can now call upon members of the Asian community within the Baulkham Hills electorate who have offered to assist with any translations that might be required.

The Government has made a major commitment to the women of New South Wales. I have long been a strong supporter of job sharing for women. However, I do not just give lip-service to such policy issues; I put policy into action. Within my electorate office are two extremely competent ladies performing the role of electorate assistant in a job sharing capacity. This has worked very successfully for a couple of years. Betty Ingels is a lady with a wealth of experience in electorate offices. Her husband is retired but Betty is keen to maintain her role within the electorate. Ros Rigby is the mother of three growing lads and the extra income earned from her three-day stint in the electorate office helps to supplement the family income.

Apart from a stable environment for the work force and the development of schools and training and the nurture of our families, it is essential that society has a strong emphasis on law and justice. The Government will introduce a comprehensive package of reforms following the review of the implementation of the Victims Compensation Act by Mr Cec Brahe, Deputy Chief Magistrate and former Chairman of the Victims Compensation Tribunal. Those reforms are aimed at clarifying the definition of an act of violence and the nature and determination of compensation.

Substantial reforms to the law of evidence will be introduced following public consideration of an exposure draft bill. The Government will release the white paper on future directions in juvenile justice this year. During my time as Minister for Justice I was keen to ensure that community consultation on future directions in juvenile justice should take place. The white paper addresses issues such as youth crime prevention, legal services for juveniles, the Children's Court and sentencing. It is essential that we take every possible step to ensure that juvenile offenders are prevented from entering into a life of crime. While maintaining high standards and requiring a sense of fair play and justice so far as young people are concerned, it was my wish as Minister to develop a sense of reconciliation as opposed to retribution. I believe that that will be carried out well by the Government, as will be revealed in the white paper.

Following the recent tragic bushfires a comprehensive review of New South Wales fire management and legislation is being undertaken by a Cabinet subcommittee chaired by the Deputy Premier, the Hon. Ian Armstrong. During my term as emergency services Minister I held discussions with the insurance industry to bring about significantly increased funding for our hard working volunteer bush fire brigades. The New South Wales volunteer bush fire brigade workers are probably unique. They are people who have immense commitment and dedication and a concern about society. They are people who subject themselves to enormous

risk to their personal well-being. But they have the drive, the incentive and the desire to look after people. I assure honourable members - as you well know, Mr Deputy-Speaker, because of the area you represent - that without the help, assistance and nurturing of the members of the New South Wales volunteer bush fire brigade, people from the country especially would not enjoy the security that they have at present from the threat of fire.

The services rendered by the volunteer workers and many other people during the recent bushfires saved New South Wales from a tragic situation. I salute and commend the people involved in emergency services throughout New South Wales. When I was Minister I was concerned to ensure that adequate funding was available to cover more vital equipment, such as tankers, emergency vehicles and other life-saving tools. We made changes to the funding structure that will ensure that the Bush Fire Fighting Fund will receive from insurance companies an increase in contributions from 50 per cent to 73.7 per

Page 839
cent. That is an important part of the New South Wales Government's policy of providing adequate protection from fire for the people of New South Wales.

The Government is committed to ensuring that health resources are placed close to where people live. I have been closely associated with the relocation of the children's hospital to Westmead. The new children's hospital is due to open early in 1996. It will provide a facility of world-class medical excellence to service the children and families of western Sydney. The planning of the new hospital has been focused on providing quality care for the children and their families, in friendly surroundings. I acknowledge the presence of my dear friend the honourable member for The Hills, who attended the tree planting day, the first stage of the landscaping planned to complement the new buildings. We had the privilege of meeting many of the families of young people who had received treatment at the existing children's hospital. That was a memorable day. The new hospital at Westmead will be close to most of its patients, as 55 per cent of all school-age children in New South Wales will live within a 25 kilometre radius of the Westmead site.

All honourable members are aware of my continuing involvement with the transport and roads portfolio in my role as parliamentary secretary to the hard working Minister Bruce Baird. This Minister is committed to improving transport safety in New South Wales. That work will continue. I was pleased to note recently the positive approach by some honourable members to the F2 expressway proposal. If the motion moved by the honourable member for Kogarah had been accepted by the House, it would have frustrated and delayed the wishes of the people of New South Wales, who in 1988 and again in 1991 voted for the Government and gave it an express mandate to build the F2. I am pleased that construction of the F2 will proceed. That project will provide a realistic and adequate system of road transport for the people living in the northwestern part of Sydney.

Mr Richardson: And will provide bus lanes.

Mr MERTON: As the honourable member for The Hills kindly reminds me, it will provide an element of public transport in the form of the bus lanes in both directions. To deal with a more local level of transport, the upgrading of safety in the vicinity of schools has been a major initiative of the Government in the past 12 months, with the introduction of school zones, wombat crossings, and education programs in schools with special emphasis on bus safety for schoolchildren. From this year's State roads budget, \$8.4 million has been allocated for the Baulkham Hills electorate, with total State funding this year for road improvements under the 3 x 3 program being increased \$20 million to \$230 million.

Clearly the Government has a mandate and commitment to take action to improve New South Wales roads after 12 years of neglect, delay and inertia by the former Labor Government. I have mentioned that I was pleased that the Parliament rejected the motion moved by the Opposition that would have frustrated the people of the State who wanted the F2 project to proceed. I was appalled that Labor Party members would have the gall to try to delay a project that had the support of at least 66 per cent of the people who live in the region. That demonstrated that Labor Party members care little about the interests, aspirations and desires of the people of northwestern Sydney. The shadow spokesman for roads comes from Kogarah and would know little about the problems that exist in northwestern Sydney. I understand that someone has invited him to visit the area and

see at first-hand the problems. I doubt that he will avail himself of that opportunity.

The Government wants to ensure that adequate transport facilities are provided for the people of northwestern Sydney. In this debate I have been able to touch on only a few of the many issues raised by the Governor in his Speech, which outlined the continuing agenda of improvement for New South Wales that is being pushed by the Fahey coalition Government. It would be remiss of me when looking to the future not to remember the dictum: strategic planning is useless unless there is a strategic vision. The Olympic Games have become a symbol of the strategic vision for the people of New South Wales moving into the next millennium. New South Wales is this nation's economic and social power-house - its largest and most populous State; a State abounding with natural and human resources.

The Olympic flame must shine as a beacon, not to be extinguished at the end of the Games period but to serve as a focal point for the development of our infrastructure and community before the Games, and as a reminder of the way that we as a community are capable of building mountains and moving beyond them. At the conclusion of the Governor's Speech he committed the Government to a program of reform, demonstrating its ongoing endeavours to ensure that the people of the State receive high quality services provided in a financially responsible and efficient manner. But beyond the words of his conclusion the spirit of his speech said far more. Beyond management and the delivery of services parliamentarians have a special responsibility to play a role of leadership within the community, to encourage people in the local regions to work together to build a better State. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

We must work not only to build a better State but, when the Olympic flame is extinguished, to ensure it continues to be the greatest State in Australia. For some reason members of the State Opposition believe that they have a monopoly right on social justice and equity. Nothing could be further from the truth, for it is the architects of the New South Wales right of the Australian Labor Party and, most particularly, the Prime Minister, who have presided over the greatest inequities and redistribution of wealth that this nation has ever seen. The Labor Party does not have a moral hold on equity and social justice. It is not those who talk loudest about being socially just who have the right to make that claim, but those who actually deliver social justice.

Page 840

I am proud to belong to a Government that sees the community developing in a way towards equity that provides opportunities for the disadvantaged, that provides access for the disabled, that provides openings for prosperity for all citizens, no matter their gender or ethnic background or their position in the socioeconomic strata. We are delivering the goods, not talking about doing it. It is easy for the champagne socialists to claim the mantle of social justice; it is far more important to the people of New South Wales that they have a government that not only cares about their society but delivers leadership that is both socially just and economically good.

Mr MARKHAM (Keira) [7.52]: It gives me great pleasure to participate in the Address in Reply to the Speech delivered by the Governor to this Parliament on 1 March this year. I should like to deal with a number of matters referred to in the Governor's Speech. First and foremost, I want to speak about the indigenous people of this State. In his Speech the Governor said that legislation will come before this Parliament at some time in the future to address the Commonwealth Mabo legislation. I hope that is done soon so that some of the unfounded fears in the community will be allayed. Australia witnessed the passing of truly historic legislation when the Native Title Act was passed by both houses of the Federal Parliament in December last year. Never before has Australia spent as much time and energy seeking to achieve a truly just settlement of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The legislation was a watershed in the dealings of government with indigenous people. It is trite to say that the Native Title Act is not the optimum resolution of the challenge presented by the Mabo decision of the High Court. The legislation is a compromise between the needs and aspirations of indigenous people on the one hand and the economic demands of land developers on the other. It is a workable medium; a national solution has been achieved. I assure the House that the world looked closely at what was being done late last

year in Canberra so far as the Mabo legislation was concerned. Many people throughout the world have applauded what was achieved. It is now up to this Government to bring forward legislation to ensure that the Federal legislation is made workable in New South Wales.

When enacting the Native Title Act the Federal Parliament did all it could to protect native titleholders and to give certainty to other titleholders. However, the Act only goes so far, and, because of the pre-eminence of the States in relation to the issue of land title, it is now up to the New South Wales Government and other State governments to enact validating legislation. Where is that legislation? Until such legislation is introduced ordinary titleholders will not have 100 per cent certainty of title. Honourable members are aware of what has happened in the media during the past few months. A program has been put in place to create confusion and, worse, derision within both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

It was totally hypocritical of the Minister for Land and Water Conservation to parade around New South Wales claiming that the Commonwealth Government had mucked up native title when it was the New South Wales Government that had screwed up. The Minister put the willies up new and potential titleholders at Crescent Head and Pambula, when his Government, the rabble opposite, has the responsibility of validating those titles. That must be done as soon as possible. It is regrettable that the Government has not indicated that such legislation will be introduced during this sitting of Parliament. The Minister had his tail between his legs over the whole affair. One minute banner headlines were quoting the Minister about uncertainty of title. The Commonwealth Government then weighed in and the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Robert Tickner, set the record straight. The next minute the Minister for Land and Water Conservation was pouring cold water over the whole affair. It was amazing.

Since the Mabo decision was handed down in June 1992 the New South Wales Government has had time to prepare its response to the challenges in the judgment. One would have thought that by now simple validating legislation could have been passed. I again call on the Government to ensure that such legislation is introduced as soon as possible. The draconian draft Native Titles Bill of last year is not needed. Everyone who read that bill was appalled by it. The State Aboriginal land council was distressed by the contents of that legislation. I have no doubt that most of that bill will be scrapped and workable legislation will be introduced in its place. I hope the Government takes heed of my comments. The Commonwealth has expeditiously established a workable regime in the form of the Native Title Tribunal.

The New South Wales Government only has to fit in with that regime. I am surprised that the Government has suddenly branded the Native Title Act as complex. The Government has obviously not looked at its own Real Property Act lately. Recently Robert Tickner called for negotiation and mediation as the best ways to settle native title claims. That is just plain common sense. New South Wales does not need the sort of obstructive behaviour exhibited by Premier Court in Western Australia. Most native title claims can be dealt with quickly and inexpensively without recourse to litigation. The Native Title Act makes provision for parties to negotiate and, if necessary, seek mediation through the tribunal.

I understand that the Wiradjuri people have lodged a land claim with the Native Title Tribunal in relation to an area of land known as the Wellington town common. I have correspondence going back a number of years concerning that claim. The claim has been raised with the Minister in New South Wales. I hope he does everything in his power to allow it to proceed. The claim is potentially quick and easy to settle. The common has been in existence since the last century and Aboriginal people have maintained an association with the land over a long period of time.

Page 841

In the *Australian* of 25 February the deputy mayor of Wellington was reported as saying that most people would support the claim. The Government should use the available machinery to show the people of New South Wales how easily native title claims can be settled. The Government should take advantage of the availability of that machinery. It can play the silly games that Premier Court wants to play at the expense of indigenous people or it can construct a fair and just settlement for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this

State. In his Speech delivered on 1 March the Governor referred to the International Year of the Family. Honourable members should remember that the International Year for the World's Indigenous People has just concluded. That was directed at Aboriginal and indigenous families throughout the world. The introduction of native title legislation is another opportunity to deal with issues affecting Aboriginal people.

I turn to recent events in Wilcannia. Honourable members talk about an economic revival, generating jobs and giving people productive lifestyles, but nothing is being done to address the horrendous problems of the unemployment rate in Wilcannia, which is practically 100 per cent. Earlier this year a number of public meetings were held in Wilcannia. Only a month or so ago I travelled to Wilcannia and spoke to a number of people who are concerned about what is happening there. I did not speak only to Aboriginal people; Gloria Clarke, the chairperson of the land council, gave me a good account of what had happened at the public meetings held in Wilcannia. Brian Toohey, the community development program officer, drew attention to a number of issues that need to be addressed before the problems at Wilcannia can be dealt with. I also met Senior Sergeant John Tallis. He explained some of the media reports that are being bandied about in the capital cities of Australia about the horrific imprisonment rate of Wilcannia residents. Honourable members will undoubtedly remember the claims that the number of people who had been imprisoned in Wilcannia was equivalent to every person living in the town being gaoled 25 times a year.

That was far from the truth. In fact, three Aboriginal liaison officers working out of Wilcannia police station are trying to address the issues raised at that particular meeting. One thing that came through loud and strong from my talks with the sergeant and Robert King, the mayor, as well as Gabrielle Selhorst, the General Manager of the Central Darling Council, is that Wilcannia needs a full-time co-ordinator from the Office of Juvenile Justice to co-ordinate programs operating in various areas. That still has not happened. It is imperative that it does happen if these family issues are to be addressed in the International Year of the Family, and there is no better place to start than with the Aboriginal families of Wilcannia. All honourable members should take these issues on board; in particular, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister for Justice should ensure that a full-time officer is employed at Wilcannia to co-ordinate the programs.

I wish to refer briefly to what the Minister for the Arts said yesterday in question time in relation to the Bangarra Dance Theatre and the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative. It is important that Aboriginal culture is recognised. The Minister has done the right thing by ensuring that an area at Walsh Bay is provided to enable Aboriginal culture to expand and to enable Australians as well as overseas visitors to gain a better appreciation of Aboriginal art and culture. In his contribution to the budget debate last year the Minister said that funding would be allocated to this program, and I am pleased that he has backed up that statement.

I can remember writing to the Minister for the Arts and the Minister for Roads, Bruce Baird, and the Premier on 28 October 1992 supporting an application by Bangarra for premises within the city to be made available so that their world renowned theatre and dance can be performed for the people of Sydney and New South Wales, giving them a better appreciation of Aboriginal art and culture. On 6 May Bangarra opens its season at the Enmore Theatre. I encourage all honourable members to view what they have to offer and the programs that have been put in place. This will provide a better understanding of the professional world renowned actors, dancers and performers that Bangarra is turning out.

I should like to refer to legislation that was not mentioned in the Governor's Speech but which has been around this Parliament for a number of years, that is, the Aboriginal Ownership of National Parks Bill. Tim Moore, when Minister for the Environment, was keen to ensure that Aboriginal people in this State were recognised. He brought forward legislation to allow four different areas of New South Wales to be handed back to Aboriginal people so that they could control their destiny through a management committee. Those four areas were Mootwingee National Park, which is just outside Broken Hill, Mount Grenfell, near Cobar, Mount Yarrowitch at Armidale, and Lake Mungo in central New South Wales.

A joint legislation committee was set up to examine the legislation. The chairperson of that committee was the honourable member for Strathfield, Paul Zammit. After examination by the committee the legislation went to the Government with our full endorsement. Last year, being the International Year for the World's

Indigenous People, was the right year for that legislation to be introduced. The Government failed to pick up the ball and run with it. Nothing in the Governor's Speech indicates that the legislation will be introduced this year into the Parliament. The Government should be doing something about it. That legislation should be supported by Cabinet and introduced into the Parliament. It was the dream and vision of the former Minister for the Environment, Tim Moore. No doubt he would be interested to know what the Government intends to do with that excellent legislation, which has remained on the shelf collecting dust somewhere in this Parliament for far too long.

Page 842

I wish to refer briefly to the coal industry. I am glad the Minister for Mines is present in the Chamber. Because of time constraints I shall raise only a couple of issues. In the week before last, during question time, the Minister commented on the coal industry and the then current negotiations for coal sales to Japan. Australia has been duded to the tune of \$US3.80 over the price of Australian coal - our coal. Even though the Japanese are the greatest price negotiators in the world, Australian coal producers visiting Japan cannot help trying to cut each other's throat and undermining one another's negotiating position.

One should bear in mind the money being received in this country through coal production and what has occurred in the past four or five years concerning efficiency in the coal industry. There is an ever increasing rate of coal production, with an ever diminishing number of men doing the work. I refer to employment figures published in *Minefo*, the mining magazine, of January 1994. The total number of employees has dropped by 14.9 per cent, from the December 1990 figure of 16,992 to 14,458 in June 1993. However, the total saleable production in that period went from 80 million tonnes up to 84.5 million tonnes, a 0.7 per cent increase. There has been a massive reduction in the number of people working in the industry but an increase in production.

I am disappointed that the Minister has not made a statement concerning the problem at the Helensburgh Metropolitan colliery. The management wrote letters to union officials saying they were not wanted any longer and if those seven men did not take redundancy on Monday of this week the company would sack 70 men. If that is the way industrial relations in the coal industry are going in this State, the system leaves a lot to be desired. It is the jackboot tactics we have seen in the past in other areas of the world and it is not what this country wants. The Minister must be concerned that a coal company could employ those sort of tactics and, threaten men who have worked in the industry for many years. Apparently the company considers the services of the union officials are not in keeping with the directions of the coal company and therefore the company does not want to retain them.

The Minister knows as well as I do that seniority in the coal industry is something that has been guarded, and will continue to be guarded, for many years. For any company to threaten 70 other men with the sack if seven men do not take voluntary retirement is something we do not want in this State and in this country. I assure the Minister that the coal industry will not tolerate it. I have no doubt that mining companies throughout this country would be very concerned about what happened at Helensburgh. [*Time expired.*]

Mr SMITH (Bega) [8.12]: It gives me great pleasure to participate in the Address-in-Reply debate to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor, Rear Admiral Peter Ross Sinclair. I congratulate His Excellency on his Speech in opening the fourth session of the Fiftieth Parliament. It gave a clear indication to the Parliament that the reforms of the Fahey Government will continue. The Governor is well received by the people. The Opposition caused turmoil in regard to who would be the next Governor. I am pleased that the Governor has accepted the Premier's offer to extend his term for 12 months. When a person takes up public office it is important that his or her spouse be seen as supportive. Mrs Sinclair is such a person and is a great ambassador for our State. On the two visits of the Governor and his wife to my electorate in the past couple of years, Mrs Sinclair has given wonderful support to His Excellency. As all honourable members know, our spouses are given very little recognition for the support they give us in carrying out our duties.

A couple of weeks ago His Excellency and Mrs Sinclair visited my electorate. When in my electorate the Governor visited the Eurobodalla area. We visited two schools, one of which was Moruya High School. The

standard set by the school was exceptional, as was the conduct of the children. I congratulate all the students, the staff and the principal, Marian Marsden, on their excellent performance during the Governor's visit. The other school we visited was Ulladulla Primary School. The Governor, Mrs Sinclair and dignitaries walked through a guard of honour formed by the primary school children all the way down the assembly area. I congratulate Beryl Wade, the principal of the school, the pupils and the teachers on their beautiful display. During the Governor's visit we attended two receptions. A reception was held in Batemans Bay for people who had performed community work for service clubs and other organisations within that area. A dinner was attended by 200 people, who very much enjoyed having the Governor and Mrs Sinclair in their town. The major event for which the Governor visited my electorate was the opening of the Milton Show.

In the initial stages of his Speech the Governor referred to the continuing reforms of the Fahey Government. Reform was a hallmark of the Greiner Government and I am pleased that it will continue, even though much work has already been done. I am pleased to be part of a Government that is continuing a process of reform. In 1988 when this Government took over from a Labor administration that had been in power for some 12 years, it inherited a debt of approximately \$46 billion. Because of the extraordinary waste of the former Labor Government, reforms were extreme and hurt a lot of people; but the payoffs are coming. Australia went into recession. The Labor Party was in great glee for a couple of months when the depths of the recession were felt in New South Wales. The coalition Government made reforms early - certainly earlier than States under Labor administrations, which were faltering because of huge debts and collapsing government enterprises. New South Wales therefore was in a far better position to cope with the recession than was any other State in the Commonwealth. New South Wales is coming out of the recession stronger than the other States, according to almost every economic indicator. The reforms, if continued, will place our children and the future of New South Wales in a good position.

Page 843

I pay tribute to those involved in securing the Olympics for Sydney in the year 2000, particularly the Premier, the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads, and the committee that organised the bid. I had the opportunity of visiting the Homebush site with members of the Royal Agricultural Society. I know that it is of great concern to some country electorates that the Royal Agricultural Society will be moving from the showground to Homebush. I am pleased to inform those electorates, particularly my electorate of Bega, that the RAS is fully behind the Government's move to the Olympic site at Homebush. It realises that the site at Moore Park is limited. Any necessary future alterations would be subjected to fire regulations and will be difficult to implement. The RAS will occupy new buildings at the Homebush site, which will be used for the Olympics before being transferred to the RAS.

I should like to make mention also of the January bushfires. I cannot remember large bushfires as close to city areas as the January fires, which threatened the city of Sydney. Even though many large fires have wreaked havoc across country areas, this was the first time that such huge fires had threatened the metropolitan area. The January fires wiped out some 800,000 hectares, destroyed 188 houses and, unfortunately, was directly or indirectly responsible for the loss of four lives - one victim died of a heart attack that could have been precipitated by the fires.

There are lessons to be learned from the bushfires, and we should have lasting memories of them. I congratulate the committee, under Deputy Premier Ian Armstrong, that is deciding new structures and authorities for management of both public and private land. Phil Koperberg, of the Bushfire Council, probably will have sole control over all areas both public and private. He will be able to enforce hazard reduction and winter burning-off and also impose penalties on those who do not take preventive measures. One body with extensive authority will be able to decide that action must be taken and that there are no options. I am pleased that Cabinet is considering these issues.

I am delighted that last Saturday the Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services and Phil Koperberg visited the Bega electorate to attend a barbeque. About 600 people attended the barbeque, which was held at the Moruya racecourse, to thank volunteer bush fire fighters. There were fires in that area, in

particular near Broulee and Batemans Bay, and some houses were destroyed. As luck would have it, and as a result of the efforts of the volunteer bush fire fighters, many houses in danger were not destroyed. Fires reached the rear of houses in Broulee and Batemans Bay. The volunteers stayed in the area for many days after the fires were put out. They were blacking-out the area, making sure a fire was under control and putting a fire out where necessary. There is not much glory attached to that work. I was proud to be present when the Minister and Phil Koperberg thanked the volunteer bushfire brigades and members of other emergency services for the wonderful job they had done. The volunteers have certainly earned recognition for their efforts. It is now up to the Government to ensure those volunteers are backed up with the right equipment, sufficient finance and the right laws to ensure backburning is done correctly to prepare ground for the next major fire. Australia has regularly suffered from fire, flood and drought.

The Governor mentioned health issues in his Speech. I am proud to say that major upgrading at Batemans Bay and Moruya hospitals - \$3 million and \$5 million respectively, a total of \$8 million - has been carried out. During the next five or six months various sections of upgraded work will be opened; the first being the opening of Moruya hospital accident emergency section in the next few weeks. Each hospital has a new 15-bed ward - a total of 30 new beds. At Moruya hospital the theatres have also been upgraded. Those capital works improvements will make those hospitals top grade establishments well into the next century. Two theatres have also been opened in Bega hospital, which for many years had been in need of upgrading. Those theatres are now first class and can deal with orthopaedic and other necessary surgery. The Bega electorate reaches as far north as Ulladulla, where the South Coast electorate, represented by my colleague John Hatton, commences.

A hospital located at Milton is used by residents of the Bega electorate. They have expressed great concern about capital and recurrent funding for that hospital. A recent report by the Illawarra Area Health Board stated that the lower Shoalhaven was not getting a fair proportion of recurrent expenditure and should have received about \$6 million more. The report recommended that \$3 million should be allocated to that area almost immediately. A great push is being made for extra facilities and beds in Milton hospital. I have told Mr Hatton that I would be only too happy to ensure extra funding, capital or recurrent, in respect of any moves he may make and to support him in every way I can.

I turn now to education and some of the Government's achievements in the Bega electorate during the past few years. Last year the Minister for Education announced that Moruya High School would get a new multipurpose hall. Planning for that project has been done. I believe tenders are out and construction should commence shortly. Stages one and two of a new primary school at Broulee should relieve overcrowding at both Moruya and Sunshine Bay public schools. Recently I announced that the Minister for Education indicated to me that planning will start now for the Tathra Primary School upgrading, a school which for many years has been endeavouring to get extra funding for halls, libraries and classrooms without great success. At one stage a previous government did all this planning but then tried to stall; and attempts to gain funding met with little success.

I am confident that in the next Budget the Minister will give the Bega electorate, though it is not guaranteed, funds to secure additions to the Tathra

Page 844

school. Since the 1991 elections Ulladulla has been part of the Bega electorate. On visiting the Ulladulla Primary School I was shocked at the number of old buildings there. No school in the Bega electorate could compare with it in that regard. I made sure that I saw the Minister on a number of occasions, and I pushed very hard to make sure that school came up to standard. The same applies to the Ulladulla Public School, where planning has commenced. We are hopeful that funds will be made available in the forthcoming Budget so that a start can be made on halls and libraries and also on the many classrooms for the Ulladulla Public School.

Planning should commence on the proposed Merimbula High School. That project has been mooted for a number of years. Eden High School, in the electorate represented by the honourable member for Monaro, is being done up and extended with new classrooms. That school is attended by a number of students from the Bega electorate. The school in adjoining Bega is up to capacity and cannot take in any more students. I recommend, however, that rather than having another building program at Bega or Eden, a school should be

built in the centre at Merimbula, with access for people at Tathra and Merimbula. Work should commence on that school shortly. Though this fact is not widely recognised, the South Coast has been experiencing tremendous growth rates and is one of the fastest growing areas in rural New South Wales. The South Coast has industries that are taking advantage of the recovery in the economy. I refer in particular to tourism, which has been hamstrung in the southern end of the Bega electorate because of the recession in Victoria. The dairy industry, however, is going through a good period and is coming into a very good season. [*Time expired.*]

Mr LANGTON (Kogarah) [8.32]: A few issues raised in the Governor's Speech a couple of weeks ago require some comment. I wish to refer to some problem areas in my electorate of Kogarah. A major problem relates to police strengths and police building. The Kogarah electorate has five or six high schools and a number of primary schools. Kogarah station has an inadequate area for these people to disburse and a very bad hooligan element congregates around the railway station. It is obvious that the police do not have the strength to adequately deal with that problem. I ask the Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services to look at the problem facing Kogarah police. The Minister shares a boundary with me and I am sure he is aware of the problems. There are continuing problems with vandalism and graffiti. Boys from my alma mater, Kogarah Marist High, are often involved in scuffles with students from other schools in the area. The police presence should be increased to try to overcome problems.

Mr Cruickshank: Do they race cars, too?

Mr LANGTON: My area has two major problems. One problem relates to the Bill Whalley Reserve in Percival Street, Bexley, and the other problem concerns Dolls Point, where for many years young people have congregated and raced their cars, much to the annoyance of local residents. I am pleased that the honourable member for Murrumbidgee raised that issue: police assistance is needed to combat the problem. Pensioners in my electorate have been waiting seven years to obtain Department of Housing accommodation. That is just too long.

Young families in my electorate have a seven-year wait for a three-bedroom or four-bedroom house or townhouse. That is an unacceptably long wait. In one case a Mrs Jenkins, who is 100 years old, is renting privately a top floor unit because the department cannot find a ground floor unit for her to move into. This lady is still on the waiting list for Department of Housing accommodation. That is appalling. People well into their eighties and nineties are waiting up to seven years for Department of Housing accommodation. If this Government has any heart at all - I am sure that somewhere there must be some semblance of a heart - it will look into these matters.

There is a problem with transport generally. There is no doubt that the on-time running figures that the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads constantly quotes in this House are fake. I catch a train every day to this place and elsewhere. I do not use a private car. Trains are consistently late. When they are cancelled no information is given. Commuters find out a train has been cancelled only when the next train arrives. Public transport is not what it should be. We must be genuine in our attempts to attract people back to it. My electorate has road problems. Every time I have spoken to the Address-in-Reply debate or to the budget debate in my 10 years in this House, I have raised the issue of the railway overbridge at Allawah. I ask the Minister for Roads to look at that problem.

There has been enormous development in Hurstville, with the development of Westfield - and further development is taking place. Traffic is being funnelled either into the Treacy Street underpass at Hurstville or the overbridge at Allawah. It is a two-lane bridge and is grossly inadequate. The bridge should be rebuilt as a matter of urgency. Early construction should take place of the county road down Elizabeth Street and Swan Lane to meet up with Park Road so as to disperse traffic on to the Princes Highway and to the beach at Ramsgate.

There is still a problem with maintenance and basic construction works at schools in my electorate. A problem at the Sans Souci Public School has recently been brought to my attention. A large number of the toilets are inoperable, taps are leaking and cisterns do not work. That is a dangerous and unhealthy situation. I

ask the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Minister for Tourism and Minister Assisting the Premier to look at that matter. For some time Carlton Public School has been requesting major construction work. The principal of the school, Mr John Warren, and his staff are doing

Page 845

a magnificent job with the facilities they have. The school has not had any major construction work carried out for many years. It is desperately in need of an assembly hall and many other facilities. I have written to the Minister and asked her to give priority to the construction of urgently needed facilities at that school.

In question time today the Minister for Health referred to the new cancer centre at St George Hospital. I congratulate the Government on the magnificent work it has carried out with respect to construction at St George Hospital. The new ward block is magnificent. I see it regularly because my mother is constantly in and out of St George Hospital. It is an excellent building. However, it has some problems. I do not want to carp; I genuinely want to put on record my congratulations to the Government on what it has already done. A couple of weeks ago the Minister and I opened the cancer centre. It is a magnificent facility. Radiotherapy and chemotherapy services are being provided at St George Hospital. Previously patients had to travel to the Prince of Wales Hospital for these services. The Kogarah electorate and the St George area generally have an ageing population. People need these services to be provided near where they live. That is now happening at St George Hospital.

As I said, I do not want to carp, but the Minister should be aware of the problems caused by the privatisation of hospital cleaning services. I have seen these problems with my own eyes. The cleaning standard at the hospital, and at many other hospitals for that matter, has greatly deteriorated since the cleaning service was privatised. The standard of cleanliness is not what it should be in a hospital. I am sure honourable members have heard reports of an increase in infections such as golden staph at that hospital and other hospitals. I also put on record that I direct no criticism at the police in Kogarah under the leadership of Inspector Paul Chaplin. I think the police are doing a magnificent job. I understand that Inspector Chaplin is the officer in charge of the patrol command in the absence of the chief superintendent. He is doing the best he can with the available staff. Clearly, more staff is needed.

I want to touch briefly on the transport matters that the Governor raised in his Speech. The first line of the Governor's Speech under the heading of transport referred to the Government's integrated transport strategy. For the information of the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads, there is no integrated transport strategy; there is only a discussion paper. It is referred to by the Minister only when he feels it is convenient. The Minister threw a document across the table at me the week before last when we were debating transport issues generally. He said, "We haven't got a transport strategy? Here is the transport strategy". On the front it says "Transport strategy", which is fine. However, when one opens it one sees that page 1 reads, "A draft for public discussion".

Later this month the Minister will have been in the job for six years, and still there is no integrated transport strategy. I really wonder at the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads. He has substituted photos in the newspaper for policy, making decisions, and actually doing something about improving public transport. The people in this State, particularly in this city, who need to use public transport are sick and tired of the inaction - poor trains, late trains, dirty trains and unsafe trains. They are sick and tired of not having toilets at railway stations and having to deal with the new automatic ticketing machines. Almost invariably they are switched off because they are not working or will take exact money only because they have run out of change.

All honourable members would know that there is not a cynical bone in my body but if I were cynical I would, perhaps, suggest that this is almost a deliberate ploy by the Government to deter people from using trains. Everything about travelling by train is hard. I was at Gosford railway station recently. Though \$20 million has been spent on renovations, there are no escalators or ramps, just a tiny lift which is broken down more often than not. Twenty millions dollars, and there is not an escalator and there is not a public toilet on the public concourse. To use the public toilet one has to buy a ticket and go down on to the platform. Heavens above! When is the Minister going to understand that attracting people to use public transport is about

providing basic facilities - trains that run on time, trains that are not cancelled, trains that are clean, trains that are safe, and basic facilities at the stations?

The Minister seems incapable of understanding that. His approach to transport planning is based on a public relations strategy rather than a public service strategy. He should understand that he has a major responsibility. In 12 months' time the people of this State will judge the Government on its lack of action over the past six years, particularly the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads. The Government will be thrown out because it has failed to provide the basic services which taxpayers have paid for and which they expect from the Government. An example of the disintegration of our public transport services is the Minister's decision to axe the Bondi train-bus ticket. It was a simple and convenient ticket which has now been replaced by two. I wonder whether the Minister calls that progress. Does he call it integration?

We know that City Circle is saturated and that it cannot carry any more trains during peak hour. But the Minister should genuinely look at rail links which would not use City Circle such as the ones the Labor Party has suggested, the cross-regional links from Hornsby to Parramatta and Liverpool. In government next March the Labor Party will investigate the feasibility - the Government should do it now - of joining the Illawarra line with the East Hills line and thence across to Liverpool and Parramatta. There is more and more pollution in the city, particularly in the west. The children of western Sydney have an extraordinarily high rate of asthma, which is directly

Page 846

related to pollution created by private motor vehicles in the city. The problem can be reduced only by getting more cars off the road by encouraging people to use public transport that meets their needs.

We have heard nothing from the Minister about his plans to expand CityRail's capacity. We found out last week that even the airport link is now in jeopardy - even after the Minister has announced it on 13 separate occasions. Each time there was a big smiling photo of the Minister. Now the proposed train service to the airport has fallen apart because one of the major members of the consortium has pulled out. Publicity has replaced substance in all the transport authorities. The Minister spoke yesterday about new on-time running figures for the buses. It was interesting that he should raise that yesterday because a very good friend visited me yesterday after catching a bus into the city. He said, "I was surveyed about whether the buses are on time". I asked, "How did it work?". He said, "When I was on the bus I was given a survey form and told to fill it out and give it back before getting off the bus".

Again, there is no cynicism in me but the people conducting the survey could not get on a bus which was not running, and they are not likely to get on a bus that was running late. The passengers are asked what they think of the bus service they are on; they are not asked what they think of bus services generally and whether they are on time. It is pretty easy to engineer a result which shows that on-time running figures for buses are fantastic. The figures are as fake as the Minister for Transport. They are as fake as the bus that he painted up to try to look like a tram to run around The Rocks. As I said when he did it, rather than dress up the bus to look like a tram, the people of this State would like him to dress up and act like a transport Minister.

Mr O'Doherty: Is that what you have been trying to do? It is not working.

Mr LANGTON: I am glad the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai interjected. An interesting article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 11 February headed "The Misery Line" was written by journalist Chris McGillion, who moved from the inner city to the Blue Mountains and who travels by train each day. The article reads:

"Abandon hope, all ye who enter here" read the sign over the gate to hell in Dante's *Inferno*. It should be the motto of the railways . . . We seem to have forgotten the value of collective ownership . . . and things *public* are regarded as necessary evils . . . We resort to "services" like public transport reluctantly and wash off the dirt and grime as quickly as we can when we're done.

In other words, just when there's more call than ever on public transport, there's less willingness to invest in it in the interests of sane planning, environmental consciousness, or just plain proof that we really can get along together in a civilised way . . .

Timetables are not made to inform passengers. They are used as a form of sensory deprivation in the gulag.

On and on the article goes. It shows the experience of everyone who catches the train. I am sure the Minister for Transport would have trouble spotting a train. If he went out in his white car and played spotto with his kids and they pointed to a train and asked, "What is that, Dad?" he would not recognise what it was. How many times does he catch a train? The honourable member for Mount Druitt is a daily train traveller, as I am. We catch trains. We talk to people on trains and we know what it is like to travel by train. I wish the Minister would do the same. I mentioned automatic ticketing machines. They are millions of dollars over budget, years behind schedule, and still not working properly. I see queues of people every morning at Kogarah station. There are sight-impaired people, the elderly and people who cannot reach the machines. The machines cannot ask for proof of a person's pensioner status. The ticketing machines allegedly were designed to save money but they are working the other way. Revenue is dropping because people cannot use them. They are not - to use those horrible words - user friendly. The Minister seems to think that if the machine is nicely painted and has flashing lights then it must be good. But the people of this State want a little more than that.

What has the Minister done with roads? He stole \$52 million that was given by the Federal Government to the State Government in untied grants. A couple of years ago Premier Greiner convinced Bob Hawke that Federal road grants should be untied. Nick said, "We will still spend it on roads". Sure! That \$52 million from the Federal Government has gone from the roads budget this year into consolidated revenue to prop up this Government's Budget. The people who pay petrol and road taxes know that they are being cheated; they know their taxes are being stolen from them to prop up the Government's Budget. Thousands of hardworking, creative and dedicated public servants are employed in the transport sector. I only hope their morale holds out long enough so that they can serve under the Australian Labor Party after March next year. We are committed to providing New South Wales with an integrated, safe, efficient and environmentally responsible transport system. We know where to put the public in public transport: we put them first. [*Time expired.*]

Mr HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [8.52]: It is a pleasure to speak in the Address in Reply to raise issues of concern within my electorate and in the broader sense. His Excellency Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair gave his Speech at the commencement of this fourth session of the Fiftieth Parliament, and I acknowledge that he and his wife Shirley have made enormous contributions to New South Wales in the functions of the Governor and his wife. I continue to be impressed by the dedication and sincerity with which they attend to their vice-regal duties. As recently as four weeks ago the Governor and his wife attended the Cubby House Toy Library in Dee Why, which is in the heart of my electorate, to acknowledge the navy cycle team on its journey from Queensland to Nowra. As the team passed through, His Excellency ensured that he was present, basically to say hello and to acknowledge the team's good endeavours in raising money for the disabled. Again

Page 847

he impressed everyone with his concern for those less fortunate in our community. I pass on the best wishes of my electorate to His Excellency and his wife Shirley.

Notwithstanding the best efforts of the Opposition - and I cannot say those best efforts amount to very much - it has been another good year for probably the best government in Australia, that is, the Fahey-Armstrong Government. This Government is presenting to the people of New South Wales the right mix of reform and, if you like, a steady-as-she-goes recipe. We are looking at corporatisation in many areas, but it is with care and concern for members of our community. If we look at members of the Opposition, we must ask whether they are much of an opposition. They certainly cannot touch the sides of the Government; they have not caused us the slightest bit of worry in the last few months. They jump up and down with silly little censure motions, but no one in the big wide world takes very much notice, except to say that obviously the Opposition does not have too much to complain about.

The most senior shadow ministers are in a maelstrom; they have lost direction. One could safely say the Opposition frontbench is in disarray. Nothing is certain in the Labor Party any more except that it has a lack of stability, a lack of clear-cut policy directions, a lack of honesty and a lack of integrity. What hope is there for the Labor Party? None! Bob Carr has slipped from a magnificent record last week of 26 per cent down to 22

per cent. He is still on the great big slide. I remember an article a couple of years ago, probably in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, headed, "Carr crash". How prophetic that this man who is trying to lead the Labor Party out of the wilderness is getting it even more lost, more dehydrated and more confused. The Leader of the Opposition has totally lost touch with the roots of Labor.

Never let it be said that I do not have respect for the Labor Party; I do. In fact, I believe the proud traditions of the Labor Party should be respected, and if Opposition members stuck to their guns, if they behaved in a sensible and sincere way, it would certainly add more to the level of respect that I have for those proud traditions. The problem is that no members of the Opposition are adding to that respect; they are demeaning it. I am sure that many people who are traditional Labor voters worry when they read the paper each morning and learn of the issues that the Labor Party raises in this place. It is a worry for Bob Carr when he cannot give a bit of support to his right-wing colleagues Paul Whelan, who is not so hot in Ashfield, and Peter Anderson, who is looking anything but happy in Liverpool. Perhaps cappuccino Carr or Etruscan sculpture Carr or American history Carr simply does not have the ability to bring great force to assist his important frontbenchers.

Is there anything the Government can say that is supportive of what Labor is doing in New South Wales? Not an awful lot. Andrew Refshauge, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and first leader of the left-wing faction, seems to be lost. Each year as he presents his speeches he says the same things over and over again. He talks about the terrible focus involving private funds in providing hospital services to the public, but he is talking like a 1950s Labor man. While he does that, his senior Federal Labor Minister is announcing in Western Australia policies similar to those that this coalition Government has been implementing for the good of the people of New South Wales. But Andrew Refshauge plays the game, closes his eyes and pretends that it is not happening. It does not matter that he can use all this champagne socialist jargon; he really does not have even the starter's gun to get going on the right policy for New South Wales.

What worries me about the honourable member for Marrickville is that he is also hypocritical. If we look at his debates over the last couple of years, it seems that he and the Leader of the Opposition interchange and plagiarise each other's speeches. They love talking about the gap between reality and rhetoric, but they both use the same terminology. When one looks at the precise terms of what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition says, one sees that entire paragraphs can be taken out of one speech one year and re-read the following year. I guess that is a reflection of the lack of innovative ideas. How ludicrous, how stupid, how nonsensical when he sits and tells Government members that we are silvertails and do not know what the average person is thinking.

In February 1993 he commenced one of his statements by saying, "Having gone to a whole range of toffee-nosed schools and having dealt with the likes of those opposite" - how ridiculous! How stupid! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition attended Knox Grammar School. I am not knocking Knox because it is a great school, but what a stupid, simplistic and facile attitude when debating substantial issues in this House for the direction of New South Wales and the needs and care of its people. I feel sorry for the Labor Party at present. I look forward to the time when it will have leadership in some depth on the frontbench. I look forward to when the Opposition can be effective and does not waste time with silly censure motions aimed at Ministers such as the Minister for Police, who is doing a great job and being far more sincere and dedicated in his approach to his task than any member of the Opposition could hope to be.

My electorate has faced issues in the last 12 months, some of which were addressed by His Excellency. The bushfires, of course, caused major problems in Wakehurst and in neighbouring electorates, especially Pittwater and Davidson. With great luck and much hard work by the bush fire brigade we were able to avoid the consequences of those devastating fires. I place on record my general acknowledgment of the hard work, dedication and sincere way that the people who belong to the bush fire brigades went about their work. In particular I acknowledge the work of the Beacon Hill bush fire brigade, as that unit is located in the heart of my electorate, right on the edge of bushland. I arrived a

Page 848

little early for their annual general meeting last Sunday but I had a cup of coffee and a chat with most of the fellows. The level of dedication of the people who take up the cudgels for the bush fire brigade never ceases to

amaze me. I also place on record my formal thankyou to Bill Herbison, the Warringah-Pittwater fire control officer, and to Tom Thomson, who spent many years training many of the officers who now contribute in such a wonderful way.

I turn now to education. His Excellency said that the Government is concentrating on schools as the centre of its public education system. That is entirely appropriate. I, for one, view the schools in my electorate as performing a critical function. They provide a focus for community hopes and aspirations in Wakehurst. They stimulate a oneness of purpose, and I will never cease to enjoy the experience of visiting schools, to take part in the activities with the children, to share in their learning experiences and to meet with the dedicated teachers who assist in each of the schools in my electorate. I should like to take the House on a walk - literally - through my schools, but I cannot, so perhaps I can refer to a number of them.

Narrabeen school is a small but very spirited school. This year it has about 123 students and as a result, a teaching principal, Mr Catts, who has been working hard since the beginning of last year to make a small school work well. I have been invited to visit that school many times and on the last occasion I was there the cyclic maintenance had been completed and the school was looking great. The efforts made by the staff, the parents and citizens, and the children to improve the inside of the school were certainly to be admired. Further south is Wheeler Heights, which is under the direction of Rosemary Pye, and Collaroy Plateau school under the direction of Marjorie Mackie. These two schools are not as small as the others but they provide quality education and they have a different emphasis which make them, if you like, attractive to different groups of students. Certainly Wheeler Heights school has a strong emphasis on environmental issues. It has a lovely shade house in which the students produce many rare and endangered eucalypts that they send to the South Coast.

Mr O'Doherty: Like the honourable member for South Coast.

Mr HAZZARD: Like the honourable member for South Coast, as the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai says. Collaroy Plateau school has a wonderful dance group and a great emphasis on music. Marjorie Mackie is constantly out and about, letting the community know what a wonderful school it is. The principal of the Fisher Road school for the disabled is Susan Baresic. I could go on all night with superlatives about the wonderful work done at that school for children who are in need of that little bit of extra love and care. Two years ago I was pleased to play a part in getting the outside balcony areas raised so that children in wheelchairs and on crutches could get into their classrooms.

Cromer school is the biggest school in my electorate. Beverley Adkins, the principal, offers a wonderful program for gifted and talented students. The whole school has a sense of purpose in creating an environment where education has a paramount role in the lives of the children. I am disappointed that the 40 kilometres an hour speed zone promised by the Roads and Traffic Authority has not reached the two side streets next to Cromer Public School. I will be looking forward to the Minister addressing that problem as soon as possible.

Trish Cavanagh is the principal of North Curl Curl Primary School. I had the delight a few weeks ago of attending the school when sixth grade students were given their prefect status. The children and the staff have an unbelievable spirit of community values. I certainly add my support for that school. Mr Tom Bradford is the principal of Dee Why Primary School, with students from more than 30 different nationalities. It is certainly a centre of multiculturalism. Mr Bradford has successfully turned that school into focusing on multiculturalism, which has been of huge benefit to the school, and I congratulate him and the school generally on that. I was pleased that he was confident enough of me to invite me to take part in his quality assurance program. I was equally pleased to see the school did so well.

Les Beckenham is the principal of Beacon Hill school. The first time I was introduced to the school was when it had a problem getting some work out of the Department of School Education. The property services department seemed to be a bit slow on the uptake, but with a little push that was fixed up fairly soon. The school has had its cyclic maintenance and is looking great. That is another school with a great group of kids. The kindergarten class has a wonderful little white rabbit that epitomises the good will and spirit of the children of that school.

The principal of Brookvale school has gone about turning it into a dedicated focus for multicultural activities. It has a huge range of students and last year they managed to get a band up and running within six months of their speech night. I congratulate them. Manly High School is a selective school. Terry Buggy is at the helm and with the capable assistance of many teachers and senior students he is progressing that school from being a general school to a selective high school. In its general school sense it was an excellent school but in its selective role it is performing a fantastic function. The number of students trying to get into the school every year is increasing. I am pleased that the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs is to visit that school in two weeks' time to open a library extension involving expenditure of almost \$400,000. That wonderful new facility recognises the needs of the school.

Peter Page is the principal of Cromer High School, a centre of excellence. It is a general high school. Last year Premier Fahey visited the school and was enormously impressed with many aspects of

Page 849

it. I wish to comment on its dance teacher, Deirdre O'Connor. The dance and music at that school are excellent. Judy King is the principal of the wonderful Beacon Hill Technology High School, which extends the boundaries of high school education and places an emphasis on technology throughout the system.

I must add my voice to the concerns about the lack of funds being expended on breast cancer. It is extraordinary that though six women a day die from breast cancer in Australia, we are spending only the equivalent of 20¢ per woman per year on that disease. I appreciate that there are other pressures on the budgets, but the reality is that we should be spending at least 10 times more than \$1.4 million on fighting breast cancer in women. I add my voice strongly against those who are making the silly decisions to spend a pittance on such a vital issue of women's health.

I have dedicated my last three years to try to increase child care facilities in my electorate. I am bitterly disappointed that Greentrees kindergarten may close tomorrow as a result of a conflict that exists between the private owner of the kindergarten and the private owner of the freehold. Until about 5 o'clock today 100 three-year-old and four-year-old children were to be without a pre-school until the Minister for Community Services, after many discussions and a great deal of worry, was able to offer \$67,000 to refit Narraweena school, which is only a couple of hundred metres up the road from this kindergarten, into a kindergarten. I am committed to getting more child care for the electorate of Wakehurst and I want to do that with great gusto and enthusiasm. I want the Minister for Community Services to seriously consider funding a child care centre. It is not just the west or the south that needs child care; the north needs it too.

Mr Longley: The Federal Government must get its act together.

Mr HAZZARD: I want to see the Federal Government get off its butt and give some decent money to this State so it can be put into child care. I am grateful for the endeavours of members of the Staysafe committee. I look forward to the continuation of my term as chairman, and to being a productive member of the committee; and I enjoy working with my Labor, Liberal and National Party colleagues on the committee. I express my thanks to members of the Police Service in my electorate, particularly senior police officers Inspector Ted Gilligan, Inspector Neville Keogh and Chief Superintendent Bill McIntosh, for their hard work. Also, I look forward to the establishment of a better transport system in the electorate of Wakehurst. It is about time that a decent transport system operated from the city to the peninsula. I know it will involve a considerable amount of money and a lot of consideration, but I look forward to assistance from the Government and some viable options. [*Time expired.*]

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt) [9.12]: I congratulate the Governor, His Excellency Rear Admiral Sinclair, on his reappointment. Obviously, no thanks are due to the Premier of New South Wales who, as has been publicly stated in this House and elsewhere, planned to replace him. The extension of the Governor's term of office was probably one of the few issues in respect of which the Labor Party and the National Party had a common goal. The release of the Opposition's alternative program was a first in an Address-in-Reply debate. Honourable members will note the contrast between the positive initiatives outlined in the speech of the Leader

of the Opposition and what most people believe are boring proposals by the Government.

On page 11 of the circulated copy of the Governor's Speech, under the heading "Law and Justice", brief mention was made of legal profession reforms. Under the heading of "Consumer Affairs" the Leader of the Opposition mentioned real competition for conveyancing consumers. From the outset I must say that the so-called great microeconomic reform of conveyancing has been botched, as the Opposition warned it would be when the legislation was debated in this House two years ago. It has delivered more control of conveyancers to the Law Society of New South Wales, to the extent that the Opposition questions whether there will ever be fair competition between solicitors and conveyancers involved in the real estate field.

It should be noted that while the Governor's Speech highlighted the Legal Profession Reform Bill as a positive for the Government, the Fahey Government's Attorney General, the Hon. John Hannaford, has referred to it as a disaster. Playing to a captive audience - although it was difficult to say who was the captive - at a meeting of the Law Society of New South Wales, Mr Hannaford, as reported in last Saturday's *Sydney Morning Herald*, attacked scrutiny by the Trade Practices Commission envisaged by this reform. The reason for his concerns are obvious. The Trade Practices Commission represents outside scrutiny of the legal profession - scrutiny which the profession's supporters have resisted in this House for many years. An article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of Saturday, 12 March 1994, under the heading "New regime for lawyers condemned 'disaster'," and referring to Mr Julian Disney said in part:

... NSW's Legal Profession Act was a good example of effective reform but added that it could have gone further.

Mr Disney went on to outline some dangers. The report states:

Dangers included delays in achieving reform, and "a tendency towards a one-size-fits-all approach" which had more to do more with trading corporations than the interests of ordinary Australians. But it could be a "useful blunderbuss" to force the legal profession to face reform, he said.

I emphasise this point. The article continued:

While he supported the increased involvement of non-lawyers in the provision of legal services, he warned of the creation of new monopolies, such as one run by a small clique of licensed conveyancers and lawyers.

The Conveyancers Licensing Act has been in operation since October 1992. The intended effect of the Act was to not only break the long-held monopoly

Page 850

of solicitors on conveyancing, but also to introduce competition, a real microeconomic reform for the benefit of the conveyancing consumers in New South Wales. It is in respect of that point that I believe a number of questions must be asked. If this was such a microeconomic reform, why are there only five licensed conveyancers when the Act has been in operation for more than 16 months? Why did it take six months for the formation of the Conveyancers Licensing Committee? Why did it take nearly 10 months for the committee to issue the first certificate of eligibility, which was not issued to a conveyancer already practising in New South Wales but issued as a result of the Federal Government's Mutual Recognition Act and complementary State legislation?

Why did the setting up of the mechanisms which were necessary to bring the Act into operation take so long that the 12-month appointment of provisional committee meetings, as prescribed by the Act, was exceeded by another three months, bringing the constitution of the committee into doubt and perhaps resulting in decisions of the committee being of no effect and putting the Law Society nominees in a position of greater influence than was intended by the Act? It was not intended by the Act but obviously was intended by the Government. How does one become a conveyancer and compete with members of the Law Society in the conveyancing field? First, in order to obtain a conveyancer's licence under the transitional provisions of the Act, conveyancers - after compliance with the two-year rule which is now in reality four years - must have their accounts inspected by Law Society trust account inspectors. That was not the purpose of the Act, which

provided that all accounts may be inspected but not necessarily by the Law Society.

By a practice of the Government and the Conveyancers Licensing Committee, that duty was given over to the conveyancers' only competitor - that is, the Law Society of New South Wales. If they survive that scrutiny, applicants are required to pass three examinations assessed by an examining subcommittee comprising a majority of lawyers. In other words, to be licensed as conveyancers, applicants are required to pass the scrutiny of four lawyers nominated by the Law Society and a report by Law Society trust account inspectors. Is it any wonder that, the Law Society being the representative body of the applicants' competitors, there are only five licensed conveyances in New South Wales? Is it any less a wonder that conveyancers, disappointed and disillusioned with the committee, fought so hard to ensure that licensed conveyancers would be appointed to the Conveyancers Licensing Committee? That begs the question: is this system of scrutiny and licensing the level playing field that is supposed to exist between conveyancers and members of the Law Society?

At the annual general meeting of the Liverpool-Fairfield branch of the Law Society a senior officer of the society expressed the view that licensed conveyancers are a subclass of solicitor. It was suggested that history might repeat itself in the course of time - perhaps in 10 years - and, as they were in 1935, conveyancers may effectively be phased out and given the opportunity to become solicitors. It was further stated that conveyancers would be seven day wonders. Obviously, the people who have been given the duty of regulating and policing conveyancers have no real commitment to their continued operation in this State. It was also reported at the meeting of the Law Society that trust account inspections and other responsibilities of the society under the Conveyancers Licensing Act would be used to keep the number of conveyancers limited. Is this position, as publicly expressed, the official policy of the Law Society? Does not this declaration of intent underline an obvious conflict of interest that exists between the conveyancers and the regulatory body, their competitors, the Law Society of New South Wales?

The Law Society has now clearly shown that it cannot, as a professional union, represent the interests of its lawyer members and administer the statutory provisions of an Act against the only legitimate competitors of its members. The senses boggle at the proposition of a system under which the Government regulates the Opposition. In the market-place that proposition becomes even more absurd. The only possible resolution from the Law Society's point of view must be to either eliminate the competitors or, failing that, to absorb them into the larger establishment. Both options are easily explained; they cannot be justified as being in the public interest and serve well the interests of the members of the society as prescribed by its constitution.

If such actions and statements are not questions of dishonesty or the ability to conduct oneself fairly, then they must be a fulfilment of the obligations of an organisation as prescribed by its charter, a charter that expresses the reasons for the organisation's existence. One of the principal objectives set out in the society's memorandum and articles of association is to "represent generally the views of the profession". Such an objective is not conducive and clearly admits to little if no objectivity. In relation to the issue of double standards, the society has made a number of complaints regarding advertising by conveyancers. No doubt motivated by its members, the society has sent these complaints to the Conveyancers Licensing Committee, assuming they will be discussed at the time an application for a conveyancer's licence is being determined. Obviously the complaint is made while the eligibility of an applicant is being assessed.

I understand that in such cases the Association of Property Conveyancers has always acted courteously and quickly. I suppose one would expect that of a professional body that has been granted its present status under an Act that has now passed through this Parliament. However, when an offensive advertisement, endorsed by the Law Society and misinforming the public about conveyancers, was placed by the South West Slopes Law Society in the *Daily Advertiser* in Wagga Wagga and an article written by Wayne Sharwood, solicitor, on behalf of that society appeared in the same publication, they

Page 851

were made the subject of a written complaint by the Association of Property Conveyancers. Guess what? No action was taken. That advertisement, of which I have a copy, states:

Buying or selling your home may be the most important investment you ever make.

That is true, but the advertisement then says in bold print, "Only A Solicitor can - ". The advertisement then reads, "Ensure that the transaction proceeds smoothly and trouble free". That is false; conveyancers are also able to do that. The advertisement continues, "Advise you about your mortgage and your dealings with financial institutions". That is also false; conveyancers are also able to do that. The advertisement continues, "Advise you about taxation consequences (capital gains Tax: Stamp Duty, Land Tax etc)" and "Suggest the best way to buy your property (e.g. Joint names, through a company etc)". That is all misleading because all of those duties can be fulfilled by a licensed conveyancer. I might add that all of those duties are fulfilled by a secretary in a lawyer's office.

Service costs are also a matter of concern. Different standards seem to be expected from conveyancers and lawyers. I understand that licence applications by some conveyancers are rejected on the basis of practice requirements if the Law Society report alleges that there may have been some undisclosed agency costs or service fees relating to the ordering of survey, building and pest inspection reports or the arranging of insurance policies for purchaser clients. If a conveyancer's licence application is rejected on that basis, the only course open is a very expensive appeal to the Supreme Court. No one, of course, condones the practice of accepting undisclosed commissions. However, the New South Wales Solicitors Manual states, under the heading, "Solicitors as agents for insurance company":

[12031] The Council -

That is obviously referring to the Law Society Council:

- referring to a general ruling on the conduct by a solicitor of another business . . . and to the not uncommon practice for solicitors to act as agents for insurance companies as a convenient means of dealing with their clients' fire and general insurance requirements, was of the opinion that this business would fall within the Council's general policy under the heading above referred to.

The receipt by a solicitor of commission on premiums paid through his agency is referred to in Lund's *Guide to Professional Conduct* as follows:

The general principles of full disclosure to the client and no retention without his consent apply to all commissions received by a solicitor, unless they are of a minor nature (for example, the commission paid by an insurance company on a premium relating to a client's house insurance policy).

I understand that the amount is commonly between \$40 and \$70. It would seem that it is not uncommon for solicitors to obtain trivial commissions when executing conveyances. Is it then the case that one rule applies to conveyancers and another to solicitors? According to the standards set by the Law Society's manual, to which I have just referred, undisclosed commissions to solicitors of trivial amounts are tolerated. But when the same practice involved small amounts of money, and even when it was questionable whether the service fee was undisclosed, the Conveyancers Licensing Committee uses this as an excuse to reject a licence application.

That happened in the case of Mrs V. Aird of the Hermitage Conveyancing Company at Penrith. Her application has been rejected, and I understand that she now must now take the matter before a court. She was a successful conveyancer whose references would be the envy of any solicitor. However, she has been targeted by local solicitors because her business is too successful, a fact known throughout the Penrith real estate industry. She must now appeal her case to the Supreme Court. However, bearing in mind the printed attitude of the Law Society in the New South Wales Solicitors Manual, I call upon the Attorney General to request the Conveyancers Licensing Committee to review its attitude to trivial discrepancies and, more particularly, to this matter.

Every action of the Law Society that influences and affects the operation of the Conveyancers Licensing Act must be examined and measured in the context of the society's charter and the statements made by one of its most senior officers. Licensed conveyancers provide an important professional service - some call it a specialised legal service - but that does not turn conveyancers into lawyers or affiliate conveyancers with

organisations that represent lawyers' interests any more than the Australian Medical Association represents dentists or optometrists. The importance of the long-term survival of independent conveyancers is evidenced by the disproportionate effect five licensed conveyancers are having on the conveyancing market. Licensed conveyancers have had to realise the expediency of the Law Society's role under the Act.

The conveyancing public, licensed conveyancers and even lawyers are quickly realising that licensed conveyancers are not lawyers and that the Law Society should be removed from the provisions of the Conveyancers Licensing Act if there is ever to be fair and open competition in the market-place. The fundamental questions about the Law Society's control of its competitors - the conveyancers - are simply these. Is the society able to be objective? Will the society be consistent? I have just highlighted the case of Mrs Aird, who has been refused a licence because of a matter referred to in the solicitors' manual as trivial. In my view that is imposing the death penalty for a charge of offensive behaviour. Is this action consistent?

I refer to a number of cases reported in a document titled "Disciplinary Reports" issued by the Legal Profession Disciplinary Tribunal. I am not suggesting there is anything wrong or untoward about these cases. I will merely use the name Freeman to identify the first case. In that case the solicitor altered a contract for the sale of land so as to avoid

Page 852

the payment of penalty stamp duty. The tribunal considered the role of solicitors in conveyancing transactions. A finding of professional misconduct was made and the solicitor was fined \$8,000. I remind honourable members that a monetary fine was imposed in that case. The solicitor was not suspended and continued to practice, but in the trivial matter to which I have referred a licence was refused.

Another case involved a person called Ellison. In that case a solicitor misled a client on numerous occasions for a period in excess of two years as to the progress of the client's third party claim. The solicitor was fined \$7,000 and ordered to pay compensation - another monetary fine. The solicitor was not suspended or struck off and continues to practice. Another case involved a person called Weingarth. In that case a solicitor signed mortgage documents, falsely stating that she was a witness to the mortgagors' signatures. The solicitor signed a statutory declaration that falsely stated that she had witnessed the clients' signatures and taken declarations. The solicitor was found guilty of professional misconduct and was fined \$1,000.

Is the society's attitude consistent when monetary fines are imposed on solicitors in cases of malpractice while conveyancers are being refused licences as a result of much lesser offences? When determining serious allegations against solicitors, the Legal Profession Disciplinary Tribunal imposes monetary fines and allows them to practice. Yet when Law Society inspectors go after a conveyancer they expect the ultimate penalty of refusal of a licence for a matter which, at the worst, is trivial by the standards of the legal profession and questionable when one hears from the clients who are supposed to be the victims of the so-called crimes. No complaints are made by the clients. As a matter of fact, I have references to support these cases. I use the Legal Profession Reform Act and the Conveyancers Licensing Act as examples in response to what the Government is doing in the legal area. I ask that the Attorney General address these matters in the next 12 months. I believe reform in that area is much needed, as are amendments to the Conveyancers Licensing Act.

Mr CRUICKSHANK (Murrumbidgee) [9.32]: I congratulate the honourable member for Mount Druitt on his wide-ranging speech. With 20 minutes to go he was talking about lawyers and with only one minute remaining he was still talking about lawyers. I hope that all the lawyers feel suitably chastened after that admonition. It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Address in Reply to the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor, Peter Ross Sinclair, on 1 March. As in all cases there are bouquets and there are brickbats, but the bouquets for the Government's performance in matters affecting the electorate of Murrumbidgee are outstanding.

In the overall picture one can talk about the winning of the year 2000 Olympic bid, an idea first mooted by Nick Greiner and brought to fruition by Premier John Fahey and his able-bodied helpers who went to Europe to boost Sydney's bid. It will give Australia a shot in the arm. It will put Australia on the map. It is hard to talk about it other than in the abstract, because it has not happened. As an Australian I feel that the country has so

much to offer the rest of the world and that the Olympic Games will be a showcase for Australia in the year 2000. The construction programs undertaken by the Government to ensure that the Games will run successfully are admirable.

There has been a remarkable lack of dissension from the various bodies involved. The private sector is co-operating in a magnificent way, which bodes extremely well for the hosting of the worldwide Games in the year 2000. The Olympic Games will create an extra 90,000 tourism-related and Games-related jobs as well as generating in the vicinity of \$3 billion worth of revenue for New South Wales in the next 10 years. New South Wales has a lot going for it. I remember the revolutionary changes brought about by Nick Greiner, and they have continued. The Standard and Poor's triple-A rating still stands. Standard and Poor's commented particularly on the deficit and debt reductions in this State during 1992-93, reversing the trends of previous years. New South Wales is the prime tourist destination in Australia. It accounts for approximately 70 per cent of all international visitors and about 30 per cent of all domestic visitors.

In my electorate of Murrumbidgee I doubt whether any previous government has a record such as this Government has been able to achieve. This year \$5 million has been spent on health in the Murrumbidgee area. A brand new hospital has been opened in Ganmain-Coolamon and a brand new hospital has been opened at Leeton, as have nursing homes, and of course area health boards have been established. Although area health boards have been spectacular in regionalising services and have brought together infrastructure that will provide an improved medical technology service, I hope they will ensure delivery of health services to people in the more remote areas. As in previous years, the Governor's Speech outlined the gap that exists in the understanding of honourable members in this place, other than members of the National Party such as myself, about what it means to live in a remote area. Remote areas do not have public transport, buses or trains, or taxis. It is a debilitating factor for development in country areas.

The Government has performed well in the area of education. Initially I opposed Minister Chadwick's initiative to spend more money on Yanco Agricultural High School. It was a boys' school, one of the few boarding schools in this country maintained by a State Government. But it was decided that it was not fair that in a country area it should remain a boys' school only. It is now a very successful co-educational school. It has been transformed in stages. The construction of new dormitories and rooms for female students has begun. It is functioning well, against all the predictions of doomsdayers. My attitude has been reversed entirely, as I have seen the success of the transformation. I must have been influenced by the

Page 853

old boys and the young boys at the school who were adamant that they did not want girls in their school. But on an equity basis, when one thinks about it, it was high time a government spent money in that area for such a worthy purpose.

Ardlethan Central School has a new administration block as well as telematic learning programs. I should like to remind honourable members that the new distance education equipment available in country schools, with its overheads, computers, microphones, faxes, et cetera, puts kids who live hundreds of miles apart into one classroom. It takes a little while to get the kids to adjust, but once they do it is just like a single classroom. Suddenly, the skills of a teacher in Urana, perhaps 100 miles away, the only teacher in the area who can teach Japanese, are available to students throughout the region via distance education. The hall at Leeton Public School is magnificent. I did not realise it would be quite as big, but it is marvellous.

Mrs Lo Po': You were very lucky.

Mr CRUICKSHANK: I have to agree, we were lucky. I do not think too many more halls are being built these days. But that is what enhances the quality of life in the country and encourages people to stay in country areas. It provides them with an education equal to anything students can get anywhere else. A lot of great things have been done in my electorate, apart from mundane things, but they cost a lot of money and require a lot of organisation. The sewerage augmentation scheme in Griffith has been extended to the villages around Griffith. It is an unusual country town with surrounding villages left over from the old days, lending quite a charm to the region. They are all connected to the sewerage system, which has been a marvellous

acquisition.

The main differentiation between country areas and city areas is the ability of Ministers and governments to devise an appropriate set of rules, regulations and laws. Although we are all one people, there is a big Dividing Range. Unfortunately, we are finding that much of the legislation and regulations that work very well in city and coastal areas that are densely populated is not adequate for the more remote areas of this State. As an example, I refer to a little town called Barmedman, with a population of about 160. It has had a mineral pool for about 40 years. Nobody has ever climbed out of that pool and felt sick or has had to be taken to hospital; in fact, no one has even had a serious accident there. The water is a little bit turbid - I know that - and there is a bacteria content in the pool. However, we really do not need people who know all about public health laws relating to swimming pools trying to apply the types of laws that would apply, for example, to North Sydney pool, where 30,000 people might be in the pool over a weekend. The mind boggles. It is probably just about like a soup by the time Monday morning comes around.

Mr Chappell: A soup of what?

Mr CRUICKSHANK: I will leave that to the Minister's imagination. On a big carnival weekend 400 individuals might use the Barmedman pool. Unfortunately, health officials said the pool had to be closed and that it could not possibly operate outside the health regulations. That, of course, endeared them to the locals no end. The biggest single feature in Barmedman is the mineral pool. There has been much toing and froing. Signs now have to be put up. The original signs were of the skull and cross bones type saying, "If you swim here death is certain". The signs conveyed that sort of message; however, they have since been modified. But it has taken an endless battle with bureaucrats and Ministers to try to get some sort of accommodation for a pool in a remote area that, unfortunately, is subject to the same public health laws that apply in city areas. I could draw the same analogy with regard to education. There is a different system of education in remote country areas which accommodates for distance. If that can apply to education, why not to other things?

Many bureaucrats have a definite reluctance in relation to the installation of mobile mammography units in the more remote areas. These units are vital. Mr Acting-Speaker, you mentioned that about six women in Australia a day die from breast cancer. I suggest to the House that if men had a similar problem with some parts of their bodies, the required unit would be on every street-corner. Such is not the case. Women are working very hard to overcome the problem. One woman has raised over \$300,000. In my town people have raised something like \$30,000 in the space of six months - all for the acquisition not of a stationary mammography unit but a mobile unit.

A mobile unit is needed to go to remote areas. As I said earlier, there are no trains, buses or taxis for these people to utilise these sorts of services. I sometimes wonder whether the Minister for Health really understands the enormity of the problems of regional boards, where inveterate empire builders are in full power, in full sway and in full flight. They do not want mobile mammography units because they do not make any money out of them; but they would make money out of stationary mammography units. Unfortunately, such considerations are coming to the fore much to the detriment of women living in country areas.

There are many aspects of the Governor's Speech that I would like to speak about, but my time is running out. We all know that the business of democracy, unfortunately, is inevitably under threat. One of the places where it is most under threat is within the Parliament of New South Wales - and in every other democratically elected Parliament - in the way in which we conduct our business. As honourable members know, I am chairman of the Regulation Review Committee. That committee has been designed to try to make regulations more democratic, more acceptable to people. Ministers and governments do not seem to realise that laws, legislation, rules and regulations are not something that belongs in a supermarket; they are not something that the individual can come along, pick up and say,

Page 854

"I don't like that one, I'll put it back". Once we have the legislation or the regulation, that is what we are lumbered with, whether we like it or not.

Is it too much to ask that legislation, Acts or regulations be acceptable to the community? The only way they will be acceptable to the community is to ensure that is what the community wants. Perhaps the cost of democracy is high - the cost of trying to ensure that legislation is fair and equitable. But there are costs associated with ensuring that it is fair to the community at large. That is something governments will have to take on board more and more. At the moment bureaucrats are saying to their Ministers, "Look, we are carrying out all this work for the Regulation Review Committee. It is costing a bundle; it is costing a fortune; we cannot get through our work". In reality, they do not want to do it because they are being questioned; they are being asked to justify their decisions.

It is not unreasonable to ask governments why the same demands should not apply to legislation brought into this Parliament. At present in New South Wales there is no formal assessment procedure to test the merits and weaknesses of legislative proposals. Usually the only formal information Parliament receives to explain each bill is the explanatory memorandum prepared by the Parliamentary Counsel. Occasionally white papers and, more recently, exposure draft bills have been prepared, but these are done on an ad hoc basis. Parliament, to a large degree, depends on the amount and quality of information furnished by the bureaucracy, through the Minister, to the Parliament.

The course followed by a government department in dealing with its proposals and presenting information to the Minister is really left to the complete discretion of that department, in just the same way as it happens with the Regulation Review Committee - only now departments are being brought to account. In July 1986 the New South Wales Government issued a handbook setting out the procedures by which the Cabinet system operates in New South Wales. This handbook was specifically issued to assist Ministers and officials involved in the preparation of documents to be submitted for Cabinet consideration. The handbook, which is still current, does not impose any obligation on a Minister to carry out an assessment of the economic and social costs and benefits, both direct and indirect, of the proposed action, apart from its financial impact on government funds.

The handbook does not require the Minister to make an assessment of the alternative options or to advise Cabinet of the course that would involve the greatest net benefit or the least net cost to the community. No mention is made in the handbook of the need, in appropriate cases, for a consultation program or of giving the public relevant notice of the proposal so that comments can be sought and evaluated. The automatic confidentiality accompanying most Cabinet proposals limits the potential for community discussion on them. If members want to know more about that, they should just ask the backbenchers. These factors limit Parliament's ability to produce useful legislation.

I believe that the Government should move as a matter of priority to correct the lack of assessment criteria in relation to the presentation of bills coming before the Parliament. Such an action would produce a more informed Parliament, a more informed public and a reliable base for decision-making. Legislation committees are no substitute for Parliament's own scrutiny. In fact, sometimes they are a waste of time. Last year one of them presented no recommendations, merely a summary of evidence taken at several days of hearings. If bills are accompanied by proper supporting information assessing those proposals, the need for such committees will fall away, together with the substantial cost of them. The greatest fear of every leader of this House is that he or she will suddenly run short of business. This practice works against adequate assessment and is not in the interests of the community. We need less legislation and more of it to be properly considered. People want to have more say in government and their views genuinely examined. I will give a short but all too typical example of such legislation. On 2 July 1991 the then Minister for the Environment introduced the National Parks and Wildlife (Aboriginal Ownership) Amendment Bill. This is what the legislation committee said of it:

Although the Minister's second reading speech and media release examined the reasons for a number of the principal provisions no attempt was made to provide the public with any thorough dissection of this complex legislation including its operational costs and benefits. No comparison was carried out of the merits of the schemes operating in other Australian States or Territories that had formed the basis for the legislation.

If I bought half a dozen cars in varying condition and without any specifications or lists of defects, how many

would I sell? None. As long as this state of affairs remains the New South Wales public will suffer. I previously touched on this subject in the House during the debate on the mining bill in 1992. Without going into the various aspects of it, the Parliament had to be satisfied with three pages in *Hansard* even though the bill ran to 181 pages. Had that bill been a regulation, its lack of assessment would have been unacceptable under the Subordinate Legislation Act. That is a ridiculous situation. I can say categorically that departments prefer putting up a bill to putting up a regulation. A bill is seen as a soft option these days because a regulation has to be financially and socially justified. That is what our Regulation Review Committee has achieved. When the 1993 Mabo legislation was introduced in the Commonwealth Parliament the accompanying explanatory memorandum devoted only one paragraph to the financial impact of the legislation. The paragraph apologised for not being able to determine the effect of the bill other than to say that the major burden would fall on the States. That example suggests that amateurism in the presentation of legislation is not restricted to New South Wales. I commend the Governor's Speech. [*Time expired.*]

Page 855

Mr GAUDRY (Newcastle) [9.52]: It is a pleasure as the member for Newcastle to contribute to Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech.

Mr Scully: A good electorate.

Mr GAUDRY: It is a good electorate and a city showing the benefit of years of work on behalf of the citizens of the city since the earthquake to ensure its physical and economic recovery. An important part of the Governor's Speech, the part on urban renewal and infrastructure, relates to Newcastle. It states:

My Government is planning strategically for sustainable urban development. To this end, two discussion papers, Sydney's Future and an Integrated Transport Strategy, were released in October 1993 for public comment. The key strategic directions presented in the reports will enable a better environment to be created in response to water and air quality concerns and will support the maintenance of a competitive regional economy. Final strategies will be completed during 1994.

"Sydney's Future" as it is quaintly called, in effect is a greater metropolitan regional strategy for the Illawarra, Sydney and Newcastle. Whilst the draft of the strategy was accepted as perhaps an idea for the future, many concerns have been raised with me by Newcastle people about the potential impacts of the policy on lifestyle and particularly economic development in the Newcastle region. If there is one thing that is deficient in the document, it is a commitment to infrastructure development and assisting economic development in the region. It is understandable that the Government is reviewing its 1988 metropolitan strategy because that patently has not been successful.

Sydney is continuing its urban sprawl to the west with huge population growth in that area. There are problems with the disposal of sewage, blue-green algae in the Hawkesbury-Nepean and the whole waste problem of Sydney. The document anticipates that the region's population will grow by 800,000 to 5.2 million by the year 2010. It is expected that 100,000 people will move to the Newcastle-lower Hunter area and perhaps 80,000 homes will be built there in the next 20 years. Local government, political representatives and the community will not accept that type of growth unless it is underpinned by preceding economic development and good planning so that existing infrastructure is not overstrained and the quality of life in the Newcastle area is not lowered.

I turn specifically to water and water quality. On 17 January the Hunter Water Corporation put out a blue-green algae alert for the lower Williams River that stated that the Williams River, the principal water supply for the whole lower Hunter area, feeding into the Grahamstown Dam, the principal water supply to Newcastle, is being impacted on by developments in the Williams River catchment. If that problem is being experienced now, we must question whether the extra 100,000 people could be supplied with water and sewerage services without upgrading of the infrastructure beyond the planned upgrading of the Grahamstown Dam.

When I questioned the Hunter Water Corporation at a regular briefing - I commend the corporation for conducting the briefings - between the corporation and the Hunter task force I was advised that the corporation had not been contacted and that a submission from the corporation had not been sought in relation to the draft discussion paper "Sydney's Future". Water is important for the home and for industry, and the implications should have been taken into account in the first draft. Future planning must take into account a comprehensive review of existing infrastructure in relation to population movements. Newcastle is at present undergoing urban consolidation, a very sound policy. Through the Building Better Cities program and the Honeysuckle project \$100 million will be spent in the area over the next four years. This will assist with urban consolidation, particularly in the Honeysuckle area but also in the areas surrounding the inner city. A quarter of the money will be spent in the development of housing on the Honeysuckle in accordance with an affordable housing strategy in the inner city area.

There is development pressure right around Newcastle - in the Maryland-Minmi area, west of the lakes, from Pinney Beach south of Swansea to Fern Bay in the north. Tremendous pressure is being applied for the release of land. That is of great concern to me and to many people in the Newcastle area because without the very best planning controls Newcastle may suffer the same sort of problems being suffered by western Sydney today. There should be more consultation with the community by the Department of Planning in relation to the development of the "Sydney's Future" document. Any plans for the increase of population in the Newcastle area should be accompanied by government proposals for economic development of the area.

I refer to the integrated transport study, which is to go along with the "Sydney's Future" document. Newcastle has its own Hunter region integrated transport study. It has been a little slow because of the lack of up-to-date statistical information when the consultancy brief was carried through in the first stage. The one weakness is that the Government persisted in refusing to accept the Civic to Newcastle railway link as part of the overall study. That attitude weakens the study and precludes a comprehensive look at the overall transport needs of the Hunter Valley. The retention of that rail link has tremendous community support. I was pleased to read this morning in the *Newcastle Morning Herald* of a consultant's plan linking the Hunter Street Mall and the foreshore via a proposal for upgraded access across the railway line with controlled crossings. That is an important step being taken by city planners.

One negative aspect in relation to transport in Newcastle has been the failure of the Hunter Port Authority and other planners in the Newcastle area to take advantage of the one-off chance given by the Honeysuckle Building Better Cities funding project to examine the heavy truck transport routes linking the port to the F3 freeway, in particular the west of the lake transport route. The people of Carrington in

Page 856

particular have had great difficulty with the existing level of port traffic, whether it be with the current loading of wheat from the Graincorp building and the overnight movement of trucks in Denison Street or the loading of cargoes from the new cargo terminals. Over the past two to three years the residents of Carrington have applied pressure so that they could work with the Hunter Port Authority to achieve a better transport route. Unfortunately, that joint consultation has not come to fruition.

The Hunter Port Authority and the city planners must take urban industrial interface into account and do something about the transport links to enable residents to continue their pleasant lifestyle close to the city. The developments at Honeysuckle are progressing, whether at the Carrington site where Mirvac will invest and build houses on the new residential estate; the fisherman's wharf, which has been completed and has fishing vessels tied up; the Wickham Public School, which is to be recycled into accommodation units; or the Civic Workshops, which are progressing rapidly towards completion. Evidence can be seen of public sector investment and private sector investment in regard to Mirvac. Everyone in Newcastle will be delighted when the investment level is again lifted and more and more of the Honeysuckle development comes on stream.

The port of Newcastle had record exports last year. Significant investment in the port is being undertaken by Port Waratah Coal Services with the building of a second wharf at Kooragang Island, which is progressing rapidly. The good news for the Newcastle metalwork industry is winning the topside module contract, which is being built for Esso-BHP by Transfield. It will stay the drift in jobs that has occurred in the industries in the

past few years. The determination on 15 December that the three minehunter tenderers - Transfield, Australian Defence Industries and Australian Submarine Corporation - have all chosen Newcastle as the preferred site is good news for New South Wales and Newcastle in particular. I pay tribute to the city businesses that are obviously committing themselves to bidding for the project. Businesses and industries have lifted their quality assurance standards, something that has occurred in Newcastle over the past few years, with more and more industries making sure that they are quality assured to the highest level, which will enable them to bid for this work.

I pay tribute also to the Trades Hall Council for its role in industrial relations in the city, because no doubt the three tenderers gave consideration to the sound industrial relations policies and practices in the Newcastle area. Whichever tenderer is successful in obtaining the contract, the minehunter will be built in a very tight time frame. The first minehunter must come off the slips in the first year. This will mean that city businesses keen to be involved in the project should at this stage be in contact with the three prime tenderers to make sure they know who the principal subcontractors will be, which will enable them to enter negotiations as quickly as possible and get them on board for this important project. As I have said, the contracts are worth \$1 billion for six ships; and there is potential for Newcastle and New South Wales to obtain 60 per cent of that work.

We should all continue to work to ensure that as much employment as possible comes to Newcastle. No doubt Newcastle has a difficulty with unemployment. Figures released this week showed youth unemployment at 32.2 per cent and general unemployment at 16.3 per cent, with many people caught in a long-term unemployment trap. That certainly shows that much work needs to be done. It is pleasing that the work force is increasing. Jobs are being created in the area, but further initiatives are still necessary.

I refer briefly to the specific subject of policing in the city. I pay tribute to the police in the Hamilton and Mayfield districts for their professionalism and ability to work in the twentieth century under nineteenth century conditions - that is a disgrace. I have written to the Minister for Police inviting him to visit Newcastle. I am sure he would appreciate conditions in Hamilton and Mayfield being improved out of sight. Something must be done about the condition of Hamilton police station: there is inadequate accommodation, inadequate working conditions and no public waiting area. The charge area is next to where people stand at the counter; witnesses, victims and aggressors or offenders are together in the muster room. The situation is untenable and something must be done about it. I pay tribute to Inspector Max Ebrill of the combined patrol. I also offer my condolences to the family of Inspector Terry Dooker, former patrol commander of the Hamilton patrol, who passed away earlier this year.

I congratulate Mr Kevin McDonald on being awarded the prestigious Newton-John award for his work in environmental studies and the tremendous amount of work that he has done for the Shortland Wetlands Centre and his work in ensuring that Newcastle would be selected as the No. 1 site in New South Wales for the Ramsar conference. Kevin McDonald has been a great worker for the Newcastle environment. Like many honourable members, I pay great tribute to those volunteer and professional firefighters who were involved in fighting bushfires at Fern Bay in January. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CHAPPELL (Northern Tablelands - Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Regional Development) [10.12]: It gives me great pleasure, as it did all of my colleagues in this House, to reply to the address by His Excellency in opening this session of Parliament. Indeed, as we have come to expect, the Governor gave us a good run-down on the Government's programs for this year. He touched on all those areas that we would expect to be reported on, matters such as health, education and training, transport and roads, urban renewal and infrastructure, the environment, employment and economic development and, of course, each of those areas of Government policy impacting directly on the electorates of each and every one of us.

Page 857

I guess it is always the case that we can, in looking at our own electorates, find areas of need. This year I would expect that none is as worthy of serious consideration by the Government as health care. Though His Excellency was able to speak of the Government's continuing drive to improve health care delivery, he made

special comment on the Government's commitment to the delivery of the highest possible quality of customer focused health service. Despite that, and despite the almost heroic attempts of the Government to keep up with funding the ever increasing need for the health budget in the light of cutbacks from Medicare funding from Canberra, each of our electorates has pressure points that need to be addressed. I hope the needs of the Northern Tablelands will be addressed by the Government and particularly by the health Minister this coming year.

This year the New South Wales health budget is in excess of \$5 billion - an enormous amount of money out of the State's Budget. It is increasing in real terms each year, and it seems as though the increase in the level of commitment of the New South Wales health budget is almost in reverse proportion to what we get back from the funds we contribute to Canberra by way of the Medicare levy. In recent years there has been an enormous improvement in many aspects of health care delivery in New South Wales. We can all point to higher equipment levels in our hospitals, to new clinical procedures, to ever improving technology, to entire new hospitals in some areas, particularly in the areas of high growth population, and major redevelopment of many of our hospitals or parts of our hospitals throughout the State. That has been achieved only by the State Government continuing to divert an increasing proportion of its budget to health services rather than to ancillary costs, particularly administration.

The Government has had to cut deeply wherever it could into the administrative costs of health care delivery. Honourable members have seen the reduction in health administration at the regional level. Some health administrations were grossly overgrown, had blown out of all proportion to their original intention and were absorbing a huge amount of the health budget. Many of those have been eliminated by way of the restructuring of area health boards throughout the State. Indeed, the Government is also continuing to work on the restructuring of the Department of Health itself to see that the funds absorbed by that huge bureaucracy will once again be directed to expenditure on actual health care services. However, much has yet to be achieved.

In my electorate the new area health board has identified a range of infrastructure requirements that are way overdue for consideration, and not only the present Minister but also his predecessors have all been aware of that. I have marched them all through the Armidale and New England Hospital to point out to them the need for refurbishment in a number of areas. Clearly, we would love to see an entirely new hospital but, to be realistic, that will be difficult to achieve in the next few years given there are populations much larger than Armidale and the area that it serves which have no hospital at all. It is difficult to get on to the priority list for such a massive expenditure of \$50 million to \$80 million or whatever might be required to satisfy that need.

The capital funding that has been identified by the New England Region Area Health Service as priority funding includes the construction of a new Armidale hospital emergency care unit which is estimated to cost some \$1.7 million; the overdue construction of a new Inverell hospital emergency care unit for some \$900,000; the redevelopment of Armidale hospital's east wing medical care unit at about \$800,000; redevelopment of Armidale hospital women's and birthing unit at \$0.7 million; and construction of an entirely new hospital at Tenterfield for about \$2.7 million. That represents one of those golden opportunities for us to capitalise on the program, if we can, that is represented by the multiple purpose units. If only the Federal Government would get on with that program we could certainly fill it up with another 10 or dozen projects each year until the real needs of the people in smaller communities were met.

We can add redevelopment of Tingha hospital which, although in the electorate of Barwon, is attached to the Inverell District Hospital and that looks like costing about \$800,000. Armidale and Inverell hospitals both need new services, maintenance, and so on, all of which add up to about \$8.5 million. We do not expect that we will get it all at once but we certainly expect to convince a review team that the Minister for Health has agreed to send to my hospitals in the next couple of weeks that the need is genuine, that our priority requirements are real and that some money ought to be flowing into our region for health services in the near future. Health is just one matter where all local members have some serious resource needs. I am pleased that the Minister has responded after a number of discussions with him over recent months and more particularly since that priority listing was given to me by the New England Region Area Health Service. I am sure that some results will flow from that.

There are a number of matters that I would like to touch on but I know that time is short. I guess the one area of particular focus for me as Minister for Small Business and Minister for Regional Development is that of the economic development of New South Wales. It is true that we are experiencing a considerable resurgence in the economy at present, and figures released today in Canberra again point to significant growth rates which would seem to indicate that we have really begun to escape the clutches of that long, drawn-out recession. It has been an inordinately difficult time, no more so than in rural areas, particularly those depending on wool, where wool prices have been disastrously low and under the cost of production. Certainly in the grain belt and other areas that have been beset by drought for up to three and four years, not just the farmers but the businesses that supply the farmers and the businesses that depend on good farm cash flow in order to

Page 858

survive in country towns have had a terrible grubbing the past few years. For many it will be quite some time before they do recover, even if they have several good seasons in front of them.

As Minister for Regional Development I have perhaps been more frustrated in the past several years by those who might have been expected to invest in the local economy not having the courage or the necessary financial wherewithal to do so. Investment in new businesses and the refurbishment and growth of existing businesses in country towns has been lower than expected. Country areas of New South Wales have been suffering the same very high levels of unemployment and the resulting social ramifications as have other areas of the State. Particular areas of the State - those at the two extremes in one sense - have been suffering from the pressures of high rates of population growth, for example along the coastal fringe, where the population growth rates have been high but there have been no jobs to go with them.

Unemployment rates in country areas are much too high. In many instances they are much higher than those parts of the metropolitan area with the highest rates of unemployment. The other area of particular concern to me is the depopulation of the Far West of the State where many rural towns, particularly those entirely dependent on agricultural industries, have experienced a loss of population and a drift of people to the coast and to the cities. The Government has done its best to divert some economic activity into those areas. There are some glimmers of hope. Every now and again on my trips around the State I have been pleased to learn that people are prepared to invest, even in the smallest country towns, to generate real jobs. The jobs may only come in twos and threes, but they are real jobs and are tremendously important.

Turning to the improvement in the economy, I have no doubt that the successful bid for the Olympic Games 2000 has consolidated the change of attitude needed by the business community. It seems to me that New South Wales now has the best opportunity for many years to capitalise on the ground swell of interest and commitment to growth in this State resulting from the successful bid. At present New South Wales is the focus of significant attention. The Government has the responsibility of capitalising on that focus and turning it into economic development and jobs. At a recent luncheon with members of the Consular Corps in Sydney the renewed interest in Australia, particularly in New South Wales and Sydney, was perfectly obvious from anecdotal evidence that was being swapped around the table by people from around the world.

Many Europeans who have been suffering fairly difficult economic circumstances - particularly those in the middle European countries that have suddenly broken away from the tyranny of communist dictatorships and so forth - are looking for a new start. Many are looking to Australia for that new start. To some extent that attention reflects the renewed interest in Australia caused by the successful bid for the Olympic Games 2000. The opportunity for New South Wales to attract new businesses certainly emerged strongly at the luncheon with the Consular Corps. New South Wales must be smart enough to take advantage of those opportunities. We cannot do it on our own, of course, because many policy areas are controlled by the Federal Government.

I have already mentioned to my counterpart in Canberra that Federal policies must be responsive to some of the opportunities in order for New South Wales to take advantage of opportunities for business investment. Given those conditions, new businesses with skilled personnel and capital investment will set up in New South Wales. In summary, it seems to me that the Olympic Games will present us with a once in a lifetime

opportunity to showcase all that New South Wales does well, not only in terms of sport. I do not want to focus only on the short-term advantage offered by the Olympic Games, good as that is for national pride. Because of the renewed focus of interest, New South Wales will be able to capture the interest of the extensive international market-place in our technology and services. Earlier today in question time I spoke about the service industries that are such a rapidly growing sector of the Australian economy.

New South Wales is particularly good at staging cultural and other events. Our educational institutions are world leaders in various areas of research and so on. New South Wales will be able to showcase all of those attributes as a result of the attention focused on the State because of the winning bid for the Olympic Games 2000. It is up to all of us - and I intend to do some work on this aspect during the next few weeks - to focus on ways of capturing new business from now until the Olympic Games and probably for decades beyond the turn of the century. I should like to give a simple example of what New South Wales can do. It is well recognised that Australia is a long way from many parts of the world.

Over the years many people have said to me that one has to travel a long way to visit Australia. We should be saying, "Yes, it is a long way, but whether you are coming at the time of the Olympic Games or before, make it the trip of a lifetime. When you come to Australia, do not come for three or four days or three or four weeks, but come for three months. Let us show you Australia. Stay for a while because we can show you things you will not see anywhere else". A marvellous new promotion for tourism in New South Wales has captured a great deal of attention, not only domestically but internationally. The campaign promotes the fact that people can have a lifetime experience as tourists in New South Wales. The tourist promotion is but one example of the things that New South Wales does so well. As the responsible Minister, I am aware of a great range of businesses, industries and service industries - either long established or newly commenced - that are leading the world in so many aspects.

New South Wales has industries that are quality assured to the highest international standard. In fact, some industries have been the first to be accredited to the highest international standard. New South Wales
Page 859

is able to lead the way and the new focus of attention on Sydney and New South Wales is a golden opportunity to do so. I would like to detail a range of Government achievements in regional development. I could list the many hundreds of jobs that have been created throughout the small business sector in New South Wales, but time does not permit me to do that. Let me say that the New South Wales Government remains absolutely committed to economic growth and job creation. The Government will continue to seek out every possible opportunity to put resources in the right places, and to ensure that impediments to business investment and job creation - bureaucratic control and red tape - are eliminated.

That will not be easy. The community clearly expects the Government to control the many costs to business - for example, the costs of occupational health and safety and so on. The Government must constantly review those costs to make sure the right action is being taken. The Government has a very good track record and, in many respects, has shown a clean pair of heels to the rest of Australia. Honourable members only had to listen to the answer given by the Treasurer today in response to a question about the economic performance of New South Wales - particularly the way in which New South Wales taxpayers have subsidised other prosperous States in Australia, such as Queensland and Western Australia - to realise what great opportunities exist for the State. Indeed, great opportunities are available but New South Wales would be much better able to capture and exploit them if it received a fair shake from Canberra.

I will conclude my reply to His Excellency's Speech by saying that the Government is committed to growth and to the creation of jobs. It will continue to work as harmoniously as it can with the Federal Government, so long as that Government's policies are the right policies. The Federal Government needs to bite the bullet on a number of issues, such as industrial relations reform, which, unfortunately, it has squibbed out on. A number of other microeconomic reforms for the benefit of Australian industry are long overdue. The New South Wales Government needs and deserves such reforms, bearing in mind the difficult decisions it has taken in relation to microeconomic reform in the past five or six years. As always, it was a great pleasure to listen to His Excellency dealing with the breadth and quality of the Government's program for New South

Wales for the coming year. I compliment His Excellency on the job he is doing as Governor of New South Wales. I continue to be a proud member of a Government that is setting the right scene for better business for the people of New South Wales.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr E. T. Page.

House adjourned at 10.32 p.m.
