

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 20 September 1994

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CABRAMATTA

Issue of Writ

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have to inform the House that in accordance with Section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 I have issued a writ for the election of a member to serve in the room of John Paul Newman, deceased. The particulars of the writ are: date of writ, 19 September 1994; nomination date, 28 September 1994; polling date, 22 October 1994; and return of the writ, 11 November 1994.

DEATH OF ERNEST NOEL PARK, A FORMER MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr FAHEY (Southern Highlands - Premier, and Minister for Economic Development) [2.16]: I move:

That this House extends to Mrs Park and family the deep sympathy of the members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained by the death of Ernest Noel Park, DSO, ED, a former member of this House.

It is with the deepest regret that I move this condolence motion to mark the passing of Ernest Noel Park, the former member for the electorate of Tamworth in this House. Today we mourn the death of a man known to many of his friends and colleagues on both sides of this House as Parkie. Noel Park, one of this country's finest, passed away last Thursday night in Tamworth Base Hospital after a long battle with cancer. I am sure that I speak on behalf of all members when I say that Noel Park will be greatly missed and long remembered - missed because of the service he gave to his beloved home town and district of Tamworth and its people, and remembered for the vitality and commitment he brought to his duties in this Parliament and in that community of Tamworth.

Noel was revered by his many colleagues in the National Party, and I know that they, particularly, will be mourning his loss. I am aware that a great many National Party members of Parliament, even after Parkie's retirement from this place, went to him for advice on issues affecting their electorates. That speaks volumes for the esteem in which Noel Park was held by his colleagues, and it is in keeping with the distinguished career of serving the community that Noel built up over the course of his life. Indeed, Noel began that long history of serving his country and his community on the battlefields during World War II. In early 1939 Noel joined the 33rd Infantry Battalion, a militia unit based in Tamworth. When the war came he fought with the Second 2nd Australian Infantry Battalion, taking part in campaigns in North Africa, Greece and Crete, and serving two stints in New Guinea.

While serving with the AIF in the campaign in Crete he was taken a prisoner of war by the German army. In true Parkie style he escaped 14 days after his capture. Not even the German army could stop Parkie when he set his mind to escaping. In fact, he escaped from Crete in a small boat, taking it across the Mediterranean Sea

to safety. It is fair to say that Parkie stood out as a hero amongst all of the heroes of the Second World War. He was wounded twice in action in New Guinea, where he was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Distinguished Service Order. At the end of the war Noel was one of the youngest people to hold the DSO in what was then the British Empire. He was one of only four Australian junior officers to be honoured with the DSO in the Second World War. In fact, although he would never have boasted about it, his war career, by the sounds of all the action and tension associated with it, would have made a great movie.

Through all of that, however, the theme of service rang true. To Parkie, it was not about daring deeds; it was about the love of his country and, possibly more so, the love of his district of Tamworth. How fitting that he received the DSO so early in life when his whole life was devoted to serving others in one capacity or another. Noel continued his distinguished military career after the end of World War II, serving with the Hunter River Lancers and even putting in four years with the Command and Staff Unit in Sydney. After his return from the war, Noel settled on the land and owned a series of grazing properties in the Tamworth electorate. It was still that desire to serve the community that drove him, shortly after the war, to begin his career in public life by joining the National Party.

From then on, Noel was never far from the action. His distinguished list of achievements in public life is very telling about Noel's degree of commitment to every group within the Tamworth electorate. He was a councillor on Manilla Shire Council for 7½ years and Deputy Shire President for seven years. He was a longstanding member of Tamworth Legacy and President of the local branch of the Graziers Association for two years. He progressed into this House as the National Party member for Tamworth in the 1973 elections. He went on to fight five successful election campaigns and was, at the time of his departure, one of the fathers of this House. He retired and did not contest the 1991 election.

Noel had a prolific career in this House, serving on many joint committees and representing the National Party on corrective services, mineral

Page 3332

resources and industrial relations issues. But it was his love of his electorate that really characterised his service in this House. He was passionate about issues affecting his local people and he fought long and hard in this place to protect their interests. He became a role model to many members on both sides of the Chamber and, as I have mentioned, that role continued even after he had retired.

Noel Park served on a number of committees that had an involvement with my portfolio. I can recall on many occasions giving Noel notes on different issues that were before this House for debate. I can say that on no occasion did he use the notes that had been prepared, whether by departmental officers for background material, or otherwise. He sat and wrote out his own speeches, always in longhand. Many honourable members would remember him sitting on the backbenches, constantly writing in a meticulous hand the words that he wanted to say. He never wanted to express words that belonged to others; he wanted to say it sincerely. He did everything in his life sincerely.

I can recall, at the end of many hours in this Chamber - and, I might say, in another Chamber, when I was involved with industrial relations and spent that inglorious period of time in the other House - he often came, late at night, to see how things were going in any debate, and he would always say, "What about one scotch before I go home?" I might say that, as meticulous and as organised as he was in everything that he did, he was also very meticulous about that one for the road, and then he went. Last Monday week the Deputy Premier indicated to me that he believed that Noel would not live for much longer, and I said, "I must ring him". Towards evening I managed to get through to him in his hospital bed in Tamworth. He spent the first few minutes chiding me about the fact that I was too busy to be worrying about him. He was selfless; constantly worrying about others and not himself.

Noel indicated to me that he was getting the very best of treatment in the hospital and said that he had taken a real fancy to Fanta orange. It seemed to be the only thing that he could digest at that stage. I must say that his voice, as always in conversation, was gentle - on that occasion it was also very, very feeble. Later that night I said to my wife, "I think I have spoken to Noel Park for the last time". He has been described, probably

never more truly, as a gentleman. I do not think that description fits any other person as well as it fits him. There are very few people I know that can fit as comfortably under that particular hat - that hat called "gentleman" - as Noel Park could. We will all miss him and we all very much appreciated him. Having known him, having worked with him, having shared occasions with him and having shared public service with him, I and my family extend deepest sympathy to his wife, June, and to the entire family. As I said earlier, he was one of the finest that this nation has produced. The service which he gave was indeed distinguished and we are very much the poorer for his passing.

Mr CARR (Maroubra - Leader of the Opposition) [2.24]: The Opposition joins with the Premier in extending its condolences to the family of the late Ernest Noel Park. I remember not long after my election to the Parliament in 1983 chatting with Noel, pointing to the badge on his lapel and asking for its precise significance. He said, "Well, I can wear that because I enlisted in the services before the end of 1939". I knew straightaway that he was someone who could talk with pride of his military service for this country in the global conflict of the Second World War. In fact, he joined the Australian Imperial Force at the age of 18 years and served six years in the Australian infantry.

I sat next to him at a Cretan function on one occasion and I asked him about his experiences during the campaign in Crete. He told that thrilling, riveting story about his imprisonment at the time of the German invasion and, of course, about his experiences before that in getting out of Greece as the Germans occupied Greece. I mentioned to him that the world was indebted to the service of the Allies on Crete for slowing down the German occupation. That had huge strategic significance, because it delayed the German invasion of the Soviet Union, which was to take place, of course, on 22 June 1941. Hitler's timetable was slowed because the German forces were bogged down in Crete. He went on to tell me the story about his imprisonment and his escape, and about his experiences on the Mediterranean before, as I recall, he reached Egypt.

There was a tremendous story in it, and it is something of which he and his family can be enormously proud. The more one thinks about his career - his contribution to the community of Tamworth, his military service, his service in this Parliament, his love of Tamworth - the more one is reminded that the story of his life is, in fact, a great and very touching Australian story. As the Premier said, he was on all occasions a gentleman. It was part of his nature. No-one on this side of the House, I dare say, would have had a hostile word with him. He was very proud of his region. Any of my colleagues who visited Tamworth received a very warm welcome from him. He was interested in the welfare of the region and, as someone who had the experiences he had in World War II, he had a deep love of the land that he had engaged in such great risks to defend from 1939 to 1945. We have lost a very fine Australian. His family can take enormous pride in the qualities of his person and the circumstances of his life.

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan - Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works, and Minister for Ports) [2.27]: On behalf of the National Party I support this condolence motion for Ernest Noel Park. In the Australian War Memorial in Canberra hangs a portrait of Colonel Ernest Noel Park, a portrait dedicated to the valour of young Australian soldiers who bravely fought in World War II. Noel Park typified everything that was good about Australia's manhood. He was loyal, he was brave, he was considerate, he loved his country and he loved his fellow man. Noel was a dedicated and doting family man, and a

Page 3333

wonderful member of the community. He possessed great strength. He was tenacious in pursuit of a fair go for his electorate, and one of his greatest attributes was his humility at the end of the day. The House has heard, from the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, some mention of his very colourful and quite extraordinary war career, particularly those events surrounding his capture in Crete. I think it is worth recording for posterity in *Hansard* a little bit more about how he escaped from Crete, because Noel was captured by German paratroopers on Crete but escaped, and with daring and great courage made his way to Greece and later to North Africa in a small boat. During that cat-and-mouse escape he was first hunted by the Italian troops in Greece, then bombed in his boat by the English, then strafed and bombed by the Germans. It took Noel Park from 15 June 1941, when he escaped from the Germans, to 15 October that year to reach Mersa Matruh in North Africa.

On the night of 14 October, as Noel and his fellow escapee Ian McLaren prepared to land on the North African coast, a huge dust storm blew them 70 miles east. The next morning they found themselves about 400 yards from the beach with a big surf running after the storm. Together they swam ashore, and they were found by members of the British Army's Sussex Regiment. Only then did they discover that if they had landed the previous night where they had intended to land they would have landed right in the arms of Rommel's troops. The windstorm saved them from landing in German territory; instead they landed in the arms of the British Army's Sussex Regiment. In 1953 Noel was chosen as a member of Australia's coronation contingent to London for the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. On Coronation Day a very proud Noel Park commanded the light-horse escort for the Australian Prime Minister, the late Sir Robert Menzies.

Other speakers will detail Noel Park's great contribution to the community and to the State. I have never been associated with a more honest, forthright, loving and caring man. Noel Park held fine Christian values and never devalued those principles. Every person in Parliament genuinely respected Noel Park for his sincerity and for his fairness. He was truly an inspiration and an example to us all, and set standards to which we would all do well to aspire. It might be easy to conclude today, when listening to the various speakers, that Noel Park was a serious man. He was a serious man. He believed passionately, but there was a side to Noel Park that made him a very warm and charming fellow, as well as good company. Noel had an impish sense of humour, a great athletic wit, and could see the funny side of any occasion.

I will never forget - it was probably the second or third time that I had met Noel Park - an occasion shortly after the 1981 election when the honourable member for Dubbo and I joined our Country Party colleagues in this place. It was the second or third day that we were in the members dining room. Sitting at the table was Tim Fischer, now the leader of the National Party in Canberra; the late Jack Boyd; Col Fisher, the honourable member for Upper Hunter; and Parkie, as he was known. On the table was a small bowl of daisies. Without saying a word, Noel started to eat the daisies. He consumed the whole bowl. The honourable member for Dubbo and I were wide-eyed at the time, wondering what was going on, but we did not know Parkie. That was just Parkie's way of saying to us, "Well, there are a few rules around here, fellows, that you've got to learn and a few things you've got to appreciate". That was Noel's great sense of timing and of the right occasion.

For some reason or other during the 1980s Noel and I seemed to do a lot of doorknocking together during by-election campaigns in the Northern Tablelands, Drummoyne and Heathcote. In the 1988 election I remember doorknocking with Noel in the seat of Harden, in the Murrumbidgee. There was a certain tenacity about Noel: if you went out doorknocking with him for the day, you knew you were there for the entire day. Irrespective of whether it was wet or cold or hot, or whatever it was, you were going to complete the day. Nothing - not dogs, or people shutting doors in your face, or a little bit of abuse - would deter Noel from completing the task: up hill and down dale all day, never miss a house, do every block. He was totally consistent.

I remember one occasion in the 1988 campaign in Harden. It was a stinking hot day - it would have been 105 or 106 degrees Fahrenheit. The candidate we were supporting was a gentleman who was considerably overweight. He knocked up after about half an hour. Parkie said, "We've got to finish the task", so on we went. I had my tongue out after about three more blocks, but Parkie was still going strongly, up hill and down dale. We did complete the task. Whatever votes were obtained for that particular candidate, who had been recumbent in the shade for most of the day, I can assure all honourable members that it was Noel Park's tenacity that probably captured most of them.

One of the highest tributes a man can achieve is to win the approval of his peers during his lifetime. Somebody once said that the hardest thing in life is to become a prophet in one's own time and in one's own country. Noel Park certainly gained respect through his war service, his parliamentary service, his community service and his devotion to his family. Just by being a very fine Australian he won the respect of his peers, irrespective of their politics, their age or their geography. Those of us who were fortunate enough to know Noel Park are the richer for the experience. On behalf of my National Party colleagues and their families I extend deepest sympathy to Noel's wife, June, and their daughters, Vicki, Jeannette, Edette, Joanne, Tanya, Ysanne and their families. June, her daughters, some of her sons-in-law and grandchildren are in the gallery

today. We are the poorer for losing Noel Park, but Noel Park has left this Parliament and this country the richer for his life. May he rest in peace.

Page 3334

Mr SOURIS (Upper Hunter - Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [2.36]: I had the honour of serving in this Parliament with Noel Park during his last three years and my first three years, from 1988 to 1991. He helped me and campaigned for me in the lead-up to the 1988 election and he helped me in this place. I appreciated the soft spot he always held for Crete and Greece and the fact that he had earned a great respect in those countries for Australia that endures to this very day. He was in every sense a parliamentary colleague who I, as a new member, respected very highly indeed. People looked up to Noel Park. He was the essence of experience, the epitome of political success - one whose example should be followed. Indeed, his is still an example that should be followed; he is one from whom all of us in this Parliament, irrespective of politics, can learn.

In 17½ years as the member for Tamworth one of Noel Park's achievements stood out above everything else: absolute and total dedication to the people of his electorate. That was the secret of his parliamentary success. No issue was too big or too small for him. Everyone in the electorate was equally important to him. He listened, he learned, and he acted in what he regarded to be the best interests of his people and his electorate. Clearly, he was extraordinarily successful, otherwise the people of Tamworth would not have stuck by him the way they did until his retirement from politics in 1991. Noel Park's success was accurately encapsulated in an editorial of the *Northern Daily Leader* this week. It stated:

It's a rare thing when a politician has the strength of character to hold office and at the same time a genuine empathy for their constituents. But Noel Park was that kind of man.

Much has already been said about Noel Park's brilliant military career and distinguished service to this country. He was also thoroughly dedicated to the Tamworth region in which he was born, where his wife, June, comes from, and where together they built their home and raised a family of six daughters. After the Second World War he returned home and settled on the land; over a period of 35 years he owned several properties in the Tamworth region. He was, not surprisingly, a dedicated member of Tamworth Legacy and the Tamworth Returned Services League sub-branch.

Noel Park was president of the Manilla branch of the Graziers Association, a councillor on the Manilla Shire Council for 7½ years, and deputy president for seven years. He was a champion of the north-west Life Education Centre committee, a dedicated Rotarian and a dedicated family man. In July 1990 he and his wife were made freemen of the city of Tamworth. From January 1992 he was official visitor to the Tamworth Correctional Centre. In September 1992 his work was further recognised with a new government office block in Tamworth named after him - Noel Park House.

In every sense Noel worked for the betterment of his electorate, his community and his fellow citizens. He was truly a great Australian, as others have said. Not only did he reflect what many of us today regard as that great Aussie spirit and attitude; he actually lived it. That should be a lesson for all of us. In his long parliamentary career he held several shadow portfolios and served on numerous parliamentary committees. He involved himself vigorously on behalf of his constituents in parliamentary debates, as the *Hansard* record shows, on everything from health and education facilities - to an issue which was very important to him - the deregulation of the egg industry, to transport, and much more.

One of the major achievements towards the end of his parliamentary career was his total and enthusiastic commitment to the planning and development of the Government's decision to provide the highly successful Xplorer train services through the Tamworth electorate and the north-west. For many years to come that will stand as a great achievement by Noel Park for his electorate. Noel Park summed up his attitude to parliamentary and public life very well in his final speech to this Parliament on 2 May 1991, in which he said:

I have always regarded members of this place as colleagues. Each and every one of us represents people. We are each elected by a majority of constituents. On both sides of the House we are here to fulfil the same sorts of responsibilities, though in doing so we often differ widely in views and attitudes.

Noel Park never stopped working for his constituents, even after he left this place. A few weeks ago I had a phone call from him regarding an issue in the western division. He wanted to pursue that matter and to finalise it. I asked him how he was. He replied, "Okay for someone with terminal cancer. Now let's talk about the western division". That was typical of Noel Park; it demonstrates his character, that he was always a realist and a hard worker. He and June were always welcoming in Tamworth. His door was always open and he had many friends amongst his colleagues and the staff at Parliament House. I join with the House in bidding farewell to a great Australian, to a great National Party parliamentarian, and to a great colleague. I join with other members in expressing my condolences to June and the family.

Mr W. T. J. MURRAY (Barwon) [2.42]: I join with the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Premier, and other members in extending my condolences to June and her family, and to Noel's brothers and sisters. Ernest Noel Park, DSO, ED, mentioned in dispatches and a former member for Tamworth, was a brave and distinguished Australian. He was loved and respected by all who had anything to do with him. Courage and bravery were the hallmarks of Noel Park, not only in war but in all features of life. He showed it as a youth in fighting for his country; he showed it in his term on the land; and he showed it in his passing. I quote from a citation that was made to Lieutenant Ernest Noel Park, NX8942, when he received the Distinguished Service Order:

Page 3335

Lieutenant Park's keen intelligence and outstanding leadership were responsible for the capture of the feature "Jap Knoll". Three previous Company attacks had failed. The only known approach was a narrow razor-back ridge, under enemy observation. Park infiltrated the enemy position, climbing an almost vertical cliff and approaching to within ten yards of the enemy. He worked his way through the enemy foxholes and returned to the Company that evening with a plan of the defences. Next day he personally led two platoons, taking his men one by one up the sixty feet of cliff to a forming place at the top. Then on his command the charge was made and the position captured.

That is only part of his military record. The honourable member for Monaro will refer to it in more detail later. Noel Park was always the representative of those who were involved with the Returned Services League and Legacy, the army, the navy and the air force. He made it his job in this House always to recognise those who had given service to their country. I hope that practice is continued by other members who are former servicemen. His bravery was shown not only in his time in the army or in the battles that took place in agriculture and his farming life: perhaps his greatest battle was with public speaking. Noel Park was a fairly slow speaker. Many of us had no trouble following his speeches and Hansard had no trouble in reporting them. Noel was the pride and joy of Hansard. One of Noel's greatest acts of courage was to overcome his fear of public speaking. When he first went into politics he found it almost impossible to make a speech but he battled and eventually, by always speaking very slowly, he was able to speak before any group of people in any circumstance. He beat his fear and spoke with great credibility in the House. Noel Park's speeches were always handwritten prior to delivery. That practice authenticated his authorship of the speech and helped to overcome his dislike of public speaking.

He displayed indomitable courage in representing Tamworth and its people. He never took a back seat. He would never take no for an answer. No Minister or constituent could override him. Perhaps his greatest bravery was revealed in his last battle. From the day he was told he had cancer he fought with every fibre of his being. I remember speaking to him one day when he was in Sydney. He had been growing green wheat, crunching it to make wheat juice and drinking it with other vegetable juices. He was staying off meat and certain other foods. I said to him, "It must be a pretty rough diet". He said, "Oh mate, I will be a walking wheat field before long if I keep this up". But he battled on and he worked hard to defeat that problem. In my opinion that was probably his greatest act of bravery.

He was known by many names - Parkie, the Colonel, Parkhouse. He was known as Parkhouse long before the people of Tamworth named the local government office block Park House. The nickname came about because the building at 191 Macquarie Street, opposite this place, was named Park House. The nickname stuck to him. Another significant aspect of Noel was the family man attitude that he adopted all through his life. Meeting the cost of sending his six daughters to Ascham was a feat in its own right. Having his family visit Parliament House at night for many meals must have cost almost as much. The girls seemed to be always here. They had great joy coming to see dad and it was a great treat for Noel to have them here. The number of trays outside Noel's door showed how many members of his family were in for dinner that night - and there were plenty of them, I can assure you. Woe betide anyone who wanted to talk business with Noel when he had the family in: you got nowhere. Noel always had the meals sent to his room upstairs so that the family could talk together as a family. Family life was probably the greatest feature of Noel and June Park. Noel always introduced me to the girls. I apologise that I still cannot name them all individually. But on many occasions I got away well with, "Hello girls".

Jack Boyd, Noel Park and I spent a lot of time together here in the early days, because we could not travel home on Thursday nights. We had many "ones for the road". We probably had two or three. Noel had a sense of humour and a great capacity to enjoy life. It is rather strange that the two old army colonels, Jack Boyd and Noel Park, the two front foot people as we always used to call them in the then Country Party, both passed away from the same cause. On Monday morning I rang the Clerk, Russell Grove, after having spoken to June on the weekend. Unfortunately, not all the family could get here for the condolence motion. It was suggested that in addition to the written record of the contributions today a tape might be provided. I spoke to Patricia Broderick and, through her, to Russell and to the Speaker, asking for such a tape. On Monday morning I received a letter which foreshadowed an important feature for future condolence motions in this House. Russell Grove wrote:

I am writing in regard to your request for a copy of the tape of the Condolence Motion for the late Mr E. N. (Noel) Park, to be held on Tuesday, 20 September, 1994.

Although you have requested a tape, it is thought the family may prefer a video of that section of proceedings, and with that in mind the Legislative Assembly would be happy to provide the family with a copy of the video of the Condolence Motion, together with an audio tape.

That is a great step forward and a worthy recognition of those who have served this Parliament. It will enable the many friends and relatives who cannot attend here to be part of the proceedings today. On behalf of June and her family I thank you, Mr Speaker, and your staff for the very kind consideration. Noel Park was a man of honesty, integrity, bravery and, above all, he was a great friend. Vale, Noel Park.

Mr WINDSOR (Tamworth) [2.52]: I am indeed honoured to join others today in speaking to the condolence motion concerning the former member of Parliament for Tamworth, Noel Park, DSO, ED, freeman of the City of Tamworth. I should like to do so as a former constituent of Noel Park and one who got to know him very well, particularly after the 1988 election when the community in which I lived, Werris Creek, became part of his electorate. Noel Park was

Page 3336

a truly great Australian who served his country, in war and in peace, well beyond the call of duty. He was a man who had very strong beliefs in God, Queen and country. He was a man who fought to defend Australia both in war and as a representative of his community. Above all, he was a man who genuinely cared for his people, the people of the electorate of Tamworth.

Noel Park put his people first, above politics. To Noel Park the issue was more important than the politics of the issue. I believe he based that upon his very high principles, his belief in discipline and his Christian faith. Noel Park was more interested in solving the problem, not self-promotion through the media. Proof of his abilities as a representative of his community is that at the last election in which he stood, that being the 1988 election, he received a primary vote of 78 per cent. Many members in this place claim to represent all in

their electorates. Noel Park actually did that: he represented everybody. The vote of 78 per cent was a true indicator of the way people felt about him. Noel Park was also the first member of Parliament for Tamworth to open an electorate office in the streets of Tamworth, reflecting his wish to get close to the people and learn of their real problems.

I should like to give examples of the things Noel Park did for people in his community. I reside near a small town called Werris Creek. Traditionally, two-thirds of Werris Creek voted for the Australian Labor Party and one-third voted for the National Party. That tradition went on for years and years. After the electoral redistribution prior to the 1988 election Noel Park, as the member of Parliament for Tamworth, represented Werris Creek for the first time. Problems in that township at that time concerned the State Rail Authority and cutbacks in jobs. Over a period of time quite a number of meetings were held with both Government and Opposition members of Parliament and State Rail Authority officials, and a series of town meetings were held to see what could be done to help save that small community. The community heard a great deal of the rhetoric that comes from most politicians on occasion, but not from Noel Park. He, in my view, was the only one who really cared about those people, irrespective of the way they had voted traditionally.

During the electoral boundary redistribution prior to the 1991 election Noel Park spoke before the Boundaries Commission, arguing to maintain the continuity of the electorate of Tamworth, seeking to maintain both those areas of interest that he had built up and the nature of the electorate, with Tamworth being the dominant city surrounded by satellite towns. Noel Park spoke very strongly before the Boundaries Commission - I know because I was there to listen to him - and the people of Tamworth owe to him the present shape of the electorate of Tamworth. It was his speech, I believe, that was able to maintain the electorate in its present configuration.

Noel Park oversaw and was responsible for key projects in the Tamworth electorate too numerous to mention. I shall mention some: Chaffey Dam, possibly the most important piece of infrastructure that any country politician could provide for his community, that of a more than adequate water supply for the infrastructure of that community and the irrigators using the stream involved; the Tamworth College of Technical and Further Education; Peel High School; Split Rock Dam; Tamworth Base Hospital developments; and the state office block aptly named Noel Park House. He was also very much involved with the redevelopment of the Tamworth gaol and, with the honourable member for Northern Tablelands and the honourable member for Upper Hunter, he made an enormous contribution towards getting the XPT service into that area.

Noel Park was a true man of the people. He never lost sight of who he was representing, both as a government member and an opposition member, or why he was the member of Parliament for Tamworth. My electorate secretary, Leigh Tschirpig, who had worked with Noel Park, told me a story that some of his family may well remember. One Christmas Day Noel Park was sitting down to dinner with his family when he took a telephone call from a constituent who could not find a plumber to repair a broken pipe. Unfazed, Noel Park managed to solve the problem. That was the sort of individual he was.

About a week before Noel Park's death I received a telephone call from him regarding a constituent he had nominated for the honours list prior to his retirement in 1991. Though I could tell from his voice that he was very ill, and I knew it, he asked me to follow up the representations he had made and, if they had been unsuccessful, he wanted to add to the original nomination. I duly did that. I asked Noel whether he could give me an approximate date or month for the original nomination, which would make it easier to track down. His reply surprised me at the time, and still does. He said, "Hang on, I'll get the file". That truly demonstrates that, though he had retired from politics some years earlier and at this time was gravely ill, he was still thinking and caring about his constituents.

In his maiden speech Noel Park said he had a number of visions, one of which was to encourage water conservation. He did that in an important structural sense, as I mentioned earlier, in regard to Chaffey Dam, the most important piece of infrastructure that a city like Tamworth could have. He was also instrumental in the addition of Split Rock Dam to the Manilla River as an irrigation backup for Keepit Dam. He had a vision that I

intend to follow - one that may offend some members of this House: to see a diversion of surplus eastern water flows to drier parts of western New South Wales. This House should seriously consider giving effect to that vision, particularly given the devastating effects of the current drought.

Noel Park also believed that Tamworth needed a broad based technical college. After the expenditure of about \$16 million Tamworth has a technical and further education college with in the vicinity of 5,000 students. During the Second World War Noel Park

Page 3337

was a member of the Second 2nd Battalion. Their motto was: "Second to none". That motto fits this man: during the 17½ years that he was the member for Tamworth he was second to none. He represented all of his constituents in a most genuine and concerned way. He was extremely proud of his country; he was very proud of his electorate; he was proud of his family. I conclude with a quotation from Noel Park's maiden speech on 7 August 1974:

. . . may I say that I now represent equally everyone who lives in my electorate - a good place in which to reside and a good place in which to work. As a new member I record my deep appreciation of the courtesy extended to me by Ministers, by members of all parties, by parliamentary staff, officers of the public service and those in statutory authorities and in responsible positions. May I say that I will do my best to effectively represent all the people of my electorate, to play a worthwhile part in the procedure and work of this House and in the maintenance of constitutional government in New South Wales, giving credit where credit is due, both inside and outside Parliament and at all times enunciating the principles I believe in.

That sums up the man many honourable members came to know - a man who lived by those principles. I extend to Noel's wife, June, to his daughters Vicki, Jeannette, Edette, Joanne, Tanya and Ysanne and their families, many of whom are present in the gallery today, the sympathy of the people of Tamworth on the loss of Noel. I thank Noel and June also for the enormous contribution they have made to the welfare of the Tamworth community.

Mr WEST (Orange - Minister for Police, and Minister for Emergency Services) [3.03]: I join with honourable members of the House in paying tribute to the great work that was done in this Parliament and for this State by the late Noel Park. I first met Noel in the early 1970s at a Tamworth branch meeting of the Australian Country Party soon after his preselection as candidate to succeed Bill Chaffey. I remember attending that meeting as the State chairman and Federal chairman of the Young Australian Country Party. As the honourable member for Barwon said, we all inquired whether this man who was frightened of public speaking was really going to represent Tamworth. He overcame that fear because of his dedication to the people of that area.

Noel was subsequently elected to represent Tamworth. I was elected at a by-election in February 1986 as the youngest member of the party that many used to say was one for old digs. Noel and the late Jack Boyd were two of those we used to call the colonels who used to plot and scheme at many of those Thursday night meetings. As the youngest member of the party I gained from them wonderful inspiration and a great knowledge of the way teamwork was brought together. Another thing I recall is that I was a young member with a brand new wife and a young baby. The party used to encourage its members to bring their wives to the meetings. My wife brought our baby daughter, who was only about three or four months old. It was always June and, I think, Lady Fuller who used to help mainly in looking after Libby and my daughter at that time. The wives of members helped so much in that early introduction. I know Libby would like me to say just how much we do and will miss Noel Park.

I went on to serve on the Select Committee upon Aborigines with Noel. That select committee continued for some time and, of course, was the forerunner to the State's Aboriginal land rights legislation. We travelled the breadths of New South Wales, to Central Australia and the north of South Australia, meeting and talking with many Aborigines, individually and in community groups. Again I think the human qualities of Noel Park came to the fore at that time. He was genuinely interested in people and their welfare. We were both pipe smokers at the time and therefore shared something in common. We both reformed, but many honourable

members have memories of our driving through the electorate, the pipe being filled with one hand stoking it and the other putting tobacco in - do not ask who was driving or how the car was being driven! They are the memories I have.

I should say also that in those early days of the Country Party there were great debates about the dairy industry. Noel was one who did not really get involved in those debates, but he used to manage always to deflect the debate to the egg industry. He was the great champion of the egg industry in Tamworth. He earned the nickname Googs because he was a great speaker for the industry's cause. In some ways Tamworth was the richer when Noel retired, for though Tony Windsor was formally elected as the member for Tamworth, without ever undermining him Noel continued to work for the people of Tamworth. He was always ringing Ministers asking what he could do on different issues. He would often get back to Tony and say, "This is what I have had to do with it". Tamworth was lucky because it had two members during that period.

I learned a lot in those early years serving with Noel. He was a great friend. I was always the young fellow, the young Turk; but he had a stabilising influence on the party. He was a great team member. He was always there with us to talk through the issues and to give some good fatherly advice. To June and to all of the girls I say we all know that Noel is going to be missed by so many, but, of course, by you most. I recall those great nights when the girls would come in for dinner, in a constant stream. But that was the way he kept touch with the family. It is a lesson to all of us that in this job we must not lose touch with our families, because when we finally leave this place they are probably all we have. Noel taught us that families are important. Farewell to a good friend and a good colleague. To June and the family I offer our sympathies.

Dr REFSHAUGE (Marrickville - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.08]: I join the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the National Party and others in extending sympathies to Noel Park's family. It is not often that a Liberal Party backbencher visits the electorate of Marrickville - there are not many votes for them there - but it is unbelievably rare for a National Party member to visit Marrickville. I was quite surprised one night as I arrived at a function to find Noel and June attending. Noel was representing the Premier. Obviously it was

Page 3338

not surprising when we realised this was the commemoration of the Battle of Crete. After other politicians had made their speeches, up stepped not Noel Park, yet another politician, but a man who had been there and fought. He reaffirmed the principles that led so many Australians overseas to fight for democracy and freedom. He did it in such a self-deprecating way that one could but marvel at what he had done and the value that Australia has derived from his activities.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, the Battle of Crete was not only a major turning point in delaying the attack on Russia, it was also the last time the Germans used paratroopers. The effect of the allied forces meant that the Germans became disheartened in their use of paratroopers. The friendship and bonds that developed between the Australian, New Zealand and British forces on the one hand and the Cretans and Greeks on the other would never die. It is possible that Noel turned up at Marrickville on the Premier's instructions to get some votes. I do not know whether he got any votes but he got something that was probably more important: reaffirmation of that respect from the Cretan community who, I am sure, would want me to say to his family, "Thanks again, Noel. It was really worth while".

Mr CAUSLEY (Clarence - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, and Minister for Mines) [3.10]: I join the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the National Party and other members in paying tribute to Noel Park. I came into this House in 1984 as a very junior member of the National Party. At that time, of course, Noel Park had been here for many years. Soon after becoming members of this House, Robert Webster and I were given shadow ministerial responsibilities that were daunting, to say the least. I was always grateful that Noel Park used to turn up at night, sit down and relate, to me in particular, some of his experiences and anecdotes about what had occurred in this place over many years.

One thing that I have learned in life is that experience cannot be bought, and Noel Park had a lot of experience. He certainly passed on that experience freely, and I am indebted to him for that. He never spoke

very much about his wartime experiences, but sometimes late at night when he shared with us some of that liquor that comes from Glenfiddich, he told us about a few of the things that had happened. It was fairly clear that as a young man Noel Park was a fearless and courageous soldier. It came through loud and clear that he really loved his country and fought dearly for it. The Deputy Premier mentioned that Noel's fellow escapee was one Ian McLaren, who was born and reared at Morora, just north of Maclean. For many years Ian was the licensee of the Crown Hotel in Grafton. I know that June and Noel were very friendly with the McLaren family and often renewed acquaintances with them. That bond was certainly forged during the escape from Crete. When one heard Noel's recollections of that escape, one realised that it was a hair-raising experience. I am sure the McLaren family are experiencing the same feelings as the Park family at the sudden loss of Noel Park.

As other speakers have said, Noel certainly represented the electorate of Tamworth exceptionally well. I recall the opening of the Split Rock Dam. The honourable member for Barwon was there with me. Noel soon reminded me that a promise had been made to irrigators when the extensions to Split Rock Dam were completed. He was determined that that promise would be honoured. One Sunday a few weeks ago he rang me and I managed to get back to him. He was again worried about his former electorate. He wanted to talk to me about poultry, the drought and constituents around Tamworth about whom he was concerned. At that time he was not a well man. He was still at home, and one of his daughters was trying to write his memoirs. It is interesting that even in capture Noel could make friends; he had some very dear friends in Greece and Crete. He continued those friendships throughout his life. A few years ago June and he made a pilgrimage over there and renewed those friendships. Such a man was Noel Park.

It is regrettable that in his retirement he became ill so quickly. June has not enjoyed the best of health either. As other members have said, there is no doubt that Noel was stoic; he battled the problem. When I was speaking to him a few weeks ago, I said to him, "Noel, how are you getting on?" He said, "Not very well. They can't treat me any more with the usual treatment". He said, "I have said to them, 'Try out the new medicines; you might be able to help someone else.'" That was Noel Park, and that is the way he will be remembered. My family and I join with other members in passing on condolences to June and the family. I am sure that Noel will be long remembered in this place and for his service to the State.

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield) [3.15]: I join in this sad condolence motion to the family of Noel Park. I knew Noel during his period in this Parliament. He was a very loving and kindly person. He bore no malice to fellow members of Parliament or to any other of his fellow men. He had a distinguished career both as a serviceman and as a member of this Parliament. I got to know Noel Park very well when as Minister for Water Resources I had responsibility for the development and construction of Split Rock Dam. It was then that I realised just how much, and how hard, Noel Park worked on behalf of his constituents, whether they were the downstream future users, the upstream users or the people whose properties were resumed to facilitate construction of the dam. Never once did harsh words pass between Noel and me. I will always recall him as a man who was totally dedicated to his constituents. To his family, particularly to his wife, June, I extend my deep sympathy on the passing of a great Australian, a loving husband and a dedicated member of Parliament.

Page 3339

Mr CHAPPELL (Northern Tablelands - Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Regional Development) [3.16]: All of us who serve in this place are very much aware of the rare privilege we share. However, the greatest privilege we share is meeting and working with special people and knowing them as real friends. One of those special people was Noel Park. He was an exemplar, mentor and friend. As the member for a neighbouring electorate, I worked with Parkie on many issues and shared many an interest with him. As has been alluded to by other speakers, many of our most significant discussions were held in the wee small hours of the morning, bearing in mind the strange hours we keep in this place. At those times Parkie would usually be found at his desk writing another speech or working on constituent or committee matters. He simply did not know how to give up, and - as has also been said - he did not give up.

One Sunday morning a couple of months ago he phoned me and said in that typical slow, measured tone of his, "It is Sunday morning, Ray. I usually ring Wal Murray but he is not at home, so you'll do". He proceeded

to tell me where the Government was going right on a couple of things and where it was going wrong on a couple of things, and what we should do about it. Everything Noel Park did throughout his life, he did very well. He served his country with valour; he served his community with integrity and commitment. But, most importantly, he served his family and his legion of friends with loyalty and devotion. On behalf of the many people throughout my electorate, which is in the northern part of the State and adjoins Noel's former electorate, who knew and loved Noel over many years, and particularly on behalf of my wife, Annette, I extend to another true friend, loyal partner, loving mother and worker for the community, June, and her daughters our sincere condolences on the passing of our friend Parkie.

Mr PEACOCKE (Dubbo) [3.19]: I support the condolence motion. Noel Park was a rarity in modern society. He was a man with a deep sense of obligation, duty and loyalty to the people he fought for, the people he represented and the nation as a whole. We have all heard of Noel's war service. He was one of the youngest officers commissioned in the field during the Second World War, and one of the youngest officers to be awarded the Distinguished Service Order during the Second World War. He was a man of great ability and dedication. When I was first elected as a member of this place, like all new members I felt a bit out of place and a bit lonely; I was looking around for a mate or two.

I went to see Noel Park and Jack Boyd and they said, "We have a shot of whisky every afternoon at about this time; come down", and we developed a very close relationship, which was very enjoyable, I can assure you - although I never quite developed the same taste for whisky as Parkie and Jack Boyd. We had some great times and interesting talks. All that has been said before, but I wanted to place on record that Noel Park was my friend and that he was a friend to almost everyone on both sides of this House. He was a great bloke but there were infuriating things about him. For instance, he was so dedicated and precise, and did everything with military precision, and he used to nearly drive me mad with the depths that he would go to to get his notes right. If you wanted to go home after the House adjourned at night, he would always have to pack up. He did that meticulously and thoroughly, again with military precision.

Sometimes he was dangerous. I remember going to Tamworth. I was staying at a motel there - I forget the name of it - and it was a very long motel. Parkie was taking me somewhere or other and my room was right up at the far end from the entrance to the motel. So help me, by the time we had got into Parkie's car and had gone out through that entrance we were doing more than 60 miles an hour - and we had not even hit the street. He did those little things, and it was a bit terrifying. Parkie was such a dedicated person; he was meticulous to the nth degree. He wanted to get his facts right, and he did. By doing that and by being like he was - fair and loyal, and all the things that he should have been - he got a tremendous number of things done for the community that he represented. I echo the words of many others here, that he was a genuine servant of the people he represented and never forgot that he was in this place in a representative capacity.

He really could not have achieved what he did without his wife, June. June - like all parliamentary wives - is a long-suffering person, in the sense of having to put up with the hours that we work, the days we are away, our endless talk about politics and so forth. Parkie was very much supported by June and by his family. He had six children, and I suppose that is one of the things I had in common with Parkie, as I also have six children. We understood about children, we understood the obligation to our families and we understood the needs of young people. Parkie will be missed in this place - in fact, he has been missed since he left. It is a pity that when we leave Parliament and go our separate ways, we are so separated that a lot of our connections are broken off. But Parkie, as many previous speakers have said, fought to the end for his people.

It is an indicator of the type of person he was that he still had his files on old matters and was still pursuing them. It is an indicator that speakers opposite have said that they respected him and treated him as he was - fair and even-handed in what he was doing - and that they respected his deep sense of obligation. To June and her family, there is much more I could say but I simply offer my deepest sympathy to them all and hope that what has been said in this House today brings some comfort to them and reinforces what they already know: that Parkie was a great man, a great Australian and a great parliamentarian.

Mr COCHRAN (Monaro) [3.24]: I join with previous speakers to pay tribute to Noel Park DSO, ED,

MID, known to us as Parkie or Parkhouse. Noel Park was a man of eminent integrity, he was a man of
Page 3340

unspoiled honesty, a man of vision and wisdom, and he was undoubtedly one of Australia's great warriors of World War II. The epitaph "unsung hero" could be no better placed than on the tombstone of Noel Park. Others have spoken of his political and social life; I want to honour his military service on behalf of ex-servicemen and those who serve with Legacy. Noel Park enlisted with the services as a private soldier under the regimental number NX15437. He later re-enlisted as a corporal, NX8942. For those uninitiated in the methodology of the numbering of servicemen, NX represents volunteers.

As a corporal, Noel Park would have experienced his first command as a section commander in an infantry unit. He would have experienced the great excitement of moulding a team, and having to learn the very fundamental experiences of leadership. Noel Park was a distinguished leader. Leaders are not simply born; they are born but then re-created through a training system under sometimes cruel experiences of life. Noel Park developed his leadership skills the hard way, by being thrown in at the deep end. In recent times - in the last year, in fact - Noel prepared a record of the events that many have referred to, the events in Crete. That record is in his own words and was prepared for the honourable member for Barwon. Other speakers have alluded to the history of those events. It is worth placing on the record, in the words of Noel, exactly what happened. He wrote:

1. Sailed for Greece in BANKURA from Alexandria on 18 March, 1941.
2. Battle of Tempe Gorge (Pinios River) 17/18 April.
3. Our forces withdrew evening and night 18 April.
4. Self and Ian McLaren under Lt Kerry Loftus with his platoon of A Company and with a company of 21 NZ Battalion withdrew East and South East along the ridge lines and proceeded to the coast South of Volos.
5. After several days we assembled into a force of about 150 Australian and New Zealand troops under our Major Cullen who then hired a 100 ton ship to take us via the Aegean Sea Islands to either Turkey or Crete. We spent Anzac Day en route. Generally we sailed at night and dropped anchor by day to avoid German aircraft. Islands passed or called at included Skiathos, Mytilene, Skopelos, Skyros, Psara to Chios near Turkey. Here some took the risk of internment and proceeded to Turkey. Others, including Ian and I, sailed with Major Cullen to Crete via Tinos, Naxos and Santorini to Heraklion on the North East Coast of Crete on 5 May. From here we travelled by Army trucks to Kalibis where we took up defensive positions overlooking the entrance to Suda Bay. We were in C Company of 16 Composite Battalion with OC Kerry Loftus and 2IC Tony Adler.
6. General withdrawals started on the night of 26 May and our Company's task was to protect the line of withdrawal and the proposed embarkation beach at Sfakia on the South coast. We moved in trucks and had to march on foot for the last few miles. We reached the vicinity of Sfakia in the early dawn and, with orders from General Freyberg to evacuate Crete received about 1500 hours on 27 May, we took up our positions guarding the perimeter of the Sfakia position.
7. 0400 on 1 June - a runner arrived with a message for us to surrender to the first German force approaching our position as the evacuation was concluded.
8. 0800 we surrendered to a patrol of 25 German paratroops after which we assembled near Sfakia village where there were some thousands of Allied troops.
9. 1500. Our captors ordered us all to march back across Crete to the vicinity of Khania/Maleme. We marched well into the night, all next day and arrived at our destination, a temporary prison camp on 3 June.
10. 4 June. We were marched back to an old British POW camp near Skines where we arrived after dark.
11. 15 June. Ian, Frank Ezzy and I escaped about 5.30 p.m. (Frank was re-captured by the Germans some weeks later but Ian and I evaded re-capture and eventually made it back to our lines in North Africa.)

12. About 10 August, Ian and I plus two officers from the 2/1 Battalion and some Greeks wanting to return to the mainland embarked after dark in a 40 foot sailing boat from the small beach near the village of Suya close to the North West end of Crete.
13. About 13 August. Our boat stopped in shallow water near the coast of Southern Greece at about 1500 hours. Ian and I waded ashore and made contact with a small fishing village nearby lying about 10 miles west of Neapolis.
14. About 16 August. We moved along the beach to Neapolis - myself on a donkey because I had a poisoned leg. At Neapolis my leg was examined and treated by Dr Irene Skourdoulis.
15. We lived in the Neapolis/Faraclou districts for about six weeks.
16. About 28 Sept. We moved to St Nicholas lying a few miles North East of Neapolis where we met up with seven Australians, eight New Zealanders and one Scotsman sheltering in a church known as St Demetrios, high up above the village.
17. About 29 Sept. We all moved to a cave overlooking the sea South East of St Nicholas because Italian troops from the local garrison were hunting us.
18. The Cretans and the Greeks were wonderfully loyal to the Allies, guided, protected and fed us since we escaped from prison camp, often at great risk to themselves.
19. 9 October. After several attempts we commandeered a 35' ketch with an auxiliary motor and, taking the three Greek crew with us, we set sail for North Africa at midnight making about six knots.
20. 12 October. We ran out of fuel at 1600 hours so had to rely on sail with not much wind. Soon after two British Blenheim bombers flew over and one dropped five bombs near our stern but, thankfully, did not explode.
21. 14 October. At 0800 hours a German Heinkel bomber bombed and strafed our boat, wounding one of the crew slightly, putting a few small holes in the hull but not doing any other damage. At 0830 hours another Heinkel bomber flew over our position for half an hour but couldn't see us because a North African kamsin had blown out to sea covering us with a mantle of dust.
22. During the night of 14 October a big storm drove us about seventy miles East. Next morning, 15 October, we found ourselves about 400 yards from the beach with a big surf resulting from the storm. We could see a building, a tent or two and a few British troops. Ian and I swam ashore and were greeted by the Sussex Regiment, located about fifteen miles West of Mersa Matruh. After a meal in the Officers Mess we were driven to Mersa Matruh and an E boat was despatched from there to tow our boat in. Later we were de-briefed and again at Alexandria and Cairo before Ian and I were returned to the 16 AITB in Palestine. The other fellows were returned to their various units and formations.
23. An interesting sidelight to this story is the fact that when we landed just West of Mersa Matruh we were only about fifteen miles East of Rommel's forward elements. Therefore, unbeknown to us, only for the storm which drove us seventy miles East on the night of 14 October we would almost certainly have been recaptured by the Germans.

Page 3341

That was signed by Noel Park on 7 April 1991 - 50 years after the event. I can confidently say that nobody will ever convince me that whisky is detrimental to a person's memory. There is no question that the accuracy of that record is exceptional. For a person to be able to remember it with such accuracy, it must have had a major impact on his life. Noel also saw service in New Guinea, where he was awarded the MID and the DSO; some would say he should have been awarded the VC. So concludes an epic story that barely touches the history of the great soldier that Noel Park was. At the end of the Second World War Noel Park was one of the youngest DSOs in the British Empire and one of only four Australian subalterns to be so honoured in the Second World War. He was also one of the youngest Australians to be commissioned in the field.

From 1948 he continued his military service in the 12/16 Hunter River Lancers CMF for 15 years, rising to

the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and commanding the unit for three years, and was awarded the Efficiency Decoration. He also served for four years in the Command and Staff Unit in Sydney, after which he was transferred to the Reserve of Officers with the rank of Colonel. On behalf of the RSL and Legacy, to his wife, June, who also saw service during World War II, and his daughters: accept our deepest sympathy. You have lost an exceptional husband and father. We have lost a great Australian. Lest we forget.

Mr BECK (Murwillumbah) [3.35]: I join with the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Premier and others in this motion in memory of Noel Park, our former colleague in this place. I was elected to Parliament in 1984, following the illness of the late Jack Boyd. As I had been elected to the seat of Byron I was allocated room 1106 on the eleventh floor, next door to Noel Park. As previous speakers have mentioned, Noel was a good friend of Jack. The rooms had a little corridor between them, so I often popped in to say hello and, of course, his door was always open for me to speak to him. Anytime you wanted to find something out, you wandered into Noel's room. This practice continued until 1991. I think he kept every file, every copy of *Hansard* and every speech. I do not think there was much room left in his cupboards to put a pair of socks, because he kept everything. If you wanted to know something, he had it.

I can recall that in those early days he said to me, "Don't forget, Don, you must always look after the gun club roster and put on morning tea". I said, "You had better explain the gun club to me". Noel's explanation went something like this, "It is a way of keeping all the members together with some camaraderie", because, as we have heard, Noel was a man to keep the team together. The gun club is a morning tea, supplied by National Party members, attended by National Party members, and held in a member's room every morning that the House is sitting. As was mentioned earlier, Jack Boyd was a great friend and an army colleague of Noel's. I know that my wife spoke with Nan this week and that Nan Boyd has been speaking with June. Nan wanted recorded here today her deepest sympathy for June and her family from the Boyd family at Murwillumbah.

Noel Park was one of nature's gentlemen, a man whom we will always remember. Only last Wednesday I picked up the telephone at about ten past two, just before question time. I phoned the hospital in Tamworth and spoke to one of Noel's daughters. She said, "Yes, I think dad will be able to say hello". The words came across the phone, "Is that you, Don?" and I said, "Yes, Noel. Keep your chin up, old buddy". I will remember that. I am sure that Noel will be remembered by everyone in this place. I would like to convey to June and all her family my deepest sympathy and that of my wife, Lynne, and my family.

Mr NEILLY (Cessnock) [3.38]: I should also like to speak to this motion of respect on the passing of Mr Noel Park. I was unaware of Noel's illness until last Wednesday. I was surprised on Friday to receive a phone call from a relative, Mrs Jenny Ward, to advise me of Noel's demise. My association with Noel began in 1981 when I first entered this Parliament. I was not here for Noel's last term of office when he was a member of the Government, but my recollection is of Noel sitting on the backbench, a couple of seats from the end. Often at night members would wander across to the other side of the House. Noel was a gentlemen with whom one could have a discussion without rancour and with frankness; and that cannot always occur in this Parliament.

I recognise the illustrious war service Noel provided. He was a serving officer during the war and postwar, particularly with the Hunter River Lancers. He shared a great empathy with returned servicemen and their families. He fought for his electorate with fervour. I had a great deal of respect for the man. I was able to speak to Noel with frankness and to enjoy a conversation with him. On two occasions we campaigned on opposite sides within my electorate. The first time I went down, the second time I got up. Noel Park never came in with stealth or subterfuge; he came in the front door, he always made a point of looking us up, he made a point of saying, "Hello, I'm around here, Stan. I'll see you". This Parliament and this State should express sorrow for the loss of a person of the ilk of Noel Park. I express my deepest sympathy to Noel's loved ones.

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [3.41]: I join with other members in expressing my condolences to June, to her six daughters and to the Park family on the loss of a very fine Australian, a war hero and a former member for Tamworth, Noel Park, DSO, ED. By any standard Noel Park gave distinguished service to his country, to his State and to his region. Other members have outlined his parliamentary achievements, but I shall talk about Noel Park the man. He was an unassuming person whose courage both on the battlefield and in political life

was an inspiration and an example to us all. There are many
Page 3342

in this Chamber who knew Noel for longer than I did. His last term in this place coincided with my first term.

Notwithstanding the relative briefness of our relationship, over the past seven years we formed a close bond, partly because my uncle, Lieutenant Kerry Loftus, was Noel Park's commanding officer in the Second 2nd Battalion during the German invasion of the island of Crete in 1941. The Australians were heavily outnumbered and deprived of air and sea support. Noel Park and Kerry Loftus were good friends. On occasion Noel shared with me, in a very private sense, some of the experiences he had during the Crete campaign. But, like many war heroes, Noel Park was not one to talk overtly about his wartime experiences. However, to get some insight into the courage and resourcefulness of Corporal Noel Park, as he was then, I refer to a passage in Stan Wick's book *Purple Over Green: The History of the 2/2 Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-1945*. The book refers to the Battle of Crete. There are no fewer than 10 separate references to Noel Park in this book. I would like to share with the House this one brief reference:

Cpl. Noel Park and Pte. Ian McLaren of the 2/2 Bn. had been captured in Crete, but escaped from the prison camp with a number of others, and 21 of them got hold of a boat and sailed back to Greece via the islands of Kithera and Antikithera until they reached Neapolis, the most southern point of Greece. Here they joined other Australians and New Zealanders who were seeking a boat to sail to Turkey or North Africa. The plan was for a few of them to swim out to a caique -

which is a long, narrow rowing boat -

-seize the dinghy and tow it ashore. Then a larger party would row out, board the caique and force the captain to sail southwards in the direction of Egypt. This plan failed at their first attempt but succeeded next time, and they sailed from Greece in a captured caique on 10 October. On their way to North Africa their petrol began to run short, so they mixed olive oil with it to make it spin out. They were attacked by both British and German planes but a khamsin which was blowing helped to conceal them because of the dust and they made land west of Mersa Matruh on 17th October.

I would like to share with honourable members another quote from this book. I think it exemplifies the courage and resourcefulness of our former parliamentary colleague. I refer to the incident that resulted in his being awarded the DSO. I quote from page 282 of *Purple over Green*:

The stalemate on Feature 1410 was broken in a spectacular fashion by B Coy, but particularly by the courageous and resourceful work of Lt. Noel Park who was awarded the D.S.O., a rare honour for a lieutenant. Gavin Long on Page 323 of *The Final Campaigns* describes this operation: "In preparation for a further attack on Jap Knoll on the 1410 Feature, Lt. Park on 1st April stealthily climbed an almost vertical cliff and reached a point within ten yards of the enemy. This scouting expedition took the whole day and provided Park with a detailed knowledge of the enemy's position. When he returned he planned an attack for the next day. Thus on 2nd April aircraft attacked the enemy's position, then the artillery and mortars bombarded it. A party moved to a nearby knoll whence they could keep the enemy under mortar and small arms fire during the attack. At 1130, 10 and 11 Platoons led by Lt. Park climbed up a 60-foot cliff to a forming-up place and thence charged with fixed bayonets. At a critical moment, Sgt. Finlayson dashed forward and overran two forward pits. Although wounded he remained in the lead and was the first to reach the main objective. The skill and courage of Park and Finlayson were the main causes of the success of this action."

Because I knew of Noel Park's military record as a brave and distinguished soldier before I came into this Parliament, I was somewhat surprised initially at the personality of this war hero. He was not a Rambo-type character who fired political missiles at every enemy target that moved. To the contrary, he was a very unassuming, thoughtful, sincere and thoroughly decent person who cared intensely about his electorate and the community he represented. He also had a great sense of humour. He enjoyed a scotch. Anyone who wanted to have a nightcap with Noel Park had to be prepared to drink at least half a glass straight. Also, instead of putting sugar in his tea by using a teaspoon, he would pick up the bowl and pour it in until he filled about a quarter of the cup. Perhaps that was because of a lack of sugar during his war experiences.

Noel Park put people before politics. When issues were being debated, particularly in the party room, he would listen very carefully to what was being proposed before offering his opinion. When his contribution

came it was delivered slowly and with conviction, each word designed for maximum impact. It was often the case that after Noel Park had spoken the debate concluded, invariably with an outcome similar to that proposed by Noel. In his 18 years representing the Tamworth area in this Parliament, Noel Park always kept the key local issues at the forefront. In his maiden speech delivered on 7 August 1974 he talked about the importance of the primary industries, the need for a proper water supply for the area, the significance of decentralisation, rail and road infrastructure, industrial relations, technical education and the need to keep our defence forces prepared and to preserve, in particular, those units operating in country areas. He concluded his maiden speech thus:

May I say that I will do my best to effectively represent all the people of my electorate, to play a worthwhile part in the procedure and work of this House and in the maintenance of constitutional government in New South Wales, giving credit where credit is due, both inside and outside Parliament and at all times enunciating the principles I believe in.

Those who look back at the parliamentary career of this very fine Australian will agree that Noel Park adhered to his original objectives and gave tremendous service to his electorate, this Parliament and this country. Even in the end, Noel Park faced his death with the same courage he displayed throughout his life. We are the poorer for his passing, but we are the richer for having had a person of the calibre and qualities of Noel Park as a parliamentary colleague and a friend.

Mr HATTON (South Coast) [3.50]: I can add very little to what has been said but in offering my condolences and sympathy to Noel Park's family and all those people who loved and respected him as much

Page 3343

as we did I can say, having arrived in this Parliament in the same year as Noel, that from my experience there has never been a more sincere, more meaningful and more moving tribute to any member of this House, whether a Premier, a Minister or a backbench member, and there has never been a man more deserving of the tribute we have witnessed today than Noel Park.

I do not claim to have known him well. I had a very deep respect for him because of his sincerity, his cast-iron honesty, his thorough preparation and his humanity - a mark of great men. I am privileged to know one other in the field of the services and that is my wife's uncle, Major-General Sir Ivan Dougherty, who spoke so highly of Noel Park as a general. That is when I came to know a little of Noel Park - I would not have known from Noel Park himself - and the respect for Noel Park in military circles. I also learned from Major-General Sir Ivan Dougherty the importance of humility and the importance of taking a personal interest in the men under one's command. He and Noel Park had in common that they would not rest unless they were assured that every person within their responsibility was looked after.

I think it is important to place on record also the thoughts of Ivan Dougherty about going back to Crete and the extraordinary reverence with which the people who went back to Greece in peacetime were treated by the Greek and Cretan people. I know that Noel Park went back on at least one occasion; he may have gone back on more than one occasion. I had an interesting experience when I met some Greek people in a very small village on a Greek island. I was walking early in the morning taking in the landscape. It was typical Greek landscape: very rugged country with olive trees and small red and white poppies in the fields.

I was deep in thought when a fellow came along with a donkey absolutely loaded down with hay. He said to me, "Anglais?" I said, "No, Australie". He said, "Australie. Australie", and he started to jump up and down saying, "Boom, boom! Very good, very good". I did not know what he was talking about but a friend there spoke fluent Greek and I asked him what it meant. He said, "You should be proud of the deep respect with which this generation of Greeks hold Australians soldiers who fought in their country so bravely and who shared the privations for no economic gain".

I want *Hansard* to show the respect that people who have the distinguished career of Noel Park are held in throughout the world. Those who joined up early went from the North African deserts to the Crete and Greece campaign, straight to the tropical jungles of New Guinea to face another enemy that was extremely clever and highly trained. And they did their job all over again. Noel Park was a truly great man and I ask his family to take great comfort in the fact that they will never experience a more moving, sincere and well-earned tribute

than they have heard today. I am proud to have known Noel Park and I am proud to join my colleagues in speaking on this very sad occasion.

Mr SMALL (Murray) [3.55]: I rise with honour to speak about a hero - a hero to this House, a hero to his wife, June, and his family, and a hero to this nation. Many of my colleagues - the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Premier and the leaders of this House - have described Noel Park, but to me Noel Park was the epitome of strength, ability, reasoning and attitude. He was a very loving and caring Christian person and a gentleman. The first time I met him was probably in late 1979 or in 1980 when Tim Fischer stood for the seat of Murray. I can recall Noel coming down to Deniliquin to attend a campaign meeting in the Anglican church hall. As usual, Tim Fischer was able to get 12 of his colleagues to come to Deniliquin. I can recall Tim Bruxner, Wal Murray, Col Fisher, Bruce Duncan, Roger Wotton, Garry West and others, including members of the House who have retired.

Noel left a lasting impression in my mind a few years ago when speaking in the House on regulation and an excess of red tape. He said, "We are over-regulated. I have got 32 licences". When queried on this he said, "I have a marriage licence, three dog licences, two pumping licences, two gun licences", and on he went. That showed the range of Noel's involvement. His war experiences had a great influence on our party, particularly at times of remembrance of the fallen. On Anzac Day he tried to help his colleagues by providing speech notes for the ceremonies which all members of Parliament attend to honour the fallen.

Noel Park represented the Tamworth electorate. As Tony Windsor, the present member, said, it is perhaps one of the best farming areas of New South Wales and Australia. Noel was totally honest and loved by everybody, including members of this Parliament. My wife would like me to pass on to June, her daughters and family, her love, respect and sympathy. She thought very highly of Noel and June. Noel was a wonderful Australian and father and a magnificent spokesman, and I am proud to thank June in this unfortunate circumstance for the part she played.

Ms ALLAN (Blacktown) [4.00]: I was saddened last week to hear of the death of Noel Park. My predecessor in the seat of Wentworthville, Ernie Quinn, spent about a decade in this Parliament with Noel Park, and he was very fond of Noel. Ernie first introduced me to Noel Park in 1987. Perhaps he had the view, as already indicated by the honourable member for Dubbo, that Noel would take me under his wing and I would develop in a way that he would be proud of. Ernie had about half as many daughters as Noel Park but I imagine that in the decade they were in Parliament together they shared many interesting conversations about their families. It is tragic that neither Noel nor Ernie enjoyed political retirement, both having died of cancer.

In the three years that I served in this place with Noel Park I found him to be a prolific speaker in debate. There was almost no debate, even on the environment, in which Noel did not participate. As did the honourable member for Tamworth, I took the

Page 3344

trouble to read Noel Park's maiden speech. Issues of concern to Noel in 1974 - such as water conservation and opportunities for those in western and north-western New South Wales - are still being debated, and I am sure that Noel would have loved to participate in some of the current debates. From various contributions today I have learned a lot about Noel's military career. As the honourable member for South Coast has said, it is fairly obvious that one would not have known about Noel's military career unless one had the opportunity to listen to today's debate or to speak to those who knew him very well. I found Noel Park to be a very gentle man. He made an outstanding contribution in this Parliament. I express my condolences to his family.

Members and officers of the House standing in their places,

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr WEST (Orange - Minister for Police, and Minister for Emergency Services) [4.04], by leave: I move:

That certain standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the Leader of the Opposition to deliver forthwith his second reading speech on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills, followed by the routine of business and private members' statements.

To facilitate members in making plans for this afternoon, I indicate that it is my understanding that the speech of the Leader of the Opposition will take approximately 20 minutes. The House will then move on to question time, routine business of the House and private members' statements.

Motion for suspension of standing and sessional orders agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL

PARLIAMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL

BUSINESS FRANCHISE LICENCES (PETROLEUM PRODUCTS) AMENDMENT BILL

MOTOR VEHICLES TAXATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

ROAD IMPROVEMENT (SPECIAL FUNDING) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 14 September.

Mr CARR (Maroubra - Leader of the Opposition) [4.05]: There is one great thing about this budget: it is this Government's last budget. After seven-odd years - seven years of missed opportunities, wrong priorities and ineffective government - this is the Government's last budget. New South Wales has experienced seven years of public relations stunts, waste and mismanagement. I might add, it has had six years straight of deficit budgets. On 27 August the people of Parramatta made their judgment on the Government's seven-year record. They rejected the whole raft of ineffective policies that the beaten, down-at-heel Cabinet had cobbled together. They rejected \$1.5 billion in vote buying.

We are told that after the Parramatta by-election the Premier convened a crisis meeting with his great strategic adviser, Mr Ted Pickering. Imagine that great meeting! Honourable members should imagine the great meeting of minds, the great clash of intellect, as they analysed the result of the Parramatta by-election. There has been nothing like it since early Laurel and Hardy. Only yesterday the staff of the Minister for the Environment rang the Public Service Association to ask what would happen to ministerial staff on a change of government. On 25 March 1995 the judgment of the people of Parramatta will be reaffirmed by the people of this State. All the pork-barrelling was tried in Parramatta. It did not work there and it will not work statewide. After seven long years, it is not enough to save the Government.

How can people believe anything promised by this Government when its record is so bad? There were 200 broken promises in the Government's first three years. This Government has been underspending, chronically, year by year. This Government underspent its police operations budget by \$137.3 million between 1989 and 1994. It underspent its total school education budget by \$22.7 million between 1989 and 1994. The budget papers reveal that last year's recurrent health budget was underspent by \$105 million. There is another test of the Government's credibility - its mandatory balanced budget proposal. The Treasurer said last Tuesday:

Every State but two in the United States has balanced budget legislation and the better States with the better legislation do very well out of it.

We propose to introduce this because we believe it's a good fiscal discipline for us and any government that may follow.

Let me take up the issue of mandated balanced budgets. What the Treasurer says is basically right, that is, most states in the United States of America have mandatory balanced budget legislation. Opposition research on this matter has revealed another very interesting fact. Every state except two in the United States also has either a goods and services tax or a state income tax. How Government members love the idea of a goods and services tax. Scrub away as hard as they do, they just cannot get it out of their system. Most states in the United States have both a goods and services tax and a state income tax. Every state except Alaska and New Hampshire has either a general sales tax or a broad based personal income tax, and most have both. Apart from either a general sales tax or a broad based personal income tax there is something else unusual about those two states, Alaska and New Hampshire. Honourable members have guessed it. Remember what the Treasurer told the *7.30 Report*:

Every State but two in the United States has balanced budget legislation.

Page 3345

According to the latest information available, Alaska and New Hampshire have no such requirement. They must be the two exceptions referred to by the Treasurer. In other words, it is a package: every state in the United States that has balanced budget legislation has either a goods and services tax or a state income tax. In America mandatory balanced budgets, state based income taxes and general broad based sales taxes go together. And the Treasurer spoke about the American comparison! The position is this: the present Premier and Treasurer want to introduce the American system of state government finances. They want to do that by introducing, by way of referendum, strict mandatory balanced budgets. They do not have the decency to tell the public about the other two integral parts of the American states' government financial system, a general sales tax and a broad based personal income tax. The Premier's plan becomes very clear all of a sudden. We know what he is up to. It is the old Liberal Party policy of a broad based consumption tax or drastic cuts in services. They have not given up; they love their GSTs.

Remember Nick Greiner? In May 1991 he revealed the Treasury document that committed the Government to exploring and introducing a state consumption tax. Premier Fahey was a member of the Cabinet that approved that document. He supported the Fightback package plans for a GST saying in this Parliament, "If one looks at the entire package, one gets an answer, and by God we need an answer in this country. If we get Fightback in its present form, we will be miles ahead". That was rejected by the people but the Government has not given up. No matter what labels are put on their new taxes, new taxes there will be under the Government's balanced budget legislation. In the United States some states which have legislated for balanced budgets have, as part of the package, a GST or state income tax, that is, a broad based tax. Of course, these populist United States' gimmicks have had their effect. Let me give just one example. According to the *Washington Post* of 12 November 1993:

. . . [the] deeply troubled Chicago public school system stood at the brink of another forced shutdown today as state officials met in Springfield to see a way out of the latest crisis.

After opening a week late in September, the 411,000-student system, third largest in the nation, has stumbled through the first weeks of the academic year under a series of federal court orders that temporarily waived a state law requiring a balanced budget.

The school system shut down because of the requirements of balanced budget legislation. It is enough that this Government took 2,500 teachers out of the school system; now it is playing with a proposal that would see the schools shut down if a recession forced a budget towards a deficit. Members opposite might be mightily relieved at this stage to hear that some Independents have formed the view that this legislation ought to be defeated. With a bit of luck, they must be thinking this proposal will die a quiet death in this place. The honourable member for South Coast is reported to be opposed to the legislation, slamming the plan as a childish approach to economics. The weekend press reported that the balanced budget legislation appeared doomed, with

the honourable member for Tamworth committed to voting against it. The honourable member for Manly is also reported to have reservations.

We now have this exquisite paradox. The Government relentlessly pursues the line that the Independent members are to blame for the chronic instability in the administration of this State. Crisis after crisis - blame the Independents. Bombings in the Blue Mountains - blame the Independents. They cop it for everything! Members opposite are desperately hoping that the Independents will come to their rescue on this matter, get them off the hook and save them from their Premier's folly. I have bad news for the Government. It cannot rely on the Independents to shield it from the dishonesty of the Premier. The Opposition will not block the referendum. The Treasurer, and Minister for the Arts has gone white. The other government members have fled the Chamber. Where have they gone? Bring in the smelling salts! If the legislation conforms to the proposal outlined by the Premier last week, the Opposition will not oppose it. Our view is to let the people judge. Take it to the people.

The Opposition wants this proposal with all its implications defeated not just by a vote on party lines in this Parliament but by a vote of the people after a wide-ranging debate. Let the people decide. The Opposition will mobilise the people of this State to defeat this proposition. If government members thought they saw a coalition against Hewson's GST, wait until they see the coalition against their proposal for balanced budgets backed by a new broad based tax. The Opposition will say to the people of this State - the honourable member for Cronulla is on the phone to the Premier! Panic has broken out. Scrap the proposal! Alarm bells are ringing.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no reason for the outburst from the Opposition benches. The Leader of the Opposition will continue.

Mr CARR: The Opposition is looking at the most important referendum in the history of this country since 1917. It is a proposal where the Opposition will urge a no vote: no to Liberal plans for a new broad based State tax; no to the Government's plan for cuts in health and education and, indeed, all public services; no to a proposal which could lead only to the enforced liquidation of the people's assets, including schools and hospitals; no to this coalition; and no to the lamebrained stunts of the Premier. The next State election therefore will be a referendum on the New South Wales coalition's continuing attempts to foist new taxes on the people of this State. It will be a referendum and election campaign; a choice between Labor's effective policies and the failed policies of the past seven years.

The Opposition's opponents have no concern for the vital functions of government that are placed at risk by their proposals. It is not in their philosophy. Look at their record. There have been cuts to the

Page 3346

number of teachers in schools. There have been hospital cuts - nearly 46,000 people on the waiting list for elective surgery. That is a record in the State's history. There were 29 hospitals that were closed, wound down or privatised; 5,300 beds have closed since 1988. On the weekend the dishonesty over hospitals continued and the Government will be held accountable for that dishonesty. Vital community services have been axed with cutbacks in the number of child protection officers. Public transport has suffered cutbacks as well.

The Government has never believed in the public sector providing the services that we as a complex interdependent society require. That is why the Government has twice moved to privatise public hospitals. First it was Port Macquarie, next will be Hawkesbury. Members will remember that in October 1992 the Minister for Health said that only four hospitals would be considered for privatisation before March. Obviously, this means that if the Government has its chance every hospital redevelopment up for consideration after March will be for privatisation: Maitland, Albury, Wollongong, Coffs Harbour, Lithgow, Liverpool, Prince of Wales, St George, Sutherland and Camden. Wherever there is a debate about the future of hospital services, the Government will go for the privatisation option, which is what it has signalled.

We must add to that list for privatisation the Government's plans for water authorities. The Minister for Planning, and Minister for Housing made it clear last year that he wanted to make the Sydney Water Board "a

candidate for privatisation in the future". If this Liberal Government is given a third term, health and water - the core responsibilities of government - will be subject to privatisation. This means worse services and much higher costs, even higher than the people have been paying for the past seven years. For example, families in the Blue Mountains are now \$1,700 a year worse off than in 1988, due to this Liberal Government.

The Opposition welcomes the cuts to payroll tax, business water charges, industrial electricity tariffs and port charges. However, it was not this Government but the independent Government Pricing Tribunal of New South Wales which forced cuts in water and electricity charges in the past two years after the Government imposed savage increases in its first five years of office. This Government expects business to be grateful for the proposed annual \$54 million in payroll tax cuts. When the Opposition called for these cuts 16 months ago the proposal was derided and rejected by the Government. These are the very cuts the Treasurer criticised. This comes from a Liberal Government that failed to index the tax threshold for four years while Queensland became more tax competitive. This comes from a Liberal Government which four years ago increased payroll tax to the highest rate in the country, driving jobs out of this State; driving jobs to Queensland.

As a result of all of this, New South Wales has been entrenched each year since 1988 as the highest taxed State. In 1987-88, the year covering Labor's last budget, when Labor left this State with an AAA rating, the Australian Bureau of Statistics measured the tax burden on the people of this State as \$1,344 for every man, woman and child. The latest figure, for 1992-93, is \$1,838 for every man, woman and child, an increase of around \$500 in just five years. That is the seven-year legacy of this Liberal Government. Honourable members will remember how in 1988 the brilliant commissioners of the Curran Commission of Inquiry lampooned Labor for leaving a legacy of \$46 billion of state liabilities, but what is it now? It is now an estimated \$56 billion, an extra \$10 billion in only six budgets.

The economy is on the mend, even though New South Wales still ranks behind the other States because of the failure of this Government's policies on taxes, charges and State development, and its failure to act on red tape. Take one key indicator, related directly to this State's performance in jobs. Investment in New South Wales is \$1 billion a year less than it was two years ago. Queensland, by contrast, boasts an increase in investment of 8.5 per cent; Victoria, up 21.5 per cent; Tasmania, up 22 per cent; and Western Australia, up 43 per cent. National economic recovery means this budget benefits from an extra \$500 million in taxes. In addition, Federal payments are up by more than \$300 million this year alone. Of course, without the benefit of the potential windfall of the casino payment, the deficit would be more than double what it is.

As in 1988-89, after the last revenue boom, the Premier and Treasurer are acting like village idiots who have won Lotto. They are running around spending their gains and splashing money all over the place. It will not work. The people of this State are too sophisticated for these acts of cynicism. As I said in my Evatt Foundation address two weeks ago, only a New South Wales Labor government, with its great tradition of fiscal responsibility, can and will deliver both economic and social responsibility with its effective policies. Our proposals for government have at their core a commitment to increasing spending on essential services, the right priorities, in public health, schools, public transport, community services and the environment. We will target these and other essential public services with our practical solutions to improve the quality of life of our people, wherever they live in this great State.

We will govern by living within our means and refocusing every cent of expenditure towards these priorities to deliver better services without burdening families and businesses. In budget commitments we have placed a cap of 2 per cent on the annual state budget. In addition, as I have reaffirmed with the rating agencies, we will ensure those commitments are funded by cuts elsewhere in the budget. We are the only State Opposition to have put our budgetary proposals to and have them endorsed by the rating agencies. We take great pride in that, building on the tradition of the AAA rating left behind by the last State Labor Government.

The extra funding for our commitments will come from our slashing of the waste and mismanagement of this Government, including our commitment to slash spending on consultants,

Page 3347

advertising and office refurbishments, to halve the size of the senior executive service; saving around 5 per cent

in the State's \$1 billion stores and equipment budget; streamlining administration; reforming the public sector, oversighted by a council on the cost of government; utilising the best private and public sector managers to streamline existing review mechanisms; freezing public funding of low priority capital works; and applying an immediate curb on advertising of public service jobs so vacancies can be filled by redeployment from lower priority programs we propose to cut.

We will fully document our savings proposals, as we did in detail during the 1991 campaign. Our approach of fully funding our commitments through expenditure cuts meets a goal: not to increase the tax burden on the people and businesses of this State. Two weeks ago I announced that - along with our core goals of capping spending, aiming to balance the budget, freezing taxes and restraining debt - I committed a Labor government to a fifth core fiscal goal: to cut business taxes, specifically to cut the burden of payroll tax. The measure will be on the agenda in framing every one of our budgets, with the precise concessions depending on each year's budgetary circumstances. But our key goal is to have New South Wales win the race for new jobs against the other States. We will continue to reduce the budget deficit, aiming at a balanced budget in our first year, precisely the time in the economic cycle when it makes sense to seek a balanced budget.

On the Government's forecast there will be a projected deficit of \$266 million in 1995-96. This largely reflects pork-barrelling, including the excessive level of the Treasurer's advance: double what it is in a normal year. Given last year's improved result of \$460 million in only five months, the goal of a balanced budget looks achievable by June 1996. Of course, next March we will require Treasury to provide a detailed and up-to-date projection for 1995-96. Our financial policy, our economic development policies and our social policies are all interrelated with a common goal: to deliver better services, a better economy, a better State and a better government, which the people of New South Wales have now been denied for seven years.

This much at least can be said for this seventh and last coalition budget: it is a truly fitting epitaph for a thoroughly discredited government. Carved in stone over it all is the word "hypocrisy" - the undisguised pork-barrelling typified by the \$200 million so-called Treasurer's advance, which is in reality the coalition's election slush fund. If ever there was a time in the economic cycle for a Treasurer to be working in earnest towards a balanced budget, this is it. If this Government were dinkum about a balanced budget it would be making a genuine effort for debt and deficit reduction. Instead, we have the Premier's referendum stunt: "Make me chaste, oh Lord - but not yet". This budget scarcely deserves serious consideration as a budget at all. It is just an electioneering document. From this Government's point of view, it is simply Parramatta writ large. The people of Parramatta had their say about this Government's approach last month. The people of New South Wales will have their say next March. I invite the House to condemn this budget, as assuredly the people will do at the earliest opportunity.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Armstrong.

APPOINTMENT OF COMMISSIONER OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Message

Mr Speaker reported the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr Speaker

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that, having had under consideration the Assembly's Message of 15 September 1994 regarding the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption, it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

That this House refers the matter of Justice Barry O'Keefe's proposed appointment as Independent Commission Against Corruption Commissioner to the Joint Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption for reconsideration.

BILLS RETURNED

The following bills were returned from the Legislative Council without amendment:

Supply Bill
Parliamentary Supply Bill

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

BALANCED BUDGETS

Mr CARR: My question is directed to the Premier. Will he guarantee that legislation for a referendum on balanced budgets will be introduced and dealt with before Parliament adjourns this year?

Mr FAHEY: Yes.

CASINO CONTROL AUTHORITY LICENSING INQUIRY

Mr TURNER: My question without notice is addressed to the Chief Secretary, and Minister for Administrative Services. Has the Leader of the Opposition been able to explain from which publicly available source his staff obtained a Louisiana police report? What action will she take on this matter?

Mrs COHEN: I thank the honourable member for his interest in exposing the Opposition's casino agenda. Last week I advised the House of the Leader of the Opposition's very carefully constructed attacks on the Casino Control Authority process.

Page 3348

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

Mrs COHEN: I explained to the House why it is important for the casino processes to remain free of political meddling and how in order to fulfil the Labor Party's agenda, the Leader of the Opposition has waged a vicious and deceitful campaign against the Casino Control Authority. A matter which goes to the heart of the motives and lack of integrity of the Leader of the Opposition in relation to casino issues is the source of his allegations against both the authority and the preferred applicant.

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

Mrs COHEN: If the Leader of the Opposition has lied on this issue, it is hard to see how he can have any integrity or credibility when it comes to any matters relating to the casino. With this in mind, last week I openly challenged the Leader of the Opposition to explain the publicly available sources from which his staff had obtained a confidential Louisiana police report.

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

Mrs COHEN: Let me remind the House that this was the report which the Casino Control Authority advises it had in its possession and was investigating before the Leader of the Opposition paraded it around town last month.

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

Mrs COHEN: It is also the report that the Leader of the Opposition initially refused to give to the authority, preferring to engage in public speculation, even if it meant compromising the authority's investigation. It is also the report that the Leader of the Opposition claimed, on a number of radio stations, and very frequently, was obtained from publicly available sources. However, the Louisiana police take a very different view. They are so alarmed that the Leader of the Opposition got hold of the report that they have started their own investigation. Five days ago I told the Leader of the Opposition that it was now time for him to explain his publicly available sources.

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

Mrs COHEN: I challenged him, in this House, to explain his lie or be branded by it. The Leader of the Opposition has run for cover.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much interjection from both sides of the House. In the interests of the smooth conduct of question time, honourable members should listen to the answer in silence.

Mrs COHEN: What do honourable members think his response has been?

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

Mrs COHEN: The Leader of the Opposition has, as I said, run for cover. In Friday's newspapers, quotes from the Leader of the Opposition on this subject are nowhere to be seen. Instead, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* a spokesman is quoted as saying that the Opposition would not disclose its source. Likewise, the *Australian Financial Review* stated that "a spokeswoman for Mr Carr's office said the Opposition Leader would not be revealing his sources". If the Leader of the Opposition had obtained the police report from confidential sources, his reasons for not disclosing them might be understood. However, was it not the Leader of the Opposition who said, over and over again, that it was obtained from publicly available sources? Does Mr Carr mean honourable members to take this as confirmation that he is a liar?

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

Mrs COHEN: Why has the Leader of the Opposition been unavailable for more than a week, apart from appearances in Parliament and in some selected radio interviews?

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

Mrs COHEN: I understand members of the press gallery have been having a great deal of trouble getting near him. It seems he has gone into hiding on this issue.

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

Mrs COHEN: I understand the Leader of the Opposition has not visited the Parliament House press

conference room for well over a week. In fact, Michael Egan has been given the task instead. It seems to me that the Leader of the Opposition has, in fact, appointed an acting Opposition leader.

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

Mrs COHEN: In a letter faxed to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, I again asked him to explain whether his source was a public one and, if not, why he had claimed it was. Again, no response has been forthcoming. The Leader of the Opposition has been condemned by his own silence. Why will he not explain and why has he gone into hiding? We are not, after all, talking about paper clips; we are talking about a \$1 billion casino project. At this stage, the Leader of the Opposition has no choice but to come out in the open and name his source.

Page 3349

BALANCED BUDGETS

Mr WHELAN: I address my question without notice to the Premier, and Minister for Economic Development. In announcing balanced budget legislation last week, did he and the Treasurer say that all but two of the States of the United States of America have guaranteed balanced budgets? Do those States also have a goods and services tax and/or State income taxes?

Mr FAHEY: I know that the Leader of the Opposition has a penchant for American history and spends his time going there and looking at what is happening in America.

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

Mr FAHEY: That is, of course, when he is not playing his little games with the factions and trying to shaft the honourable member for Liverpool with one of his cafe friends from the North Shore, a former Young Labor lady. It seems that only one thing interests the Leader of the Opposition: how he can keep the honourable member for Liverpool away from him, out of Parliament, not anywhere near his leadership aspirations, so that he can be secure. I say one thing to the honourable member for Liverpool. If he wants to run in Cabramatta as a Liberal, we will endorse him. In fact, if the honourable member for Liverpool wants to run in Liverpool as the Liberal candidate we will have him.

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

Mr FAHEY: I believe there was a disturbance in this House as the Leader of the Opposition was endeavouring to rehearse his lines for the theatre for his response, when he went into hiding for a week, as the Chief Secretary said. An invitation came to the office of the honourable member for Liverpool to "come down and let us see if we can patch things up a little. A few of us are having a lemonade. Come down and we will just have a little chat and see if we can sort things out".

Mr Whelan: On a point of order: the answer now has absolutely no relevance to the question, which relates to potential sales tax and is thus of importance to the State. I would ask you to draw the Premier's attention to the question and bring him back to a possible answer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I understood that the Premier was responding to interjections from the Opposition. However, he has had ample time to respond to those interjections. He has indicated he will come back to the question before the House.

Mr FAHEY: There were little soirees down there and the honourable member for Liverpool said to the Leader of the Opposition, "You're not going to raise a goods and services tax, surely?"

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will continue with his answer.

Mr FAHEY: He said, "You're not going to raise a goods and services tax, surely? You tried that in the 1991 election. Nobody believed you then. You're not going to raise a goods and services tax again?"

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Recently the Opposition complained about the Premier digressing from the subject matter of the question. After I directed the Premier to return to the subject of the question it was almost impossible to hear what was being said because of the barrage of interjections from Opposition members. It is totally against the proper conduct of question time and the principles of debate in this Parliament if the member with the call cannot be heard. I ask all honourable members to cooperate for the remainder of question time and to listen in silence to whoever has the call.

Mr FAHEY: Despite this conversation and the advice from the honourable member for Liverpool about the GST, the Leader of the Opposition thinks he might revisit 1991. Let me give the Leader of the Opposition, all honourable members of the House and the public of New South Wales one unequivocal guarantee, I will even say law: no GST! There will not be a GST in New South Wales under this Government.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing to order.

Mr FAHEY: The only one who will continue to talk about GST is this man, the Leader of the Opposition, because he has blown the budget. He does not know the truth. If he is going to pay for the overspending when he cuts out the tollways - \$615 million - when he builds the Eastern Distributor without a toll - another \$18 million - he might go looking for something.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Chief Secretary, and Minister for Administrative Services to order.

Mr FAHEY: This side of the House will not be bringing in a GST.

BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Mr RIXON: Could the Minister for Police, and Minister for Emergency Services inform the House of the potential bushfire danger facing New South Wales this summer? What action is the Government taking to assist the State's bush fire fighters?

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

Mr WEST: Obviously the concern of the honourable member for Lismore is shared by many people in this State. As at noon today more than 50 bushfires were raging across the State, stretching from Wollongong to the Queensland border. Port Macquarie, Taree, Cessnock and Wollongong are the main problem areas. In a report to me this morning the Commissioner of Bush Fire Services, Phil Koperberg said:

It is highly likely that further and significant expansion of all uncontained fires in timbered areas will occur today.

Page 3350

He added:

I hold serious concerns for the longer term outlook due to the current extent of fire and extremely dry fuels which exist in timbered areas right along the coast and ranges.

These fires erupted not because of searing temperatures but because of high winds. However, I regret to inform the House that yesterday a series of fires were started not just because of those high winds but as a result of a series of mindless acts of arson. Let me warn arsonists that no effort will be spared to arrest and charge them.

Let me also remind them of the penalties that the Parliament imposed early this year, increasing the maximum fine of \$5,000 and a gaol sentence of 12 months to a maximum fine of \$100,000 and a gaol sentence of five years. I am advised that it is possible that the bushfire season this coming summer has the potential to be every bit as bad as it was earlier this year. As we all know, the State is in the grip of drought and it is like a tinderbox.

Because of the tremendous work that has been done by the Bush Fire Services and, in particular, its 70,000 volunteers in 2,400 brigades, the Government is attempting to make sure that the fighters have the equipment to do the job for which they are trained. I am able to tell honourable members and the people of this State that as a result of the budget brought down last week, the Government is able to allocate a record \$50 million to the Bush Fire Services of this State. Of that amount a record \$39 million is to be channelled through 142 local councils and local government areas for new equipment and for upgrading of present equipment. That amount is 27 per cent higher than was allocated in the previous year. But, more importantly, it is 240 per cent higher than the amount allocated by that miserable Labor Government when it was in power in 1988.

If there was any doubt in the minds of the 70,000 volunteers about the level of allocations, they only had to listen to the reply to the Treasurer's Budget Speech by the Leader of the Opposition earlier this afternoon. They can be assured that no further moneys will be coming to them if, by some chance, the Labor Party gains power. It will not. This Government will continue to ensure that the bush fire fighters of this State get the equipment and the training they deserve. This Government has put in an enormous effort to make sure that the volunteers and the councils are able to bring their equipment up to scratch. Let me give some examples of areas that have put in their bids and to which the Government has been able to respond with allocations: Albury city is to get a 194 per cent increase compared to what it got last year; Uralla is up 278 per cent; Walgett up 217 per cent; Balranald up 186 per cent; Culcairn up 172 per cent and Copmanhurst up 127 per cent. The biggest increase is at Ku-ring-gai: its allocation has increased by a massive 524 per cent.

In January the volunteers of this State had to deal with 827 fires covering thousands of kilometres of fire line. More than 2,000 firefighting appliances, 76 aircraft and countless other resources were engaged. At the end of the day, tragically, four lives, 204 houses and considerable infrastructure had been lost. However, without the equipment upgrading program upon which the Government embarked in 1988 the toll could have been far higher. Legislative changes put in place this year have imposed a significant new onus on all land managers - government and private - to maintain their lands in a less hazardous condition. Commissioner Koperberg and the coordinating committee have been given enhanced authority to enable them to deal with some of the problems we have had, such as councils or government departments that have not cooperated in undertaking control burns. During this past winter considerable effort has been made by various government agencies to ensure that fuel reduction continued to occur.

The Government has made arrangements for local fire control officers to be more operationally accountable to the Department of Bush Fire Services, while ensuring that they remain totally responsive to local council needs. The Government is doing everything it can to ensure that the bush fire fighters of this State are able to carry out the work they have to do. This is one area where the old saying, "Prevention is better than cure", is extremely apt. I can only hope that the preventive measures that the Government has put in place will ensure no loss of life this summer as a result of bushfires. I appeal to the community to assist the Government to catch arsonists. The Government will do everything it can to ensure that the Bush Fire Services can take whatever action is necessary to prevent another horrific bushfire season.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr J. J. AQUILINA: Is the Premier, and Minister for Economic Development aware that the Chicago public school system faced complete shutdown late last year because of a state law requiring a balanced budget? Were schools only kept open because of court orders that temporarily waived the requirement? Is this his vision for the 750,000 children in the New South Wales public education system?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing to order for the second time.

Mr FAHEY: Parents of New South Wales appreciate very much the fact that 1,466 additional teachers will be in our schools by the start of next year and that they will concentrate on the areas of greatest concern, including literacy and numeracy in the early years of school, vocational education in the early years of high school and special needs and support in years 11 and 12 as students prepare for their higher school certificate. As we all know, the HSC for 1994 is just around the corner. This recruitment program will concentrate on counsellors, one of the more important areas in the primary and secondary school system. Increased demands placed

Page 3351

on teachers because of the social needs of students and their families have created the need for those counsellors. The parents of New South Wales school children will appreciate that the Government has reduced the computer to student ratio from one to 60 to one to 19.

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

Mr FAHEY: It is abundantly clear that this Government has had real increases in education spending in each of the years it has been in office. We have a strong commitment to ensuring that our young people have the best opportunity to take their place in the world, with the best education behind them. They should have the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to New South Wales in the future. We cannot live on Bankcard, the only credo the Leader of the Opposition believes in. The Opposition cannot keep putting things on Bankcard. It cannot keep lying to the electorate. That is what the Leader of the Opposition continues to do day after day. It might be one thing to lie to the honourable member for Liverpool, but he cannot lie to the people of New South Wales.

WORKPLACE REFORM

Mrs SKINNER: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment, and Minister for the Status of Women. Can the Minister inform the House of steps taken by the New South Wales Government to further increase flexibility in our labour market? Does this mean that employees will be provided with more family-friendly working practices?

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: I commend the honourable member for North Shore for her continuing interest in this issue. Over the years she has been successful in her career as well as in her family responsibilities. When she was involved with the Office of Youth Affairs she was instrumental in introducing the sorts of flexible working conditions we on this side of the House believe the people of New South Wales deserve; that is, part-time work, job sharing and flexible working hours.

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

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: Today I had the great pleasure of unveiling, on behalf of the Premier, a number of measures that will once again place New South Wales at the forefront of workplace reform in this country. These measures are part of the Government's ongoing commitment to transform the New South Wales labour market from one that was rigid and outdated to one that is increasingly flexible, more responsive and less disruptive with respect to strikes and other activities that characterised this State for so long.

The industrial reforms introduced by this Government in 1991 have been an outstanding success. The number of working days lost in New South Wales have been reduced by 80 per cent. Through the introduction of enterprise bargaining we have provided enterprises with the legislative framework required to make their workplaces more flexible and to increase productivity. We have opened up the industrial system and given all

workers the right to choose and to negotiate, whether or not they belong to a union. We have protected the rights of workers by enshrining in legislation a safety net of entitlements and minimum conditions.

No wonder our industrial relations reforms have been adopted by all States and, to a perverted extent, by the Labor Party in Canberra. In fact, the only political group in this country which does not accept our industrial reforms and the focus we have taken - the only group hankering for the bad old days of inflexibility and strikes - is, you guessed it, the New South Wales Labor Party. The Leader of the Opposition, who has left the Chamber, and his shadow spokesman for industrial relations spend much of their time telling the business community that they support our reforms, that they support a moderate industrial relations policy. On one hand they have hawked that word around town at all the business lunches they have been to, but on the other they then rush down to the Labor Council and confirm that they will reintroduce what it wants - compulsory unionism - and abolish enterprise bargaining. We will end up back in the bad old days of the 1950s. The Labor Party understands who is its master: the New South Wales Labor Council.

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

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: On this issue, as on most other issues, the Leader of the Opposition has absolutely no credibility.

Mr Causley: He is a liar.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: Yes, he is a liar. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition is not here.

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

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: What is the Leader of the Opposition's definition of flexible working practices? I suspect it means that Whelan works and Anderson does not. By way of contrast, this Government continues to break new ground in relation to industrial relations and workplace reforms. It continues to set the pace. Today's launch of the Government's new guidelines for flexible working arrangements in the New South Wales public sector is no exception. These new guidelines have the potential to benefit more than 300,000 employees in government departments and agencies and to provide those employees, men and women, with the framework for a whole range of innovative working arrangements. The guidelines include permanent part-time work, part-time leave without pay, working from home, more flexible working hours, job sharing, career break schemes and part-year employment.

Page 3352

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

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: In this country and across much of the Western world we are experiencing one of the most dramatic changes to the way we organise our workplaces since the end of the industrial revolution. New South Wales is at the forefront of those changes. This Government recognises that there has been a change in family composition, a change in social expectations -

[Interruption]

Members opposite might think this is boring.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much interjection.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: We regularly hear the rhetoric from the Labor Party about its commitment to women, to families and to workers. When we actually introduce changes that recognise family responsibilities and commitment, and worker responsibilities and commitment, those opposite say that it is boring. The honourable member for Parramatta might be one of the members we talk to about changing the working hours in

this place so we can combine working with family responsibilities.

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

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: It is important for the world and the people of New South Wales to know that the Labor Party is all talk when it comes to these issues; it has absolutely no commitment. It does not care about families. Where is the Labor Party's family policy? Its commitment to women is absolutely false. It is all talk.

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

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: The Labor Party is not committed to working women in this State. When was the last time the shadow minister asked a question in this place about women? The Labor Party does not care. It has absolutely no commitment. If the Labor Party were serious, it would be applauding the Government. It would not be saying that this is boring. We are facing an enormous change in family life. We now have single parents, dual income families and an ageing population. Those things impact on our home life and our work life. Despite these changes the private sector and the public sector have not recognised the need to change our workplaces to make them more family-friendly. However, there have been some truly magnificent exceptions in the private sector. I congratulate the companies that are providing these sorts of facilities for their staff. But it is not happening fast enough.

The private sector is now recognising that we need to change, and this Government will give the impetus by providing the push through the public sector. It is important for employees to recognise that this is not just a women's issue, not just a feminist issue; it is a community issue and one that needs to be addressed from a wider industrial framework. The Government is leading by example. Through the introduction of these guidelines for more flexible working arrangements we are providing the leadership and guidance to both the public sector and the private sector. These guidelines were worked out in consultation with the agencies and relevant unions. It is surprising and depressing, although not atypical, that the Labor Council has attacked the guidelines. That is where we should be looking for industrial relations policies in this State. Do not look at what the Labor Party is saying, look at what the Labor Council is saying. The Labor Council pulls the strings. These guidelines will result in opportunities for new and innovative working arrangements but the benefits will be not only for employees and their families but also for their customers. We believe that greater flexibility of work will result in increased productivity, better service delivery and, ultimately, savings for the taxpayers of New South Wales. And that is an appropriate goal for a government such as this one, which is committed to protecting and helping families across New South Wales, a government which is committed to building a better State.

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

HEALTH FUNDING

Dr REFSHAUGE: My question is directed to the Premier, and Minister for Economic Development. Is he aware that in 1987 the balanced budget legislation in the State of Oregon led to cuts in cancer services -

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

Dr REFSHAUGE: - even to the extent that a seven-year-old child with leukaemia was refused bone marrow transplantation -

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much interjection from the Government benches. It is impossible for the Minister who is being asked a question to answer if he cannot hear the question. It was very difficult for the Chair to hear what was being said and therefore I presume it was difficult for the Premier to hear exactly what was said. Did the Premier get the gist of the question?

Mr FAHEY: Yes, Mr Speaker, I did.

Dr REFSHAUGE: I have not finished the question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition says that he has not finished the question. I remind him that, quite apart from interjections, the question seems to be getting lengthy. I ask him to conclude his question as soon as possible. I call the honourable member for Eastwood to order for the third time. I call the honourable member for Murwillumbah to order. I call the Minister for Health to order.

Page 3353

Dr REFSHAUGE: Is the Premier aware that the cuts to cancer services were to such an extent that a seven-year-old child -

Mr Humpherson: On a point of order: the purpose of asking questions at question time is to press for information and explanation relating to matters of public administration in the State of New South Wales. This question relates to a state in the United States. It bears no relevance to matters of public administration in this State. The matters raised in the question have nothing to do with matters which should be raised during question time in this House. Mr Speaker, I ask you to rule the question out of order.

Dr REFSHAUGE: On the point of order: I have not finished the question so it would be difficult to know what the honourable member is objecting to. The question relates to a Government policy initiative that the Premier has announced. He has made comparisons with jurisdictions in which this policy has worked. There is evidence in the question that similar jurisdictions have experienced problems, which raises the question of whether such problems will be experienced here.

Mr Whelan: On the point of order: the question is relevant because, as members know, the Government proposes to make the American experience the role model for New South Wales.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Ashfield is attempting to argue the matter. Earlier in question time I mentioned that interjections - from both sides of the House or from one side of the house or the other - make it difficult to hear what is being said. The question has been broken into several parts because of interjections from the Government benches, making it very difficult to understand the gist of the question and whether there is substance to the point of order taken by the honourable member for Davidson. However, the Premier indicated that he had the gist of the question and was prepared to answer it. Therefore, I rely on his judgment as to whether the question comes within the jurisdiction of this State. If he feels it does, I will allow the question. If he feels it is outside the jurisdiction of the State, he may take a point of order. Otherwise, I rule the question in order.

Dr REFSHAUGE: I have not finished the question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call on the Premier to answer the question.

Mr FAHEY: I can only presume that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition gleaned this information when he went to the United States on the fact-finding mission to get information about the preferred tenderer for the casino. When the Leader of the Opposition was asked where he got his information from about the casino he said, "My staff got that information from public and published sources". Off they went to the United States, I presume at taxpayers expense. Maybe the cost was less if they had some other little fund - the Evatt Foundation or a similar body might have thrown up money.

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

Mr FAHEY: Mr Speaker, let me tell you about health because I think it is about time we had a look at

health. The score is: Government, 28; Opposition, in its 12 years in government, two. This Government in its 6½ years in office has built or redeveloped 28 hospitals; the Labor Government, in 12 years, two. Every year the present Government's health budget has been increased. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to cancer. The figures show that this year there was record funding for cancer care, \$500 million. This year the total health budget is \$5.75 billion in accrual terms, and that is \$1.25 billion more in accrual terms than under the last year of Labor.

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

Mr FAHEY: The question is about health and I am going to speak about health. Capital spending this year is \$460 million, an 85 per cent real increase on Labor's spending in its last year in government.

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

Mr FAHEY: I turn to the greater west of Sydney. The Leader of the Opposition is probably out there looking for a candidate at the moment. He is probably trying to find one for Parramatta, for the west of Sydney. He has probably gone over to the North Shore, to Neutral Bay.

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

Mr FAHEY: The west of Sydney is getting \$1.1 billion under this Government, not the paltry \$700 million it got in the last year under Labor. There is a record \$800 million in this year's budget for treating heart disease and a record \$93 million for women's health. For rural health there is \$976 million, an increase of more than \$280 million on the expenditure in Labor's last year. But the figure I like best is that in 6½ years of coalition government there have been 28 new or substantially redeveloped hospitals and in the 12 years under Labor there were two.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY TOLL PROPOSALS

Mr MERTON: Is the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads aware of comments by the Leader of the Opposition in which he supported the concept of a toll road on the Pacific Highway? Does this contradict promises made by the honourable member for Kogarah that no toll roads will be built on the Pacific Highway?

Dr Refshauge: On a point of order: the question asked has nothing to do with government administration and -

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition indicates by taking such a point of order that he has a short memory. Hundreds of

Page 3354

questions asked in this House over many years have been based on Opposition statements that reflect upon government policy, and they have been allowed. I rule the question in order.

Mr BAIRD: The honourable member for Baulkham Hills is obviously an outstanding member -

Ms Allan: Ministerial material.

Mr BAIRD: Absolutely, like shadow minister Peter Anderson, and great leadership potential too. Not only in health do we have great achievement in the budget; in road funding there has been a 63 per cent increase in real terms in this budget compared with the last year the Labor Government was in power. In the western Sydney area alone there was a 87 per cent increase in real terms in State spending on roads compared with expenditure in the last year of the Labor Government. I am sure that the honourable member for St Marys is

very grateful. In the electorate of St Marys in the last three years of the Labor Government \$59,000 -

Mr Langton: On a point of order: I seem to recall that the question related specifically to the Pacific Highway. Perhaps the Minister is not aware that the Pacific Highway does not go through St Marys. I could get a map for him.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The question may have dealt with the Pacific Highway, but it clearly touches on government funding of roads, and the Minister for Transport is speaking to that.

Mr Langton: On a further point of order: the question did not relate to government expenditure. The question related -

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Kogarah is questioning my ruling. I direct him to resume his seat.

Mr BAIRD: Thank you for your ruling, Mr Speaker. We are simply getting out of Sydney.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BAIRD: As I was saying, over the past three years under this Government St Marys has experienced a 5,000 per cent increase in expenditure, for which I am sure the honourable member for St Marys is very grateful. We were talking about tollways. The statement on tollways made by the Opposition and the honourable member for Kogarah simply cannot be believed. It is difficult to be precise about the Opposition's stance on tollways because there is so much contradiction. It all depends on what time of the day and when Opposition members made such statements.

On their most recent statements, Opposition members support the removal of tolls from the M4 and the M5 tollways. They want to put a toll on the Gore Hill freeway, they want to take the toll off the Eastern Distributor and they want to put a toll on the Pacific Highway. To put it simply, Opposition members have no idea which stance they should take on toll roads, so they just oppose whatever the Government does. The classic example is the Pacific Highway. In this House last year the honourable member for Kogarah said that the only way to achieve a dual carriageway between Hexham and the Queensland border was to build a toll road. He said:

The Opposition is not opposed to that as long as there will be alternative route which is untolled.

Opposition members should check *Hansard* if they do not recall that statement. During another debate the Leader of the Opposition called for the "speedy letting of tenders" for the Pacific Highway toll road. What happened a few months later was a 3.5 backflip, with pike - one of the biggest backflips of all time. In fact, local papers called it a backflip. We read headlines such as "The ALP does a backflip over \$5 billion tollway" and "Opposition's tollway stance an about face".

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

Mr BAIRD: The honourable member for Kogarah suddenly decided that there were more votes in being green, so he declared that a toll road on the Pacific Highway was "environmental vandalism". In the House he supported a toll road but in the electorate he decided that a toll would be environmental vandalism. The headlines in the papers on the north coast were deserved. The official position as outlined by the honourable member for Kogarah was that the Labor Party was opposed to the Pacific Highway being a toll road. That was, of course, until last week, when the Leader of the Opposition attended a business breakfast and declared that he was not against toll roads after all. He was against removing tolls in the west, but in the north and on the Pacific Highway it was appropriate.

The Labor Party has gone full circle. In the beginning the Labor Party was in favour of a toll road on the Pacific Highway, then it was against a toll road and now it is back in support at business breakfasts - and, of

course, we know that statements made in the Parliament and out at rallies are quite different from what is said at business breakfasts, when the real story comes out. The Labor Party candidate for Murwillumbah, Mr Trevor Wilson, two months ago issued the following statement:

Tweed residents not have to put their hands in their pockets twice - once as taxpayers to pay for roadworks and then again for toll charges.

Mr Wilson points out that he is totally opposed to a tollway proposal for the Pacific Highway. Just where does the Labor Party stand on this whole issue? It is known that the Leader of the Opposition favours a toll road. He told everyone at business breakfasts that he wants a toll road. We are left with an unanswered question as to the stance of the Labor Party. At the same business breakfast the Leader of the Opposition said that the M4 and the M5 roads would have phantom tolls. Honourable members know about the Phantom of the Opera; now the Leader of the Opposition is talking about the phantom of the M4 and M5. The Labor Party proposes to calculate the number of cars travelling through the tollway and reimburse toll companies for the amount paid.

Page 3355

While there has been a great bonanza in the west - the huge funding bonanza, including the 5,000 per cent increase in the electorate of St Marys, that has been enjoyed by all - the Labor Party has a proposal that would result in a loss of about \$112 million each year from the annual budget to repay the toll companies. That is what the phantom toll would deliver. What a waste! Which Opposition members would volunteer to have their roads budgets cut? Would it be the honourable member for St Marys, who has been enjoying a great bonanza? Would it be the honourable member for Mount Druitt? His roads budget of \$2.2 million in the last three years of the Labor Government increased under this Government to \$16.4 million in the most recent three years - a 633 per cent increase. The member for Mount Druitt has done very well. The Opposition's position is a confused mess.

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

Mr BAIRD: Labor Party members cannot make up their minds whether they are in favour of toll roads. Never mind what the constituents of New South Wales want. The Government's track record is very clear and very firm. It has achieved an increase in road funding of more than 30 per cent in real terms since it has been in government. Labor Party members know that their record is extremely poor. Another \$1 billion has been added in private sector funding of toll roads in this State. Labor Party members do not know what to do so they have come full circle on the Pacific Highway, which has the worst accident rate of any road in Australia. In fact, the member for Murwillumbah knows the problems and knows why the Government is pressing ahead with the Motorway Pacific. Opposition members do not know where they stand in terms of the M4 and the M5. They talk about phantom tolls, which will take funding away from much needed road projects. Heaven help the roadworks in this State if Labor Party members ever get into government. This Government needs to continue to clean up the mess. The honourable member for Kogarah has shown that his credentials and credibility have failed in every aspect. It is the present Government that is building the roads required by the people of New South Wales.

POLICE DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr ANDERSON: Mr Speaker -

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no need for an outburst from the Government benches.

Mr ANDERSON: My question -

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

Mr ANDERSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Police, and Minister for Emergency Services.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for the Environment to order for the second time.

Mr ANDERSON: I have a pension, which is more than the Minister will get. Who gave approval to Chief Inspector Leek to attack the late John Newman on the *Four Corners* program last night by disclosing confidential information relating to the slain former member?

Mr WEST: It is nice to see the shadow minister in exile finally get an opportunity to ask a question. It is also telling that he asked his question while the Leader of the Opposition was absent from the Chamber. I did not see the program that went to air last night but I will seek information as to whether the information described was confidential and I shall report back to the House.

WESTERN SYDNEY HEALTH SERVICES

Mr PETCH: Is the Minister for Health aware of recent comments made by the Leader of the Opposition and by Labor Party members in relation to health services in the west of Sydney? What is the Minister's response to those comments?

Mr PHILLIPS: It is very interesting that when a question is asked about western Sydney Opposition members depart in droves. They always pretend to represent the west but when it comes down to it they walk away. We have been talking about integrity and commitment to western Sydney. I bring to the attention of this House a brochure that was distributed by the Australian Labor Party throughout the electorate of Blue Mountains regarding its attitude towards health services. The brochure has a photograph of a lady and some children waving goodbye to a train. It says that thousands of Blue Mountains residents have to say goodbye. I thought it was a positive brochure about my colleague the Minister for Transport because it features one of the lovely new trains that go to the Blue Mountains. However, when I opened the brochure I saw something about the health debate in this State that continues to sicken me.

Inside, the brochure shows a distraught lady supposedly being put on a train. What does the brochure say? "All cancer patients needing chemotherapy . . . have to travel to Westmead or Sydney". What shroud waving and lying. It is despicable that elderly people in the Blue Mountains should receive in their letterboxes this brochure showing a distraught elderly lady being told she has to go all the way to Sydney to receive chemotherapy treatment, but it is worse when it is an outright lie. I am not the only one who is saying it is a lie. In a letter from the Penrith District Health Service Dr Stephen Clarke said:

We have seen a copy of a Labor Party pamphlet which suggests "All cancer patients needing chemotherapy . . . have to travel to Westmead or Sydney". The Medical Oncology Department at Nepean Hospital currently administers chemotherapy to a large number of patients with a variety of malignancies. In 1993, our unit gave 1059 treatments to patients within the Wentworth Area Health Service which includes the Blue Mountains.

Page 3356

This Government is pushing that service to the west. The Opposition never even thought about and never had any plans to move it to the west. The letter continued:

We feel somewhat surprised at your apparent ignorance of our service and would be happy to show you around when you next visit Nepean Hospital.

Generously, I thought, "Maybe that was just an error in the Labor Party pamphlet" though I do not think so because that is the way the Labor party runs campaigns. Another statement in the brochure is, "Labor laid the plans for the teaching hospital at Nepean". Would you believe it? Those plans must have been written on the

back of a cigarette packet because it was not included in the *Health 2000* plan - the Opposition vision for health services over the five years leading to the year 2000. What does the brochure say about Nepean Hospital? The Opposition vision was not that Nepean Hospital would be a teaching hospital. The brochure said that new kitchen facilities and a new psychiatric unit will be constructed at Nepean Hospital. That was it. We know the demands of the greater west and we know the commitment and vision 2000 of the Opposition, but what did the brochure say about Liverpool? It was that the Opposition will build an intensive care unit at a cost of \$1.6 million. It contains no commitment to a teaching hospital.

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

Mr PHILLIPS: That is the comparison of commitments of Labor in government after 12 years and the coalition after six years. For the past five or six years Labor, keen to be in government, said it wanted to commit \$7 million to the people of the west. How much has this Government committed? Almost \$200 million in increased facilities at Liverpool to turn it into a proper teaching hospital and \$88 million at Nepean to upgrade its services. That is real commitment to the west. One would have thought that would be enough to show the Opposition's ignorance of what is happening in the west and its lack of commitment to the west, but I was disturbed that the Leader of the Opposition, on a visit to the area, announced his support for the failed previous member for Blue Mountains, Bob Debus. Bob Debus, having been thrown out once, now wants to make a comeback.

Picture the Leader of the Opposition walking out of the cafe at Zigolini's or Bar Colussi or Dove at Darlinghurst in the morning after a nice cappuccino and croissant, getting into his car and going out to the Blue Mountains, zipping past the Nepean Hospital and not seeing what actually goes on at the hospital. Obviously he did not realise that already the Government has opened a new neonatal intensive care unit at Nepean Hospital; already it has opened a new emergency department; already it has opened four new operating theatres; already it has opened a world-class medical imaging department and a new pathology department; and by the end of this year I will have the pleasure, with the member for Blue Mountains, the candidate for Nepean and the member for Badgerys Creek, to open the Government's completed redevelopment of Nepean Hospital into a teaching hospital.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Chief Secretary to order for the second time.

Mr PHILLIPS: What was the statement of the Leader of the Opposition on his commitment to the west as he stood with Bob Debus? In the Penrith press as recently as 6 September he said:

We will fast-track making the Nepean Hospital a teaching hospital.

What credibility! He had better be quick because it will be completed and opened by the end of this year. The Government has more to come for the Nepean Hospital. We look forward to continuing to deliver. It is quite clear the Opposition has no idea of what goes on in the west; it has no real vision or plans for the west, and no commitment to the people of the west. Opposition members are prepared to lie and shroud wave to scare the people into believing that Labor can do better with health services. This Government will not have a bar of that. Opposition members can tell the Leader of the Opposition when they see him that if he is planning to fast-track the kitchen in Nepean Hospital, he is too late. It is finished.

PETITIONS

Burying Ground Creek Bridge

Petition praying that funds be made available for the replacement of the bridge over Burying Ground Creek and its approaches on Main Road 74, received from **Mr Chappell**.

Newcastle Rail Services

Petition praying that the rail line between Civic railway station and Newcastle railway station not be closed, received from **Mr Gaudry**.

Warilla Police Station

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

Bulli, Coledale and Port Kembla District Hospitals

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

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**.

Wyang Hospital

Petition praying that Wyong Hospital be provided with a fully functioning obstetric and childbirthing facility, received from **Mr Crittenden**.

Page 3357

Pit Bull Terriers

Petition praying that because of the increasing number of attacks on citizens by pit bull terriers, they be banned, received from **Mr Cruickshank**.

RURAL LANDS PROTECTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Bill read a third time.

SELECT COMMITTEE UPON LEAD POLLUTION

Membership

Motion by Mr West, by leave, agreed to:

That Ivan John Petch be discharged from attendance upon the Select Committee upon Lead Pollution and that Paul John Zammit be appointed to serve on the committee.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RSL VETERANS' RETIREMENT VILLAGES LIMITED HYDROTHERAPY POOL

Mr HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [5.36]: I bring to the attention of the House the excellent endeavours of veterans organisations in my electorate and the adjacent electorate of Manly. The RSL Veterans' Retirement Villages Limited, which is located in Veterans Parade, Collaroy Plateau, is probably the largest veterans retirement village in Australia. It is set in magnificent surroundings, provides wonderful accommodation and a great spirit, and caters for some 1,200 to 1,300 retired servicemen and servicewomen. For some years the residents have been of the opinion that a hydrotherapy pool would be of great assistance by providing some of the elder folk with an opportunity to try to loosen up limbs that would otherwise tend to tighten up.

The provision of a hydrotherapy pool, a large project, is being driven by a small committee of veterans rather than by a formal group of clubs. I should like to record in *Hansard* the names of the people who have been doing great things in that regard. They are Richard Morris, Col Butterworth, Reg Bernard, Donald Sundin, John English and Mrs Joy Howard. Their endeavours to raise funds have received a deal of assistance. That brings me to the wonderful recent contribution of the Harbord Diggers Club. Technically that club lies outside the boundaries of my electorate but a great deal of its good work is done inside my electorate. I should like to formally record my thanks and the thanks of the Parliament to the Harbord Diggers Club for its wonderful ongoing contribution to the community in so many different ways. In this regard the club announced a week or so ago a donation of \$60,000 to the pool fund. I should like to record the names of the current directors. The president is J. V. McLaughlin and the directors are K. Aldridge, H. Gee, P. Geary, R. Keeling, J. Carruthers, D. Pearce, H. Tighe and P. Teague. It would be remiss of me not to mention two gentlemen who retired recently from the board, Mackie Campbell and Meggs (E. S. Maddigan) who between them have contributed more than 60 years of service.

The bottom line is that the Harbord Diggers Club has joined RSL Veterans' Retirement Villages Limited, and many others, to contribute to this wonderful cause. I hope that they will soon reach their target. I believe they have already raised \$250,000, which is an amazing feat in itself, and are heading towards the figure of more than \$300,000, which would allow the project to move to fruition. In that regard I acknowledge the ongoing support of the Dee Why RSL Club, and particularly that of the president Ted Jackson and the board of directors. Dee Why RSL Club is in my electorate. The club is involved regularly in community fundraising activities and by adding its support to many local endeavours. Indeed, the club is the major sponsor for the Dee Why Surf Club.

It is appropriate that as we move into the fiftieth year since the end of World War II, there be community recognition of our returned servicemen and servicewomen. It is entirely proper that there be recognition by this Parliament of the importance of RSL Veterans' Retirement Villages Limited. I would particularly thank the chairman of the board of directors, P. M. Wilkinson, the various members of the board, and the honorary solicitor, R. J. Miles, for their contribution to the board. I look forward to their contribution to the commemoration of the fiftieth year.

M2 MOTORWAY HOUSING ACQUISITIONS

Mr LANGTON (Kogarah) [5.41]: I wish to raise a matter on behalf of several residents of homes affected by the proposed construction of the M2 tollway. They have been ignored by their own elected representatives - members on the government benches. Not surprisingly, the cause of these people's grief is the Roads and Traffic Authority. For some time now the RTA has been acquiring properties in order to prepare the route of the M2 for the private developers. Indeed, before the contract was allegedly signed, even before the preferred proponent was selected, the RTA was exerting its considerable pressure on home owners to sell up.

Many residents have complained to me of harassment, of the RTA phoning residents at home late in the evening; of being pressured into accepting lower than market value for their homes; of not being advised by the RTA of their full rights and entitlements. I shall quote from a Roads and Traffic Authority letter which exposes its land acquisition program as truly farcical. The letter was dated 28 March 1994, addressed to Mr and Mrs

Marshall of Sierra Place, West Baulkham Hills, and stated in part:

The authority's proposal for road construction at the above location necessitates the acquisition of the whole subject property.

The authority wishes to open negotiations now . . .

. . . Due to the significant demands on the authority's current year funding for the project it will be necessary for the settlement of this matter to be deferred until after 11 July 1994 . . .

Page 3358

Furthermore, I am advised that the land in question was only rezoned in May of this year. Perhaps the Minister can explain if and when the western end of the tollway route was surveyed. We are entitled to know what is going on. Though the RTA thought it was okay to tell Mr and Mrs Marshall to wait three months because the RTA had a cash flow problem, it is now giving them only three weeks to sell up or it will "acquire the property by compulsory process" yet the RTA quite clearly states it does not need to hand over the vacant property to the Hills motorway until April 1995. Can the Minister explain why the Marshalls should be forced to disrupt their lives and their children's school year by moving before Christmas? Is there any member on the Government side with enough heart to give families such as the Marshalls a bit more time?

Is there anyone in the Government who is prepared to direct the RTA to negotiate with Mr and Mrs Craggs of Beecroft? Thus far, the RTA has made its offer and refuses to acknowledge the fact that it falls \$65,000 short of the Craggs' independent valuer's assessment. What is the point of an independent valuation when the RTA will not accept it? Or does the Minister for Transport expect Pat and John Craggs to donate \$65,000 towards the construction of the M2? The process of the M2 has revealed time and again the RTA's unprofessional and incompetent management and its bulldozer mentality.

The Roads and Traffic Authority signed a contract - allegedly, but we have never seen it and until we do we have only the authority's word - to build a motorway even though the period for lodging native title claims has not yet expired. The authority moved the route of the motorway to avoid a golf course but then contemptuously told residents that they knew all along their homes were in the way of the proposed road. How could they, when the boundaries kept changing? And even if the authority were to try - which try it has not done - how could the RTA compensate a widow who is forced to leave her home and community of 35 years? In moving she will lose the support of her neighbours and will be compelled to move into a retirement unit. She now has to decide whether to have her cat put down.

Mr and Mrs Michel of 23A Epping Road, North Ryde, have for several years rehabilitated native birds and animals for the Wild Life Information and Rescue Service, WIRES. When the M2 is under construction, and after it is completed, their home will no longer be suitable for such work. The area adjacent to them in Lane Cove Park will no longer be viable for releasing rehabilitated wildlife. They have not even been offered acquisition by the RTA although their home will become a traffic island when the M2 is built.

Even if they were offered acquisition - and I ask the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads to offer it - it is doubtful whether they could afford a property which offered conditions suitable to the continuation of their dedicated work with wildlife. There are countless others whose homes and lifestyles will be destroyed by the construction of the M2. Noise and air pollution will become unbearable. People will be forced to move, losing a substantial part of the value of their sole asset, the family home. More than 100,000 mature trees will be destroyed and the effect on wildlife will be devastating. What for? Just to build one gigantic traffic jam. All around Australia we see monuments to things big - the big merino, the big prawn, the big oyster, the big pineapple and the big banana. I suggest that, on this site, the Minister might build a big Ventolin nebuliser. That would epitomise this Government's priorities in planning transport facilities in this State.

VANDALISM IN STATE FORESTS

Mr JEFFERY (Oxley) [5.46]: Attacks by protesters on logging equipment in the Urunga forestry district stand condemned. Recent acts by a group called the forest dwellers is the latest step in an ongoing campaign of sabotage by radical elements, and must stop. Recently a State Forests grader parked in the Buckrabendinni State Forest in the Urunga district was vandalised. The cost of damage and lost time was in the vicinity of \$9,000. On the same night, a logging contractor's bulldozer in the Mistake State Forest was also vandalised. In Oakes State Forest, police from Macksville and Bowraville were called to disband a blockade. Protesters had chained themselves to the logging dozer and State Forests grader. A cherrypicker was required to remove protesters from tripods.

On Friday, protesters outside the Urunga forestry office stepped up their campaign of hostility and resistance and stormed the premises. They were on the roof of the office and the police were called. This form of action must cease. The hampering of legal forestry operations is having a detrimental effect on the economic and social wellbeing of north coast towns. These so-called forest dwellers are professional protesters with nothing else in mind but hindrance. They fail to acknowledge that the forests of this State are being carefully managed by increased levels of environmental reserves and protection resulting from environmental assessment and logging approval processes.

Though I understand that to date there have been no arrests, logging has continued despite delays and the main access road being blocked by logs and stones placed there by protesters. Police were called in to keep the road open and the area has been closed to the public. These people must answer to the law. Besides various items being stolen - including a chainsaw - the cost to the community is enormous. The people have refused to accept the negotiated result of consultation prior to logging. State Forests was involved in extensive consultation for 12 months prior to logging. These negotiations resulted in a workable harvesting plan that adequately attended to everyone's concerns and needs. It is indeed disappointing that this fringe group should jeopardise the efforts and wishes of the rest of the community.

That consultation involved matters concerning catchment protection, endangered animals, Aboriginal sites, protection of old growth and any potential
Page 3359

impact on adjoining rainforest areas. No old growth is present and the entire area had been previously harvested. The net area being logged is approximately 45 hectares of a gross compartment of 287 hectares. The closest logging comes to Little Wonder Creek is 350 metres. Consultation included numerous on-site inspections, public meetings and compromise wherever possible. The Oakes State Forest logging operation is in full compliance with all relevant regulations, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Environment Protection Authority conditions. Governments must look at ways of recovering from those responsible the costs of illegal activities. No man, woman or child should have to foot the bill for illegal activities that threaten the livelihood and safety of others.

I suggest that the people of this State are footing the bill for forest protests on two fronts: our taxes fund the social security and unemployment benefits that many protesters use to fund their illegal activities; and our taxes fund the costs associated with police presence in the forests. If protesters are receiving social security allowances, we must ensure that deductions are made from their payments so that they are repaying their debt to the community. Surely it is not unreasonable to suggest that a garnishee be placed on any income that these people receive from the public purse after they have been arrested and charged, when that charge has been proved. After all, it is the community that suffers as a result of their illegal actions. They are causing a cost to the Government and the taxpayers, not to mention loss of income to contractors and their families. The protesters should foot the bill.

Very few protesters who are arrested and charged have the funds to pay fines. Therefore I believe all of us should support a garnishee on their social security income, or a charge against their tax return in the same way that child maintenance support is collected. Most people who want a holiday pay for it themselves. These protesters take a self-indulgent holiday in the forest, or at the front of Parliament House, at taxpayers expense and disrupt the livelihood of others at the same time. At no time have the taxpayers of New South

Wales been asked whether they consider this to be a proper use of their money. Given a choice, each and every community minded citizen would reject the notion of their hard earned dollars being used in this way. This behaviour is deplorable and must be condemned. This form of protest is destructive and only serves to frustrate constructive and rational forestry debate. I believe we have had a security threat to members of Parliament when late at night we have had to go out the front of this House and we do not know who is there. The Speaker should have those people removed immediately.

Mr SOURIS (Upper Hunter - Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [5.51]: I should like to respond to the comments of the honourable member for Oxley in relation to the incident that occurred on 16 September. I am sure I can reflect both the views of all honourable members and the view of society in general that if any person causes damage or cost and inconvenience, given that it is able to be attributed properly and legally, whatever resources they have should be applied to remedy the cost and damages they have incurred, whether that be unemployment relief or ordinary wages. The concept is well and truly supported and would reflect the general views of society that these protesters, if they are entitled to protest, are also entitled to make good and remedy any damages they might cause.

I have sympathy for the honourable member for Oxley. This issue recurs. It is one that causes considerable anxiety to him, members of the community, members of local government, members of chambers of commerce, not to mention the families who are either directly or indirectly concerned with forestry activities. That these protesters are able to disrupt legitimate activities in forestry areas, for what, in many cases, are political media games and gains on their behalf is also a cause for anxiety. To do what they did and to conduct acts of desecration, which my briefing notes describe, and not have to suffer any penalty of restitution, is a travesty of justice. These people should be brought to justice to make good and to remedy the damages they have caused. I am very supportive of the stance taken by the honourable member for Oxley in defence of his local community, his local economy and the jobs that go with it.

MOOREBANK PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr KNOWLES (Moorebank) [5.53]: I speak on behalf of the parents, teachers, students and friends of the Moorebank Public School, together with families who would like to send their children to Moorebank Public School, to ask the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs to vary the enrolment ceiling and to allocate resources to enable the school to expand from its current capacity of 140 children. Moorebank Public School is one of the oldest schools in my electorate and has a fine tradition of serving its local community. Because of its location it has historically served the defence force families who live in and around the Holsworthy and Moorebank army bases. In fact, at present 89 per cent of the school enrolment is drawn from defence force families. The average length of stay for these families is between two and three years as they are rotated through their various postings.

However, the local area is changing. Most notably, within a distance of less than one kilometre lies the new and burgeoning community of Wattle Grove and Greenbrook Village. Since development started in 1991 these new communities have added more than 3,500 people to the local population. When completed Wattle Grove will have a population of more than 5,000. Under the terms of the development agreement, 30 per cent of all housing stock in the Wattle Grove estate is to be made available to the Defence Housing Authority to house defence force families. Sadly, despite being within a stone's throw of Moorebank Public School, children who grow up in Wattle Grove estate, particularly children of defence force families, will not be able to attend Moorebank Public School because of the foolish and artificial boundaries of the Department of School Education.

Moorebank Public School is constantly counselled to refuse new enrolment requests unless the families live within its very small and overly restrictive in-area location. It seems that the Department of School Education has little understanding of the unique needs of children who grow up in defence force families. Departmental guidelines dictate that the present enrolment ceiling of 140 children requires the school principal

to teach a year 4-5-6 composite class. That is, of course, on top of his normal management and administrative duties. A recent quality assurance review found that the school needed extra assistance for children with special needs and for children who have gaps in their basic skills due to their high levels of mobility as they move from one state education system to another.

If the enrolment ceiling were lifted to 170 it would allow the school principal to be class free and to undertake these important special needs programs. Sadly the Department of School Education says no. It says no, despite the clearly identified need for special programs to be taught to children who have been disadvantaged by their high levels of mobility. It says no, despite a constant barrage of requests by parents, many of them defence force families who live in Wattle Grove who, because of some artificial and bureaucratic line on the map, are precluded from sending their children to Moorebank Public School. It even says no despite an offer by the army to help with the installation of a new portable classroom to accommodate the increased number. The school council recently put forward a proposal to the Department of School Education to rearrange the existing accommodation at Moorebank Public School. The school council proposed to return the current library to its former classroom status. However, once again, the school was advised informally by the Department of School Education that this simple and logical proposal had been denied.

Moorebank Public School is a very good school serving an important function in my electorate. It provides a focus for defence force families and establishes a vital link between the defence forces and the civilian community. However, there is now a fear amongst the school population that the refusal of the Department of School Education to apply a logical solution to a simple problem is the precursor to an announcement to close the school. The Moorebank Public School community simply cannot understand why, with its unique needs and enrolment numbers readily available, it cannot be permitted to increase its enrolment ceiling to 170 children. Is the cost of one teacher's salary and one extra classroom too much to ask for in a region of Sydney that is growing at a rate faster than any other part of New South Wales? The Department of School Education does itself no credit for its head in the sand attitude. I therefore urge the Minister to support my call on behalf of Moorebank Public School to allocate the resources and let this school of fine traditions continue its important work to the future.

GORDON ELECTORATE TRAFFIC VOLUME

Mr KINROSS (Gordon) [5.58]: I should like to draw the attention of honourable members to the necessity for the installation of traffic lights in my electorate at the intersection of Kitchener Street and Mona Vale Road, St Ives. Six or seven months ago I addressed the House on the volume of traffic along Arterial Road and around St Ives generally. Currently that road takes about 27,000 cars per day, nearly as many as the Cahill Expressway overpass. I have raised previously with the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads and Ku-ring-gai Council the need for immediate action. The residents of Kitchener Street and Green Valley Avenue are having difficulties making a right-hand turn on to Mona Vale Road because of the volume of peak hour traffic. It is important that a set of traffic lights be installed there. I have spoken to the Ku-ring-gai Council traffic committee, but it seems that the problem will not be addressed for at least a year. That is not good enough.

Mr Photios: It is not satisfactory.

Mr KINROSS: No, it is not satisfactory, given that the residents have been waiting for a set of traffic lights for a long time. Many have written to me and have signed petitions. I refer to traffic signals generally. As one heads west along Kissing Point Road on to The Comenarra Parkway, there is no right-hand turn arrow. I believe it may be an oversight. There are 30 courts located in Canoon Road, South Turramurra, which are used principally by the Ku-ring-gai Netball Association. Provision has been made for a right-hand turn bay. The lack of a traffic control light at Kissing Point Road to turn right on to The Comenarra Parkway creates enormous congestion, especially on Saturday mornings when the netball courts are used.

Residents have written to me saying that sometimes it takes five changes in signals before they can turn on to The Comenarra Parkway. The parkway is also an extremely busy thoroughfare, especially during peak hour.

On Saturday morning it carries a lot of traffic to and from sporting facilities in my electorate. Though 30 courts are used principally for netball, there is also a range of other sports for participants. Many hundreds of people visit that area and it is extremely difficult for them to reach and later leave those facilities. There is also shopping traffic on Saturday mornings.

I believe the lack of a right-hand signal is an oversight. It could be remedied easily at the cost of only a few hundred dollars, I would think. The traffic in my electorate continues to grow. Arterial Road already carries some 27,000 vehicles per day. The Comenarra Parkway carries about the same number of vehicles. We have to make sure that traffic management is catered for and that the flow of traffic is regulated. In this instance traffic signals will assist to a large extent.

Page 3361

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING APPLICANTS

Mr J. J. AQUILINA (Riverstone) [6.03]: On 4 July I interviewed, with the help of an Assyrian interpreter provided by the Ethnic Affairs Commission, Mr and Mrs A, who reside in Department of Housing accommodation at Riverstone. The house is listed in Mrs A's name. Mr and Mrs A's major problem is that they are currently experiencing great difficulties where they are living and they urgently require transfer to other accommodation. Mr A maintains that he has been threatened by his neighbours on a number of occasions, and these threats have attracted the attention of the Riverstone police.

Following my application to the department for transfer on behalf of Mr and Mrs A and their family, I received a response dated 17 February, indicating that the circumstances would be looked into. In April Mrs A was granted approval for transfer to a three-bedroom house in the Fairfield-Guildford area. However, the department is currently looking at allocating accommodation in this location for July 1989 applicants. I wrote to the Minister for Planning, and Minister for Housing on 6 July outlining the circumstances which had been conveyed to me by Mr and Mrs A. I pointed out to him that unless priority was given to Mr and Mrs A and their family it would be likely that it would be a considerable period of time before the transfer takes place.

Mr and Mrs A have three very young children. Mr A has indicated to me that he fears physical violence toward his family and that there is some likelihood that his children may be victims. These matters have been reported to Riverstone police on a number of occasions. It is regretted that the communication between the A family and their neighbours has deteriorated to the extent that it appears only physical transfer will now resolve the problem. The Riverstone police have spent a substantial amount of time dealing with this problem. It is obvious that it would also be in their best interests if the matter were to be resolved by the A family being granted priority for transfer to their chosen area of Fairfield-Guildford.

Mr and Mrs A have a limited command of English. It is very difficult to understand them. That is why I required the assistance of the Assyrian interpreter, provided by the Ethnic Affairs Commission, for which I am grateful. There are few people, if any, in the Riverstone area of Assyrian background. Mr and Mrs A are completely isolated from contact with any persons with whom they can communicate. That has added to the problems they are experiencing. As the Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs would be aware, in the Fairfield-Guildford district there are a large number of persons of Assyrian descent. It is more likely that they would be able to integrate into that community in which they would be able to make themselves more thoroughly understood. They would be able to find companionship and further assistance.

I communicated these matters to the Minister for Housing by correspondence dated 6 July. On 21 July I received an acknowledgment from the Minister. As early as February I advised the department of this matter, and it did everything it could. I have absolutely no criticism of the department for the way in which it handled the matter. The officers have been very humane about this matter, as have the Riverstone police. They have assisted in every way possible, but their hands are tied. To go any further they need ministerial intervention. On 21 July the Minister acknowledged my letter. I was very distressed to receive this acknowledgment which was rubber-stamped with the Minister's signature - a rubber stamp for a signature. That is an absolute disgrace.

The Minister for Housing has the reputation of being one of the laziest Ministers in this place. That is no wonder when there are rubber stamps for signatures. What an absolute disgrace! What sort of man does he believe he is to think he can treat constituents in this way? The Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs has a concern for people of ethnic descent. He would no doubt be outraged by the way in which these people have been treated. To this day, despite my follow-up letter of 1 September to the Minister's office, I have had no reply. How long do these people, and I as their representative, have to wait to get some sort of an answer from the Minister? Even a knockback would be a reply. I call upon the Minister for Housing to reply to the representations I have made on behalf of Mr and Mrs A. These are legitimate concerns from people whose lives have been threatened, whose children have been subjected to physical violence. It is an absolute disgrace that no action has been taken. [*Time expired.*]

SEVENTY-NINTH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY OF STOJAN AND PETRA MILIANIS

Mr COCHRAN (Monaro) [6.08]: I draw the attention of the House to three very significant events occurring in Queanbeyan this week. One is that the Canberra Raiders defeated Norths, which was a great win; a second is that the Raiders will win next weekend; but the major event occurring in Queanbeyan this weekend is the recognition of the seventy-ninth wedding anniversary of Stojan and Petra Milianis. This is a significant event in the history not only of Queanbeyan but of Australia. We are led to believe - it has not been confirmed yet - that the couple have been married for 79 years, which is an extraordinary record in anyone's language. I ask the House to join me in congratulating the couple, who reside at 26 Morton Street, Queanbeyan. They have already held a celebration. Stojan, who is now 94, is out of hospital and in relatively good health. Most of his time now is spent working in his vegetable garden waiting for his beloved wife Petra to return from hospital to the family home so they can continue their married life, no doubt for many years to come.

Mr and Mrs Milianis were married at the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Statitsa, Macedonia, on 20 September 1915. At the time Stojan was 15 and Petra was 17. Theirs has been a magnificent

Page 3362

effort. In the time they have lived in Australia they have endured difficult times. In fact, for the first 20 years of their marriage, they lived apart: Stojan moved to Australia to establish a future for his family. Yet the marriage survived this period of separation. Petra was brought out later. Stojan served in the French and Greek armies. He moved to Australia, which he often refers to as the "lucky country", to raise enough money to bring his wife and daughter, Sophia, to Australia. On arrival in Australia, Stojan worked at Braidwood tree cutting and producing eucalyptus oil, for which he received the princely sum of 10 pence a pound. I can assure anybody that eucalyptus cutting is a rough and tough game which is exhausting to the body and the mind.

The Milianis family has expanded. Petra and Stojan have one child, Sophia, five grandchildren, eleven great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild. They can certainly be proud of this. Messages of congratulation have been received from the Prime Minister, Mr Paul Keating; New South Wales Governor, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair; the Premier of New South Wales, John Fahey; both local members, Jim Snow and me; and the honourable member for Wyong, Paul Crittenden. I ask all members of the House to join me in passing on to Mr and Mrs Milianis our best wishes for their seventy-ninth wedding anniversary, which occurs today. I hope they have as much enjoyment today as the Raiders supporters will have after next weekend.

Mr PHOTIOS (Ermington - Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Justice) [6.13]: The New South Wales Parliament is privileged to join the honourable member for Monaro in congratulating Mr and Mrs Milianis on their seventy-ninth wedding anniversary. In my six years in the Parliament I have never seen this courtesy extended to anyone else. On this, the day of the anniversary, this is appropriate. On behalf of the Parliament and again on behalf of the Premier of New South Wales I thank the honourable member for Monaro for bringing the matter to the attention of the House and for taking such a personal interest in an unquestionably unique event in the history of New South Wales - migrant battlers celebrating 79 years of happy married life in country New South Wales. As Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs I am very happy about the achievement and extend to Mr and Mrs Milianis, their child, their

grandchildren, their great-grandchildren and their great-great-grandchild congratulations on behalf of the Premier and the Government of New South Wales.

LAKE MACQUARIE ELECTORATE ROADS

Mr HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [6.15]: I bring to the attention of the House problems concerning roads in the electorate of Lake Macquarie which have been raised with me by many individual constituents and many progress associations and resident groups throughout the electorate. The first problem relates to Main Road 509 at Wyee. In June I raised with the Roads and Traffic Authority concerns of the Wyee Progress Association. Recently I received a reply from a Mr Sharpe, the zone manager of the Roads and Traffic Authority. He thanked me for my representations on behalf of the Wyee Progress Association concerning guard railing and line marking at Wyee railway bridge. He pointed out that Main Road 509 is a regional road under the care and control of Lake Macquarie City Council. He said that council had to recommend improvements but had not given a high priority to installing a guardrail, which is very important to the constituents in the area because the road caters to very heavy vehicles and the bridge is the main walkway for children travelling from the eastern side of Wyee to Wyee Public School.

Lake Macquarie City Council has given the matter high priority. It has estimated the cost of extending the guardrail to protect the young children and families that use the bridge at \$30,000, and it is seeking additional support from the Roads and Traffic Authority. I ask the Minister to look into the matter with a view to bringing funding forward for the project. The second issue I wish to raise concerns Toronto. Main Road 217 as it travels through Toronto has been of concern to me and local residents for a considerable period. The Toronto Chamber of Commerce and Industry wrote a letter to me, which I forwarded to Minister Baird, in August of this year calling for extra funding of \$300,000 for the upgrading and widening of Main Road 217 and for installation of a concrete median barrier to stop vehicles turning across the road, which has been the cause of a number of serious accidents.

I also asked for the allocation of about \$60,000 for installation of traffic signals at the intersection of Victory Parade and Main Road 217. There are two pedestrian crossings at the intersection. I am sure the Roads and Traffic Authority would like to eliminate them from a main road which carries about 25,000 vehicles a day. For only \$60,000 traffic signals could be installed to protect pedestrians from being hit by the traffic. This would assist in linking the Toronto to Fassifern greenway - the cycleway that will run along the former rail line from Toronto to Fassifern. The Minister has shown his interest in the project by visiting and inspecting the site.

The final matter I wish to raise is the decision to realign the F3 Freeway directly adjacent to the town of Seahampton. Though Minister Baird was not Minister for Roads at the time, he would have been made aware of the problems Seahampton residents suffered because of blasting for the freeway, the cracks to their homes, and the fact that the Roads and Traffic Authority wiped its hands of responsibility, directing the residents to speak to the contractors, who also wiped their hands of responsibility. The residents have now had to resort to taking the matter to court. Recently the Roads and Traffic Authority announced the preferred route for the link between the F3 Freeway and the New England Highway. It chose the Kurri Kurri corridor. The proposed route will be adjacent to the village of Seahampton. The residents have asked me to request the Government to consider a number of their concerns. They want a local

Page 3363

resident to be included in consideration of the environmental planning aspects of the proposed route so that they can have a direct input, to see that the town and the people in it do not suffer again. They would like water, dust, blasting and noise monitored so that their homes are not again damaged by construction of a freeway or highway link road. They are also asking that work begin on the eastern end of the freeway closer to Seahampton. I ask the Minister to consider the matters raised.

MOBILE MAMMOGRAPHY UNIT, SOUTH-WEST HEALTH REGION

Mr SCHULTZ (Burrinjuck) [6.20]: I raise a matter of deep concern in the south-west region. In difficult economic times 47 communities in the south-west have worked hard for more than three years to purchase a relocatable mobile mammography unit to be attached to the south-west screening and assessment service at Calvary Hospital, Wagga Wagga. More than \$373,000 has been raised in that time. Residents of six towns in the fundraising area have been informed via media reports that they will have to travel to Wagga Wagga to get a mammogram under the national screening program. This decision has been made despite their hard work and public assurances that the towns that participated in fundraising would have the facility visit them. The south-west screening and assessment service, the Minister for Health, departmental managers and, in particular, the Cancer Council knew of the guarantee. The mobile mammography funding appeal committee has been told:

We have a contractual agreement with the Cancer Council in N.S.W. to service with fixed and mobile units the fund-raising towns.

The word "service" in the case of Holbrook, Tarcutta, Culcairn, Henty, Lockhart and Coolamon does not mean visit. Rural women 40 years and over will have to board a bus and travel an hour for a service that they have worked hard to have visit them in their own towns. Women simply will not do it! They have said loudly and clearly that they will not travel to seek a service for a disease that they can neither see nor feel. Indeed, at times they cannot find the time to do so. One young woman from a country town that is being serviced - a woman who has a small child at school and one at home - went to the mobile unit when it visited her town and found that she had breast cancer in both breasts. Had the unit not visited her town that woman would not have travelled to Wagga Wagga - that is what she told my wife.

That lady and others worked to have this medical facility visit them in their own towns, which is what the national screening program is all about. One continually hears excuses. It is said that the towns are too small. I point out that the relocatable unit has already visited much smaller communities. The comment has been made that the towns are too close to Wagga Wagga, despite the fact that Holbrook is at least 45 minutes by car and an hour by bus. Junee, which is located 35 minutes from Wagga Wagga and has a daily bus service, is about to receive a visit from the unit. Where is the consistency in the guidelines referred to by the group? It would take three weeks out of two years to service the six fundraising communities to which I have referred. The mobile mammography funding appeal committee has decided to withhold payment to the south-west screening service until those towns receive their entitlement.

By comparison, Australian Capital Territory Health has agreed in writing that the relocatable unit will visit all of the fundraising towns and villages. The mobile mammography funding appeal committee will be delighted to pay for that unit. It should be noted that the committee has been flexible with the south-west screening service. Originally it was planned to buy a large road coach but the screening service informed the committee that the relocatable unit is better. It is better: it is more flexible, more mobile and takes much less time to set up. There is definitely no excuse for it not to visit the six towns to which I have referred. Where is the Cancer Council of New South Wales in all of this? Is the council not responsible to the taxpayers of this State to give an account of where its funding is going?

Despite the Cancer Council being aware that the mobile mammography funding appeal committee had the money to pay for the unit, it went ahead and granted funding for the relocatable unit. What are the terms of the contract the Cancer Council has entered into with the screening service at Wagga Wagga? This appalling situation will stifle initiative and future fundraising in rural towns in the south-west. The local people worked hard for the breast cancer detection facility only to have it denied them. I strongly appeal to the Minister to take action on behalf of these small rural communities that have not waited for government handouts. These communities got out there and worked to have a medical facility visit them in their towns. The arrogance and the high-handed attitude adopted by both the Cancer Council and the south-west mammography screening and assessment service should not be tolerated.

RUGBY LEAGUE GRAND FINAL

Mr DAVOREN (Lakemba) [6.25]: I should inform the House of a very important event that will take place next Sunday when Canterbury-Bankstown will play Canberra in the grand final of the rugby league championship. If honourable members are smart and want to earn extra money they should back Canterbury-Bankstown, because that team will certainly win. It is interesting to note that once again Canterbury-Bankstown will fly the pennant, the Flowers trophy, for the club championship that it has won two years in succession. This year Canterbury-Bankstown were the minor premiers. People throughout the State support Canterbury-Bankstown. Recently my colleague the honourable member for Keira, the shadow minister for Aboriginal affairs, and I visited Collarenebri.

Schoolchildren there were engaged in practice for a choral eisteddfod. My colleague posed a number of questions to them, one being how many

Page 3364

schoolchildren supported rugby league. The number who put their hands up was surprising. My colleague then asked who supported the Steelers. Only the teacher supported the Steelers. Afterwards he said that he regretted his final question, which was how many supported Canterbury-Bankstown. All of the children put their hands up. The fame of Canterbury-Bankstown has spread. Canterbury-Bankstown has done well, but not simply because of the great players the team has, such as Terry Lamb and the great forwards who will certainly make a difference to Canberra. Administration is part of the equation. I have always said that the secret of St George's great run was not so much its players but the administration of Frank Facer, its secretary, and Baden Wales, its president.

Of course, it is the same with Canterbury-Bankstown. The team's secretary and chief executive is Peter Moore, who is well known to everybody, and its president is Barry Nelson, who also is well known throughout the State. If honourable members want to place a bet with me, I will not give them odds - it is a straight bet. Canterbury-Bankstown will do extremely well next week and will add to the already impressive number of premierships the team holds. It had a great win in 1988, the bicentenary year. Although it lost players in the past couple of years, it has now built up a marvellous team that will go on to victory next Sunday under the auspices of coach Chris Anderson, who has done extremely well with the team that has been provided by the administration. Honourable members should put their money on Canterbury-Bankstown. If honourable members really want to place bets, I think the score will be 30 points to 16 points.

Mr PHOTIOS (Ermington - Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Justice) [6.28]: On behalf of honourable colleagues I thank the honourable member for Lakemba for "Wes's weekly tips". Canterbury-Bankstown has one thing right behind it - the No. 1 ticket holder, the Premier of New South Wales, John Fahey.

Private members' statements noted.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Hazzard) left the chair at 6.29 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]

APPROPRIATION BILL

PARLIAMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL

BUSINESS FRANCHISE LICENCES (PETROLEUM PRODUCTS) AMENDMENT BILL

MOTOR VEHICLES TAXATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

ROAD IMPROVEMENT (SPECIAL FUNDING) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan - Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works, and Minister for Ports) [7.30]: It gives me great pleasure to speak to the 1994 New South Wales budget. By any measure this budget is responsible, progressive, clear and far-sighted and it provides a vision for the further economic management of New South Wales that will undoubtedly lead to a more prosperous future and will attract additional investment in this State both on a domestic basis and by enticing investment from interstate and overseas. It would be unfair not to acknowledge the outstanding Budget Speech delivered by the Treasurer, for its clarity, honesty and probity. Today honourable members heard the response from the Leader of the Opposition.

Traditionally the Leader of the Opposition has the first right of reply to the Budget Speech. It is easy in this place to be political and to take points for the sake of taking points, but in all honesty the effort by the Leader of the Opposition today was abysmal to say the least. His contribution did not address the budget; most importantly, it contained no vision and had no appreciation of economic management for New South Wales. This Parliament operates under the Westminster system and it is inherent that there shall be a Government and an Opposition. The role of the Opposition is to present an alternative program; to present a counter argument to that of the Government.

The presentation by the Leader of the Opposition, if it did nothing else, confirmed in no uncertain terms that he and his shadow minister for finance do not have any vision apart from some very tired, old rhetoric that is narrow in its perspective and its research and certainly will do nothing to entice investment, growth or further stability for this State. The budget confirms the National-Liberal Party coalition Government as prudent, effective and far-sighted managers of the economic needs of the citizens of New South Wales. The Government has met the challenge of a recession flowing from a failed Labor Government in Canberra, and it has produced a budget which delivers the benefits of reforms over the seven years of its administration since 1988.

Once again the deficit has been pared, this time by \$77 million, to just on \$350 million. We will soon see the budget in balance. Considerable comment has been made in recent days about a balanced budget. I offer my simple perspective, which is similar to the approach anyone would take with a domestic budget, be it the housekeeping budget, the small business budget or the family business budget. It is also the approach that any bank manager demands from someone who has borrowed money, that is: balance the budget. We must service commitments from within our income for each year; whether we run a fish shop at Moree or Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited the same fundamentals apply. Most importantly, New South Wales, which is arguably the State's largest business - the taxpayers of New South Wales being the shareholders and the Government being the board of administration - has a responsibility to produce a budget that will pay for itself. The Government has to cover its own costs and service its debts and deficits.

Page 3365

The Government and the Treasurer should be complimented on achieving once again a reduction in the deficit to \$350 million. At the same time the budget gives a critical stimulus to the productive, growth-oriented industries - farming, mining, small business, tourism and manufacturing - to encourage their efforts to generate wealth and create new, permanent jobs. I might dwell for a moment on the word "permanent". In recent years a lot has been said about jobs being created by the Federal Government. Where is the permanency of employment? New job creation figures in this country have been a total sham, because those jobs have not been permanent. Since 1988 this Government has been committed, and remains committed, to the creation of permanent, ongoing jobs that will improve productivity. In turn those jobs will generate new jobs. We are not undertaking a cosmetic exercise just to get the figures right for another election, as Canberra has done. This highly responsible approach to debt management coupled with long-term growth shows clearly a vision beyond the current financial year to hand improved living standards to our children and their children as we move into and beyond the year 2000. [*Quorum formed.*]

This budget devotes almost \$3 billion to services for the people of rural New South Wales. The Government is absolutely determined to assist recovery and to encourage new growth in the productive country areas - a task made all the more important by the crippling drought across 83 per cent of the State's land mass, relatively low commodity prices and now rising interest rates. More than \$73 million is allocated for rural assistance to combat the drought; \$10 million has been provided in exceptional circumstances for drought support. A further \$10 million continues transport subsidies for fodder, water and livestock for which well in excess of \$40 million has been outlaid since 1991. The livestock and fodder distance limit has increased from 1,000 kilometres to 1,500 kilometres, acknowledging the severity of present conditions.

Such high levels of drought assistance have never been provided in the State's history. At this stage of the drought the Government has already done things that the Labor Party - as a State Government and certainly not as a Federal Government - was never prepared to entertain. The contribution to the rural financial councillors program has been increased to \$1.4 million, and a further \$1 million has been directed to drought support worker services to help families cope with the personal impact of drought trauma. Again it is the New South Wales Government that has doubled its contribution - a 100 per cent increase - to the funding of rural financial councillors across the State. The original agreement was 25 per cent. The New South Wales Government has put in 50 per cent, but the Commonwealth has not increased its commitment by one scintilla. More than a dozen free call telephone counselling and advisory services are now available, and I urge farm families to make full use of these resources.

All of this is complemented, of course, by the efforts of agencies including New South Wales Agriculture, the Department of Conservation and Land Management, the Department of Water Resources, and, of course, the Department of Business and Regional Development, for which my colleague Ray Chappell has responsibility. Times of crisis must be managed with long-term as well as short-term responses. Over the next two years allocations to the special conservation assistance scheme will be increased by \$3 million to \$20 million. This scheme offers low interest rate loans through the Rural Assistance Authority for water conservation and related measures.

Family farms, the backbone of agriculture and leaders in economic efficiency, will enjoy a historic breakthrough as a result of the exemption of intergeneration farms transfers from stamp duty. Once again I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the New South Wales National-Liberal Party Government recognised that family farming is family farming and that the imposition of a tax on intergenerational farm transfers is unfair. The Government will introduce legislation in this session of Parliament to ensure that that iniquitous tax on the right to an inheritance is abolished. That is among the single most important actions ever taken by a government to encourage retention of our farm industries, which generate up to \$4 for the economy for every \$1 of production behind the farm gate.

The announcement of the introduction of that legislation is important to all people of New South Wales. By keeping families on farms, the Government will guarantee that benefits will continue to flow through the economy to transporters, agents, retailers and exporters, to name only a few. An efficient family farm sector will ensure that consumers continue to enjoy high-quality, low-cost food and fibre. The news that the leading agricultural State in Australia is taking such a step to keep farm families on the land is outstanding for all Australians and is a huge morale boost for farmers after years of harsh Federal policy making, depressed world commodity markets and as much as four years of drought.

The National Party understands that policy making is about the short term and the long term; it is about getting things done. The Labor Party is about platitudes and reluctantly throwing the occasional morsel to the productive, efficient sectors of the economy, while bending over backwards to accommodate its friends under the old mates system. That is why in March next year the people of the electorates of Broken Hill and Bathurst will complete the routing of Labor from non-metropolitan New South Wales. They know that that is the only way to get effective representation where it counts - from a Government that understands and acts. Small and medium-size businesses are essential players in policies to create long-term, sustainable growth and jobs. The Government has established the Department of Business and Regional Development to recognise and act on this potential.

In 1994-95 more than \$40 million has been allocated to fund business development across the State. To back up that development New South Wales now has one of the most sympathetic taxation systems in Australia. Every business currently outlaying payroll tax will experience a two-stage tax cut from 1 January 1995. From that date a business will be able to spend an extra \$50,000, or 10 per cent, on its wages bill that will be fully exempt from payroll tax. From January 1996 the threshold will increase by another \$50,000. In all, the threshold will have increased by 20 per cent in a little over one year from now. That increase has the potential to place 1,000 businesses fully underneath the threshold, thereby creating 4,000 new jobs and stimulating new growth, which will inevitably multiply into more growth, cash and jobs. All this economic activity makes \$54 million in foregone revenue an outstanding investment in the future of this State.

I must make the point that in his response to the budget the Leader of the Opposition said that when the Opposition occupies the Government benches it will address payroll tax. He has made reference to that a number of times in recent weeks but he has yet to put any figure on it. He has not mentioned one figure; he has not supported his own rhetoric. His shadow ministers and backbenchers are not putting the weights on him. They are not saying to him, "Bob, come clean, give us something to go and tell the people", because they know that once again Bob is lying. He has no intention of helping small businesses. He never has in the past; he has taxed the socks off them. Every Labor government in the history of this State has been a high taxing government.

The Leader of the Opposition knows darned well that his claim of benefiting small business is nothing more than shallow rhetoric. That is why his shadow frontbench and backbenchers have not put the weights on him to make him own up and to come up with some figures. The Government's figures are not rhetoric; they are fact. We have put dates on them. We have equated the figures to amounts of money and spelled out the benefits to small businesses in this State. They will continue to expand after the National-Liberal Government is re-elected in March 1995.

The budget stimulates new growth, while ensuring services to the community are developed and extended. The coalition recognises that services must be matched to the real needs of the people, and the figures speak for themselves. Since 1988 spending on health has increased by 12 per cent in real terms. Funding for education has increased by 13 per cent; law and order by 23 per cent; and social and community services by 63 per cent. Unlike Labor administrations, the Government has achieved these increases within the bounds of responsible fiscal policy, not by blowing out debt and mortgaging the living standards of our children. The coalition has focused on service delivery. For example, in my electorate of Lachlan, Parkes is serviced by 900 rail seats, almost 3,000 coach seats and more than 900 airline seats every week of the year. If that is not providing service infrastructure to inland New South Wales, I do not know what is. Labor never dreamed of providing those services.

Mr W. T. J. Murray: Labor would never allow it.

Mr ARMSTRONG: Labor did not allow it, that is quite right. All Labor did was ignore the needs of country people, and the necessity for services and public transport in the bush. In 1989 consultants Booz Allen and Hamilton told us that public transport systems similar to the archaic system for which Labor was responsible were endured only in Egypt and some parts of China. By any yardstick, when the figures I have quoted relate to a central western electorate such as mine one can see that the Government cares, acts and delivers. Government agencies that serve the people of the Forbes and Parkes districts include New South Wales Agriculture, courts and sheriffs offices, police, fire, community services, housing, HomeFund, juvenile justice, the Roads and Traffic Authority, TAFE, schools, state emergency services, CountryLink, Freight Rail, home and community care, forestry, water resources, the Lachlan Valley Education Resource Centre, and the Rural Lands Protection Boards, to name only a few. To these services should be added statewide services such as 008 telephone links, which are freely available to all members of the community. The Government understands that service delivery is an essential component of quality of life for all people of the State.

Education spending is a direct investment in our future. This year it has been increased to more than \$5 billion for students from pre-school to post-school TAFE. That is an all-time record figure. Capital works include the construction of, or purchase of sites for, 45 new schools, while new or improved tertiary facilities include Wollongbar, Scone, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Kingscliff and Albury, to name only a few. More than \$50 million is allocated for rural education programs to 30,300 students, with \$8.7 million for Aboriginal education programs. The latest technology will be introduced across the State through \$4.2 million for updated library reference software, \$10 million for the purchase of computer equipment and \$2 million for training in the use of technology. A further \$4 million will help non-metropolitan schools overcome the tyranny of distance by the introduction of teleconferencing facilities, satellite dishes, computer modems and training.

Education policy is not just about quantity of resources; it is equally about quality. The Department of School Education will support these facilities with help, including a statewide training and development program for teachers in relation to implementing current year curriculum priorities, assessment and report strategies and the use of curriculum profiles and statements of student progress. Rural and isolated students have been a focus of policy since 1988 through the rural education plan to address problems of isolation, the provision of 17 distant education

Page 3367

service centres across the State, a program of incentives for teachers in isolated schools, living away from home allowances and a rural recession relief package. Rural initiatives in TAFE include rural skills centres, support for industry restructuring in rural areas, mixed mode courses such as combined property agency and rural office practice certificates, rural business management courses and the introduction of open learning centres. The bottom line is that, wherever a student is in New South Wales today - be it Tibooburra or Temora, Tocomwal or Palm Beach, Strathfield or the western suburbs, Baulkham Hills or Tumbarumba -

Mr Gibson: And Parramatta.

Mr ARMSTRONG: Parramatta, indeed. Very good. In the days of the Labor Government, of course, Parramatta was totally neglected with regard to education, but now, as the honourable member opposite reminds me, the people of Parramatta enjoy quality education. The honourable member for Londonderry recognises it. He knows when his kids are on to a good thing under this Government. One thing I always appreciate about the honourable member is his honesty, because he is prepared to say that the Government is doing a good job in education. He knows that. He likes kids and he wants to see them do well in the future, because that is where good young auctioneers come from, kids who get a good education. The honourable member for Londonderry should stick with us and we will ensure a good education for the kids and good auctioneers for the future.

Though I digressed momentarily for a little levity, the fact is that the quality of education in New South Wales - which is the largest education system in the world today - is par excellence; it is without peer by any benchmark, be it national or international. The education system has achieved benefits and standards that a decade ago were thought to be impossible. Much of the credit for that must go, first, to the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs and obviously to the Government for putting up the resources; second, the budget; and, third, the expertise. I must say that credit is due to the department for the way it has articulated these programs and used those funds in recent years.

Outlays on education are exceeded only by the provision for health services, this year more than \$5.2 billion. An allocation to rural health services of just on \$1 billion will enable redevelopment or provision of new facilities in regional centres, including Murwillumbah, Walgett, Tweed Heads, Ballina, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Armidale, Albury and Batemans Bay. Port Macquarie base hospital will be completed this year. The Rural Health Service will oversee its completion. What a wonderful, modern facility that will be. It will be the best facility ever established on the north coast of New South Wales. This most modern and attractive facility will provide a better quality health service than residents of the north coast have had access to before. That is the hospital at Port Macquarie, introduced by this Government, despite the knockers, despite the Opposition. It is the best, and the community is now recognising that.

This Government is converting the ramshackle system inherited from Labor into a program without comparison across the nation. Since the coalition took office it has helped build or redevelop 45 hospitals - the biggest reconstruction of any public hospital system in Australia, and more than double the number achieved by Labor during its last five years in office. Honourable members who were in this place when Labor was in office will recall its health policies under Minister Brereton. How many new hospitals were built then? Two. Do honourable members remember the hospitals that were closed under Labor? How many have been closed by this Government? None. How many new hospitals have been built? There are 45.

That record will probably go down in history as being the best ever in this State. I do not think any government in the future will ever match it - 45 new hospitals in 6½ years. That is real service. The program is responding to new levels of demand. Our hospitals are now handling 28 per cent more patients in need of critical acute care than they were in 1988. The coalition Government recognises that people in rural New South Wales deserve the same standards of access and excellence in health care as city dwellers. Compare the performance. Under the previous Labor administration 32 hospitals were closed or downgraded; the majority of them were in country centres. I reiterate: how many hospitals did Labor administrations open and how many hospitals did they close? Let me put it on the record. Labor closed or restrained 32 hospitals. What has the Government done? It has built 45 hospitals, the most modern in the country.

Under the coalition Government hospitals have not closed; instead, we have set about the urgent job of renewal. Under the Government there has been an increase of more than 200 general practitioners in rural areas. This trend is being supported by coalition initiatives, including the rural doctors resource network, rural doctors training unit at Tamworth and cadetships to attract general practitioners to rural towns. The shift to district health services is refocusing management on rural district needs. Important features of the budget include a forward program of nearly \$200 million to implement the findings of the Burdekin report on mental health services, and \$100 million for specific health initiatives for women, including early detection of breast cancer and a specialist institute to undertake vital research.

As well, in a joint Commonwealth-State program, the Government will establish 12 multipurpose services to provide a comprehensive range of health and aged care services in rural communities. Centres nominated for the establishment of these services include Dorriggo, Tenterfield, Warren, Trangie and Wentworth. Once again, the Government has recognised the smaller to

Page 3368

medium size country towns, unlike Labor, which only looked after its mates in the big centres. The fact is that, in addition to those aspects of health and education already enunciated, New South Wales can be justly proud of its reputation as Australia's number one tourist destination. The industry generates more than \$8 billion gross expenditure each year. The Seven Wonders of New South Wales tourist campaign is proving a brilliant success, and has attracted a sharp increase of \$5 million in this budget.

Overall, State funding for tourism has increased by 72 per cent in the past five years. This year the Seven Wonders of New South Wales campaign will be extended into Asia, recognising the vast potential of our northern neighbours and the rapid growth, especially in those so-called tiger economies. Tourism New South Wales will shortly finalise and begin implementing the recommendations of the specialised regional tourism strategy. I think that every citizen in New South Wales recognises that we are probably now on the eve of the greatest tourism boom the State has ever seen. With the Olympics for the year 2000, the International Floral Festival to be staged here in the year 2000 to 2001, the strong possibility that Australia will be leading the world in the year of agriculture in 1998, and the fact that we will celebrate the year of Federation in 2001, New South Wales is set to have a whole new attitude to tourism and a whole new industry in addition to the very successful one it has at the moment.

A key element of tourism and business policy is the ongoing development of new and improved transport links across the land mass of New South Wales. The budget injects \$138,000 to improvements on the Pacific Highway, in particular at Chinderah, Brunswick Heads, the dual carriageways at Raymond Terrace, the Taree bypass and the Raleigh deviation. The Armidale bypass and the Barton Highway connection to the Yass

bypass will open during the year. A comprehensive forward works program is outlined in Budget Paper No. 4. The amount of \$80 million is allocated for the safer roads program, including acceleration of the black spots program.

The 3 x 3 program has injected more than \$200 million per year since its inception as one of the first initiatives of the coalition Government in office. This year an extra \$258 million has been allocated to the road network from the 3 x 3 program. In all, \$1.26 billion has revitalised roads, bridges and traffic management works over six years. Well over 1,000 individual projects have been started or completed earlier than expected under this initiative with 35 per cent of revenue raised from country motorists, but 60 per cent of the funds spent on country roads to the benefit of the entire motoring public. The Government has allocated the entire \$104 million in untied Commonwealth grants to road programs in New South Wales this year.

I turn briefly to other key features of this budget for the people of non-metropolitan regions. Conservation and land management outlays of \$130 million include \$50 million for soil conservation in rural areas. At the same time, \$10 million will enable the Rural Assistance Authority to provide low interest loans for soil conservation works. An allocation of \$153 million to New South Wales Agriculture includes \$2.4 million for the purchase of properties affected by chemical contamination of former cattle tick dip sites. The Department of Water Resources attracts more than \$120 million, including capital works, to assist future drought prevention strategies.

The work of the Bush Fire Services earlier this year has been recognised by the provision of 27 new positions in the organisation statewide and \$31 million, enabling the purchase of additional firefighting equipment and new fire tankers. A \$31 million capital program for the National Parks and Wildlife Service includes \$2.8 million for fire management and \$1.5 million for pest species management. The Department of Mineral Resources will use almost \$33 million to promote development and utilisation of mineral resources along with \$10 million to fund Discovery 2000 to attract exploration by updating and enhancing maps, reports and digital data. Over its six-year life, Discovery 2000 will outlay \$40 million towards this vital work.

I turn to my public works portfolio, with its broad charter of improving public assets as well as the public amenities of a range of the natural and built assets of the State. Direct funding to the agency includes provision of water supply and sewerage services to non-metropolitan communities, physical restoration and prevention of damage to beaches and estuaries, prevention and reduction of losses due to flooding, and breakwater maintenance and services to commercial and recreational boating communities. The New South Wales Public Works Department further undertakes risk management, development of building industry policy and standards, and offers an advisory role on management and conservation of State assets.

A feature of this budget is a net increase of more than \$5 million to \$85 million for the country town water supply and sewerage program. Of this, \$8 million will facilitate advice to councils on managing and developing water and sewerage services to country communities. Within the water and sewerage program a \$5.5 million environmental initiative will ensure the upgrading of 10 major sewage treatment facilities flowing into the Murray-Darling Basin. The budget allocates \$13.9 million to assist local government in preparation of coastline, flood plain and estuary management plans. In all, the budget assists 120 flood plain and 80 coastal projects. Capital payments include construction of three recreational inland lakes, a start to dredging of the Tweed River entrance, repair of the South Ballina breakwater and a start to the restoration of the historic Coffs Harbour jetty. More than \$5 million has been made available for stonework and heritage maintenance projects, including repairs to Searle's Monument in Sydney Harbour as a permanent tribute to our world champion sculler from Grafton.

Page 3369

The major trading ports of Hunter, Sydney-Botany and Illawarra are to undergo corporatisation to provide a more competitive, aggressive trading environment for our export and import sectors. This will lock in gains of the past five years, as reflected in significant productivity improvements and reductions to export and import charges. Since 1988 the average cost per tonne of cargo has fallen in real terms by 36 per cent, container

handling rates have increased from an average 10 per hour to 15 per hour and port debt has been halved. Let us pause for a moment and dwell on those figures. Would anybody like to draw an analogy from the performance of New South Wales, the performance of the Australian National Line and the performance of the Federal Government, which, two weeks ago, handled that industrial problem?

What was the answer of the Federal Government? Its answer was to write a cheque for \$18 million and to do a sweetheart deal the likes of which this country has never seen; to try to cover its total incompetence, its total lack of initiative in running ANL. Then, two days ago, the Minister had the temerity, the audacity to try to bucket the Chairman of ANL. If New South Wales can do it with the cooperation of the port authorities, with the cooperation of the work force, with the cooperation of the Labor Council, why cannot Federal Labor? Because Labor could not run a pie stall at the grand final next Sunday. It does not have the capacity. It never has had and it never will have because it is a socialist-orientated Government, led by Paul in Canberra. These fellows in Sydney are not too sure what it is, as was evidenced today by the backflips of the Leader of the Opposition. Legislation will be presented to this Parliament following the budget debate to achieve corporatisation, building on the outstanding gains achieved by port management and staff over five years.

I commend the positive outcomes of this budget for my electorate of Lachlan. In particular I note road funding of \$19 million with more than \$2 million to the safer roads program along with grants to councils and highway improvements. Major works include \$925,000 at Fitzgeralds Bridge over the Lachlan River, widening of the Cowra-Canowindra road and elimination of the T-junction between the Mid Western and Newell highways at Marsden. These funds follow on from works of the last six years, notably replacement of the old timber bridge over the Lachlan River at Cowra, widening and strengthening of the Mid Western and Newell highways and restoration of the Olympic Way at Koorawatha.

Funding of \$1.8 million towards community services in Lachlan includes more than \$500,00 for pre-schools and day care centres, \$240,000 for family and individual support, \$340,000 for home and community care programs, and \$274,000 for disability services. In all 46 community service projects in Lachlan enjoy an ongoing commitment from this Government. In education more than \$2 million has been allocated for improvements and repairs including Bendick Murrell, Muylan, Murringo, Wallendbeen and Monteagle public and Trundle central schools along with the Cowra, Parks and Henry Lawson high schools. The Forbes campus of the Western Institute of Technical and Further Education receives \$352,000 for construction of a multipurpose training workshop, \$75,000 towards library upgrading and \$41,000 for general maintenance. Cowra, Parkes, Grenfell, Lake Cargelligo and West Wyalong colleges together receive more than \$50,000 for a range of works.

[Interruption]

The honourable member for Monaro makes a good point by his interjection, "Just think, this is a comparatively safe seat. See how we look after those marginal seats." If we can do that for a safe seat, what are we going to do for a marginal seat?

Mr Scully: What about Smithfield?

Mr ARMSTRONG: The only thing marginal about Smithfield is you, my good friend, and the voters recognise that. They say that the seat is all right but the member is lousy. They reckon he is a crazy. Actually they do not take any notice of him. I underline the equity of this budget. It is a common sense progressive budget which will stimulate growth, create jobs, deliver vastly improved services across a range of portfolios and ensure a better future for generations to follow us. It stands in total contrast to the reckless irresponsibility of Labor. I suspect as we move closer to March 1995 that we will experience yet another round of ad hoc promises on the run by a Labor Opposition unable to grasp the importance of fiscal responsibility.

It is a pleasure to support the budget. It is one that I think every honourable member of the Parliament can be justly proud of. It is one that the people of New South Wales deserve. The Government has worked since 1988 to achieve these results. It would not have been able to achieve these results without the cooperation of

the broad population of the State. The Government acknowledges that the taxpayers, the residents of New South Wales - just over six million - have worked with the Government to achieve these results. The Government is now in a position, because of that cooperative approach and because of the leadership that the Government has been able to give, to achieve some real benefits and a few additional benefits for the people of this State. Why should they not have them? The Government is in a position to make record amounts of funds available to introduce the latest technologies in education and health in particular.

We are in a position to recognise the desire of everybody to have safety and security in their own home, whether they are at work, at home or at play. The only impediment to further gains, economic and social, is the recalcitrance, the lack of imagination and the sheer bloody-mindedness of an opposition that just does not have any feeling for, or understanding of, matters economic, social, or material. Importantly, it does not understand its responsibilities when it has been elected to sit on the opposition benches in this

Page 3370

Parliament. I am quite sure that the people of New South Wales recognise the competency of this budget. That will be manifest in March next year. There is no alternative to the good management program the Government has been able to deliver. Our commitment is to build further on the good management strategies and the financial benefits we have put in place. The budget will assist every man, woman and child in this State.

Mr GIBSON (Londonderry) [8.12]: Government members are starting to believe their own rhetoric. When the National Party starts to sound like the Liberal Party we know there are problems. Government members have played it a little bit each way. This is probably good management, because they really have put a little bit away - \$200 million - for a rainy day. Does that mean that the money will be spent when the drought breaks? Is it there for a little slush fund for when things start to get tough between now and March? I am certain that Mark Coultan and Linda Morris got it right last Friday in the *Sydney Morning Herald* when they stated:

The State Government has equipped itself with a \$200 million "rainy day fund" which could be used to fund election-related spending . . . In this week's Budget the Government has allocated \$200 million as a "Treasurer's advance" . . . Treasurer's advances are traditionally inserted in Budgets as discretionary expenditure, and are sometimes used to manipulate the end-of-year deficit figure.

When the Treasurer brought down the budget he said that he believed it was a very good budget for New South Wales. The Premier said the budget was a promise to the people of New South Wales, that future generations would not have to bear the burden of debt, pay for past debt. In my humble opinion, the budget is a gamble on the chances of the Government being returned to office next March. Make no mistake: the budget is aimed at the hip-pocket nerve of the people of New South Wales.

Government members are slow learners. During a by-election over the last couple of months they tried to buy the people of Parramatta. The people of Parramatta, the people of Sydney's west, told the Government in no uncertain terms what they thought of being left to sit there for six or seven years with nothing offered. All of a sudden, when the seat was up for grabs, \$1.5 billion was made available for the people of Parramatta. The people of Parramatta would not wear it. The people of New South Wales will not wear it either. They will take it as a complete insult.

Though the \$1 billion that has been promised on voter-friendly areas such as health, education and community services is welcome, the educated public in New South Wales will not accept that too kindly either. They have had to pay since this Government came to power in 1988 - they have had to subsidise each of these services by having other services taken from them. Today in this Chamber the Premier ponced around saying, "We are going to give 1,466 new teachers to New South Wales. That will be the panacea to cure the education problems". The people of New South Wales know that not long after the Government came to office it sacked 2,500 teachers. Government members are "Hood Robins" - they take from the poor and give to the rich. The Government took 2,500 teachers away, and it is now giving back 1,466. The people of New South Wales have long memories.

We have heard a lot about balanced budgets recently. Government members forgot to mention that, although they believe in balanced budgets, they do not believe that just at the moment. They say, "We want a balanced budget in New South Wales, but we don't want it just yet. We don't want to do that too quickly because there is an election in March. We say that by 1997 we will have a balanced budget in New South Wales".

Mr Cochran: Don't you want a balanced budget?

Mr GIBSON: We all want a balanced budget, but there are proper ways to get it. I will talk about that in a moment. This is sheer hypocrisy. There has been talk of a referendum to compel balanced budgets. As the Leader of the Opposition said today, we will be only too pleased to support that referendum. We will go to the people of New South Wales and tell them that the only way we can support a balanced budget is with a GST. Let us see whether the New South Wales public will buy that. I believe the Government got John Hewson to write the budget. His GST was belted about the head. The Liberal Party should have learned from that, but it does not have enough brains.

This year the Government had the opportunity to show a little fiscal responsibility by bringing down a balanced budget, but it failed to do so. It did not bring down a balanced budget because a State election is due in a few months' time. Next March the people of New South Wales will tell the Government what it thinks about its balanced budget, and what it thinks about this budget - the Government will be thrown out of office. As the Leader of the Opposition rightly said, this will be the Government's last budget. And that will be the best thing for the people of New South Wales. One wonders why the Government did not bring down a balanced budget this year. Because of the efforts of the Federal Government, the economy is on a roll. Revenue is pouring into State coffers like never before. In the fiscal year just ended State stamp duty receipts came in nearly \$400 million above the original 1993 budget estimates, mainly because of a surge in revenue from property transactions. It was not the work of the State Government which achieved that.

The Treasurer did not talk about the level of State debt. We have to talk about the level of State debt. The level of State debt has remained virtually the same as it was when the coalition parties came to office in 1988. It has not improved at all. Without doubt, the Treasurer knows that the Government's projected stamp duty receipts will rise by more than has been suggested. The Treasurer said that there will be a 3.8 per cent increase in stamp duty, a rise of some \$100 million during the next financial year. It will probably be more than that. The Government has made a conservative estimate of this figure.

Page 3371

Payroll tax is projected to rise by only \$120 million. As employment picks up and wages rise, this amount may increase sharply and revenue will be a lot higher. The Treasurer and other Government members know that. But in the overall picture there is one question the Government did not answer; that is, what happens in the future? Will the surplus be used to cut the State debt, which has not happened since the Government came to office in 1988, or will it be used to reduce taxes in order to put government members in a good light for the coming election? A relevant factor that the Treasurer did not mention in his speech was that every man, woman and child in this State has a debt of \$3,500. Is this good government?

The figure does not look too bad when compared with that for Victoria, where it is \$6,500. Victoria now has a Liberal Government. However, this State's figure compares badly with that for Queensland, which is quickly becoming the No. 1 State. The per capita State debt in Queensland today is zero. This is due to the fiscal management of the present Labor Government in that State, not because of the Bjelke-Petersens of this world. All revenue raised in Queensland goes to health, education and the provision of state infrastructure but of every dollar raised in New South Wales 10c goes towards paying State debts.

I move on to show how the budget will affect the electorate of Londonderry. My electorate takes in most of the Mount Druitt area, one of the most needy areas of Australia. The need for public housing is a big factor in Mount Druitt. Government members know nothing about public housing. They would not have

Department of Housing homes in their electorates. According to these budget papers work is in progress on 24 places at Lethbridge Park, but that work was completed about two months ago, and it was in the budget papers last year! Those 24 units of accommodation should not count because they are not new. Two units of accommodation are included for Hebersham. One was completed in May this year and the other was completed in July. Yet this work is shown in the budget papers as work to be done in my electorate. So there is no work for this needy area. All Government members worry about in regard to western Sydney is the Olympic Games but the people of western Sydney can go fly a kite as far as Government members are concerned.

At the moment 75,000 people are on the waiting list for public housing, depending on who provides the statistics. In the Mount Druitt area of the Londonderry electorate the average waiting time is three years. Mount Druitt has 5,500 people on the public housing list yet the Government in this budget is providing not one unit of accommodation. It is absolutely scandalous. Richmond will get nothing, the part of Penrith that I represent will get nothing and Mount Druitt will get nothing. This is just another way in which the Government has told the people of western Sydney that it does not really care about them. The people on the waiting list will get a house on the twelfth of never.

I move next to the provision of health services, a subject important to the people of my electorate and western Sydney. The Leader of the National Party spoke about hospitals that the Government has opened. Since I was elected to the Parliament in 1988 every year in the budget papers \$70 million has been put aside in the capital works program to build the Hawkesbury public hospital. Both inside and outside the Chamber the Government has stated, "We, as a government, will not privatise Hawkesbury hospital. We will not make a private hospital out there". The \$70 million has been in the budget figures for years. But it was never given to the people of the Hawkesbury. A few months ago tenders were called for non-profit organisations to build a private hospital at Hawkesbury. The people of Hawkesbury have waited longer than people in any other part of Australia for a proper public hospital - under Labor and under the coalition. They will not get first prize; they will get second prize. A non-profit organisation will run the hospital.

Labor's stance is this: if contracts have not been signed by the time we win the election in March next, they will be cancelled. If contracts have been signed - this is the advice from our shadow minister - we will try to buy out those contracts and deliver to the people of the Hawkesbury the public hospital that they should have. If the people do not get a public hospital they will probably face a situation similar to that at Mount Druitt at the moment, where a private religious organisation is running a public hospital. Though I have great admiration for the nuns - I am a practising Catholic and I think the world of the nuns - they are not the proper people to run a public hospital. We have problem after problem with Mount Druitt hospital. Though there is nothing in the budget to help Mount Druitt hospital, something in the budget tells us what might happen to Mount Druitt hospital in the near future. A letter sent by Dr Mac Wyllie, the director of surgery, to Colin Osborne, the executive director of Mount Druitt hospital a few weeks ago - and there is nothing in the budget to counter this - stated:

I have viewed with considerable trepidation your proposal for the anticipated closure of this Hospital for up to fifteen weeks.

There is no public housing for Mount Druitt; now the Government is going to close our hospital for 15 weeks a year - nearly four months. We are going to lose the services of the public hospital for nearly a third of the year. The letter went on to state:

Dr. David Brooks has informed me that resignations have already been tendered to the Executive over these closures and that more resignations are anticipated. Any Anaesthetist resignation will adversely affect the Department of Surgery and its provision of care to patients.

The final paragraph stated:

On behalf of the Department of Surgery, I would urge you to commence positive negotiations with the Anaesthetists in order to come to an acceptable resolution, otherwise I fear for the future of this Hospital.

The Government and the hospital board have had consultants looking at the hospital. Government members are mad on consultants. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Page 3372

A letter from consultants to the board of Mount Druitt hospital, which was given to me only yesterday stated:

Regardless of the large population increases taking place and that will take place over the next ten or so years, the western Sydney area health service will not be receiving a greater share of the Health Budget and will, therefore, have to optimise services to meet the needs of the community.

The review is at a stage where a large amount of information has been gathered and the consultants are still analysing this. They have identified some major issues but have not come to any concrete conclusions as yet. There is obviously a certain level of uncertainty about the future role of Mt. Druitt Hospital and there is obviously some difficulty in maintaining junior, middle and senior staffing levels in ICU, Emergency, CCU and, especially, in out-of-hours shifts.

The Chairman asked what the reason was for the under-utilisation of Mt. Druitt Hospital? Is the Organisation badly designed or poorly planned for the community it serves?

This issue goes to the heart of the budget. The letter stated:

Dr. Harris advised that the under-utilisation is mainly in Theatre usage. Calculations show that there is only a fifty percent usage, which is the equivalent of two out of the four theatres. Blacktown and Mount Druitt Hospitals together provide less than fifty percent of the surgical services required in the Local Government Area.

Dr Harris went on to refer to the complex issue of trying to get doctors. Mount Druitt Hospital will be the thirtieth hospital to be closed by this Government. I have been told that the directors have been advised that an announcement will not be made until after the election in March. Mount Druitt Hospital will be turned into the head community health centre for all of western Sydney. If that happens it will be an utter disgrace. The people of western Sydney would never forgive this Government for that. They will never forgive the Government for the hiding that the Government has been giving them for years through Mount Druitt Hospital. The Government realises that if it takes that hospital off the people of western Sydney it will not win the election, so it has decided to save the hospital for now. I want the people out there to know that the Government intends, if it wins the next election, to close Mount Druitt Hospital after the election in March.

In the time I have left I should like to speak about education. The budget papers note that there will be a new public school in Vincent Road at Cranebrook. That is fine. A school there is badly needed. There is one little school out there for which the Opposition has been trying to get a few dollars for quite some time. The school I refer to is Dawson Public School at Mount Druitt. Some while ago I requested from the Minister funds to build a safety fence around that school. Most schools in the Mount Druitt area have safety fences. They have been a wonderful innovation. They have saved the Government and the taxpayer a lot of money because vandalism has virtually disappeared overnight. The Minister replied in the negative.

I have three foolscap pages with me of incidents that have occurred in the past six months of drunken people interfering with kids on the playground, and at one time causing \$2,000 worth of damage in breakages. Day after day there were broken windows and other acts of vandalism. Packs of people have gone into the schoolyard. Twenty-four unruly youths in the schoolyard caused tremendous damage. Meetings of parents and citizens have had to be broken up because of violence by people who came on to the school campus. The school program itself has also been disrupted and broken at certain times because of the same factor. All I have asked the Government for is a lousy \$60,000, \$70,000 or \$80,000 to build a safety fence for this school, but the answer has been no. How can the Government tell us in the budget all that it is doing for education? The funds needed are very small but I am certain that the people of Dawson Public School would appreciate tender loving

care and a little thought from the Government, which to date they have not had.

The Government is sticking its chest out in matters of law and order and has increased its spending. There has been a 3.6 per cent increase in law and order funding, taking the total expenditure for 1994-95 to \$1.9 billion. That is great. The Government tells us that there will be an additional 200 police officers. It has taken a great deal of time to get additional police officers provided by this Government. Unfortunately, recent events have proved that the Government is wrong. More police should have been put in certain parts of western Sydney a long time ago.

At the moment I have an explosive situation in my electorate. I have racial trouble out there that is coming to a head very quickly. I asked the previous Minister, the honourable member for Georges River, for a police station at Bidwill. I am certain that the problems would be overcome if we had a police station at Bidwill. An assessment was being made about that matter. There is a new Minister for Police, who has told me that the provision of a police station at Bidwill is not on. That appears to be a very strange decision. The electorate next to my own, the electorate of Badgerys Creek, is not a violent area - in fact, it is fairly safe. It is a marginal seat. A little while ago Badgerys Creek got a police station.

Mr Photios: It is all a question of good representation.

Mr GIBSON: Possibly. It might have been a matter of somebody knowing somebody. It might have also been a matter of somebody considering numbers and the coming election. I also note that on the other side of my electorate, up in the mountains, the country of the honourable member for Blue Mountains, a police station has just been upgraded. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent on that police station. Every policeman from Parramatta to Lithgow will say that the money should never have been spent. The hierarchy of the Police Service who look after my area say that in all New South Wales the area most needy of a police station is Bidwill. I

Page 3373

have told the Government that. I put the House on notice that something will explode out there before too long. The Government cannot say it was not warned. It has been given plenty of warning. The Government will not budge - it will not provide a police station out there because it is a safe Labor Party seat in a working-class area. But if we do not get a police station in Bidwill there will be problems, and those problems will rest solely on the shoulders of the present Government. As I have said, there is not a great deal in the budget for the electorate of Londonderry. Everything has been either misconstrued, put in twice or altered.

The budget papers refer to a figure of \$3.7 million for electorate works. When I read that I thought, "This is a little different. The electorate of Londonderry is to get \$3.7 million?" When I examined the budget papers a little further I realised that the sum was set aside for the Penrith rowing course. That area falls just inside my electorate, and although I am pleased to have it in my electorate this expenditure relates to a facility that is being built for one reason: the Olympic Games in the year 2000. To allocate that expenditure to an area and to say that \$3.7 billion is being spent for the people of the electorate of Londonderry is not right. I believe that all funds for the Olympics should be included in the budget papers under a specific heading and not shown as being allocated to an electorate to make it appear that an electorate is in receipt of a specific amount of money.

In the past few weeks a great deal has been heard in the Chamber about the drought. Members on this side of the Chamber, including myself, feel exactly the same as people on the other side. We are devastated about the drought and we wish that we could do something about it. At the beginning of my speech I stated that the Government had put away \$200 million for a rainy day. I hope that it spends that money when the drought breaks. I wish to make a suggestion. I do not make this suggestion to be controversial, it is made in good faith. The Government is worried about the drought, it is worried about the farmers and it is worried about how the farmers can be helped, but in the past seven years it has done nothing for drought prevention. There are no new dam projects. Every time it rains in New South Wales we see runoff and water wastage as never before.

Nothing in the budget will address any of those matters in the future. There is no plan to build another

Burrinjuck Dam, no plan to build any other dam that would hold water so that something can be done to combat future droughts. The budget papers have nothing like that. The budget papers allocate \$300 million to be spent on the Olympic Games in the next 12 months. I make the suggestion that expenditure on the Olympic Games be put on hold for 12 months and the \$300 million be spent to look after the people who live on the land.

Mr Photios: You have to be joking.

Mr GIBSON: Of course you have to be joking. But when the Premier comes into the Chamber and says that the Prime Minister -

Mr Photios: Is that Australian Labor Party policy or just yours?

Mr GIBSON: It is only mine. The Prime Minister suggested the provision of money to facilitate the demolition of the Cahill Expressway. Let us be fair dinkum. Let us worry about people in the State, let us worry about the families that are starving because of the drought, let us think of all the stock they are losing, let us think of the homes they are being forced out of because the banks have foreclosed on them. Let us consider putting some of the Olympic Games expenditure on hold and spending it on the man on the land. Let us see how fair dinkum the Government is.

In the remaining time I have I shall refer to a terrible problem in my part of western Sydney - street kids. Over the last few months I found 83 kids, most of whom were sleeping in clothing bins and under bridges. I found 22 kids in a suburban garage - I am talking about kids as young as seven and eight years of age. Western Sydney needs a crash pad, for want of a better word, to house and look after these kids. Western Sydney does not have that facility. The Penrith youth refuge has been unable to meet the demands placed upon it, and is turning away 50 kids a month because it cannot look after them. Barnardo's Outreach does a wonderful job but it too has been swamped by demand. The Penrith street work project group has asked for a 20-bed supervised unit to be set up in Penrith to look after these kids, but cannot get that facility. The budget papers make no provision to look after that matter.

It is all very well for the Government to talk about the billions of dollars it will provide, but if the Government is fair dinkum it should look at the level of State debt and analyse the proposition that since it came to government it has done nothing about the level of debt. That level has not changed since the coalition came to office in 1988. As I said earlier, Queensland is not one cent in debt for every man, woman and child. In New South Wales the debt level for every man, woman and child is \$3,500. If the Government wants to win votes in western Sydney - it will not; it will be thrown out of government in March anyway - it should start being a little people orientated. The Government is not people orientated; the people of western Sydney will never accept it and I am certain the people of New South Wales will not accept it. The Government should have a little faith. The Opposition will support the Government putting its referendum question to the people of New South Wales, "If you vote for us you vote for a GST".

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [8.41]: I consider it a privilege to speak in support of the Government's budget. First, I congratulate you, Mr Acting-Speaker, on your recent appointment to the office you now hold within this Parliament. I know you will do an excellent job as you have done with every other responsibility you have undertaken since you became a member of Parliament. I do not know what I have done but I must be a little unlucky to follow the honourable member for Londonderry. He

Page 3374

is a dynamic little performer. He may be entertaining but the trouble is that there is no substance and absolutely no depth in the rhetoric. When one analyses what this man said in the last painful 30 minutes - the most painful and traumatic experience that I have been subjected to, as indeed the Minister for Ethnic Affairs has -

Mr Gibson: You may learn something.

Mr MERTON: We have learned absolutely nothing. The honourable member for Londonderry spoke

about the goods and services tax. What the GST means for the Labor Party is that it is a good story for today. There is absolutely no truth, no substance and not one iota of evidence to support the suggestion that this Government will introduce a GST. Members opposite know it is not constitutionally possible for New South Wales to have a GST. The honourable member for Londonderry spoke at great length about the State's debt level being the same as it was when we came to office. That is probably the situation; but we are now referring to a period 6½ years later. During the 12 years that the Labor Party was in office it accumulated a debt of \$4 billion a year, making a total of \$48 billion at the time it was thrown out of office. If this Government had continued the Opposition's illustrious record and followed the same path of economic vandalism, it would have created another debt of \$25 billion. It has not. As far as the State product is concerned, the debt level per person has reduced dramatically. In real terms the debt is less.

Mr Scully: What is the gross product? You don't know what it is.

Mr MERTON: You do not know all that much either. The people of Smithfield will deal with the honourable member very quickly in March so he can look for another job. When the coalition came to power in 1988 the debt was 42 per cent of gross domestic product; today it is 38 per cent. During the last 6½ years, for four or five of which we have suffered the worst recession - created and inflicted by the Opposition's Federal master, that great man who said it was the recession we had to have - New South Wales should have had an increased level of debt. That has not happened. The debt is actually less than it was when we came to power. I like the way the Opposition praises the Queensland Government. It is good that it recognises the contribution the Bjelke-Petersen Government made to stability of financial accounting in Queensland.

Mr Scully: Tell us about integrity.

Mr MERTON: The honourable member would know about integrity! When the Opposition talks about Queensland, we must not forget that that Government inherited a very sound economic State after 18 years of National Party Government. The honourable member for Londonderry spoke about his needy electorate. I have news for him: the electorate needs a member. Unfortunately they have not got a good member of Parliament at the present time. The honourable member for Londonderry spoke about the hospital; everyone knows Windsor needs a new hospital. I was treated at Windsor hospital on one occasion and the staff were lovely, but the facilities are not all that good.

Mr Scully: For mental illness?

Mr MERTON: The member for Smithfield is probably out on day release. For 12 long years the people approached the previous New South Wales Labor Government for a new hospital at Windsor. After 6½ years this Government is now calling for expressions of interest. There will be a new hospital at Windsor. I was concerned when it was suggested that the church should not run the hospital at Windsor - loving, caring and compassionate people well able to run the hospital. The pièce de résistance, the highlight of the oration of the honourable member for Londonderry was about closing Mount Druitt Hospital. I do not know whether he dreamed about that last night or the night before but my understanding is that there is no evidence to suggest that Mount Druitt Hospital will close.

The honourable member for Londonderry concluded by saying that if the Government has money to spend on the Olympic Games, it should be able to spend it on other things too. Of course, he conveniently overlooked the fact that his Federal masters offered this Government \$200 million to pull down the Cahill Expressway. This Government does not do things that way. It sees the community need, whether it be rural New South Wales or in the suburbs. The Government has higher priorities. The Premier told his joke to Parliament the other day: what is the difference between the drought and the Cahill Expressway? Answer: you cannot see the drought from Kirribilli House!

Mr McManus: It's an old joke.

Mr MERTON: It is old and so are your policies, but it is still relevant. If I were a member of the New

South Wales Labor Party I would not be pleased with a Prime Minister who wanted to spend \$200 million on what are virtually cosmetic repairs when people in the country are doing it tough and people in the suburbs are doing it tough, all as a result of a Federally induced recession. It is my pleasure to now deal with some of the budget items. This is a budget of financial responsibility; it is a budget of a government that has delivered the goods under its plan in years gone by and has a plan for the future. The Government has done it hard in recent years; it has made the tough decisions but is now able to reap the benefits of its financial planning. Of course, those on the Opposition benches do not know what financial planning is, so they will not understand what I am talking about.

This Government is rapidly reaching the stage when it will introduce a balanced budget - something that has not happened in this State. This budget provides improvements to core government services. The Government is providing real increases in funding for health, education, social and community services, and law and order. Compared to 1987, Labor's last

Page 3375

year in office, the Government has recorded the following increases in recurrent expenditure over and above the rate of inflation and well in excess of population growth rates: an increase of around 12 per cent on health, 13 per cent on education, almost 63 per cent on social and community services and more than 23 per cent on law, order and public safety. That has all been done without the Government being guilty of what was done by Labor governments in South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria; that is, putting all these things on Bankcard, paying for them on credit. As I said earlier, the New South Wales Government is now reaping the benefits of a period of financial consolidation.

I turn now to health. The New South Wales Government has spent more on health than has any other State government in Australia. This year more than \$5.2 billion will be spent on health, an increase of 2.6 per cent in real terms on the 1993-94 allocation. Of that, more than \$960 million will be spent in greater western Sydney, and \$388 million on the central coast and the north coast. The honourable member for Londonderry gave the House the impression that the Government is depriving the people of western Sydney. As the member for the electorate of Baulkham Hills, which is in the north-western part of Sydney, I am proud to be a member of a Government that is spending so much money on western Sydney. As I have said, more than \$960 million, or almost \$1 billion, will be spent in that area.

Westmead Children's Hospital is the largest children's hospital in the world. Since taking office in 1988 the Government has built or redeveloped 45 hospitals. That is the biggest reconstruction program of any public hospital system in Australia, and is more than double what was achieved by Labor in the last five years of its administration. The Government is meeting the growing demands on public hospitals. Last year New South Wales hospitals handled 28 per cent more patients in need of critical acute care than in 1989. All honourable members are aware of the tremendous number of improvements taking place in the structure of the hospital at Westmead. The Government is committed to providing comprehensive hospital and other health services at Westmead to cater for all people, but the needs of women will be particularly emphasised.

Honourable members are aware of the problems caused in the community by breast cancer. Many of us know people who have been affected by this tragic illness. In the budget \$93 million has been allocated specifically for women's health services. The breast screening service currently available at Parramatta is to be extended. Honourable members will remember that earlier this year the Premier announced the allocation of \$1.5 million to establish a breast cancer institute at Westmead. That institute will focus on promoting best practice in the treatment and management of breast cancer, including better communication between health care workers and a clear focus on women who have been diagnosed.

Other initiatives announced in the budget include a \$3 million cancer centre at Westmead Hospital to focus on research into the treatment of, and a cure for, breast cancer and other forms of cancer. The budget also included a \$4 million boost for radiotherapy services for people with cancer. The Government is committed to the provision of health services, particularly in western Sydney, and to women's health problems. I now turn to education. My friends from Baulkham Hills Rotary Club, a good group of people, are in the gallery tonight. They have come to Parliament to see what happens in this Chamber.

Mr Humpherson: To see how well their member works.

Mr MERTON: They may well be of that opinion. That, of course, is another matter, but I would not disagree with that interjection. Ross Scoble, the headmaster of the Crestwood Public School, which is in my electorate, is also in the gallery. It is good to see him here when I am speaking about the budget allocation for education. The New South Wales Department of School Education is responsible for educating almost 760,000 students across the State. It employs the full-time equivalent of more than 52,000 teaching staff and almost 10,000 ancillary staff. Last year in New South Wales TAFE colleges there were 423,000 new enrolments in more than 1,300 courses offered through more than 100 colleges and campuses. Approximately one in every 13 New South Wales students over the age of 15 years attends a TAFE course. A record \$5 billion will be spent on education this year, an increase of 4 per cent or \$194 million on 1993-94. A significant component of that increase is the funding of an additional 1,466 teachers, including 717 primary and secondary school teachers.

[*Interruption*]

One of the misfortunes of the honourable member for Bulli is that his education was not complete. If he stays in this House, he will be given a late-life education, if that is possible. In practical terms, the additional funding means that no year 1 class need exceed 28 students. The Government is committed to education and my electorate of Baulkham Hills has received grants in the budget. An amount of \$1.235 million has been allocated for maintenance of local schools. That is excellent. That amount includes approved funding for the forthcoming year for external maintenance projects on five schools. The schools are Baulkham Hills High School, Baulkham Hills Public School, Crestwood High School, Jasper Road Public School and Model Farm High School.

The standard of education available in my electorate is excellent. I am pleased that the Government has allocated funding to maintain the school buildings and grounds. When I became the member for Carlingford in 1988, I visited some of these schools. I could see that for many years they had had little money spent on them and certainly

Page 3376

needed improving. The Government has an excellent record so far as those improvements are concerned. In addition to the money that has been allocated to schools, \$62,150 has been allocated to maintaining the buildings at Baulkham Hills TAFE. It is important that the Government continues its commitment to education in New South Wales. As I have said, I believe the schools in the Baulkham Hills district are second to none.

I turn to roads, an important aspect of the budget. When I became the member for Carlingford in 1988, it became obvious to me that roads and transport were big issues. Since that time, people everywhere have said to me, "What are we going to do about the M2 expressway?" Everyone acknowledges that the north-western part of Sydney has bad traffic problems. Recently the Minister for Transport signed an agreement to build the M2. That expressway had been on the books and had been shown in the Gregory's Street Directory for almost 30 years. Previous governments have spoken about it but it is now a reality and, hopefully within the next 3½ years, it should be completed. My friend the Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, the member for Ermington, obviously supports that move because the people of his electorate will benefit from the M2.

Mr Photios: An allocation of \$28 million in this year's budget.

Mr MERTON: That is right, about \$28 million has been allocated in this year's budget. A substantial amount of that will be spent in the Baulkham Hills electorate. That is what the Government is about. In addition to that, a significant amount will be spent on widening Old Windsor Road from Abbott Road to Sunnyholt Road at Kellyville. Further funding for roadworks, to be determined by Baulkham Hills Council, amounts to about \$67,500. In addition, \$65,000 has been allocated for work in North Rocks Road, covering between Montana Avenue and Hampden Street, as well as \$225,000 for work at the intersection of North Rocks Road and Jenkins Road. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The 3 x 3 program continues to provide major input for the electorate of Baulkham Hills. The benefits are obvious. Projects completed in the past six years under the 3 x 3 program include reconstruction of the intersection of Seven Hills Road, Old Northern Road and Windsor Road, Baulkham Hills; the widening and rehabilitation of the Old Northern Road between Windsor Road, Baulkham Hills, and Middle Dural Road, Middle Dural; construction of a right-hand turn bay at Old Northern Road and Olive Street, Baulkham Hills; the installation of traffic signals at the intersection of Barclay Road and Perry Street, North Rocks -

Mr Photios: You must be getting all the money. Is there any left for us?

Mr MERTON: We will see how we go, but we will worry about the Baulkham Hills area first. Other completed projects include the construction of a passing lane on Windsor Road at Excelsior Avenue and Parsonage Road, Castle Hill; and the provision of a right-hand turn bay at Old Windsor Road and Gibbon Road, Baulkham Hills. This financial year \$372,000 has been allocated to the electorate of Baulkham Hills under the extended 3 x 3 program, of which \$232,000 will be allocated to Baulkham Hills Council determined works and \$140,000 for traffic facility works, including a right-hand turn bay at the corner of North Rocks Road and Barclay Road, North Rocks - which, as local residents know, is a black spot.

The sum of \$750,000 has been allocated under the safer roads program for a right-hand turn bay at the intersection of Windsor Road and Cook Street, Baulkham Hills. Anyone who travels on the Windsor Road at night would well know the stress involved. Indeed, I think there is even applause from the gallery, and there should be applause. I am sorry, Mr Acting-Speaker, they just could not restrain themselves. I would imagine that the blood pressure will certainly be a lot lower now, because the fact is that that is certainly a black spot during the afternoon. I will now move to other important issues.

An important issue in New South Wales is law and order. The reality is that many people still do not believe that the streets are safe at night. That is probably the situation, but the Government is certainly making tremendous improvements so far as that is concerned. It is a pleasure to be a member of a government that has a real commitment to law and order. In my previous occupation I was very concerned about law and order and I note that the present Minister for Police, and the Attorney General and Minister for Justice have continued that focus. As a vital part of the budget the Premier recently announced that, during the next five years, the Government will put 500 additional police on the streets to deter crime. Of those, 200 police officers will enter the force in this budget year, substantially boosting the police presence on New South Wales streets.

This commitment is part of a 3.6 per cent increase in funding for law and order in 1994-95, taking the total expenditure to \$1.9 billion. In addition to that, another initiative is the appointment of further judges and magistrates on a temporary basis to reduce the backlog of cases in the State's courts. Three acting justices will be appointed to the Supreme Court; three judges will be appointed to the District Court to handle civil matters; and three acting magistrates will be appointed to the Local Court to reduce waiting times. It is undoubtedly true to say that there can never be too many police on the beat, as it were, but we have improved the position considerably from what it was in the very dark days of 1988, when it was true to say that the hoodlums ran the streets and reigned supreme.

The Government has a commitment to improve the position, and has improved it over the years by the introduction of many statutory offences and increased penalties, and by allowing the Crown to

Page 3377

lodge appeals in cases where defendants have been given inadequate sentences by magistrates. Of course, truth in sentencing means that the prison remission scheme has gone and a person who receives a sentence of 10 years will actually serve the 10 years. In the days of the previous Labor Government, persons sentenced to 10 years imprisonment received approximately one-third off with remissions.

Mr Photios: They had the revolving door system.

Mr MERTON: Labor had the revolving door system. One prisoner would come in and another would

go out.

Mr Photios: Or they would go to Rex Jackson.

Mr MERTON: Well, no. In fact, there were so many people outside and they were so short of prisoners inside that they put the Minister inside to build up the numbers. That was the situation under Rex Jackson's administration. The Government has acted responsibly so far as prisons are concerned. In addition, it has increased the payroll tax threshold from \$500,000 to \$600,000 in two stages. That will mean that more than 1,000 businesses will cease paying payroll tax altogether. The budget certainly indicates to the people of New South Wales that there is stability, so far as the Government is concerned. The budget does not impose any new taxes, nor does it increase existing taxes - other than the established indexation provisions, of course. Indeed, the Government has made a number of concessions. As I said, it has reduced payroll tax. The budget also contains several other forms of tax relief.

The Government will grant land tax concessions for owners of low cost rental accommodation, to encourage continued private sector involvement in the provision of this important service. No-one would dispute the need for low cost rental accommodation for those in need. I refer particularly to the tragedy of the street kids. I was really moved when the honourable member for Londonderry spoke about that tragedy. Honourable members know it is a reality but, unfortunately, the Opposition's Federal masters have done nothing to improve the situation with a recession that has meant unemployment. Almost one million people are unemployed, and of course the loss of employment has contributed to the breakdown of families.

The Government will give concessions to people who are able to set up low cost rental accommodation. The Government has also made a change in the transfers of certain rural properties; small business is also assisted through further changes to land tax treatment of nonresidential strata units; and the liquor licence fees on low-alcohol beverages will be abolished to further encourage social responsibility. The Government has struck a balance between strong financial management and the needs of a community emerging from a recession. It is a Government that is both responsible and responsive. There has been talk about budget deficits. Since 1991 - the last Greiner budget - the Fahey Government has reduced the deficit by more than \$800 million. The deficit for 1994-95 will mark a further reduction of \$353 million. This is proof that with good management it is possible to increase funding on core services, yet reduce taxes, and at the same time cut the State's Bankcard bill.

That is what this budget is about; it is about responsibility; about being able to increase payments to people and organisations that need them; but it is also about not increasing taxes and government charges. The Government is able to present such a budget because of the years of financial responsibility that commenced in 1988 under Nick Greiner. But for the efforts of the Greiner Government - of course inherited by Premier Fahey - New South Wales would have been in the black hole that Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia are in. Many people in those States lost their life savings when financial institutions crashed. New South Wales has not had that trouble because the Government has been prepared to make the tough decisions when they are needed. If the Labor Party - our friends in Opposition - thinks it has any easy solutions, the simple answer is that there are no easy solutions.

This Government has made the hard decisions and has been able to give the people of New South Wales a new era of stability and prosperity. This country is emerging from the worst recession in 60 years. If the coalition Government had continued the Labor Party spending pattern up to 1988, as I said earlier, New South Wales would now have a budget deficit of the order of \$65 billion. That is not the case, because the Government has acted responsibly. I conclude by saying that in March the people of New South Wales will vote in an important election. They will be at the crossroads; they will have to decide whether they want to go back and relive those nightmare days of financial irresponsibility and despair under Labor, or continue on the road of solid, hard achievement that the Government has established.

There is light at the end of the tunnel, and we in New South Wales, as members of the Fahey-Armstrong Government, are proud to be able to lead New South Wales out of the recession - a federally induced,

deliberately created recession. In March next year the people of New South Wales will realise that there is only one way for them to go; that is, to continue on the solid, hard road of achievement that will lead to prosperity. The people of New South Wales can well understand what the Government has done and how they have benefited. The reality is that there simply is no alternative.

To go back to the dark, dismal days of Labor would be a tragedy, not only for the people of New South Wales but for future generations. It would be a tragedy for their children and it would be a tragedy for the history of New South Wales. I do not believe that will happen. As entertaining as the honourable member for Londonderry might have been, the reality is that there is no substance to what he said. The Government has the runs on the board. We have the

Page 3378

achievements. We have saved New South Wales from the fates of Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. The people of New South Wales are the real winners.

Dr KERNOHAN (Camden) [9.11]: I am very pleased to support the budget, which is built on the theme of building a better future. "Building" is the right term; it is a good theme because we are building on what the coalition Government has achieved since 1988. The words "commonsense priorities" have been used with respect to this budget. Commonsense is not very common in the general community and is even less common in government. But that statement is not applicable to this Government or this budget. A government shows it has commonsense when it does not accept an offer of money to pull down the Cahill Expressway when there are many more important things to do in this country.

This is a positive budget, yet it is not a pork-barrelling budget, despite what some members of the Opposition might say. I know that because it is certainly not pork-barrelling in my electorate. My electorate has the biggest population in New South Wales. On 2 August there were 15.68 per cent more people in the electorate than there should be to comply with boundary criteria. I am required to look after 45,090 people. Therefore they are entitled to more and they should have got more. We need and should have got more. I got some, but not enough, and I am fighting for more all the time.

Mr McManus: You are on your way out the door.

Dr KERNOHAN: Never. Do not worry about that. The Government appreciates the problems of these growth areas and last year introduced the developing areas assistance scheme to help such areas. That scheme has been extended. I was very grateful for the \$395,000 I got from that first round of allocations from the scheme for developing areas in Camden and Campbelltown. A second round is coming up in the budget this year. I am very pleased that we will get another bite at the DAAS cherry. I aim to get more next time, because many brand new houses are surrounded by paddocks and it will take a lot of money to construct the various facilities that my constituents need. I will certainly be applying for part of the \$2.5 million in the next round. Because of the size of my electorate, it will not be pork-barrelling.

I have great problems housing the people of the Camden electorate, particularly old people. Even though a very large number of young people and young families are moving into the area, older towns such as Camden and Picton have a large proportion of senior citizens. I have been lobbying vigorously for more housing for our senior citizens. In the Picton-Tahmoor area the Department of Housing waiting list for one-bedroom units goes back to April 1991 and in Camden it goes back to November 1985. My pleas have been heard, and I have 11 units near completion at Picton at a total cost of \$647,000, as well as a further 22 units to be built at Camden. This year \$658,000 has been allocated in the budget out of a total of \$1.456 million for that complex, which is just a part of the 30 per cent increase for pensioner housing in this Government's budget. I have other housing units nearing completion in other areas, including Mount Annan and Tahmoor. The total capital for public housing in my area for this year is \$1.465 million.

Education is another aspect of community life that is important to my constituents, particularly new residents. This budget allocates \$459 million for education statewide, an increase of 46 per cent on the 1988 budget. More than \$3.6 million is to be spent on schools and TAFE in the Camden electorate. For example,

Elizabeth MacArthur High School will receive new buildings at a total cost of \$2.71 million, which will enable 1,000 students to attend the school. The stage two development of St Helens Park primary school is to be completed at a total cost of \$820,000. Planning is also progressing for the refurbishment of Camden High School, one of my electorate's oldest high schools, at a total cost of \$2.2 million. The concept plans will be available for community discussion during term four and tenders will be let early in the next financial year.

I have been lobbying for a library for Camden public school, and halls for Camden South and Mawarra, old schools in my electorate, but I have not been extremely successful because this Government has its priorities right. Camden does have a library, albeit old, and other facilities are being used at the other schools. Some of my very old schools consisted of nearly all demountable accommodation; the permanent buildings are 100 years old. These have been fixed. On 10 September I officially opened the refurbishment of Oakdale public school. It is now a school with permanent buildings; the demountables are not needed but two demountables were kept for the school's own purposes. The Oaks public school, which was in a similar condition, has also had similar construction. I am still working on a site for Buxton public school. I believe that negotiations are under way. I am also working on a high school site for Wollondilly.

This year the budget also allocates more than \$1.68 million for repairs and external improvements to 13 schools in the Camden electorate. The Government's priorities are right: looking after our young people, the future of our country, giving them the very best possible places in which to learn and to be educated to a superior standard. TAFE received more than \$1.9 million in my area. Campbelltown TAFE, which is within my electorate, is part of the South Western Sydney Institute of TAFE. Stage six of the Campbelltown college has been allocated \$1.7 million, which will provide basic education and general surplus classrooms as well as the development of the college's new resource centre. There is also an allocation of \$131,000 for general maintenance. The Government is looking after not only the school population but also the older members of my community who need tertiary education.

I welcome very much the \$1 billion community services budget - a record budget. It has almost doubled since the coalition came to office. We have

Page 3379

recognised the importance of community services in our State. This budget's 9.9 per cent increase over last year's budget highlights the Government's commitment to families and individuals, to the frail aged and to people with disabilities. Of this community services budget, \$1,957,040 is allocated to the Camden electorate. Hopefully it will go towards providing some of the extra services we require, including physiotherapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy.

The environment is important to the people of my electorate. This has been noted by the Government. I shall mention some of the benefits to the environment in my community through the allocations from the budget. The first example is a very important allocation of \$450,000 for the Nattai National Park. While referring to national parks and wilderness, I thank the Minister for the Environment for acknowledging the special problems in relation to declaring the Kanangra Boyd wilderness area and for leaving it, at the moment, as a national park. This area has very special problems. I believe it should remain a national park. I am glad that this has been recognised.

Last year this Government declared the Dharawal Reserve, which includes the O'Hares Gorge area. This budget provides \$10,000 towards the preparation costs of a plan of management for this reserve. The Government has set up catchment management committees in my electorate. The Nepean committee is headed by Dr Tony Ross and the Wollondilly committee is headed by Mr David Pockley. These local committees will monitor the situation with respect to the rivers in their area and report to the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust, which is overseeing all developments affecting the Hawkesbury-Nepean system.

I was very happy to see \$3.6 million allocated in the budget for the Hawkesbury-Nepean Management Trust for its river care projects, blue-green algae management program, and public awareness program with regard to phosphorous. It is asking for a reduction in the amount of phosphorous going into our rivers. Over the next 12 months the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust will receive over \$9 million, \$3

million of which will be used for studies to monitor pollution in the water of the Hawkesbury-Nepean. This is a great step forward in trying to clean up the rivers in our area. The Water Board contributes very much to the situation in our rivers. It is starting to spend a lot of money to help improve the rivers. In fact, the total Water Board contribution to my electorate in the forthcoming year will be \$12.674 million.

The budget allocates money for the Picton sewerage scheme. This year's budget appropriates money for stage one of the treatment plant, costing \$5.33 million, and for the reticulation system, costing \$5.38 million. That sewerage system is for Picton, Tahmoor and Thirlmere. This is the largest area in New South Wales without reticulated sewerage. It has been a problem for many years. It was first mentioned in the 1930s. At last the project is coming to fruition. I must say that this has been achieved without the help of many people who say that they are in favour of cleaning up the rivers. Some of the extreme green elements in our community have held up the gazettal of an amendment to the Clean Waters Act which was necessary to fund not only this sewerage scheme but other very needed sewerage plants and repairs to sewerage plants in other areas. However, I understand that this is no longer the case and it is full steam ahead. The people of Picton, Tahmoor and Thirlmere will at last get their sewerage schemes.

Mr McManus: It was started by the Unsworth Government.

Dr KERNOHAN: It did not produce the money though.

Mr McManus: We started it.

Dr KERNOHAN: Anyone can start things. It is who puts the money in and finishes projects that counts. The Government has put up the money. An environmental impact statement will go on display and the public will be asked to comment on the options. Public participation is the way this Government works. It does not work under the old system under which Labor governments used to say, "You will have this, you will wear it. This is what we are going to give you. Be thankful". Our Government asks the people for comments on proposals. The environmental impact statement for the Picton sewage treatment works will be on display. I assure everyone in this House and the people of my electorate that I am not prepared to settle for anything less than the very best sewerage scheme available for them. I am still lobbying for a sewerage scheme for The Oaks, and I will keep lobbying for that.

The West Camden sewage treatment works is to have \$1 million spent on it this year to help clean up the Nepean. Bar screens will be replaced at a cost of \$500,000. The budget refers to alum dosing treatment costing \$350,000, but I am sure we will now use ferric chloride to remove nutrients. Wet well access is also targeted in the budget. Other projects for the Water Board include the Sugarloaf interconnection facility, the Broughton Pass outlet, and the Penstocks and Pheasants Nest gates upgrade. That is very good. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I refer now to something that is important to everyone in the community: health. The Opposition is using health as an electioneering issue. The Opposition is on a scaremongering campaign, telling lies about health. The shadow minister and my Opposition candidate were out in the Camden electorate scaring my constituents. They were saying, "We will give you another hospital in Camden". I think that is No. 10 on the list of new hospitals promised for when Labor is in office. They want a hospital on every corner. They want to go back to the 1960s, not having specialities providing the very best service in a region. Previously people had to go

Page 3380
right into Sydney for treatment of other than a minor fracture or an uncomplicated kind of disease. Now specialities are provided in the west and the south-west. But the Labor Opposition does not want that; it wants the little cottage hospitals again on every street corner. I will not repeat what was said at question time today because I do not believe in repeating word for word what other people say, but I invite members to look at what the Labor Party's plans were for western Sydney when it was in power compared with our performance.

The budget for greater western Sydney this year is \$967 million, 45 per cent more than it was in 1988-89. What did Labor do in the previous years? What did my Opposition candidate do? What a hypocrite! He was

the Chairman of the Macarthur Area Health Service. What did he do for the Camden electorate then? What did he do for health when he was the member for Camden? Nothing. What have we done? We are providing specialist centres in the west and south-west. Liverpool is on its way to being a teaching hospital. As a centre for our area it looks after women in particular. We have the Caroline Chisholm unit for mothers and babies. It has been completed at a cost of \$18 million. It will care for 3,000 mothers and babies a year. This month a 25-bed, high level neonatal intensive care unit will be functional. No longer will babies with real problems have to go all the way to Westmead or Sydney. There is to be a breast cancer and associated assistance centre at Liverpool, costing \$750,000.

The Government is funding the benevolent society to provide health services to victims of domestic violence and to older women in south-western Sydney. We will spend \$3.25 million over four years and provide about half a million dollars this year. In my specific area, on 11 February I turned the first sod for a new community health centre at Narellan. The budget provides \$1.8 million for this. The centre will be completed soon. It will provide counsellors, nursing, dental services, mental health services and treatment for drug and alcohol abuse. Another section of it is called the Faithfull Anderson Day Rehabilitation Centre. It will have occupational therapy, speech therapy, physiotherapy, podiatry and social workers. A full staff of 25 will serve the Narellan complex. A rumour has been put around by the Opposition that the Camden centre will be bereft of workers, however a centre will be kept in old Camden town for health services; they will not all go to Narellan. Mental health services in the area will be extended to ensure that there is 24-hour capacity.

I turn to transport. Roads are very important to a semi-rural area. A headline in the *Macarthur Advertiser* of 14 September stated that crossings were "a blight in our city". Campbelltown Council called for the removal of all level crossings in the city of Campbelltown. I have been lobbying since my election to Parliament to get the level crossing on Narellan Road replaced with an overbridge. It is 500 metres outside my electorate, but my people use it. Planning and community consultation for the project have been undertaken and we will deliver in this budget. Construction will commence. A person from my area would not recognise from the budget entry "Narellan Road deviation from Appin Road to Blaxland Road Campbelltown" that it refers to the removal of the level crossing. The whole project will cost \$10 million. In my electorate the expenditure will be \$1.586 million and \$750,000 will be spent on the project overall this year.

On other roadworks, \$540,000 will be spent on minor works and total spending on other programs will be \$4.495 million. This includes \$460,000 under the 3 x 3 program. This is broken up into \$2.188 million for total restoration; \$2.279 million for preservation and maintenance; and \$28,000 for road user services. Roads in semi-rural areas are very important to local people but the roads outside my electorate are important to my constituents because many of them commute to Sydney to work. I have to say thank you to the Government for completing the missing link on the M5 at Casula. It cuts 10 minutes off the trip into Sydney from my electorate. The extension of the M5 east from King Georges Road to the airport will occur. The environmental impact statement is on public display at the moment and comments on the project are being called for. The environmental impact statement display period will end on 12 October. The preferred option will take the M5 through to General Holmes Drive and on into Sydney. Completion of the route will be of great benefit to people of the south-west. It will enable them to get into Sydney easily.

Railways are another important service to the community. A total of \$7.15 million will be spent in my electorate on railways. A number of stations within the electorate have already been upgraded and more stations will be upgraded this year. For example, there will be platform raising and reconstruction at Bargo, Douglas Park and Menangle Park at respective costs of \$230,000, \$380,000 and \$340,000. Also at Menangle Park, the Sunnyside underbridge will be renewed at a cost of \$200,000. Railways play an important role in the southern part of my electorate and \$150,000 will be spent on automatic signalling as part of the Picton-Mittagong scheme.

There will be concrete resleepering at the Glenlee-Jobba junction at Menangle Park at a cost of \$5.5 million. That seems a lot for railway sleepers, however that is only part of an upgrade of the southern line. In the Douglas Park-Bundanoon-Wingello area \$11 million will be spent to upgrade 30 kilometres of track. This will involve 50,000 concrete railway sleepers, improved drainage and reconditioned ballast. It has already been

announced that Campbelltown railway station will receive \$1.6 million to install easy access lifts so that the elderly, the disabled and mothers with young children will not have to climb what seems like hundreds of steps to catch the train.

At last the new Endeavour has come to the southern highlands line. On 28 August the full complement of the new Endeavour trains was running

Page 3381

and providing 13 return services on weekdays to the southern highlands area. It is made up of 11 shuttle services to Campbelltown and two through trains to the city. One runs during the commuter period and one runs later during the day. In November last year there were only 11 return services on weekdays, being made up of eight shuttle services and three through commuter trains to Sydney. There were two sets of old carriages and three diesel rail cars, which broke down regularly. They were late, they were out of service and trains did not run. Now the southern highlands line has brand-new beautiful Endeavour trains.

There have been a few commuter complaints about the new trains. One complaint is that the trains run a little fast and people feel that they are getting sick - I think people just need to get used to the fast service. It has been said that sometimes the doors do not open. Teething problems are always experienced. The problems are being fixed. The new trains make a difference to the journey and they are a great improvement on what was provided before. Some commuters have also complained about the shuttle services. They should recognise that other areas also have shuttle services. Indeed, the people from the southern lines have no through trains to Sydney - they change at Dapto so that they can catch electric trains and better services through to Sydney. I believe that the budget is very sensible and worth while. It continues programs that were set up to get New South Wales going, to get ahead and to build a better future for our State and for our community.

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith) [9.41]: The budget can be described in many ways. The first description it could be given is that of a "back to the future" budget. By making provision for an additional 1,466 teachers the Government is getting back to where the Labor Government was in 1988. Second, the budget could be called soft. It is a soft budget intended to try to entice voters to re-elect this coalition Government. Third, the budget could be called dishonest. It is a dishonest budget for the electorate of Penrith. The offer of 1,466 teachers to reduce class sizes is featured as a highlight. Why is there a need to provide an extra 1,466 teachers if the Government has been managing well by putting people first for many years? Why does the Government suddenly need to give the education system a kick-start with the provision of additional teachers? It is simply because the Government knows that it has done the wrong thing and it is trying to make amends.

I wish to advise the House of the impact of a reduction in teacher numbers in our schools. I know a bit about schools, I am an escaped teacher and I have teachers in my family. You, Mr Acting Speaker, are also an escaped teacher and you would be aware of the impact of a reduction in teacher numbers. Fewer teachers mean larger classes. The diligence or dedication of a teacher do not matter when classes are larger, it is very difficult to meet the needs of the average and below average students. In the past seven years, under this Government, a great many young people have been disadvantaged because teacher numbers have been reduced and they have been put into large classes. The Government reduced teacher numbers at a time when, as everyone knows, the fabric of society was crumbling. Families are not delivering values in the way they used to, and churches and community groups are not making an impact.

The one institution in our society that is there to deliver values and change attitudes is the school. At a time when schools were most needed in the delivery of values the present Government took teachers out of the education system. Our teachers struggle with an academic curriculum and try to impart values that families are not able to deliver because of the disintegration of the fabric of families. What has happened to those young people who were placed in oversized classes? Where are they going? What have they lost? How much is this Government responsible for what is going to happen to those young people on their way through society? My real concern about the way in which the Government has handled education, despite the fact that it is now congratulating itself for returning what it has taken away, is that in the education system the prime client has always been the student. Today the prime client of this Government's system is the system itself.

Because of the competition between schools and because of the financial structure of schools, teachers in western Sydney spend many hours trying to raise money. One western Sydney school held a spellathon which raised \$14,000. Honourable members can imagine the number of hours that were put into that project. Teachers participate in committee meetings and spend a great deal of time in attending them - time that should be spent on other duties such as attending to children. In essence, teachers are now carrying out tasks that previously were undertaken by people employed for that purpose. The provision of 1,466 additional teachers is a sop to the people about to vote in the coming election. The Government wants to be seen as a caring government when in fact it is a careless government.

I turn to the issue of health. The Minister for Health labels as ingrates members of Parliament for western Sydney. He says that we are grateful for nothing. I wish to put that matter straight. The people of Penrith are extremely grateful to have a very fine five-storey hospital that cost \$87 million. We think it is great. Everybody is grateful that we have such a fine building. The Minister says that we are not grateful, but that is not true. We are grateful for the building. The difficulty we have is that the hospital is understaffed. Given that this budget includes no increment, how will both the current hospital and a new hospital be staffed? At the current hospital dedicated nurses work consistently, but there are not enough of them. Anyone who has had family in the Nepean Hospital recently knows that the hospital is understaffed. Families have to take time off work to assist in feeding lunches to incapacitated patients. They do so because they want to assist the overworked and dedicated nurses.

Page 3382

Where is the extra funding for staff in the hospital that is about to open this financial year? There is none, yet health service is highlighted in the budget. The Government is trying, but not succeeding, to replace its ruthless productivity cuts in hospital funding in the past seven years. How any government could even contemplate productivity cuts in a hospital situated in a growth area is beyond me. The present Government has done that and is now trying to repair the damage caused. I foresee no improvement for the Wentworth Area Health Service, which represents 5 per cent of the State's population but receives only 3 per cent of the budget. Honourable members can imagine how good it could be if the Wentworth Area Health Service were to receive 5 per cent of the budget. The Wentworth area deserves 5 per cent of the budget yet the allocation to the area has been cut again.

People are concerned about health services. If the Government is delivering as it says it is, why is everybody so concerned about it? If the new-found \$5 billion plus in health services is actually going to do something to the system, why is everybody so concerned? What assistance is given to victims of sexual assault? The answer to that question, in the electorate of Penrith, is not very much. So meagre are the funds that both counselling services, the Wentworth area counselling service and the community health centre, have closed their books for the past nine months. Victims of sexual assault have nowhere to go for counselling. They have to wait because the Government does not give sufficient funds to provide them with access to counselling.

Services for victims are sparse and underfunded. The Government will hear from those people this week because they will be demonstrating outside Parliament House. A group of women who are survivors of incest visited my office. They told me it is difficult for them to access a system that has locked them out. If you talk at length to these women, not only do you hear that their childhood has been taken away from them; their adulthood has been mucked around as well. The system owes them something, but there is nowhere for them to go for help. In other electorates there may be better systems. In the Penrith electorate the two available services are overstretched and need greater funding.

I am pleased, however, to see an increase in the community services budget, which is sorely needed. The funds for services for disabled people are totally inadequate. In the Penrith electorate there are no facilities for developmentally disabled adults who are in their thirties and forties. The Government has seen fit to ignore elderly parents who struggle daily with adult children who have special needs. No attempt has been made to place these developmentally disabled people in any respite care. Funds are needed for such services. This Government has no intention of recognising the ongoing burden for parents who are on call 24 hours a day.

Some of the increased funds in this portfolio should be put into services to help developmentally disabled adults.

In the Londonderry electorate there is a fine establishment called the Castlereagh adult learning service. I believe it is the only such service from Blacktown to the mountains. It houses approximately 24 developmentally disabled adults and there is a waiting list to Bourke and back for people who want to access the system. We need more of the same services. I understand the Castlereagh service is either moving or closing. Yet again we will have another group of developmentally disabled adults who have to stay at home with their elderly parents who worry themselves sick about what will happen to their children when they pass on.

The honourable member for Londonderry referred to the problem with street kids. I should like to push the point further. In Penrith there is lobbying to build accommodation for street kids. Some street children, through no fault of their own, find they have nowhere to sleep but under bridges and in clothing bins. Supervised accommodation is sorely needed. The current centre allows these children to use the centre as an address, drink coffee and have showers, but at the end of the day the door is shut and the children are again out on the streets. This is a shame that this Government should be anxious to correct. While this problem exists and the area remains underfunded, this Government will be seen as a non-caring insensitive government.

Every member of this Parliament would probably know something about street kids. Penrith is a river city and river cities seem to attract street kids more than other cities. If you visit Penrith in the dead of night you will find soup kitchens at the railway station. No-one seems to be able to address the very real need. Certainly these street kids have somewhere to shower but what they need is somewhere to sleep, not en masse but with supervision. I should like now to talk about the budget highlights for the environment. I did not find them. What does this mean? Will the Minister continue to administer his portfolio as he does now? It is a little frightening. No extra funding has been provided for cleaning the river. However, further funds have been provided for the Environment Protection Authority. Does this mean effectiveness? The budget paper states:

Over the 1994-95 financial year the Environment Protection Authority will be allocating its resources via a holistic approach to environmental matters, that is, by addressing all aspects of the environment in an integrated manner and developing strategies that focus on major factors affecting the environment.

It sounds great but it does not mean very much in Penrith. Again in Londonderry, there is an establishment called AMGRO, which is an outdoor putrescible food factory. Because it is not using current and up-to-date technology, it simply pollutes the escarpment with an incredible smell. People have reported that it smells like stale vomit. The problem has been there since October 1993. Despite my protestations and those of other people, the Minister has seen fit to ignore the needs of the people. So, when I read about this wonderful, holistic approach to pollution and I know what is actually happening, I

Page 3383

wonder what the Minister is up to. He is aware of the enormous problems that families are experiencing with the offensive smell but he seems incapable of getting on top of the issue. It would be great if some of the funds that have been set aside for the increase in the EPA were to help sort out the problem in the seat of Penrith.

The Nepean river has not changed or improved over the last two years. No extra funds have been provided to assist in cleaning up this area of the environment. No wonder the Minister is seeking advice about his future redundant staff: the greenies are cheesed off at the Minister's inactivity, particularly in relation to the environment of the river. Because of the Minister's inactivity and neglect of the real environmental issues there is a groundswell of concern against him. In fact, the general belief is that the Minister's inactivity is a great drawback even to the Environment Protection Authority.

I should like now to talk about roads. I congratulate the Government: after having allowed Mulgoa Road to look like a goat track for several years, money is now being invested in its improvement. This year, in the Penrith electorate, the Government is spending \$3.5 million on Mulgoa Road. Of course, Mulgoa Road is the road that will access the Olympic Games rowing site. I remind the House that the motorists of greater western Sydney pay about 30 per cent of the State's 3 x 3 petrol tax. It would be great to think that the motorists in greater western Sydney might receive funds commensurate with the fees and taxes that they pay. While

speaking about transport I report to the House that this Government's cost cutting at railway stations is backfiring. Ticket machines have been installed in readiness for complete annihilation of staff at railway stations. Eighty per cent of the commuters I have surveyed are opposed to these impersonal machines. They want personal contact with railway staff. If this Government thinks it can cut back staff on railway stations and make voters happy, it should think again. I move now to the electorate budget. When the budget was delivered last week one media outlet reported:

Premier John Fahey today announced that the State budget had allocated a massive \$25.934 million boost to capital works in the Penrith electorate . . . Penrith is the big winner in this year's State budget. The responsible economic management which the Liberal Government has brought to New South Wales is paying dividends right across the State.

Then the capital works for the Penrith electorate are listed. The first is \$17 million to complete the Nepean hospital. We are very happy to receive that funding. The next is \$1.5 million for the Emu Plains gaol upgrading. The Chief Secretary, and Minister for Administrative Services will be pleased to know that Glenmore Park Public School has been allocated \$490,000. The new university railway station in the seat of St Marys has been allocated \$1 million. We have a Government that clearly does not know the borders of its electorates. I suggest it should shave off a bit of money to buy electoral maps and street directories to get it right next year.

My concluding remarks are about the total dishonesty of this Government. Not only is it dishonest for making great hoopla about things that do not apply to my electorate - we get used to that because the Government is sloppy about the way it does things - but for the first time ever the electricity councils' capital works budgets have appeared in our budget papers as this Government's funding. It is absolutely outrageous when I sit on the board of Prospect Electricity and make decisions about its capital works budget with the money of the people of western Sydney to find later that this Government is taking credit for something that it is not paying for and made no decision about. It is very clear that the Government is seeking to present an inflated picture of overall State Government capital spending.

People will not be fooled: it has never happened before and the dishonesty must be seen clearly. I ask the Treasurer, if the Government is going to harpoon and claim the capital works of these electricity councils, why it is not thoroughly honest and taking on the debts which have been incurred by the councils to pay dividends, special dividends and some capital works? The Government is taking a totally dishonest approach to the budget by running it as good news and leaving the bad news behind. I am appalled. I understand that the Minister for Energy and the Treasurer put their heads together to devise this trick to bump up the budget and make them look good. The people of western Sydney will hear about this, and those who have participated in this scheme to try to fool the people will find themselves on the receiving end. Prospect Electricity will not sit still and watch its capital works budget being run around the State as a budget for this Government.

The Government has not only included the capital works budget of Prospect Electricity. It has included those of Illawarra Electricity, \$36 million; Shortland Electricity, \$29 million; and Sydney Electricity, \$171 million. The budget is an absolute and total sham. If the Government intends to do this, it should also pick up the debts incurred by these capital works and add them on the State budget deficit. The Government could not do that because that would be too honest. All in all, I am grateful for the Nepean hospital and the funding for work on Mulgoa Road. Apart from that, there is not much in the budget for my electorate. I heard members on the other side of House say that their electorates will get bridges and everything that opens and shuts. Come the revolution, we will do exactly the same.

Mr BECK (Murwillumbah) [10.01]: I am pleased to support the seventh budget of the Liberal Party-National Party coalition that was delivered last week by the Treasurer, the Hon. Peter Collins. The previous speaker, the honourable member for Penrith, thanked the Government for the funds allocated in the budget to her electorate. I assure her that during the four years I had the displeasure of sitting on the Opposition benches no funds at all were spent on the north coast. The north coast was starved of funds by the Wran and Unsworth governments. That is why the Opposition disappeared from the Government benches in 1988.

I want to deal specifically with the increased funding for the north coast area since the coalition came to office in 1988. I turn first to roads in my electorate and on the north coast generally. For more than 30 years a new super highway from the Queensland border to the southern capitals has been talked about. At long last some progress is being made so far as that road is concerned. I compliment the previous Minister for roads, the Hon. Wal Murray, who, in February 1993, launched the north coast roads strategy. Part of that strategy involved the construction of a road from Tweed Heads to Hexham. In the 1994-95 budget \$6.3 million has been made available for the acquisition of properties, when required, so that this project can get under way.

I will mention other roads shortly. Before I do so I should like to mention some concerns I have about the road to which I have just referred. When the north coast roads strategy was launched in February 1993 Government members were confident that it would proceed. When the State Roads (Toll Works) Amendment Bill was before this House in 1992 the Government believed that it had the support of the Opposition. On 29 April 1992 the Opposition spokesman on transport, the honourable member for Kogarah, is recorded in *Hansard* as saying:

We understand that if there is to be a dual carriageway on the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border, realistically that will be achieved only by it being a tollway. The Opposition is not opposed to that, so long as there will be an alternative route which is untolled.

He has since visited north coast electorates and said that the Opposition does not support the tollway. As I have said, that roadway will be a major motorway between Tweed Heads and Hexham. In September 1992 the Leader of the Opposition said in his response to the then budget:

To supplement the capital works program, Labor would arrange for a speedy letting of tenders for a number of projects to be constructed solely by the private sector or as part of joint venture arrangements . . . These projects include . . . the construction of toll roads on the Pacific Highway, particularly on the North Coast . . .

The Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition spokesman on transport now condemn the road they supported only a year or so ago. I am alarmed by this turnaround, but possibly their statements had a political motive. I look forward to the construction of a safe dual carriageway. I am delighted that the Government has made \$6.3 million available towards the construction of this road. The road will reduce the number of kilometres travelled from Tweed Heads to Billinudgel, which is now 41 kilometres, to 28 kilometres, or, if travelling along the coast road, from 38 kilometres to 28 kilometres, a saving of about 15 minutes in travelling time.

I was delighted to read in the information that has been forwarded to all of the people on the north coast that that road is to be built over a three-year period at a cost of almost \$200 million. I look forward to further funding for the construction of this road as budgets are brought down each year by the coalition Government. Funds have been allocated for work on many other roads within the Murwillumbah electorate, after many years of being starved of funds from the Opposition during its 12 years of government. Some \$2.1 million has been allocated to a major black spot area, the Terranora Road intersection with the Pacific Highway. That will involve the installation of traffic lights and road safety programs to make it safer for people to turn into and exit from Terranora Road. The Pacific Highway in the town of Murwillumbah south of the railway station has also received additional funding. About \$900,000 will be expended on the restoration of the old concrete road there and the upgrading of the pavement. The people of the north coast will be looking forward to that.

Further works will take place north of Murwillumbah township, right through to Condong Creek, at a cost of \$400,000. The spokesperson for the Australian Labor Party in the electorate of Murwillumbah, Councillor Trevor Wilson, stated that the only money being expended on the Pacific Highway was \$400,000. He is either stupid or he is stretching the truth, but he made that statement. I indicate - as I have done in the media - that in excess of \$4.4 million is to be allocated to the Pacific Highway, and that does not take into account the \$6.3 million for the acquisition of land that I mentioned earlier. An amount of \$10.6 million will be allocated for the

works currently being carried out on the Chinderah bypass. That is a project of some \$54 million and will involve the completion of the six-lane Barney's Point bridge.

That additional \$10.6 million has been allocated in the roads program and will be expended during this financial year. Residents of the electorate of Murwillumbah look forward to the expenditure of another \$900,000 on passing lanes and other pavement construction on the Pacific Highway, and many other works that I cannot make full mention of in the limited time available to me tonight. The comment was made in the media this week that the allocation to the electorate of Murwillumbah is pork-barrelling; that it is blatant vote buying. I invite any of my constituents or anyone in the community to tell me one item that is not necessary for the electorate. These funds should have been allocated many years ago, and this is only catch-up money for the starvation we had over a period of 12 years. Heaven help us if we ever see the likes of a Carr government sitting on the Government benches. We on the north coast will be sent back to starvation.

Health spending on the entire north coast area has been increased by more than \$17 million in this year's budget, bringing it to \$197 million. More specifically, expenditure in the Tweed district has been increased from \$31.94 million last year to \$33.56 million, an increase of 2.56 per cent. The Opposition spokesman on health has been running around the north coast making outlandish statements and telling the typical Labor lie that there have been reductions in health funding. That is not on. I have read from the budget papers. The people of New

Page 3385

South Wales will see from the budget papers that the Government has increased health funding. Honourable members had only to listen to the answer given by the Minister for Health in question time this afternoon, which refuted the question asked by the Opposition.

There have been major increases in health funding throughout New South Wales. It was said today, and I will say it again now, that in 12 years the Labor Government built only two hospitals. In the years since 1988 the coalition has built or upgraded more than 30 new hospitals. Different figures have been referred to tonight but we know the number is between 30 and 40 hospitals; and the Government will continue to build hospitals in the years to come. Of the \$33.56 million for the Tweed area, \$2.7 million has been allocated to the Murwillumbah District Hospital for construction of an assessment and rehabilitation unit. I look forward to the completion of that project, because there has been considerable concern among people in the electorate of Murwillumbah that there may not be an upgrading of the Murwillumbah District Hospital, more specifically the Marie Smith ward. An amount of \$2.7 million will be expended on that ward and other areas of the hospital. I know that this will be very well received by those in the electorate of Murwillumbah.

Marie Smith, who was matron of the hospital for many years, passed away this week. She will be sadly missed, but we know that her name will carry on in that hospital and in the area for many years to come. The Tweed Heads District Hospital will receive additional funding of \$4.6 million for stage two and funds will continue to pour into the area because the Fahey-Armstrong Government recognises that the Tweed area and the electorate of Murwillumbah are the fastest growing local government areas in the State. I cannot let this opportunity go by without mentioning one thing which I have been working on for many years and which is now coming to fruition - that is, the Tweed Heads sand bypass project. It involves dredging of the Tweed River, construction of a sand bypass to the river and upgrading of the Tweed mouth to make it safe for our commercial fleet, the tourist boat operators and the general public who use the Tweed River.

It is a jointly funded project. Most of the dollars are coming from New South Wales but it is a bipartisan project being jointly funded by the New South Wales and Queensland governments. An amount of \$23 million will be expended. Following the handing down of the budget, I had the pleasure to announce - as a result of advice that I received from the Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works, and Minister for Ports - that the Government will ask contractors to stand by for tenders to be called for the first stage of the project, which will be dredging of the mouth of the river. Funds for that work have been included in this year's budget. Almost two million cubic metres of sand will be extracted from the entrance to the river and an environmental impact statement will be carried out to put in a sand bypass system.

The announcement of this undertaking is very good news because over the years a lot of money has been spent on the Tweed River through the Public Works Department and now, under the leadership of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works, and Minister for Ports, funds will keep on flowing through. I must make mention of the present Minister's predecessor, the honourable member for Barwon, who provided large amounts for the upgrading of port facilities - such as the southern boat harbour - and who made funds available to the council from dredging royalties for river restoration works. Additional funds have also been made available to the Tweed Council on a dollar for dollar basis to complete the \$18 million sewerage project at Banora Point. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

Funds will become available in the budget for additional sewerage works and water augmentation. The area will also receive \$81,600 for waterway improvements in the Tweed River. Of that amount, \$76,000 will be allocated for the purchase of a new patrol boat with outboard motor, which is to be put into operation as soon as possible. The remaining \$5,000 will be for the further upgrading of navigational aids within the Tweed River. All this augurs well for the Murwillumbah electorate: the river mouth being dredged, wharf facilities, and the upgrading of facilities for our Maritime Services Board personnel. The budget has allocated \$100,000 to Tweed Council for flood warning systems. It is to be noted that, contrary to normal practice, the Federal Government has not provided funds for this project. Once again the Federal Government is forgetting the north coast area fairly well. The public works allocation in the State budget has provided \$120,000 for the provision of a new sewage pump-out facility at Foyster's Jetty, Tweed Heads. I am delighted that these projects are going ahead in recognition of the growth of the north coast.

Education is something that is very close to all of us. We all have children and we all have grandchildren. I have a nine-month-old granddaughter, so I am very interested in the future of education. The budget contains the final allocation for our primary schools, high schools and TAFE colleges that are near completion. I am looking forward to the opening of the new Wollumbin high school at West Murwillumbah, which will take in students from next year. Centaur primary school, named after the hospital ship that sunk off Tweed Heads during the Second World War - an appropriate name - will open at the beginning of 1995. A new school that has been allocated funding in this year's budget is a primary school for Pottsville on the Tweed coast. The existing school is overcrowded. Stage two allocation of funds has also been made and I am looking forward to the construction and the opening of that school in the near future. The Kingscliff TAFE college, which is something we have talked about in the Tweed - we need major TAFE facilities - has received funding, in addition to the original cost of \$10 million, for the completion of the college, on which construction began 12 months ago. I am looking forward to the opening of that college for the start of 1995.

Page 3386

Whilst we are talking about schools, and I know that previous speakers on the Opposition benches have mentioned that they are not getting sufficient funds for schools, I note that the budget allocation for education has been increased. All schools have benefited, not only through public works expenditure but through the allocation of funds for the employment of additional teachers. The Murwillumbah electorate has major works in progress. Small schools, such as Burringbar primary school, has been allocated in excess of \$100,000 for the construction of new classrooms. Terranora primary school has been allocated additional funds for the construction of new classrooms. Bilambil primary school will receive more than \$105,000 for new classrooms. Kingscliff High School, which is growing rapidly and adjoins the TAFE college I mentioned earlier, will receive \$180,000 for additional facilities. Terranora primary school, as well as receiving new classrooms will also receive a new hall. Maintenance works totalling \$500,000 will be carried out at Dungay primary school, Murwillumbah East primary school, Tyalgum primary school and Uki primary school. I am proud of the amount of money that is being expended on education in the north coast; we are being recognised as a growth area that is deserving of that amount of money.

All honourable members will recall when trains travelled from Central station through to Brisbane and from Central station through to Murwillumbah, which was the end of that line. When we came into government the Pacific Coast Motor Rail - equipment which was more than 40 years old - ran up and down the coast. We took those trains off the line and introduced the XPT. There was talk about closing the line from

Casino to Murwillumbah, but that was not on. The honourable member for Lismore, the honourable member for Ballina and I objected strongly and we won the day. An amount of \$5.1 million is being expended on an ongoing program of upgrading bridges and line facilities between Murwillumbah and Casino.

Murwillumbah railway station has been upgraded, like many railway stations throughout the State, at a cost of \$1.043 million and an additional \$80,000 has been allocated for further work. But the important thing that has occurred over the past year is the refurbishing of the XPTs. They are a magnificent train on which to travel. Sleeper carriages have been re-introduced, which has been well accepted by people who travel from Brisbane, Murwillumbah or any of our north coast centres. I am very pleased that those additional funds have been made available. Agriculture in the area is very important. We cannot forget our cane industry, which is very important to the Tweed Valley, and the northern rivers as a whole. We must always remember that they are a vital part of the area and that they should always be given full consideration in any program.

But, more specifically, more than \$2 million has been made available for the upgrading of dip yards. It is very important, when we are right on the Queensland border, to have a buffer zone to protect cattle from tick infestation moving south from Queensland. New South Wales must protect over 5,500 million head of cattle. I am delighted not only with the amount that was allocated in this year's budget, but also with the physical work that is taking place to upgrade the dip yards and, more specifically, to improve facilities on the border, by repositioning the spray area and upgrading and repositioning a new inspection point on the Tweed Heads bypass.

I refer to community service projects. The budget papers show that a record amount of money has been allocated to the north coast. For some time I have been concerned about the lack of funds for the region. Funds must be provided for projects within the Murwillumbah electorate because of the population growth and the ageing population. An amount of \$2.5 million has been allocated in recurrent funding for 33 projects within the Murwillumbah electorate. I am pleased that this money has been made available. I am sure it will bring great relief to people who need those services.

The next matter to which I should refer concerns police. My electorate borders Queensland and during holiday periods has a great influx of people. I am concerned about the number of police in the electorate. I have spoken to previous police Ministers and to the current Minister for Police in this regard. I was grateful for the decision to provide six additional police officers over the last year. Greater police numbers are needed in Murwillumbah to deal with the problem of street kids. I look forward to the extra funding that has been made available in the budget to allow additional police to be allocated to the north coast, specifically to the electorate of Murwillumbah.

With respect to the environment, the budget reveals that the National Parks and Wildlife Service funding has increased by 51 per cent. I will not refer to all of the areas where there have been increases in funding. I noted in the budget papers that there was an increase of \$7.9 million for land acquisition. My electorate and that of the honourable member for Lismore have the world heritage Border Ranges National Park. Mount Warning is the first place in Australia to get the sun. It is overtaxed with tourists at the moment. I bring Mount Nullum to the attention of the Minister for the Environment. I hope that some of the funds which have been appropriated for the acquisition of additional land can be made available for the purchasing of a freehold parcel of land on the top of Mount Nullum. That land can be developed to give people who wish to bushwalk and look at the beautiful views of the Tweed Valley - the same view that can be seen from Mount Warning - a walking track up Mount Nullum. [*Time expired.*]

Mr McMANUS (Bulli) [10.31]: I wish the Government well with its budget, because it will be this Government's final budget. I am pleased that sitting behind me tonight is the new member for Parramatta, who is on House duty. She is a constant reminder to the Government of its inability to produce a proper fiscal policy for this State. On 27 August

Page 3387

Gabrielle Harrison had a resounding victory for the Labor Party in this State. At one time the Government held the close marginal seat of Parramatta. Because of the delightful, charming and competent way in which our

candidate handled the issues of concern to Parramatta voters she was able to convince the people of Parramatta, and of New South Wales, that the Liberal Party-National Party coalition is losing popularity as a result of its inability and incompetence.

Undoubtedly on 25 March 1995 what happened in Parramatta will happen throughout New South Wales. I was at an official function only two days ago where a former senior member, a former Minister in this Government, indicated that he left, as a lot of his colleagues are doing, because he saw the writing on the wall. They are working with and for incompetents who are falling apart at the seams. These people are going into private enterprise knowing full well that they have no future career in the current coalition. The Government was rejected by the people of Parramatta, even though it was prepared to buy votes by giving the people \$1.5 billion. There was a 10 per cent swing against the Government.

Why did the Government lose? Because the people do not know who its members are. I worked at a polling booth at Parramatta East on election day, as did a number of Liberal Party people. Who turned up at the polling booth? The guru - Ted Pickering. He spent 15 minutes talking to the Liberal Party poll booth workers. When he left, the Green candidate turned to the Liberal polling booth worker and asked, "Who was that?" The woman who was handing out the Liberal how-to-vote cards shrugged her shoulders and said, "I don't know". I had to explain who the guru of elections was. The poll booth workers do not know who the Liberal election masterminds are, so what chance -

Mrs Cohen: On a point of order: I was under the impression that this debate was on the budget, not on the Parramatta by-election.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Rixon): I am sure that the honourable member for Bulli was only touching on that issue and that he will come back to the budget debate now.

Mr McMANUS: I return to the budget and refer to the incompetence of the Chief Secretary, and Minister for Administrative Services and her colleagues. In the last few years we have seen some terrible underspending. The people of New South Wales, including those in my electorate, have called for funds for specific purposes, ranging from police and emergency services to the environment, public housing, roads, rail, et cetera. One continually hears the old catchcry of this Government: there are no funds. Let me examine what has been going on. Do honourable members know that the Government underspent its police operations budget by \$137.3 million between 1989 and 1994? Do they know that the Government underspent its Department of Community Services budget by \$112.3 million between 1988 and 1994?

Are honourable members aware that the Government underspent the total Department of Transport budget by \$110.2 million between 1989 and 1994? Are they aware that the Government underspent its TAFE operations allocation by \$20.9 million between 1988 and 1994? Are they aware that the Government underspent its total education budget by \$22.5 million during the same period? The budget papers reveal that last year's recurrent health budget was underspent by \$105 million. This has been going on for three years. During the last three years health has been underspent by \$300 million. That is an absolute disgrace. Members of the Government who have the audacity to stand in this House and say that the health policies of the New South Wales Government are something to behold should hang their heads in shame.

In the last week the Premier and Deputy Premier have advocated a balanced budget. We are to have legislation to balance the budget. To date we have discovered the hidden agenda. The Liberal Party is once again turning to its colleagues in the United States as an example. There has been a return to the Federal Liberal Party policies of only a few year's ago - policies which put it on its backside politically. We have an opportunity to show the people of New South Wales that there has been a return to the bad old days of the Liberal Party-National Party coalition promoting a goods and services tax. We hear the screams already from the other side: we are not going to have a goods and services tax. Let me say that there are other names. We all know them.

Mrs Cohen: You said that last time. You have forgotten your calling.

Mr McMANUS: We are going to get the plastic around the schools, it is ready to go. The people of New South Wales cannot trust the Government, do not trust the Government and do not want this Government. It is gone. It is pathetic; it is incompetent. This is yet another nail in its coffin. On the *7.30 Report* -

Mr Humpherson: Tell us about *Four Corners*.

Mr McMANUS: I will tell you about the *7.30 Report*, not *Four Corners*.

Mr Humpherson: What about *Four Corners*?

Mr McMANUS: I will tell the honourable member about *Four Corners* if he is referring to last night's program about John Newman and the references to police messages. I will certainly say something about police messages in my contribution to the budget debate. I will identify the honourable member and remind the House of his incompetence. He should be ashamed of himself for raising the matter, as should the police officer who was interviewed for that program. I suggest that the honourable member concentrate on the budget and not on such material.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Rixon): Order! I ask members on both sides of the House to refrain from interjecting so that other members may hear the contribution of the honourable member for Bulli.

Page 3388

Mr McMANUS: Last Tuesday the Treasurer said that every State but two of the United States of America has balanced budget legislation, and that "the better States with better legislation do it very well". However, it was pointed out in the 30 August edition of the *Christian Science Monitor* that the United States has some real problems. Chicago, in particular, has major education problems because it operates under a system similar to that which this Government wants to introduce. Under such a system we run the risk of running our schools and public utilities into such debt that they will have to close. We simply cannot allow that situation to develop. Newspaper and magazine articles from the United States leave me in no doubt that if we continue down the track suggested by this Government of a balanced budget - no doubt following the United States model - this State will be ruined financially. We simply cannot allow that to happen.

Budget Paper No. 1 is 17 pages of absolute garbage. Once again the Government has tried to play down many of its mistakes. Page 3 of Budget Paper No. 1 indicates that more than \$5.2 billion will be spent this year on health. Of that amount more than \$960 million will be spent in greater western Sydney and \$388 million on the central and northern coasts. No mention is made, however, of the Illawarra, and that is typical of the way the Premier treats the Illawarra region. The Minister for Health never visits the region, unless he sneaks into town, letting the Illawarra Health Board and the media know only an hour before he arrives. He rushes in, has a photograph taken for the *Illawarra Mercury*, and is gone before anyone can discuss health matters with him. It is a total and absolute disgrace.

Time and again over the past few years the Illawarra region has been asked by the Government to cut \$1.8 million from its health budget. The same Government, in 1988 when it came to government, asked the people of the Illawarra to conduct a public campaign to raise \$3 million for a cancer care centre. Since then the Government has continued to demand a cut in the health budget. The Government did not even have the decency to match the amount, which was raised by way of a telethon. In New South Wales 46,000 people are on the hospital waiting lists. That is an absolute disgrace. How can members of the Government side of the House claim that health services are in great shape in New South Wales?

On the face of it, it seems that Wollongong Hospital, which is in my electorate, has been allocated \$52 million in this budget. In fact, Wollongong Hospital has been given only \$1.5 million to help settle the dust over the hole in the ground left by this Government some years ago. We have been told that even though we will get \$1.5 million we are required to continue to cut our funding by \$1.8 million. It is absolutely criminal to

offer \$1.5 million but require the Illawarra Area Health Service to achieve productivity cuts of the order of \$1.8 million. We have not been given a level playing field. The Coledale District Hospital, which is also in my electorate, is under constant threat of closure, and has been for a number of years, despite continued objection from the Combined Pensioners and Superannuation Association, the union movement and the residents of the Illawarra. The Government insists that the hospital should be sold off. It is the old trick of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

The Government suggests that services at Wollongong Hospital should be increased - and that is fine - but government funds should be made available for that purpose rather than funds being raised from the sale of the Coledale site, which is obviously a prime development site. It is quite clear to the people of my electorate that that is the intention of the Government. I have already mentioned the underspending on education. It is an absolute disgrace. The Government has finally relented to make amends for the bad old days of Minister Metherell, who cut 2,000 teachers from the education system. It has decided to employ 1,400 additional teachers. But as is the case with police numbers, it is too little too late. The Illawarra must have a full complement of teachers immediately to ensure the protection and continuity of education in the region and in New South Wales. I will now touch on a matter close to my heart: capital works projects. For 20 years the schools of Engadine West and Engadine Central have been crying out for multipurpose units for their schoolchildren. In the case of Engadine -

Mr Morris: They need a new member down there; that is the problem.

Mr McMANUS: Allan Andrews was the member at the time and he was not able to get the units either. In the middle of summer schoolchildren have to sit on hot asphalt with no protection at all. That situation has existed for 20 years. The parents of the Engadine schools have been advised by the Department of School Education's Director of Administration and Finance, Mr Clancy, that funding will be approved. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Mr Clancy gave a clear assurance to the parents that funding would be available if not this year then in the 1995-96 budget. But not one cent has been allocated for planning for either of these schools. After hearing the honourable member for Camden, who was in a similar situation - though she referred to older schools - it is clear to me once again that she is gaining what she wanted because of the pork-barrelling of areas such as Camden, which is no doubt -

Mrs Cohen: A growth area.

Mr McMANUS: I have no doubt that a little pork-barrelling has gone on in the electorate of the Chief Secretary. In my whole electorate, in relation to education, not a single can of paint has been allocated. Referring again to the shortfall in the Department of Community Services, last weekend I attended a very sad meeting in Wollongong. The Minister for Community Services recently appeared on the *7.30 Report* to indicate that he was going to give support in this area, but nothing has happened since the meeting last weekend. There is a shortfall in funding for accommodation of intellectually and

Page 3389

developmentally disabled people whose parents are aged. This is not the first time that the matter has been raised in the House. The Government has fallen down badly in this regard. There are hundreds - almost thousands - of people between 50 and 80 years looking after their children of 40 to 50 years. The parents are concerned about the care of their children after the death of the parents. These people have spent most of their adult lives looking after their children and have asked nothing in return from the New South Wales Government. Between 200 and 300 people attended the meeting in the Wollongong Town Hall. I met people from Parent to Parent, a group of people in the Sutherland Shire who have similar concerns. I am sure that when the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing speaks later he will give a clear indication that the Government has planned badly on this matter.

It is not as though the Government does not know about it. Minister Longley has appeared on national television saying that if any of these aged people with dependent children have a problem and they see his

officers the problem will be resolved. Nothing of the sort happens. The 200 to 300 people at Wollongong said that it is a waste of time going to the Government because it is giving no assistance. Yet there has been an underspending in the Minister's department. Where are the Government's priorities when it is indifferent to the thousands of people throughout New South Wales who are screaming for assistance? The Government should give appropriate priority to such issues when drafting its budget. People have a desperate need but Government members have very little interest; they are too busy building monuments to themselves - building roads in marginal electorates. The Government has put away \$200 million for a rainy day. People need 35 group homes throughout the State to give respite, yet the Government is hiding money in hollow logs. It is typical of the Government. It is a disgrace. It is no wonder that it is on its way out the door.

I turn to law and order. A previous speaker stated that an extra 500 police would be put back on the beat in the next two years. Government members should visit the Illawarra region to speak to some of the local police. At a secret meeting a couple of weeks ago - it was a secret meeting because the officers were not game to talk to the Minister; he would not listen anyway - Wollongong police, particularly those from the northern suburbs, told me that they had lost even more police in the northern suburbs, in particular from Helensburgh, and they can no longer guarantee safety to the people who call within a radius of 30 kilometres. That is an indictment of a government that claims it stands for law and order. Such promises did not work in Parramatta at the by-election and it will not work anywhere else. Any promises made will not be honoured because the coalition will not be in government.

I turn now to transport. The House is aware of my views about the incompetence of the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. I admit that there has been a reasonable expenditure in one area of transport in my electorate, and that is rail. This was necessary because of the death of Mrs Hagen at Coledale some years ago. A continuous flow of money was necessary to ensure the safety of an unstable section of line, and I appreciate that expenditure. The Northern Distributor in Wollongong is the road to nowhere. It is an absolute monstrosity for the people of Russell Vale, Bulli and points north to Stanwell Park. After 30 years the Government decided that it would do something for the Illawarra. It provided \$34 million to build the Northern Distributor to Bellambi Lane. There it stopped. We have half a cake. The road stops at Bellambi Lane in the seat of Keira. It picks up thousands of cars on an unsafe arterial road taking commuters to the northern suburbs of Wollongong. Yet in the budget there is not one cent to continue the Northern Distributor. The Roads and Traffic Authority has opened Pioneer Way, which is an alternative route to the northern suburbs. This road takes 4,000 cars a day past the small but effective Woonona East primary school.

Only last Monday there was a public meeting at the school attended by 200 residents and parents complaining that the Government's action in ceasing the Northern Distributor at Bellambi Lane has placed children in grave peril. The Government must realise its responsibilities. The Government knows that the northern suburbs of Wollongong will not vote Liberal - although certainly Liberal voters use the road - so it has stopped the road at Bellambi Lane and created a monstrosity in the northern part of York Road and a danger to child safety. I am sure the chairman of the Staysafe committee agrees, as the committee is presently inquiring into child safety. The children in Russell Vale and east Woonona have Woonona railway station on one side of them and speeding traffic on the other. I am sure this will be taken up by Staysafe in future but it should also be taken up as a matter of urgency by the Government.

I should like to refer to the issue of public housing in my electorate. A large block of land at Engadine, situated on the Old Princes Highway and bounded by Cooper Street, formerly belonged to the Department of School Education. I understand it has been purchased by the Department of Housing. No doubt large sums of money have been allocated under the capital works program for the building of units on this environmentally sensitive area. For decades the land has been used by people in the Engadine area as a passive recreational area, yet now the Government has allocated funds to develop that environmentally sensitive land, which abuts the Royal National Park and the Illawarra railway. However, that is not the end of the matter because public meetings will be held on this issue.

Also, the Government has removed from my electorate essential services and backup resources, such as the Engadine youth centre. This has resulted in the Sutherland Shire Council reducing the centre's services. There

is increasing pressure in the Engadine area for the building of duplexes and other medium-rise to high-rise developments. I shall fight that until the next election, when the Labor Party will be in office. The Government again has clearly given an

Page 3390

indication that it is not interested in the concerns of my constituents. It is seeking to foist upon my electorate further public housing on environmentally sensitive land when even existing areas of public housing have major problems. I refer to a particular block of units only 300 yards from the site in question. It is abominable that police are unable to handle problems that arise from that building, and that crisis centres and the Department of Housing lack the ability to act. Until the Government is able to provide sufficient resources and a commitment to funding for public housing projects, no such development should take place.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Morris.

BILLS RETURNED

The following bills were returned from the Legislative Council without amendment:

Liquor (Further Amendment) Bill

Registered Clubs (Further Amendment) Bill

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr West agreed to:

That this House at its rising this day do adjourn until Wednesday, 21 September 1994, at 2.15 p.m.

House adjourned at 11.03 p.m.
