

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 20 October 2005

Mr Speaker (The Hon. John Joseph Aquilina) took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

CIVIL LIABILITY AMENDMENT (OFFENDER DAMAGES TRUST FUND) BILL

GAMING MACHINES AMENDMENT BILL

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

SAVE ORANGE GROVE BILL

Second Reading

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Gosford) [10.04 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Save Orange Grove Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council by the Hon. John Ryan and has passed through the Legislative Council with the support of the crossbench members. It now comes before the Legislative Assembly for its debate and consideration. How appropriate that this House should debate saving Orange Grove, at which 450 jobs were involved, only two days after the Iemma Government forced through both Houses of Parliament the Luna Park Site Amendment (Noise Control) Bill, because the rationale given for the Luna Park bill was that 600 jobs were at stake and that those 600 jobs had to be preserved. Labor has said, "Save the 600 jobs at Luna Park", and Labor now has a choice as to whether it believes that the 450 jobs at Orange Grove should be saved.

The Labor Party, we are told, is a party of consistency; the Labor Government, we are told, is a government that believes in preserving jobs in this State. Let it now ratify the decision of the Legislative Council and save the jobs that Orange Grove offers to the people of Western Sydney. Western Sydney is an area that has a high unemployment rate, an area that is heavily represented by the Australian Labor Party, an area where so many battlers live, and an area that is an important part of the life of metropolitan Sydney. Let the jobs that Orange Grove offers be saved.

The Australian Labor Party now has a chance to maintain its consistency, its integrity and, if it really believes that it is saving jobs at Luna Park, to save jobs at Orange Grove. The Orange Grove issue has been well examined by a number of bodies, by a Parliamentary committee of inquiry, by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, and by debate in the Legislative Council. The main players in Orange Grove are, or were, members of this House. First, Mr Craig Knowles, a former member of this House, the honourable member for Macquarie Fields, opened the Orange Grove Centre. In his opening remarks, well reported in the local media at the time, he described Orange Grove as "an asset to Liverpool and part of the Government's plan to make Liverpool great"—to make Liverpool great!

Second, the Hon. Diane Beamer, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister for Fair Trading, who was then the Minister for Juvenile Justice, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. She made the final decision about the refusal to rezone Orange Grove, and she allegedly uttered the immortal words to the Minister for Roads, in the corridor, when she said, "Joe, I'll play it by the rules." Can anyone really imagine the Minister for Western Sydney being, shall we say, approached—if that is the softest word one can use—by the Minister for Roads, the Hon. Joe Tripodi, who represents the Fairfield electorate, and her reply being simply, "Joe, I'll play it by the rules"? No-one believes that, no-one ever would believe that; everyone knows that that is just a good laugh.

If one believes that story, one believes in fairies and fairyland. The third player in the Orange Grove decision is the Minister for Roads, the Hon. Joe Tripodi, who was then the humble honourable member for

Fairfield. In a famous coffee shop incident, Minister Tripodi, the Gazals, the Gazals' solicitor, and the town planner sat down to have coffee. Of the five people who were having coffee, four swore statutory declarations as to what was said at that meeting, all four of whom said that Minister Tripodi had told them that the rezoning would not go ahead because of the Premier's intervention. However, Minister Tripodi has said, "No, that never happened." It is Joe against four! It is amazing, is it not, that four people have a clear memory but Joe cannot remember clearly? Of course, Joe was not going to hang around until the issue erupted; he went off to Italy and could not be contacted for quite some time. Joe refused to speak to the media. Joe refused to attend press conferences. Joe refused to make any statement at all about the issue until he was dragged before the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC].

And we have the former member for Maroubra, the former Premier, Bob Carr, who was just above it all. He had nothing to do with the Orange Grove decision, yet his chief of staff was there! His office was involved, but the former Premier had nothing to do with it. The fact that the former Premier was on close personal terms with the proprietors of the main opposition, Westfield Holdings—the very organisation that fought the case in the Land and Environment Court—and the fact that the former Premier's staff were on close personal terms with staff employed by Westfield, was all somehow irrelevant.

The former Premier really had nothing to do with it; he was a long way from the action? No-one would believe that. Everyone knows that the former Premier had a very close relationship with the senior shareholder and chairman of Westfield and that his staff had close relationships with the staff employed by Westfield. Everyone knew of the relationship between Mr Wedderburn and Mr Ryan. It is impossible for any reasonable person to believe that there was not close and ongoing contact between Mr Carr and Westfield, directly or indirectly. Mr Carr, of course, left the New South Wales Parliament before the ICAC report was tabled. There are many who argue that his departure was precipitated by the fact that he knew the ICAC report into Orange Grove was imminent and he did not know for sure what it might contain.

Then we have the Gazal family. I had not met the Gazals until the issue of Orange Grove erupted. I have since met Mr Nabil Gazal, Mrs Gazal, Nicholas Gazal and Junior Gazal—four fine people who impressed me as people of integrity. Mr Gazal is from the Middle East and his wife is from Sweden. Their sons were born in Australia. They are a credit to our national immigration policy. Their business contribution has enriched our national life and I regard them with respect. Then, of course, there are the associated players from the council and from the New South Wales Public Service. The interesting point is that the public servants were of the view that the rezoning should go ahead. They supported the rezoning.

We have Ministers who act upon public service advice, and Ministers who do not. It is the Minister who makes the final decision. The Minister is accountable for the final decision and must inform Parliament of his reasons for that decision, if called upon to do so. Minister Beamer—who, interestingly, has been moved sideways to Fair Trading and is no longer Assistant Minister for Planning—had no consistent explanation as to why she made the decision she did. She did not say why she refused to act on the advice of her senior public servants. She was asked that question on many occasions in this House and she stated simply that she had followed good planning practice in refusing to approve the rezoning, despite the fact that she had approved many rezoning applications.

Minister Beamer is a member of the Government that introduced numerous special State environmental planning policies [SEPPs]—for example, in relation to coalmining in the Hunter Valley—to ensure that job creation programs went ahead. Yet in respect of Orange Grove, despite the fact that she was advised by her own department to approve a rezoning which would have saved 450 jobs, somehow that was inconsistent with good planning practice. Only two days ago this Government was prepared to pass special legislation, allegedly to preserve 600 jobs—the Luna Park site bill. But, with Orange Grove, where 450 jobs were at stake, no request for special legislation was involved, senior public servants advised that the rezoning should go ahead, a chorus of people wanted the rezoning, and despite the fact that the people of Liverpool would benefit if the rezoning went ahead and the only disadvantaged would be Westfield, suddenly good planning practice became the norm and the Minister refused the rezoning application. In his opening remarks in the Legislative Council the Hon. John Ryan said:

The issues this bill deals with are reasonably simple and have been canvassed at length for some time ...

The purpose of the Save the Orange Grove Bill is to rezone the land at Orange Grove occupied by the designer factory outlets. The Bill achieves the same purpose as the proposed amendment to the Liverpool local environmental plan [LEP] that was suggested by the administrator of Liverpool council, Ms Gabrielle Kibble, but which was recently rejected by the Carr Government. It will not approve the factory outlets but it will enable Liverpool council to grant a development approval, subject to any appropriate training conditions.

As we all know, the designer outlets owned by Gazcorp were opened last year by planning Minister Craig Knowles, who not only represents part of the City of Liverpool but has previously been on its council and its mayor. At that time he declared the outlets to be "great for Liverpool". I could not agree more. While there may not be 400 people working there now, the outlets offer employment for a potential 400 or more workers. They provide \$30 million worth of economic activity to Liverpool and they represent 60 small business holders who have, for the most part, invested their life savings in them. Liverpool City Council gave the development consent in November 2002. Six months after the council had approved them, in June 2003, retail shopping giant Westfield Holdings commenced legal action against the outlets in the Land and Environment Court.

Westfield has a longstanding objection to factory outlets because of what it fears, or says, is unfair competition from cheap rents made possible from using cheap industrial land.

The Hon John Ryan went on to say:

The Land and Environment Court determined on 16 January 2004 that the development consent given by the council was invalid. However, the argument in court was limited to the legality of the approval. The planning merits were not considered. The appeal against the decision of the court was lost on 31 March 2004. However, Liverpool City Council planners saw great merit in the designer outlets remaining open and applied to the State Government for a spot rezoning to regularise the existing use. They resolved to do so on 8 December 2003—one full month before the Land and Environment Court had made any determination on this case.

This application was very similar to many actions taken by this and previous State governments in anticipation of court action.

I interpose to state that that rings a bell. Two days ago special legislation was passed by this Parliament to prevent court action going ahead in relation to the Luna Park site. The Hon. John Ryan then said:

One great irony of this matter is that Westfield Holdings was once the beneficiary of very similar action by the former Wran Labor Government, which rezoned land that used to be a tram depot in order to enable Westfield to build a shopping complex at Eastlakes which, at that time, was being hotly contested by its competitors. In April 2004 the Liverpool council administrator, Ms Gabrielle Kibble, forwarded an application to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources [DIPNR] for a change to the Liverpool local environmental plan to rezone the land at Orange Grove to enable the factory outlets to be approved. She recommended that the LEP be approved.

Gabrielle Kibble, one of the foremost planners in New South Wales and a former Director-General of Planning, made that recommendation. The Hon. John Ryan continued:

She has recently explained that she did so for social and economic reasons but she has also stated that the application had merit, and that if it had not, she would not have approved it.

So we have the council, Ms Gabrielle Kibble and then, within the department, we have the advice given to the Minister by senior departmental staff advising that the application by Liverpool council be approved. As I have already said, and it is well known, that did not happen. The Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning refused the rezoning and that led to the parliamentary inquiry and to the report by the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. I do not wish to canvass the report of the Independent Against Commission Corruption, but some points in the final report need to be noted. The report did not determine whether the Minister, the Hon. Diane Beamer, made her decision fairly or lawfully. An analysis of the report commences:

- 1 The report did not determine whether the Minister [The Hon. Diane Beamer] made her decision fairly or lawfully.
- 2 Notwithstanding the public perception that ICAC was examining whether Ms Beamer properly made her decision the Commissioner did not do so. He limited his consideration of the decision to the narrow terms of reference which only required him to assess if there was any corrupt conduct.

His decision was not a decision based upon planning; his decision was a decision based upon whether there was any evidence of corrupt conduct in the decision by the Minister. The analysis continues:

He did not consider whether Ms Beamer had made the right decision or whether she was entitled to ignore the expert planners in her department, the Council, and independent experts and rely on the submissions of Westfield, which were not made known to Gazcorp or Liverpool City Council who proposed the amendment to the Liverpool LEP.

- 3 Even within the limited terms of reference, the Commissioner failed to properly assess whether or not there was corruption.
- 4 Corrupt conduct in this matter related to whether Westfield through the Premier's office either did or **could have** improperly influenced the Minister in making her decision.
- 5 The only way to fairly assess whether there was corruption, (ie whether Beamer acted impartially or could have been influenced) was to determine:
 - a. The advice upon which she should have relied to make her decision.

- b. Whether she properly considered all relevant advice.
- c. The advice upon which she actually relied and the source of that advice.
- d. The reasons she articulated for the refusal.

6 The Commissioner failed to address the above issues fairly and on all the evidence. This is in fact what he did:

- 1 The Commissioner dismissed the fact that Minister Beamer had a preferred position to approve the amendment to the LEP as of 16 April 2004.

This reasoning on its face is not convincing given that the issue was whether Minister Beamer had a preferred position which is quite a different point to whether she had made a preliminary decision.

The Minister said she had not made a preliminary decision and she had not read the section 69 report, but no-one said she had. The analysis continues:

Further the s 69 report when she did read it should only have reinforced her preferred position as it wholly supported Orange Grove.

That is what this bill now seeks to achieve. The analysis goes on to state:

The evidence which the Commissioner failed to consider which overwhelmingly demonstrates that the Minister would have approved the plan—

but for the intervention of the Premiers office—

is set out at Part 4 of Gazcorp's submissions—pages 26 to 28.

- 2 The Commissioner accepted Minister Beamer's assertion that she was not influenced by the Westfield/Wedderburn briefings—

those briefings were organised by the Premier's office—

notwithstanding that all her reasons for refusal can be sourced to the ... briefings.

- 3 The Commissioner failed to consider why Minister Beamer did not require all the relevant material be placed before her in making her decision. This is capable of being evidence of bias when a decision maker knows that important reports favourable to an applicant are missing from a file and does not seek to have recourse to them and does not seek an explanation as to their absence. She would have known that the reports were missing from the file if she had read the s 69 report as she asserts she did.
- 4 The Commissioner failed to refer to the evidence of the missing reports. One would not know from reading his report the important indisputable fact that the file provided to the Minister—

that file was exhibit 33 at the ICAC hearing—

was seriously deficient in that the two main independent assessment reports commissioned by Council, (the applicant) were missing from the file and that the only reports commissioned by Gazcorp were also missing from the file.

The seriousness of these omissions are compounded by the fact that Westfield's submission was included in the file as was a submission from the Shopping Centre Council who were lobbying on behalf of Westfield. Also in the file was a submission from AMP, a partner of Westfield in the shopping Centre in the Liverpool CBD.

The Westfield submission dated 30 April postdates the Westfield/Wedderburn briefings. It annexes a report prepared by Urbis. This report was never brought to the attention of Gazcorp or Liverpool Council. It was not independently assessed.

The Urbis report was clearly not objective as it contradicted its own earlier report commissioned by AMP. This report clearly influenced the Minister and Westacott who both used its findings to justify the conclusion that Orange Grove would be bad for the Liverpool CBD. All expert planners took the contrary view including Urbis in its report commissioned by AMP.

AMP was one of the partners in the Westfield development. The analysis continues:

- 5 The Commissioner erred when he found as a fact that in relation to the s 69 report (at 53):

"Ms Westacott never contemplated not sending the Minister the s 69 report that had been prepared."

The evidence on this point was to the contrary. It can be summed up perhaps in the following sentence which appears in an email from legal Council, Mr Astill, to Ms Westacott dated 23 June 2004 (Ex "1" at 418):

"Contrary to our discussions yesterday I do not think it is within the DG's power to not submit a s 69 report to the Minister."

- 6 The Commissioner failed to consider evidence of secrecy.

The Commissioner, contrary to all the evidence, found inexplicably that there was no secrecy ... This wrong conclusion underpins his decision that there was no corruption.

The meetings between Westfield and the Premier's office would never have been revealed but for the statements made by Tripodi to Gazal and others that resulted in Mr Gazal going to ICAC.

The only evidence that in the early stages there had been meetings between the Premier and Westfield, or consultations or communications between the Premier and Westfield, were the remarks made by Mr Tripodi. The analysis continues:

The uncontested evidence was that the first time anyone conceded that meetings had taken place was in August only after internal emails came to light in the course of a parliamentary inquiry. But for that inquiry the Premier's denials in July of any interest in the matter would have remained unchallenged. The meetings between Westfield and the Premier's office were not known to Gazcorp or the public even though Minister Beamer and the Premier were giving broadcasts (Laws, Jones) defending the decision to close Orange Grove.

When the Premier and Minister Beamer spoke initially to Alan Jones about this matter and said that the decision to refuse the rezoning had been made on good planning advice, they did not disclose to Alan Jones, or to the hundreds of thousands of listeners on Sydney radio, the fact that meetings had been taking place between the Premier's staff and the staff of Westfield. The analysis continues:

Although the Commissioner alluded to the importance of any evidence of secrecy in finding corruption ... he failed to take into account the following evidence which demonstrated a conspiracy of secrecy ...

7. The Commissioner failed to test with other evidence the veracity of Beamer's explanations. Beamer acknowledged that she was forced to eat a "shit sandwich" because of the Westfield/Wedderburn briefings and yet claims that she was not influenced ... Commissioner Harrison said...:

"It was not, however, significant to her that Westfield was involved in the matter any more than any one of two parties publicly brawling over the issue."

In a proper assessment of her evidence why did the Commissioner not test her reaction to the Westfield/Wedderburn allegations which belied her assertions that she was not sensitive to them?

The Commissioner should have considered her conduct ...

- o She considered it necessary to take "a step back"
- o She did not want to be lobbied by persons associated with Orange Grove
- o She refused to speak to Mr Tripodi on her evidence yet she discussed the issue throughout this period with Wedderburn who is giving updates to Ryan and she authorises her chief of staff to meet with AMP who was lobbying against Orange Grove
- o She was unable to explain her decision
- o She did not communicate with the senior Minister, Minister Knowles.

8. The Commissioner failed to take into account the evidence of Premier Carr that he had directed Mr Wedderburn to tell the Minister that she must be in a position to prove that her decision was in no way affected by any lobbying on the part of Gazcorp. By the time Wedderburn warned Beamer of her task she had already been lobbied by Mr Tripodi. The evidence is irrefutable that he called Mr Meagher on 2 April about Orange Grove and steps were taken by the Minister as a result of the lobbying.

Whether or not Wedderburn said he was calling to deliver a message from Mr Carr, the position he held was such that he was not acting independently but on behalf of the Premier which was in fact the case. The Commissioner seems to accept that just because Minister Beamer said Mr Carr's name was not mentioned by Mr Wedderburn that therefore she did not perceive that Mr Carr was sending her a message.

How extraordinary is it that the Minister is contacted by Mr Wedderburn, Mr Carr's name is not mentioned, and yet the Minister does not draw any inference that Mr Wedderburn is acting on behalf of Mr Carr, when Mr Wedderburn was Mr Carr's chief of staff? The analysis continues:

One must pose the question - why else would he have been there? If he was not there on Mr Carr's business then who was he representing? Given the subject matter of the briefing there were only four possibilities. He was there on the Premier's behalf, Westfield's behalf, Westfield's and the Premier's behalf or his own behalf.

9. The Commissioner says in relation to Ms Westacott ...:

"There is certainly no basis for finding that Ms Westacott's actions were motivated by improper, irrelevant or otherwise collateral concerns."

10. Westacott's reasons for involving herself in this matter were unresolved by the Commissioner. He did not seek to reconcile the conflicting evidence in relation to the conversations between Westacott and Wedderburn which could have supported a finding of improper, irrelevant or otherwise collateral concerns.
11. Ms Westacott herself conceded that she became aware of 'appropriateness issues' which were collateral and irrelevant to the decision making process. The evidence is clear that she raised these irrelevant matters with the Minister... The Minister took these erroneous matters into account when she made her decision as is evidenced from the reasons she gave for refusing the plan.

Ms Westacott has left the Department of Planning, and she has never given an explanation as to why she did so. However, it is clear that she gave the Minister advice that was wrong in that she raised irrelevant matters with the Minister. The analysis continues:

12. The Commissioner erred in accepting at face value Ms Westacott's denial of any knowledge of corruption allegations in the light of all the circumstantial evidence to the contrary.

Clearly, Ms Westacott has some questions to answer. It continues:

He accepted her denials of the corruption allegations notwithstanding her extraordinary and inexplicable conduct and even though her Minister, Minister Knowles, and his chief of staff, Mr Ferrer, knew of them and her assistant Minister, Minister Beamer, and her chief of staff, Mr Meagher, knew of them.

To suggest that Ms Westacott who would regularly liaise with these people remained ignorant is nonsense. There was no suggestion according to Mr Wedderburn that there was any suggestion that Ms Westacott should not be told. He did not instruct Minister Beamer or Minister Knowles or their staff to keep it from the Director General.

So there are questions to be answered by Ms Westacott as to her role in this activity. They are questions that she now may seek to evade, having left the public sector for the private sector, but they are questions that need to be properly put to her. I would counsel anyone who employs Ms Westacott in future that they need to resolve the issues of her involvement in this whole sordid story of Orange Grove and her failure to properly advise Minister Beamer. The concern about the whole Orange Grove issue is one that many people have raised and it is one that simply will not go away. An enormous number of planners believe that the planning decision was wrong and was not consistent with good planning advice, even though the Minister claims she was acting on good planning advice.

Experts who supported the rezoning include Michael Everson of Hirst Consulting Services Pty Ltd; Peter Leyshon of Leyshon Consulting; Adrian Hack of Hill PDA, Peter Hamilton, senior policy adviser to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources [DIPNR]; Geoffrey Hunt, former senior development planner at Liverpool council; Phil Jeminson, planner at Liverpool council; Phil Tolhurst, manager of city development at Liverpool council; Mark Lamond, group manager at Liverpool council; Gabrielle Kibble, the former Director General of the Department of Environmental Planning; Laurel Cheetham, the senior environmental planner who prepared the section 69 report; David Birds, the team leader Sydney division west branch of the DIPNR; and Stephen Driscoll, the regional planning co-ordinator for the DIPNR.

Each of those people, all of whom are eminently qualified in town planning, believed that the rezoning should proceed. Although the Minister—who has no planning qualifications—said she was acting on good planning policy, the only advice she had was the dubious advice given to her by Ms Westacott. The reasons why the planners supported Orange Grove were that it would have beneficial impacts within Liverpool as people drawn to Orange Grove would visit the central business district; retailers have a need for shops both in the CBD and at outlets as they need to offload the previous year's lines and seconds; it would keep business in Liverpool by reducing escape spending being directed to other centres such as Homebush; it would provide badly needed employment for approximately 450 people; it was affordable for small entrepreneurs; it was home to about 60 businesses; it was positive to consumers in the area, eliminating long travel to other outlets; it was part of an existing retail cluster and all businesses in the cluster would benefit from it; it is a natural travel destination given the other businesses in the cluster; it has very good and safe access; there are no traffic problems and no congestion; it has excellent parking facilities; it has a food court, a coffee shop and toilet facilities; it is a pleasant place to shop; it was built on land which was already rezoned with a retail component, on the same site as a bulky goods store; and it is in line with State environmental planning policy.

This bill simply confirms State environmental planning policy, because State environmental planning policy requires an assessment of net community benefit. Ms Cheetham, the senior planner with the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, said:

"The Centre's policy provides for us to look at certain forms of traffic generating development outside centres, using specific criteria."

She continued:

"The department—

that is, the Government's department of planning—

considers that there should be equitable access to various forms of commercial retail development for all people, particularly within the metropolitan area of Sydney ... it's part of our policy."

4. There is no policy that prohibits the location of outlet centres of out the CBD.
5. There were many factors that needed to be brought to the Minister's attention other than the obvious fact that the factory outlet was not in the CBD. Ms Cheetham explained that the Minister needed to be made aware of what the Centre meant for businesses in the area and jobs associated with these businesses and, most importantly, what had been and would be the impact of Orange Grove on the CBD. She stated:

"... My assessment of that was—and it was Peter Hamilton's assessment of it, and before that it was the consultant's assessment of it, Hill PDA, and every consultant's assessment of it, that there would not be a significant impact on the Liverpool centre, and ... "

The planners examined carefully Westfield's position and determined that the outlet centre would not affect Westfield and the existing CBD. Notwithstanding that fact, the Minister refused the rezoning for that reason, overturning the advice of all the planners. This bill seeks to overturn her decision. The analysis continues:

6. The metropolitan strategy for Western Sydney emphasises the importance of taking employment into account. Ms Cheetham said:

"Well, planning is about economic, social and environmental consequences, certainly the economics and the—of an area are important, therefore, employment is important because of the social implications and the economic implications for an area."

7. It is DIPNR's position that factory outlets are not normal retail development. This is a position which must be taken on board by all planners in the Department and Ms Cheetham did so in relation to Orange Grove.

The analysis continues:

9. Further Ms Cheetham explained that the policy:

"provided for factory outlet centres to be treated in a different way as well. It didn't just say that factory outlet centres had to be treated the same way as other retail centres or other retail activities."

Upon assent, this bill will be known as the Save Orange Grove Act and its provisions will commence on the date of assent. It provides that the Orange Grove development is permitted with council consent. In other words, Gazcorp must lodge an application with Liverpool City Council, which may consider that application and make a determination upon it. Clause 3 of the bill will operate as a provision of an environmental planning instrument under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and prevail over any other planning instrument. The bill simply allows Liverpool City Council to be the consent authority and to determine whether there should be a factory outlet at Orange Grove.

The sad story of Orange Grove was laid only partially bare by the parliamentary committee of inquiry and the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. The ICAC terms of reference were narrow and limited only to evidence of corrupt conduct. The ICAC did not find evidence of corrupt conduct but the body of evidence before it indicated that there was an enormous amount of political activity between the former Premier's officer, Minister Beamer and Westfield staff. That was also the finding of the parliamentary committee of inquiry. It is clear that some people had more influence over this Government than others and that the jobs of 450 people were sacrificed on the altar of the Carr Labor Government's determination to look after its friends. The 600 jobs allegedly at risk at Luna Park are worthy of a special Act of Parliament but the 450 jobs at Orange Grove were jackbooted over by Minister Beamer and former Premier Carr.

But there is a final player in this sorry saga: the honourable member for Fairfield, the current Minister for Roads. Where was the Minister placed in all this? He was telling Gazcorp, its solicitors and its planner that Bob Carr had intervened on behalf of Westfield. The evidence against Bob Carr was provided by the Minister. When Bob Carr gave evidence to the ICAC and was asked why he was cautious about the Orange Grove matter, he made the magnificent statement that appeared in all the media reports: "The fact that Joe Tripodi was associated with the project was itself a cause of concern." That is what the then Premier had to say about a man who, through the factional system, later became one of his Ministers. That is the Minister's epitaph. The Orange Grove matter was the second ICAC inquiry involving the Minister. I am sure that all honourable members recall the ICAC inquiry in incidents that took place in this building on the night that the Olympic torch came to Sydney.

The Opposition supports this legislation, which has been passed by the Legislative Council. The Coalition parties commend this legislation for the consideration of the House. If we save Orange Grove we save not just 450 jobs but the important principle of justice for all. Gazcorp should receive the same consideration as Westfield. Gazcorp has the same rights as Westfield before the people and Parliament of New South Wales, but that principle has been denied throughout this episode. The Coalition parties support Gazcorp, the Orange Grove development and the jobs it provided. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Linda Burney.

GOVERNMENT SCHOOL ASSETS REGISTER BILL

Business called on.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I advise the House that the Government School Assets Register Bill 2005 is substantially the same as the Government School Assets Register Bill 2003, which was introduced by the honourable member for North Shore and defeated at its second reading on 2 September 2004. Any proposed motion "That this bill be now read a second time" thus falls within the terms of Standing Order No. 164, which provides that a motion that is the same in substance as any question already determined in the affirmative or the negative in the same session is disallowed. Accordingly, I direct that this order of the day be discharged from the business paper.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: Point of order: Standing order 164 states that the Speaker "may" disallow the motion. I am advised that there is no precedent in this Chamber for disallowing a second reading motion. I do not understand how you can rule on this bill without hearing what it contains. The Government School Assets Register Bill 2005 is not the same as the Government School Assets Register Bill that I introduced in the Legislative Assembly in 2003. I have spoken in debate on bills that the Government reintroduced that bore the same long title but a different year. This bill was debated in the Legislative Council, where it was supported by 20 members. By ruling in this way, Mr Speaker, you are denying those members the right to see the bill debated in this place. It is an outrage that you would allow the Government to hide behind a standing order when we should be debating this terribly important bill.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have listened closely to the point of order taken by the honourable member for North Shore. One bill bears the date 2003, the other is dated 2005. The contention of the honourable member for North Shore that the bill is different because there is a difference in the year is not valid. Standing Order 164 is specific. It provides:

The Speaker and the Chairman may disallow any motion or amendment which is the same in substance as any question already determined in the affirmative or in the negative in the same session.

I rule that the change in the year does not materially alter the substance of the bill. As the bill has already been defeated by this House during this session of Parliament, I rule that it is out of order to proceed with substantially the same bill with only a change in the date.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: Even if members on the other side do not want to consider this matter in the detail and depth that it needs to be considered, I am sure you would be prepared to do so. You made a decision and you have now reasonably heard a submission from the shadow Minister on why this bill should be allowed to proceed. You are seeking to exercise a discretion before there has been any presentation to you by the Opposition in relation to the bill. You have a discretion and because this bill is particularly significant—it has had the full endorsement of the Legislative Council—the Opposition is asking you to exercise that discretion in favour of the democratic process rather than to the exclusion of debate.

It is in your purview to do that, as set out in standing order 164. However, the real issue here is that the standing order refers to any motion or amendment. The precedents in the House, within living memory anyway, have been only for amendment to motions, not in relation to the exclusion of debate about a bill, particularly a bill that has already had the full ratification of the Legislative Council. Could you indicate the basis for the exercise of your discretion and, in particular, could you direct the Opposition to the precedent that you are relying on where another bill has been ruled out of order by either you or any of your predecessors in recent memory of the Parliament? In the interests of democracy in New South Wales, we are entitled to that direction from you.

Perhaps if the issue requires your time and consideration rather your peremptorily ruling it out of order or indicating that we cannot proceed with the motion, you might allow the matter to stay so you can consider it in more depth and then exercise your discretion with the full benefit and opportunity of looking at whether there are any precedents upon which you are now exercising your discretion. We are not being difficult or unreasonable, but what you are doing today will set a precedent.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will not debate this matter further. However, I will allow the honourable member for Wakehurst to complete his remarks before I respond.

Mr Brad Hazzard: What you do, and what you are now doing, will set a precedent. You are not exercising a discretion based on a precedent; you are setting a precedent that there will be a direction in this House from hereon in that bills cannot come back, even when they have been fully debated in the Legislative Council. The Government School Asset Register Bill is important to the schools and the communities of New South Wales who are absolutely furious about the poor maintenance and poor capital works that are being provided to schools in New South Wales.

While we are looking at an issue that is so critical to the education of our students and which communities right across New South Wales are furious about, it would be within your purview, particularly as the former Minister for Education, to exercise your discretion in a broader sense rather than a narrow sense. If you are going to exercise a discretion, in the interests of democracy it should be interpreted broadly, not narrowly. What you are seeking to do at the moment is to exercise that discretion narrowly. If you are going to do that, at the very least the Opposition, on behalf of the community of New South Wales, is asking you to give us the basis for the precedent because if there is no sound basis for the precedent, you are setting one today, which would be very restrictive of debate in this place for years to come.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have listened at length to the honourable member for Wakehurst and I understand everything he has said. However, the issue is not the merits or otherwise of the bill. The issue is the standing orders of the House, which provide that if a bill has been already defeated during the present session, it is not proper for this House to reconsider what is essentially the same bill. I am not making a judgment in relation to the merits of the bill. I have been guided by the standing orders in determining that the bill is, in substance, the same bill that has already been defeated in this House. Therefore, I have no choice but to rule that the bill cannot be dealt with further.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Further to the point of order: Could you indicate to us, in the interests of practice and procedure in the House, whether there has been a precedent for this decision to reject a bill in these circumstances?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am sure that research could be undertaken in relation to precedent, but the question is not one of precedent. The question is whether the standing orders are to be upheld. I am not aware whether these circumstances have arisen in the past and, therefore, there may not be any precedent. However, that does not allow the House to contravene Standing Order 164. I have allowed members a degree of latitude in discussing this matter. I have allowed the honourable member for North Shore and the shadow Minister for Education and Training to put forward reasons why they believe the bill should be debated. However, I rely on the advice of the Clerks of the House and on my own understanding of the standing orders to rule that to further deal with the bill would be a clear contravention of Standing Order 164.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled on the matter and I will not entertain any further points of order.

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT (ACCESS TO PROPERTY) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 24 March 2005.

Mr STEVEN PRINGLE (Hawkesbury) [10.57 a.m.]: The Crown Lands Amendment (Access to Property) Bill, introduced by the honourable member for Hornsby, seeks to amend the Crown Lands Act 1989.

It has my full support and that of many hundreds of my constituents. Schedule 1 of the bill, if passed and enacted, will insert new section 35A into the Crown Lands Act 1989. It will require, when determining or redetermining rent under the Crown Lands Act 1989 with respect to a lease, licence or enclosure permit that provides water access to the lease, licence or permit holder's property, that consideration be given as to whether the lease, licence or permit provides the only reasonable means of access to that property. That is the key point: only reasonable access to that property.

The central purpose of the bill is to insert an element of fairness and equity into the management of waterfront access rights for property owners whose only access is by the waterways. It is hardly a controversial issue. These people do not have road access. Before the bill can be considered properly we need to look at the history of the issue and how, incredibly, we have arrived at the point where the only recourse open to the affected property owners, whose sole access to their land is via our waterways, is the passage of this bill. In October 2003 the former Premier asked the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] to review and report on the rent that the Government should charge for the use of public land in relation to waterfront usages. The key recommendation contained in the IPART report is:

The Tribunal recommends that the minimum rental be set at \$350 per year and indexed each year using CPI as an escalation factor. This minimum rent will be payable where the rent calculated from the formula is less than \$350.

On the surface that seems okay. One could argue that New South Wales waterways are public facilities and that appropriate rental should be charged for their use as access to properties but, unfortunately IPART has not taken into account the full consequences of its recommendations. On the surface it seems a reasonable proposition that rental fees should be charged for access on public waterways and for the use of public lands and seabeds, pontoons, jetties and marinas and for the owners' ongoing use. Unfortunately, not all property owners have access to their land via an alternative means, in other words, across land. These are water-access-only properties. Many of them do not have a driveway and their owners do not have a car or a bike parked at the property.

Ms Linda Burney: They live on the water.

Mr STEVEN PRINGLE: They live on the water and they deserve the same sorts of facilities enjoyed by people who do not live on the water. As it commonly does with other areas of public policy, the State Government appears to have arrogantly assumed that all these waterfront properties are owned by silvertails, that they are the domain of the rich and famous and as such their owners deserves to be slugged an extra \$350 a year. But that is not the case. Since the introduction of the \$350 rental charge in the 2003 mini-budget, the State Government, particularly the Minister for Lands, has continually ignored the arguments put by the Water Only Access [WOA] group and the Waterfront Environment Access Reform [WEAR] organisation.

In May 2004 Kevin Cooper, a resident affected by the changes, raised issues on behalf of WEAR. This group has been battling for ages and I know the honourable member for Hornsby has been trying to have this bill debated in this House, where we know it takes a long time to get issues dealt with properly. Mr Cooper recommends that waterfront owners whose sole access to their property is via the water need to get a fair deal and be considered as a whole. On behalf of WEAR, Mr Cooper presented a paper detailing objections to the recommendations in the IPART report and requested support from the members of this House, including the Government—something that is not unreasonable. He wants a guarantee of the most basic of Australian principles: the right of access to one's own property without being charged by the Government.

Since the meeting I have been flooded with phone calls, emails, letters and interviews from affected constituents who are angry at the imposition of yet another annual charge on Australian households. I am sure that people in Macquarie Street would agree that it is not a reasonable charge as against the right to free and fair access to one's place of residence. It is abundantly clear from submissions to the IPART review, as well as feedback from constituents, that the IPART review was rushed and carried out in what appears to be a secretive manner. A member of a well-known team that has been integral to the success of the Australian Labor Party, the famous Blanche d'Alpuget, Bob Hawke's partner, is concerned—and if she is concerned, everyone in the Government should be concerned. Mr Hawke may not have got it right in the past but clearly Blanche, I am sure on behalf of Bob as well, has got it right. She wrote:

I am a "stakeholder" in a waterfront property which may be affected by your review. I have had no notification—

That is bad—

from your tribunal about this review, and only heard about it from neighbours a few days ago. This is despite your website reference to "stakeholder consultation" and providing an opportunity for receipt of public submissions. I therefore request an extension of time, from December 2003 to April 2004, in order to prepare a submission. I also request direct notification from you. Without direct notification your tribunal would seem to be acting stealthily and unjustly to many stakeholders—for example, another neighbour, 89 years old, has cataracts and cannot read the newspapers. As with so many others, he knew nothing of what was planned for him, and without direct notification, he will be left to rely on gossip. This is uncivilised and unacceptable.

It remains uncivilised and unacceptable. Even the Government's strongest supporters are concerned. If it is good enough for Blanche d'Alpuget to be concerned, it is good enough for honourable members opposite to be concerned, as she is right. In June 2004 I received a lot of correspondence advising of a public meeting, organised by affected residents, to be held at the Mooney Mooney Workers Club—workers, the people that Labor pretends to represent, if only that were the case. The notice at the club said that Government representatives and relevant departmental representatives would be present at the meeting. But, lo and behold, the Government and the department were not present, which is what happened at my recent meeting about green zones in north-west Sydney, when a government representative phoned five minutes before the meeting was due to commence and said, "Terribly sorry, we are not coming." Yet again the Government has ignored the legitimate concerns of local, fair dinkum people meeting at the workers club, if only the Government cared about workers.

On 22 June 2004 the then Leader of the Opposition arranged a meeting with the Minister for Lands but it was cancelled by the Minister without any reason—another cancellation to try to avoid a major issue. On 24 June a two-hour meeting was finally held at Parliament House with the honourable member for Peats and Graham Harding and Stephen Francis from the Department of Lands, at which an agreement was reached that Graham Harding, the General Manager of the Department of Lands would review the wording of the licence document, the term of the licence and the amount of guarantee renewal of the licence by 31 August 2004. Later the Minister agreed to meet the then Leader of the Opposition only—not a delegation of affected waterfront property owners. Yet again the Government would not meet with stakeholders. What sort of representatives are they? It is disgraceful that this Government will not meet with ordinary everyday people. Surely a delegation of half a dozen people would have been acceptable.

The then Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Hornsby and I then consulted with a lot of stakeholders. Indeed we have received many representations and continually meet with affected people. Our duty as members of Parliament is to take up the concerns of our constituents—and it is hardly some great thing we are doing. Negotiations took place. But unfortunately the time for rhetoric from this Government is well and truly over in relation to this issue. Members of the Government need to put up or shut up. The clear-cut option in relation to this bill is to give ordinary everyday residents a fair go. Waterfront-access-only property owners are already paying too much. Mr Cooper said:

A water access only owner must pay the Department of Lands and Water Conservation [DLWC] [as it then was] an initial application fee of \$438 plus an ongoing licence fee generally ranging from \$300 to \$2,000 per annum. A further \$400 wet berthing fee is now being applied to water access only owners for each boat moored alongside a jetty or pontoon.

Generally these people do not have a car or a driveway but have boat-access-only property in areas in which in the past the battlers of Berowra Creek lived. Residents have worked hard during their lives, and now they may have moved out of suburbia and want to enjoy their retirement on the water. As members can clearly see, the State Government already charges water access only property owners for the use of Crown land and now it is adding this cost under these new rental arrangements. Like many of the Government's decisions, this is about short-term revenue raising. These people should be given a fair go. We know this Government is cash-strapped, but ordinary people should not be the ones who have to plug deficits that are created entirely as a result of the waste and mismanagement of members opposite.

Members will recall the advertisements that heralded Mr Iemma's ascension to the premiership—Morris Iemma, yes, that Iemma, not I-amma. Do members remember that? "The new guy who got rid of the vendor tax—a fresh start". Here is the opportunity for the Government and Mr Iemma to scrap the inequitable tax that is being placed on water-access-only property owners. The Government scrapped the vendor duty—about time, as the Opposition benches urged—and now it is time for it to scrap this iniquitous tax. So far the Government has backed down on land tax and vendor duty and we are hearing more positive comments about the green environmental overlay that was slapped on thousands of my constituents in the North West some months ago.

Like land owners affected by the imposition of this now infamous landscape and rural lifestyle zone, water-access-only property owners stood up and fought against the State Government—450 residents at Berowra Waters and 3,500 residents at Rouse Hill. These people are very angry with the Government and are

demanding changes that are fair and reasonable. Changes should and can be made to the rental charges for water-access-only property owners. The bill amends the Crown Lands Act 1989 to bring fairness and equity to people who can only access their land by water. The bill is for a relatively small number of people. It will not hurt the Government to agree to it. The number of people affected may be small but the impact on their lifestyles is very severe indeed. The Government does not yet charge people for driving across their driveways, but maybe that is on the agenda. Perhaps the Government will charge people to drive across their driveways into their houses. In the meantime, do not put a similar charge on water-access-only property owners.

I commend local leaders Denis Nobbs, Carol Joy, Kevin Cooper and their team for their dedication and research skills. They have fought a particularly solid fight and have presented logical arguments in a fair, well-reasoned and well-thought-out manner. This is clearly an issue worth fighting for. I call on the Government to get its act together and listen to local residents who have a very serious problem. It is time for a fresh start. The Government should give local people a fair go and the right of access to their properties that it has unfairly taken away.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee) [11.12 a.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Hornsby, in particular, who sponsored this private member's bill, and the honourable member for Hawkesbury, many of whose constituents are affected by the Government's changes to the way charges are levied on Crown land leases. Both members have vehemently stood up for their constituents. This issue may not affect tens of thousands of people, but it is an important issue for every individual who is affected.

It is a testament to the honourable member for Hawkesbury and the honourable member for Hornsby that they stand up for every constituent in their electorates. This bill is no exception. They have made a very strong case to me as the Opposition spokesman for Lands and to the shadow cabinet and our joint party room to make this Coalition policy. That is what being a member of Parliament is about: standing up for your constituents. It is easy to do it when thousands of them are coming through your door, but the real test of a good member of Parliament is to stand up for a relatively small number of people. That is what the honourable member for Hawkesbury and the honourable member for Hornsby have done. Other members of the Coalition have constituents with water-only access and they have been strong advocates as well.

I want to echo the words of the honourable member for Hawkesbury and the honourable member for Hornsby about the Government. The Government is extremely greedy and will do anything for money. A lot of Labor members think that anyone with a water-access-only property is a multimillionaire who can afford these sorts of increases. Nothing could be further from the truth for many of the people affected by these changes. As the honourable member for Hawkesbury said, a lot of people have worked damn hard to get a house, as all of us do, but these people happen to have houses that have access only by water. They will be penalised by the Government for having bought such a house. As the honourable member for Hawkesbury said, the Government has not yet charged people to back out of their drive and onto their road, but one never knows with this Government. There is no tax that it would not be interested in levying. Why does the Government think it is fair to levy this sort of a tax on someone with a water-access-only property?

The only explanation I can think of is the Government's financial mismanagement of New South Wales. Despite the billions of dollars of revenue that has flowed into the Treasury through the property boom and the GST—one billion dollars a year more than forecast when the GST was introduced—the Government now finds itself with a budget deficit of at least \$700 million. The Government cannot do anything about the burgeoning bureaucracy because it is beholden to the unions. I often wonder who runs New South Wales. I have some doubt that it is the Government; rather, it is the unions that run this State. When the Government was talking about restructuring the health boards and the area health services it said, "Oh, well, we're still working it out because we are trying to get agreement from the unions." The question every taxpayer in New South Wales will be asking is: "Don't we elect members of Parliament to represent us and run New South Wales?" I wonder about that sometimes when we hear about the power the unions have over the Labor Party.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: The member has completely strayed from the bill. If he would come back to it, it would probably help everyone.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order. I remind the honourable member for Murrumbidgee that he should confine his remarks to the bill.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I believe my comments are relevant to the bill because it is about the State Government earning additional revenue through charging these people additional lease payments. My point is that if the Government ran the finances of New South Wales properly, it would not have to make these sorts of decisions and put its hands in more people's pockets to get more money out of them. Part of the problem is that the Government has its hands tied to some degree in making reforms that would save money because it is beholden to the union movement. Unions donate about \$6 million per electoral cycle to the Labor Party. They do not do it out of generosity and because they are terrific people. They want some payback for the \$6 million, and that is what we are seeing. That is a great tragedy for New South Wales.

We have had a great opportunity to do good things with the revenue New South Wales has been earning, but the unions are holding us back. That is the reason the Government has changed the rentals on Crown land, particularly in this case. I call on the Government to stand up to the unions. Okay, they give it \$6 million every electoral cycle, but the Government is elected to run New South Wales the way the taxpayers want it run, not the way the unions want it run. Take the burden off people who have water-access-only properties; take the burden off people who use our roads and pay tolls. Honourable members will recall Bob Carr's famous promise to abolish the tolls on the M5 and wherever else. The Government has broken a thousand promises relating to tax cuts. That is why New South Wales finds itself in this financial mess.

The Labor Party thinks that anyone who has a water-access-only property is rich and therefore should be taxed. It is interesting to note that that is how it develops policy. But it does not mind taking donations from some very rich people. It charges people \$1,000 a head to attend fundraisers. It takes money from Macquarie Bank, Westpac and all the so-called rich people, but it does not miss an opportunity to whack people whom it regards as being rich. But, according to what the honourable member for Hornsby and the honourable member for Hawkesbury have told me, it is off target. The Labor Party still suffers from class envy, which is one of the reasons why it does not want to do anything for people whose property can be accessed only by water.

I commend the honourable member for Hornsby and the honourable member for Hawkesbury for the way they stand up for their constituents. I wish the Labor Party would stick up for the taxpayers of New South Wales and get its house in order. About 18 months are left before the Labor Party will be kicked out of government. It still has time to do the right thing for the taxpayers of New South Wales by getting off their backs, taking its hands out of their pockets and starting to run the State the right way. I hope the Government supports the bill, which supports hardworking people who happen to have properties that are accessible only by water.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.21 a.m.]: On behalf of the Government I oppose the bill. I am not sure who on behalf of those on the other side does the research or who monitors what is going on in this House, but this private member's bill was made redundant by the Government's recent legislation that recognises the particular circumstances of water-access-only residences and makes available to eligible residents a rebate on rent. We oppose the bill because it is redundant.

Mrs Judy Hopwood: Point of order: The honourable member for Canterbury is misleading the House. Obviously, she has not done her homework. If she had bothered to read my second reading speech she would have realised that the Government's bill does not alter the content or relevance of my bill or supplant it.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! There is no point of order.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In the last session of Parliament the Crown Lands Act was amended to recognise the particular circumstances of waterfront property owners whose only access to their homes is by water. This stemmed from last year's Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] inquiry into waterfront rents, which accepted the Government's position that the taxpayers of New South Wales deserve to be compensated appropriately—a key aspect that those on the other side should remember. The Government asked IPART to examine the rents charged for water-access-only properties.

Recent amendments to the Crown Lands Act reflect IPART's recommendations that owner-occupiers of water-access-only residences are eligible for a \$250 rebate on their annual rent subject to the minimum rent of \$350. Both the minimum rent and the rebate will be linked to the consumer price index. The rebate builds on an automatic rental concession to water-access-only residents. The IPART-approved rental formula that is used to determine the rent is limited to the statutory land value of the adjacent property. It is important to note that considering that average land values for water-access-only properties—

Mrs Judy Hopwood: You don't even live on a waterfront. How would you know?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No, I do not live on a waterfront, but that is not the point. Considering that average land values for water-access-only properties are significantly lower than properties with road access, their rents have an automatic concession—considerably lower. I was interested to hear the contribution of the honourable member for Murrumbidgee. It is fallacious and hypocritical for him to somehow weave into the debate how New South Wales is reaping the enormous benefits, so-called, of the GST. I will not go over the numbers because people in this House understand the incredibly inequitable distribution of the GST.

Mrs Judy Hopwood: What's that got to do with this bill?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Exactly!

Mrs Judy Hopwood: Point of order: I ask you to draw the honourable member for Canterbury back to the leave of the bill, which has nothing to do with the GST.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! The honourable member for Canterbury should confine her remarks to the bill.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is absolutely correct. It has absolutely nothing to do with the GST. I am pointing out that the honourable member for Murrumbidgee spoke extensively about the GST. So I agree with the honourable member for Hornsby. She is correct. It is not about the GST. That is the point I was trying to make. I reassure the honourable member for Hawkesbury that the Government, not the unions, is running the State. There are partnerships and synergies, but I can assure him that he can rest easy tonight: We are running this State. I oppose the bill on behalf of the Government.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [11.26 a.m.], in reply: I reiterate that the object of the bill is to amend the Crown Lands Act 1989 to require that when determining or redetermining rent under the Act with respect to a lease, licence or enclosure permit that provides water access to the lease, licence or permit holder's residential property, regard is to be had to whether the lease, licence or permit provides the only reasonable means of access to that property. I thank the honourable member for Hawkesbury and the honourable member for Murrumbidgee for their contributions, but I am not sure that I can extend my thanks to the honourable member for Canterbury, even though she made some salient points.

Where is the honourable member for Heathcote, who represents people who have water-access-only properties? In conversations with me he cried crocodile tears about the concerns of residents in his electorate with water-access-only properties. He is supposed to represent those people and take their concerns to the Minister. I am disappointed that the honourable member for Heathcote did not contribute to the debate. I hope that his constituents, whom he purports to represent, find out that they have not been represented to the extent that they should have been represented.

The honourable member for Canterbury said my bill is redundant. I reject that: my bill is not redundant. Amendments to the Crown Lands Act to cover water-access-only properties did nothing but insert the term into the Act. Nothing changed. The amendments to the Crown Lands Act already reflected recommendations of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART]. Residents who have water-only access to their properties do not want to be assessed by the same formula as those with land and water access. The rebate is irrelevant to them because their minimum cost is \$350, which is much more than some of them have been paying thus far.

I recommend that the honourable member for Canterbury look at the real estate values of water-access-only properties. They are not the lower echelon; they are very much in demand. Properties for sale in my area—Brooklyn, Milsons Passage and Berowra Creek—are not considered secondary to those in the eastern suburbs. I take the response by the honourable member for Canterbury as a total insult. I also take as an insult to the owners of water access only properties that the honourable member for Heathcote, who could have made a contribution to this debate, has not done so.

This Government is totally greedy. It is unfair that this Government imposes recommendations by IPART onto people whose only access to their homes is by water and who suffer all the problems associated with not having road access to their homes. The Government's policy is yet another example of its financial mismanagement and is extremely poor form because it imposes a substantial burden on so few people that one

wonders what difference the revenue derived from that policy would make to the coffers of the Government. I am at a loss to understand the response from members on the Government side of the Chamber. I urge Government members to rethink the issue.

The Minister will probably alter the conditions applying to water-access-only properties as a reaction to what the Opposition has had to say and the Opposition's taking the lead in addressing the inequity suffered by water-access-only property owners. I expect that those property owners will be given due consideration in time. I also mention that during a meeting between the Minister, a departmental officer and me the Minister promised to inspect some of the Hawkesbury River and Berowra Creek properties, but I note that the Minister has totally reneged on that promise. That is another appalling example of a Minister not taking an interest in matters affecting his portfolio. I urge all honourable members to support the bill.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 34

Mr Aplin	Mrs Hopwood	Mrs Skinner
Mr Armstrong	Mr Humpherson	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Barr	Mr Kerr	Mr Souris
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Merton	Mr Stoner
Mr Cansdell	Ms Moore	Mr Tink
Mr Constance	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Torbay
Mr Debnam	Mr O'Farrell	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Draper	Mr Page	Mr R. W. Turner
Mrs Fardell	Mr Piccoli	
Mrs Hancock	Mr Pringle	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Hartcher	Mr Richardson	Mr George
Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Roberts	Mr Maguire

Noes, 46

Mr Amery	Mr Greene	Mr Pearce
Ms Andrews	Ms Hay	Mrs Perry
Mr Bartlett	Mr Hickey	Ms Saliba
Ms Beamer	Mr Hunter	Mr Sartor
Mr Black	Ms Judge	Mr Shearan
Mr Brown	Ms Keneally	Mr Stewart
Ms Burney	Mr Lynch	Ms Tebbutt
Miss Burton	Mr McLeay	Mr Tripodi
Mr Campbell	Ms Meagher	Mr Watkins
Mr Collier	Ms Megarrity	Mr West
Mr Corrigan	Mr Mills	Mr Whan
Mr Crittenden	Mr Morris	Mr Yeadon
Mr Daley	Mr Newell	
Mr Debus	Ms Nori	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gaudry	Mr Orkopoulos	Mr Ashton
Mr Gibson	Mrs Paluzzano	Mr Martin

Pairs

Mr Hazzard	Ms Gadiel
Ms Seaton	Mr Price

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! It being after 11.30 a.m. the House will now deal with General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices).

HELICOPTER RESCUE SERVICES

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) [11.40 a.m.]: It is with pleasure that I move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges the commencement on 14 June 2003 of Helicopter Awareness Week;
- (2) recognises the contribution to the community by the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service based at Sydney and Wollongong, the Westpac Hunter Region Service based in Newcastle and Tamworth and the Westpac Northern Region Service based in Lismore; and
- (3) congratulates and thanks the staff and voluntary crew members who continually place their lives at risk to save lives.

What motivated this motion some 2½ years ago was that in 2003 the Northern Region Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service, based at Lismore, celebrated its twentieth anniversary. At the time I congratulated the service on that achievement. I am especially proud of the service based at Lismore, of which I was honoured to be a director prior to coming to this House as the member for Lismore. Although the helicopter service is based at Lismore, it covers eastern areas from Kempsey north to the border, and western areas from Glen Innes and Inverell north to the border. The service covers the electorate of Ballina, and the honourable member for Ballina gave a very good private member's statement in June 2002, recognising the 20 years of the Northern Region Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service.

The honourable member for Coffs Harbour would have liked to pay tribute to the service, and its full-time employees, in Coffs Harbour. I will give a brief summary of the life of the service in the northern region. In December 1982 the service commenced at Ballina using a Hillier piston engine aircraft. In 1983 the service became permanent in Lismore with the leased Bell Jet Ranger helicopter, based at Lismore's St Vincent's hospital. In 1984 Surf Life Saving Australia Ltd took full control of the service and provided another Bell Jet Ranger helicopter. In 1985 major sponsorship of the service came from the Northern Co-operative Meat Company and Casino Hide Traders, based in Lismore. Those companies are major employers in the Northern Rivers area, with 1,800 members of the co-operative working on the land at that time. The companies realised the need for a helicopter service should there be a disaster at the company and/or on any of the properties in the region.

I pay tribute to the Northern Co-operative Meat Company for its sponsorship. I was honoured to be the director of the company at that time. In 1988 the late Robert Bruce Duncan, MP, was appointed to the position of chairman of the board. I need not elaborate on the contributions of Robert Bruce Duncan and Harold Fredericks to the success of that company. In 1991 the Westpac Banking Corporation became the major sponsor of the service throughout New South Wales. In the restructure, the service appointed a general manager and company secretary, Perry Wells. In 1996 the service purchased a second twin-engine aircraft. In 1997 major extensions were carried out to the hangar complex. In 1998 Warren Tozer, a prominent citizen and representative for Grafton and the Clarence Valley, was appointed as chairman, to take over from the late Robert Bruce Duncan.

In 2000 a reorganisation of the administration complex and extensions at the base took place. In 2002 the company celebrated 20 years of dedicated service to the community. In 2003 the Coffs Harbour office was launched as an extension of the Lismore operation, with a view to placement of a helicopter service at Coffs Harbour. In June 2005 the latest addition to the service's fleet was launched and brought online. I acknowledge the proud record of the Northern Region Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service, which has been strengthened by the involvement of NSW Health, the co-operation and input of the New South Wales Ambulance Service, Surf Life Saving Australia Ltd and other agencies around our region involved in rescue and emergency work in the community.

Much credit must go to the invaluable role played by the people of the region served by the helicopter through generous and continuing financial support and the professionalism and commitment of the staff in the maintenance and operation of the service. The staff accept without question the extra demands required when working for an organisation of a charitable nature. Aircraft used in the service are twin-engine, single-pilot Eurocopter Dauphins. The cabin layout allows for two patient stretchers. What I have described is typical of the much-needed services provided across the State in conjunction with the New South Wales Ambulance Service and NSW Health. I pay tribute also to Ron Rankin, Chairman, and Greg Nance, Chief Executive, of Surf Life Saving Australia Ltd for their support over the years. They have provided the mechanism and the expertise required in the initial years and they have continued their association. I thank them and all the team for their support.

The chief executive officer of the Sydney service is Doug Menzies. He and his team have provided a wonderful service for the Sydney-based Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter service. In the Hunter region, based in Newcastle and Tamworth, the chief executive, Richard Jones, and his team do a fantastic job. I know that other honourable members will recognise services throughout the State and the job that they do. The service has a proven track record of efficiency and co-operation with NSW Health and the New South Wales Ambulance Service. It successfully, efficiently and professionally fulfils all the requirements under the health department's rotary wing aeromedical retrieval services funding agreement. In my area the service has unqualified support from the community throughout its flight area. Various voluntary committees located in Lismore, Casino, Grafton Coffs Harbour, Macleay, Tenterfield and Ballina shire co-ordinate and promote events.

In accordance with the funding agreement with the New South Wales Ambulance Service, assignments also exist to provide assistance and support to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Aus SAR, the State Emergency Service, NSW Police, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Surf Life Saving Australia, bushfire services and the volunteer coastguard. This service, which provides security to country, coastal and regional areas, is an organisation we love to support but we hope and pray we never have to use it. When people in rural areas suffer any form of tragedy it is comforting to them to know that specialist staff on board that helicopter will provide the expertise and support services they need. It is with great pleasure that I move this motion today.

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.50 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the honourable member for Lismore. I acknowledge and thank all the personnel involved in helicopter rescue services across New South Wales. In particular, I note the dedication and efforts of various non-government organisations involved in the provision of helicopter services. Their hard work and commitment in providing a safe and timely service for the community are highly valued. These organisations include CareFlight, Child Flight and Surf Life Saving Australia, with their bases distributed across the major population centres of New South Wales.

I am informed that the first civilian helicopter rescue service was started in 1973 in Sydney by the Surf Life Saving Association. That was a pioneering achievement. While substantial funding is provided by NSW Health to non-government organisations for the operation of helicopter services, an immense amount of time and effort are dedicated by each non-government organisation towards community awareness and, in particular, fundraising. Helicopters, understandably, are very visible in the community. They can be used for search and rescue missions such as rescuing a hiker lost in the bush, or inter-hospital transfers when critically ill patients are transferred to hospital in a timely fashion.

I emphasise that the vehicle, that is, the helicopter, is only one component of the helicopter service. The pilots, ground technicians, doctors, nurses and paramedics are the crucial human resources required to mount an emergency response. I therefore acknowledge the NSW Ambulance Service and the State's medical retrieval unit for their role in co-ordinating emergency retrievals of critically ill or injured patients. Co-ordinating the tasking of helicopter missions is not simple, as the cases are often urgent and life threatening. I commend all the clinical and paramedic staff who work with the helicopter and non-government organisations to deliver timely emergency care to the people of New South Wales.

I want to refer to some of the things happening locally in my electorate—an electorate in which we receive fantastic service. There have been some ongoing issues in relation to the Illawarra-based medical retrieval service. Currently a firm has been contracted to provide that service. Because of an overwhelming community desire to have a high-profile local medical retrieval unit a consortium of businesses—the Illawarra Business Chamber, the South Coast Labor Council, various businesses, organisations and trade unions—put together a proposal for Guardian Air. I was recently at the launch of that scheme.

A community-based organisation will provide a helicopter service if NSW Health issues a contract for the southern region, and I am encouraging it to do so. It is a great organisation and there is much community participation, which goes to show that the community is well and truly behind such a service. People love a locally based, high-profile and visible project such as one involving a helicopter. I will watch with interest to see which parties tender for that contract. People who tender for such a contract tend to be passionate. They want to provide those services for many reasons, most of which are esoteric. They desire to have cutting-edge specialist skills and to be involved in modern and dramatic employment. It is a fantastic job to be able to save lives in such an exciting way.

The Southern Region Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service has operated from Prince of Henry Hospital in the eastern suburbs since 1990. The Surf Life Saving Association runs a 24-hour medical retrieval service, and 20,000 rescues have been carried out by that service since it was founded. The helicopter service provides emergency rescue and basic medical assistance for patients en route to hospitals. The primary emphasis is coastal and offshore areas, though inland rescues are also available. The emergency rescue service covers my electorate of Heathcote as well as other southern Sydney areas.

The Prince Henry landing base is now within 250 metres of residential development and must be moved. Investigations have revealed a suitable location, that is, Cape Banks. That site meets nearly all the requirements, in particular, the fact that it is located on the fringe of controlled air space, the land is already cleared, and it is located about one kilometre from any residential development, thus reducing intrusion from noise. The service, which will be located in Bundeena, where I live, which is just across from Port Hacking, will assist in response times to those coastal areas. So the good people in the electorate of the honourable member for Cronulla will receive faster service.

Retrievals often need to be carried out in the Royal National Park. It is good news that the helicopter will be located so close to the Royal National Park, the world's second oldest national park. Some people argue that, technically, it is the oldest national park, but it is the only legislated national park in the world. The helicopter service will be able to work in co-operation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The helicopter can be used in firefighting, water dropping, fire spotting, fire plotting, winching in of fire teams—particularly remote area firefighting teams—and evacuation of personnel and communities.

These services already perform regular rescues from national parks in the Sydney Basin, the Central Coast and the South Coast. That service will now be enhanced, as it is so close to the national park. It can assist in the evacuation of communities and in times of emergency. A number of isolated and small communities are located along that coastal stretch. The helicopter can assist in searches and be a point of contact for medical and search operations within the National Parks and Wildlife Service network. In congratulating and supporting our volunteers and service providers I commend the clinical and paramedic staff that work on these helicopter services.

Finally, I highlight the collaborative and co-operative approach taken by the New South Wales Government and these organisations in the provision of rescue helicopter services. New South Wales leads the way in the provision of safe, timely and high-quality helicopter rescue and medical retrieval services. I am told that the medical retrieval systems recently introduced in other States have been extensively modelled on the New South Wales system, which demonstrates best practice. I commend the motion.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [11.59 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Lismore on moving this important motion that recognises the contribution of all those involved with lifesaving helicopter services. Rural New South Wales—indeed, rural Australia as a whole—depends on the efforts of the many people who are instrumental in providing air rescue services. In turn, these services depend on money, which is critical to keeping the helicopters in the air. I congratulate and acknowledge the many people who raise the funds that keep our air rescue services operational. The electorates of Wagga Wagga, Bega, Murrumbidgee and Burrinjuck are served by the Snowy Hydro SouthCare Helicopter Service. The service was established in 1998 and is the only primary service provider of aeromedical and rescue helicopter services in south-eastern New South Wales.

The service is based in Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory and serves our region 24 hours day, 365 days a year. The service is a charity and is committed to encouraging individuals, groups, businesses, organisations and the community to help it to continue saving lives. The primary role of the service is to fly directly to the scene of accidents and transport patients to hospital as quickly as possible while providing the highest standard of pre-hospital care. The service performs this role time after time in our region. Last year the Snowy Hydro SouthCare Helicopter Service completed 331 missions, or an average of six to seven missions per week. Last year it helped 328 local friends, families and visitors. Since its inception in 1998 the service has accomplished more than 1,700 missions in the southern region alone.

As I said before, the service relies on donations from organisations and individuals to keep its helicopters in the air. This vital service is known as "the angel of mercy", which is a fitting accolade for a service that we embrace and love and upon which we all depend. It responds speedily to emergencies and accidents in the remote regions of our electorates, transports newborn babies and provides primary care. Let us not forget that many visitors come to our area. Snowy Hydro SouthCare serves an area comprising 800,000

men, women and children but the five million people who visit the region on business and on holiday also benefit from the service. Although I support the motion, I shall move an amendment to it. I move:

That the motion be amended by inserting the following words after "Tamworth" in paragraph (2):

"Snowy Hydro SouthCare based in Canberra"

I move that amendment in recognition of the wonderful service that Snowy Hydro SouthCare provides. The honourable member for Lismore is a board member of his local helicopter retrieval service. He is a great local member who works with his community. He continues to fight for his constituents and to move motions such as this that recognise the efforts of vital services in his electorate. I am sure that the honourable member for Heathcote will join us in supporting this motion. It is a non-political motion that seeks simply to record our thanks and acknowledgement of the worthwhile work of rescue retrieval services and our communities' dependence upon them. I congratulate all helicopter rescue services and the honourable member for Lismore on bringing this matter before the House. I support the motion.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega) [12.04 p.m.]: I join the honourable member for Wagga Wagga in congratulating the honourable member for Lismore on moving this motion. I support the motion but will speak to the amendment moved by the honourable member for Wagga Wagga regarding the Snowy Hydro SouthCare Helicopter Service. The honourable member for Lismore is a board member of a voluntary organisation that provides helicopter rescue services in rural and regional New South Wales and he congratulated all such services on their wonderful work. The health system in regional New South Wales is critically dependent upon rescue helicopter services. I live near Bega hospital so I am well aware of the volume of helicopter traffic to and from that facility. The service ferries patients—many of whom are knocking on heaven's door—to hospitals in Canberra and Sydney, where better medical treatment is available. The work of the staff who fly and maintain the helicopters is underpinned by that of volunteers, who raise both funds for and awareness of helicopter rescue services throughout regional New South Wales.

Snowy Hydro SouthCare was established in October 1998 and is the only primary service provider of aeromedical and rescue helicopter services in the Australian Capital Territory and south-eastern New South Wales. The service performs several roles but its primary function is to fly directly to the scene of accidents and transport patients to hospital as quickly as possible, where they can receive appropriate medical assistance. The service has the secondary role of transferring patients from regional to metropolitan hospitals, as I alluded to earlier. I am fortunate in that one of my staff members, Ian Duff, is an ambassador for Snowy Hydro SouthCare. Ian is a true champion when it comes to raising awareness of and funds for the service in the Eurobodalla community in particular. People such as Judy Vardon and Jan Carter from Narooma have been instrumental in the ongoing success of the Eurobodalla chapter of Friends of SouthCare. I note that the chapter will hold another fundraising event, "A Night of Note", in late November on behalf of Snowy Hydro SouthCare. I encourage local people to support that fundraising effort. There is no doubt that many magnificent people work in a volunteer capacity to provide fundraising support to SouthCare, and it is a privilege to recognise them in Parliament today.

The 750,000 people who live in the south-east corner of the State depend on the service provided by Snowy Hydro SouthCare. We reflect from time to time on the family members and friends who have benefited from the service. I know of a five-year-old whose life was saved by a helicopter rescue service. I can only pay tribute to the men and women involved with these services. Regional New South Wales depends on helicopter rescue services and the money that funds them. These services save lives and help our hospitals to serve the community better. I commend the motion to the House. I support it fully and congratulate the honourable member for Lismore on moving it.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence) [12.09 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the honourable member for Lismore, which commends rescue helicopter services. In particular, I refer to the northern region Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service. Perry Wells, its Chief Executive Officer, has overseen a lot of tragedies the service has been involved in. Warren Tozer and Stuart Messer are two hardworking staff who raise thousands of dollars annually for the service in the Clarence and northern New South Wales. It costs approximately \$3 million a year to run the northern region Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service. The average cost for one mission is \$3,000 an hour, it costs \$10,000 to train a new crew member, \$3,500 for a crew helmet, \$450 for a chopper tyre, \$120,000 for a new winch and \$5,000 to replace the winch cable.

Helicopters have to be serviced regularly to provide a safe and efficient service, at a cost of \$5,000 for a 50-hour service, up to \$25,000 for a 400-hour service, \$60,000 to overhaul the winch and \$250,000 to service a gearbox. That funding comes from a lot of chook raffles, trivia nights, bingo days run by the ladies committee

and deductions from the payroll of people who put their hands in their pockets to help this vital service. I am sure all honourable members know someone who has been helped by the rescue service. Fortunately, in the Clarence area the Rotary Club of Maclean has raised funds for a new helipad. The old helipad was located on a hill, five minutes away from the hospital, and unprotected. It was untenable to land the helicopter in extreme weather conditions. The combined Maclean, Yamba and Iluka Rotary clubs conducted a fundraiser. The money was raised in six months. On 5 March 2005 the helipad was opened, an amazing feat by the rotary clubs. Virtually minutes after the opening, the service was needed. On 11 March the Clarence Valley *Review* reported:

The Maclean Rotary Centenary Helipad project, which was officially opened by Rotary District 9640 governor Margaret Hayes last Saturday, sprung into action just minutes after the opening ceremony.

Twenty minutes after the helicopter on site for the opening—which wasn't fitted out with suitable equipment for the retrieval—had left, another helicopter was on the pad to pick up a patient.

The patient could not be transferred to the Gold Coast by ambulance because of spinal injuries. Some three months ago on my way to Sydney, on one of the few sections of divided road on the Pacific Highway, an accident occurred with traffic travelling north. The rescue helicopter landed on the highway to take severely injured patients to hospital. It is more than likely that it saved their lives, as they got to a hospital a lot quicker. The missions of the helicopter service include an elderly male transported to Nimbin Hospital, early morning transfer from Maclean to Brisbane for a burns victim, a missing plane located south-east of Tenterfield, and an inter-hospital transfer from Lismore to Brisbane. We should commend our helicopter rescue services in every way. I congratulate the honourable member for Lismore on moving this motion.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) [12.14 p.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable members representing the electorates of Heathcote, Wagga Wagga, Bega and Clarence for their contributions to this debate. I am shocked and disappointed that the honourable member for Newcastle and honourable member for Tamworth did not contribute to this debate in support of their rescue services. All speakers highlighted our concern for providing the services across the State, especially in rural and regional areas. Those areas do not have ambulance stations, so the helicopter services often save lives in country and regional remote areas.

The honourable member for Clarence referred to a plane that was missing. We need to maintain and continue to support rescue services in remote areas and areas away from the coast. Along the coastal areas employees and volunteers of the rescue helicopter services put their lives at risk, as do the staff of all emergency services in New South Wales about whom we are always complimentary. I am concerned that some areas in the State are not covered by an aeromedical service. The Department of Health has issued contracts to provide rotary wing aeromedical retrieval services under its funding agreement. I term some of those areas as black spots. I make a plea to the Minister for Health to look at those areas when providing services.

I know that efficient and professional services are being provided in the northern region, including the Hunter and the Newcastle areas, and in the Sydney Surf Life Saving service. I want the service expanded to Coffs Harbour. The northern region would be more than happy to have a helicopter based there to cover the grey area—rather than a black spot—that needs to be looked at. Contracts are being looked at across the State. The service should be extended to grey-spot areas. The CareFlight, Westpac and SouthCare services provide a wonderful service and I compliment them for doing so. They provide the Government with a professional service across the State. Community support has been second to none, as has been emphasised by other members in their contributions to the debate.

The communities overwhelmingly support the helicopter services and believe that they have an ownership and partnership with them. Country and coastal communities bend over backwards to provide financial support to the rescue services, which they hope they will not have to use. It is comforting for the regions to know that the service is available. I compliment all aero medical services in the State. In particular, I compliment the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service in the northern region, the Hunter and Newcastle, and the Sydney service, which operate a professional service. They are backed by boards of directors that do a magnificent job in New South Wales.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

WATER AND SEWERAGE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [12.20 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that thousands of litres of partially treated sewerage poured into Berowra Creek as a result of overflows of the sewage treatment plants in Hornsby and Hornsby Heights during recent high rainfalls;

- (2) notes that cracked pipes and unmaintained related infrastructure allowed rainwater to enter the system, straining the ability of the sewage treatment plants to adequately treat raw sewage; and
- (3) calls on the Government to increase funding for replacement of archaic infrastructure and improve maintenance so that sewage treatment plants can cope when it rains.

The bottom line of this motion relates to asset management and the blatant lack of maintenance of vital assets over a decade of this Labor Government. Two-and-a-half years have passed since I gave notice of this motion, but nothing has changed in relation to asset management and lack of maintenance. Rainwater still seeps into cracked pipes and, conversely, cracked water pipes allow water to escape. This affects not only my electorate but also other regions across New South Wales. I refer to the Auditor-General's performance audit report entitled "Implementing Asset Management Reforms", dated October 2005, in which he says in his foreword:

Good asset management is very important to government; even a small efficiency gain in this area can provide significant returns. Good practice by those responsible for managing assets can improve reliability, extend asset life, save on maintenance costs and aid in identifying and disposing of unnecessary or non-performing assets.

Improving the NSW public sector's approach to asset management has been on the reform agenda for at least a decade. Changes in practice have been accelerated more recently by integrating asset management policy with the budget process.

This is really not the case when it comes to managing our broken water pipes. The greedy acquisition of funds from Sydney Water Corporation has seen not only a lack of adequate asset maintenance but also delays in construction of many other assets that Sydney Water looks after, including connection to sewerage systems. The Brooklyn-Dangar sewerage system has been delayed, as have the Cowan and Galston sewerage systems. They are some sort of blip on the screen in the future. I refer to page 2 of this morning's *Daily Telegraph* and an article titled "End of the road for Scully's transitway". It refers to the Minister who now looks after utilities and says:

The State Government will bury another one of Carl Scully's white elephants by dumping unprofitable bus services on the Liverpool-Parramatta transitway.

I just hope that this will not be replicated with the maintenance of water pipes, replacement of cracked pipes and connection to sewerage systems. In 2002 Sydney Water Corporation decided to axe its customer information and billing project. That was more than \$50 million down the drain. It was well recognised as a financial disaster and an indication of mismanagement at Sydney Water. The \$50 million would have bought a number of communities access to sewerage. In 2003 it was again acknowledged that the Government's failure to manage Sydney Water had been directly responsible for Sydney Water's \$61 million IT billing system loss. The Auditor General warned the Government that Sydney Water had been haemorrhaging money as far back as 2001 but the Government has done nothing to avert that loss.

A number of comments were made about the Labor Government's cash raid on Sydney Water. It was noted as being absolutely outrageous that Sydney Water customers were to be billed big but would not receive a better service, and that much-needed infrastructure would not be built and part-treated sewage would still be pumped into the Harbour and onto the beaches. This was said to be absolute proof that the Government was using Sydney Water customers as a cash cow to prop up its budget. Sydney Water infrastructure was said to be crumbling and money was much needed to remedy the situation. In 1998-99, \$91.8 million went into Government coffers from Sydney Water. In 1999-2000, it was \$129.2 million; in 2000-01, \$53.4 million; and in 2001-02, \$110 million. So it goes on. Crucial sewerage projects have been cancelled and others have been put on hold and remain unfunded after the Labor Government's razor gang slashed Sydney Water's budget.

An article titled "Fixing all leaks not possible" in the *Daily Telegraph* of 22 October 2003 referred to Minister Sartor, the then Minister for Utilities, and said Sydney Water had no plans to increase spending on plugging its daily 188 million litre torrent of wasted water despite the tough mandatory restrictions it was imposing on its customers. The Minister conceded there was still plenty of work to be done on fixing leaks, but there would be no expansion of the leak reduction programs. He estimated the corporation would spend \$65 million in 2003 to fix old pipes, including \$2.95 million on an active leak reduction program. The water is still leaking. In 2003 it was noted that the \$380 million in dividends paid by Sydney Water over the past four years should be returned to it to allow the corporation to do its job.

We flash forward to 2005 to a media release from Andrew Stoner, now the shadow Minister for Utilities, in which he said less than 1 per cent of our ageing water pipes were to be upgraded. He said the Labor Government's announcement that 80 kilometres of our fragile and leaking water mains would be renewed across Sydney Water's network involved merely routine maintenance and was inadequate. Mr Stoner said:

According to Sydney Water's most recent Annual Report, 9.3 per cent of our supply leaks out into the network's dilapidated water pipes and mains every year. Sydney Water operates 20,867 kms of water mains—renewing and upgrading just 80 kms amounts to less than one per cent of the network—it's a drop in the bucket.

What about the more than 99 per cent of the network or the 20,787 kms that will continue to age and grow increasingly fragile?

Day after day we see burst water mains creating havoc across Sydney, the Illawarra and the Blue Mountains. While the Government is forcing Sydneysiders to rein in their water use with further water restrictions and increased fines, Labor is not doing its bit.

Every year, almost 60 billion litres of water is being lost because of the Carr Government's failure to adequately maintain Sydney Water's pipes and mains.

This is water we can ill-afford to lose because Labor has done nothing to secure Sydney's water supply over the last ten years.

Some experts are predicting Sydney will run out of water in two years. Utilities Minister Sartor says 300 kms of water mains would be renewed over the next four years.

At that pace it could well be too late.

It is about time Labor got serious. The Government's promise to spend \$57 million on replacing water pipes across the Sydney Water network cannot be believed when the budget papers show that over the past three years Sydney Water failed to spend \$97 million allocated to improve water distribution and treatment systems. In 2004 Sydney Water lost 9.3 per cent of its water, almost 60 billion litres, because of leaks in the network and dilapidated water pipes and mains. It was reported in the budget that the Government would spend \$250 million over four years to renew 300 kilometres of water mains, including 80 kilometres this year. I could keep going. The Barton Group reports Labor's neglect of water infrastructure. The Government should pull up its socks and maintain its assets so we do not lose water through cracked pipes, so rainwater does not fall into sewage treatment plants and cause them to overflow, and so our precious environment—the Berowra Creek and Hawkesbury River in my area—is not compromised by failing sewage treatment plants.

Mr TONY STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.30 p.m.]: As the Parliamentary Secretary for Utilities and on behalf of the Minister I note the concerns of the honourable member about the performance of the Sydney sewerage system, especially during wet weather. However, I will put her concerns in perspective and not misconstrue the situation. The rainfall event referred to by the honourable member for Hornsby occurred between 25 May and 27 May 2003 and caused an intermittent bypass of the biological process at both the Hornsby Heights and West Hornsby sewage treatment plants [STPs]. It is important to point out that no raw sewage was discharged by the plants, nor did any raw sewage bypass the plants at any time. All flows received full disinfection. The plants performed in accordance with the design and all licence conditions set by the Environment Protection Authority, which is now the Department of Environment and Conservation. It is important to note that no non-compliance issues were associated with this wet weather event.

The Minister at the time relayed this information to the honourable member for Hornsby in answer to her question on notice No. 349, which was published on 3 September 2003. In 2002 Sydney Water completed a \$25 million upgrade of the West Hornsby and Hornsby Heights sewage treatment plants. The STPs were upgraded to provide ultraviolet disinfection and improve the biological nutrient removal to complement tertiary treatment processes. Part of the upgrade was the new storm flow treatment facility at West Hornsby STP, which detains wet weather flows until they can be treated. In wet weather stormwater flows into the sewerage system and may exceed the capacity of the system, which can result in overflows from the pipe network and/or the diversion of one or more treatment processes and treatment plants. These events are recognised within the environmental protection licences set by the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Sydney Water operates a large sewerage network consisting of 28 sewerage systems with pipes spanning 23,247 kilometres and an amazing 662 sewage pumping stations. About 1.6 million properties are connected to this system by another 22,000 kilometres of house lines, which, as the honourable member knows, are the responsibility of property owners. Analysis of stormwater inflows into the sewerage system shows that the rehabilitation of private sewers can reduce considerably the amount of stormwater entering sewers. Given the span and complexity of Sydney's sewer network it is unrealistic to expect that the entire system is waterproof, given that when it rains in Sydney it is usually with some intensity. That said, the Government is committed to improving the reliability of the system overall and will continue improvement programs. Field verified wet weather overflows have decreased over the past three years from 608 in 2002-03 to only 168 in the 2004-05 financial year.

Mr Michael Richardson: It hasn't been raining.

Mr TONY STEWART: That is the reality. If those opposite cannot face reality they should not be here. The northside storage tunnel is 20 kilometres long, from Lane Cove West to Tunks Park and from Scotts Creek to Tunks Park and converging on North Head Sewage Treatment Plant. Sydney Water has spent \$150 million to date to reduce wet and dry weather overflows, including the northside storage tunnel. Since it opened in September 2000 the tunnel has captured more than 17.6 billion litres of effluent from 78 separate capture events. Five years ago all that effluent would have gone directly into Sydney Harbour, which is what happened under the previous Coalition Government.

We have dealt with the problem. Sydneysiders now enjoy whales in the harbour and improved conditions around Sydney foreshores and the greater New South Wales coastline because of government initiatives put in place to deal with concerns raised by the honourable member for Hornsby. However, those concerns must be put into perspective by considering the facts that sustain them. Sydney Water has been at the forefront of ensuring that those concerns are dealt with effectively and efficiently.

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (The Hills) [12.36 p.m.]: I support the excellent motion moved by the honourable member for Hornsby because this issue has been important to me and my electorate going back to when I was first elected to this place in 1993, when the Coalition was in government. The extreme contrast between the attitude of the former Coalition Government and this Government to cleaning up Berowra Creek was evident when the Parliamentary Secretary said that wet weather overflows in the sewerage system have improved when it has not been raining; and when he talked at length about the northside storage tunnel and Sydney Harbour.

This issue relates not to Sydney Harbour but to Berowra Creek, which is a very important waterway and inlet of the Hawkesbury River and one in which the Coalition Government took extreme interest in the early to mid 1990s. Longer-term members of this place might recall the establishment of the Berowra Creek community contract, which was signed off in 1994 by the then Minister for Planning and Sydney Water, Robert Webster, and Hornsby Shire Council on behalf of the local community surrounding Berowra Creek. This pioneering agreement was designed to improve the water in Berowra Creek while, at the same time, allow development to go ahead.

One of the important issues that needed to be addressed was the upgrade of the West Hornsby and Hornsby Heights sewage treatment plants. Neither the Parliamentary Secretary nor the Government can take credit for this upgrade because it was in train going back to 1994. The Parliamentary Secretary may not remember, but the Labor Party came into government in 1995. One problem is that the Government's so-called SewerFix program is not working. Indeed, the northside storage tunnel is not working when there is heavy rain, which, fortunately for the Government, has not happened on too many occasions recently.

I know the Government is very enthusiastic about filling the dams to bail itself out of its problems of providing an adequate supply of water to Sydney, but at times I believe the Government would prefer to have less rain so the weaknesses of the sewerage system will not be exposed for all to see. In a single year under the SewerFix Program, Sydney Water renews just 135 kilometres of sewer pipes out of the 23,000 kilometres of pipes in Sydney. At that rate it will take a couple of hundred years to fix all the sewer pipes in Sydney. That simply is not good enough.

In common with Hornsby and Hawkesbury constituents, many of my constituents in The Hills electorate are paying \$160 a year for a special catchment remediation levy to assist in fixing the problems that confront Berowra Creek, such as red algal bloom. We should keep in mind that the oyster industry in the Hawkesbury was wiped out as a consequence of this Government's neglect of issues such as stormwater and sewage run-off that flows into Berowra Creek. The Government stands condemned for its failure to take action on this important issue.

It is all very well for the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Police and Utilities to refer to the northside storage tunnel and to claim the Government has allegedly done a wonderful job with Sydney Harbour, but what about people who live in areas to the north of Sydney? What about the people near Berowra Creek who are paying the extra levy and expect it to be applied to cleaning up waterways in their area? The honourable member for Hornsby quite deliberately has brought this important issue to the attention of the Parliament because she understands the issues and the impact they are having on her constituents.

Mr GEOFF CORRIGAN (Camden) [12.41 p.m.]: The Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Police and Utilities has dealt with the substantive aspects of the motion moved by the honourable member

for Hornsby, so I will deal with some of the issues that have been mentioned by other speakers during this debate, and correct some of the false information that has been given. Sydney Water is continuing to work at reducing wet and dry weather overflows. During 2005-06 Sydney Water will spend approximately \$80 million on sewer maintenance and \$63 million on renewals and upgrades.

Sydney Water's SewerFix Program involves the rehabilitation, amplification and upgrading of sewerage assets. SewerFix will improve the health of the waterways by reducing overflows and leakage from the sewerage system. SewerFix consists of two key programs: the sewage pumping stations program, which delivered a program of upgrades to 258 sewage pumping stations over the past four years, and an upgrading program, on which a further \$22.8 million will be spent in 2005-06 to upgrade 168 pumping stations across Sydney, including \$12 million for telemetry improvements to ensure ongoing station performance.

During 2005-06 \$13 million will be spent on the pipes hot spots program, which involves the rehabilitation and amplification of sewer main catchments that affect water quality at swimming sites, separation of combined sewers in the city to improve water quality in Black Wattle Bay, Darling Harbour and Circular Quay, and detailed sewer catchment management plans. Key targets of the SewerFix Program are to achieve no dry weather overflows at sewage pumping stations, reduce wet weather overflows to 10 events every 10 years from the sewerage system in the Blue Mountains, and reduce the frequency of chokes in sewers.

During 2004-05 Sydney Water invested \$33 million in relining 91 kilometres of sewer mains, which represents an increase from the 65 kilometres in 2003-04, to reduce the number of choked pipes in dry weather and to help prevent rainwater from entering and overloading the system, causing sewage overflows. Part of that \$33 million was spent on relining sewer pipes to reduce the incidence of tree roots penetrating and blocking pipes, thereby causing sewage overflows, and the systematic cleaning of tree roots and silt from 465 kilometres of sewers. That funding also enabled the continuation of the inspection and cleaning of sewers near watercourses that are classified by the Department of Environment and Conservation as specially protected, or protected.

Sydney Water is also improving reliability at its sewage treatment plants. Sydney Water is planning to spend \$123.6 million in 2005-06 to renew ageing assets and improve reliability at its 29 sewage treatment plants. This will enable the plants to service urban growth, which affects my electorate of Camden, and to reliably meet the conditions of Department of Environment and Conservation licences. The \$95 million Bondi Sewage Treatment Plant Reliability Improvement and Modernisation Program is scheduled for completion in 2007. Forecasted expenditure for this project in 2005-06 is \$24 million. Work on the project is well advanced and will improve the distribution and control of the flow of waste water through the plant; the capture, handling and disposal of screenings and grit; sludge and scum withdrawal and transfer; solids handling systems, such as sludge digestion and dewatering; pumping of screened effluent; the work environment, including plant ventilation, control systems and utilities, such as electrical and water systems.

A suite of reliability improvement projects is also being implemented at North Head sewage treatment plant to ensure that the plant will continue to meet the Department of Environment and Conservation's licence requirements. The total expenditure on this project in 2005-06 is forecast to be \$23.5 million. The North Head sewage treatment plant reliability improvements will include screenings and grit removal and handling, grease and solids removal and handling, improved automation and control, improved biosolids treatment and handling, recycled water plant to reduce potable water needs and the renewal of ageing plant assets.

Construction work is progressing at sewage treatment plants at west Camden and Shellharbour. I invite all honourable members to visit west Camden and inspect that valued facility, which will benefit my electorate and neighbouring electorates such as Southern Highlands. The construction work will amplify and upgrade the plants. Forecast expenditure on these projects in 2005-06 is \$24 million for the plant at west Camden and \$22 million on the plant at Shellharbour. These projects will enable sewage treatment plants to service urban growth while reducing environmental impacts. Reliability improvement and renewals work is also proceeding at Sydney Water's other sewage treatment plants; a total of \$17 million has been allocated in the budget for that work in 2005-06.

Mr STEVEN PRINGLE (Hawkesbury) [12.46 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for Hornsby for bringing this serious matter to the attention of the House because it affects not just people in the Hornsby area or people who live in the Hawkesbury electorate but Sydney as a whole. Berowra Creek is part of the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system, which is one of the great waterways of the world. The system is very important for the economic viability of Sydney and this State. It is also important because it caters for recreational pursuits, such as water skiing and boating, and agriculture.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean area produces most of the vegetable products that are grown in the Sydney Basin and most of the turf that is supplied to Sydney. Let us not forget also that the sweetest prawns in the world come from the Hawkesbury and that the Hawkesbury-Nepean system is the site of a major fishing industry. Berowra Creek is part of that system, so it is vitally important not to let nutrients flow from it into the Hawkesbury-Nepean system. The water quality of Berowra Creek must be maintained to provide a safe recreational and agricultural environment.

The honourable member for Hornsby informed the House that the Government had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, to upgrade sewage treatment plants at Hornsby, west Hornsby and Hornsby Heights. The upgrading of sewerage treatment plants was an initiative of the former Liberal Government, but those upgrading programs have progressed very slowly during the term of this Government. That is symptomatic of how the Government neglects major problems that are facing Berowra Creek and the Hawkesbury region as a whole.

The Priority Sewerage Program directly affects the suburbs of Galston and Glenorie. Residents of those suburbs have been waiting for many years for a decent sewerage system. Despite that, Sydney Water and this Government have set back any attempts to improve the treatment of sewage and ameliorate the high cost of the pump-out service. This Government has failed to replace the pump-out service with an adequate sewerage system. Residents of Wilberforce, Glossodia and Freeman's Reach have been let down by this Government's failure to direct Sydney Water to provide an adequate sewerage system in Sydney.

One could be forgiven for thinking that people in many areas are living in a third world country, thanks to this Government. Sydney ought to be the premier city of the world and its services should be up to first world standard. We have heard from the honourable member for Hornsby that sewerage pipes are broken and are leaking sewage into the system that feeds indirectly into the Hawkesbury River and Berowra Creek. Clearly they need to be fixed quickly. We need to ensure that the Government adheres to the principles of ecological sustainable development. It pays lip-service to that but it is not actually doing anything serious about it. The dividends from Sydney Water are not adequately used to maintain the system. I ask the Government to get its act together, to try to prevent blue-green algae blooms, to prevent toxic substances from going into waterways, to get water quality up to a suitable level for swimming, to get serious about total catchment management, and to introduce adequate policies for our State's rivers and estuaries.

I ask the Government to make sure that the successor to the Environment Protection Authority ensures that we provide good-quality water, water that is safe for swimming and for the variety of uses that I outlined. I ask the Government to get its act together, to quickly provide adequate money to fix the pipes that the honourable member for Hornsby has so clearly identified that need to be replaced, and to protect our waterways.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [12.51 p.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable members representing the electorates of The Hills, Hawkesbury, Bankstown and Camden for their contributions to the debate. They dealt with not only the sensitivity of Berowra Creek and its environs but also the issues of cracked pipes and unmaintained related infrastructure. Obviously the lack of funding has impeded Sydney Water from being able to fix, in a timely fashion, problems with cracked pipes and related infrastructure issues, to protect sewage treatment plants and the surrounding environment. I emphasise that this motion is related to asset management and lack of maintenance. I moved the motion 2½ years ago and not much has changed in the meantime.

I note that in 2002 there were some upgrades to the system, but there are still cracked pipes near to sewage treatment plants. Recently Sydney has not experienced heavy rain, so wet weather flows have not been able to be tested and compared with rates in previous years. We must do everything possible to protect the Berowra Creek environment. The honourable member for The Hills mentioned the 1994 agreement that was designed to improve water quality in Berowra Creek while allowing development to go ahead. Although algal bloom conditions have improved, a lot more work needs to be done on the infrastructure.

As the replacement of water and sewerage pipes has been inadequate, it would be unfair to place a levy on ratepayers. If the Government were serious it would allocate more money towards fixing cracked pipes so we would not have rainwater runoff into waterways, as well as a loss of water, and it would provide sewerage services to all unsewered areas. It is very hard to believe that in 2005 substantial areas of the Sydney metropolitan area remain unsewered. In the Hawkesbury electorate, unsewered areas include Brooklyn, Dangar Island, Cowan and Galston. This is a sensitive catchment area. I mentioned the recent disaster in the oyster industry. Although the QX parasite is a bit of a mystery, local oyster industry workers partly blame the

condition of the Hawkesbury River on cracked pipes and overflows into the Berowra Creek and Hawkesbury River. As I have said, insufficient funding is allocated to maintain the infrastructure, and that needs to be corrected by the Government sooner rather than later.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 29

Mr Aplin	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Richardson
Mr Barr	Mr Humpherson	Mr Roberts
Ms Berejikian	Mr Kerr	Mrs Skinner
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr Souris
Mr Constance	Ms Moore	Mr Tink
Mr Debnam	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Torbay
Mr Draper	Mr O'Farrell	Mr R. W. Turner
Mrs Fardell	Mr Page	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mrs Hancock	Mr Piccoli	Mr George
Mr Hazzard	Mr Pringle	Mr Maguire

Noes, 44

Mr Amery	Mr Greene	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Andrews	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Mr Bartlett	Mr Hickey	Ms Saliba
Ms Beamer	Mr Hunter	Mr Sartor
Mr Black	Ms Judge	Mr Shearan
Mr Brown	Ms Keneally	Mr Stewart
Ms Burney	Mr Lynch	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Campbell	Mr McLeay	Mr Tripodi
Mr Collier	Ms Meagher	Mr Watkins
Mr Corrigan	Ms Megarrity	Mr West
Mr Crittenden	Mr Mills	Mr Whan
Mr Daley	Mr Morris	Mr Yeadon
Mr Debus	Mr Newell	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gaudry	Ms Nori	Mr Ashton
Mr Gibson	Mr Orkopoulos	Mr Martin

Pairs

Mr Armstrong	Ms Allan
Mr Hartcher	Mr Chaytor
Ms Seaton	Ms Gadiel
Mr Stoner	Mr Price

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

LEGISLATION REVIEW AMENDMENT (FAMILY IMPACT) BILL

Bill received and read a first time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I advise members that the honourable member for Davidson will have the carriage of the bill in this House.

Second reading ordered to stand as an order of the day.

[Mr Speaker left the chair at 1.05 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery the abbot of Shaolin Temple, Mr Shi Yong Xin, guest of the honourable member for Kiama. I also welcome Mr Tony Windsor, former member for Tamworth and current member for the Federal electorate of New England.

MINISTRY

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: In the absence of the Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Central Coast the Minister for Community Services, and Minister for Youth will answer questions on his behalf. I also welcome Mr Tony Windsor, former member for Tamworth and current member for the Federal electorate of New England.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Property Legislation Amendment Bill
Security Interests in Goods Bill
Local Government Amendment (Stormwater) Bill
Standard Time Amendment (Daylight Saving) Bill
Luna Park Site Amendment (Noise Control) Bill

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business

[During notices of motions]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I again draw the attention of members to the length of their notices.

Later,

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Hawkesbury will give his notice of motion or resume his seat.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Hawkesbury to order for the first time and direct him to resume his seat.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am sorely tempted to rule the notice of motion given by the honourable member for Hawkesbury out of order. Although I am willing to allow a certain amount of give and take in relation to matters of humour, I do not regard his behaviour, after I had given him a degree of latitude, as meeting the standards of the House. I will not rule his notice of motion out of order, but in future the honourable member for Hawkesbury will observe the standing orders. I also call the honourable member for Blacktown to order.

PETITIONS

Gaming Machine Tax

Petitions opposing the decision to increase poker machine tax, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood** and **Mr Andrew Tink**.

Alstonville Bypass

Petition requesting that the Alstonville Bypass be completed by the end of 2006, received from **Mr Donald Page**.

Southern Tablelands Rail Services

Petition opposing any reduction in rail services on the Southern Tablelands line, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Southern Tablelands CityRail Timetable

Petition requesting changes to the Southern Tablelands CityRail timetable, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Pets on Public Transport

Petition requesting that pets be allowed on public transport, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Murwillumbah to Casino Rail Service

Petitions requesting the retention of the CountryLink rail service from Murwillumbah to Casino, received from **Mr Neville Newell** and **Mr Donald Page**.

Blacktown to Richmond Night Bus Service

Petition requesting a bus service from Blacktown along the Richmond line between midnight and 5.00 a.m., received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

CountryLink Rail Services

Petition opposing the abolition of CountryLink rail services and their replacement with bus services in rural and regional New South Wales, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Goulburn Child Therapy Services

Petition requesting the reinstatement of speech, child psychology, physio and occupational therapy services in Goulburn for the treatment of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other disabilities, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Japanese Whaling in Australian Waters

Petition opposing Japanese commercial whaling in Australian waters, received from **Mr John Bartlett**.

Anti-Discrimination (Religious Tolerance) Legislation

Petition opposing the proposed anti-discrimination (religious tolerance) legislation, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Kurnell Desalination Plant

Petition opposing the construction of a desalination plant at Kurnell, received from **Mr Malcolm Kerr**.

Wagga Wagga Electorate Schools Airconditioning

Petition requesting the installation of airconditioning in all learning spaces in public schools in the Wagga Wagga electorate, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

Model Farms High School Hall

Petition requesting the provision of a school hall for the Model Farms High School, received from **Mr Wayne Merton**.

Colo High School Airconditioning

Petition requesting the installation of airconditioning in all classrooms and the library of Colo High School, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Breast Screening Funding

Petitions requesting funding for BreastScreen NSW, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell, Mrs Judy Hopwood, Mr Wayne Merton and Mr Andrew Stoner.**

Greater Southern Area Health Service Family and Carer Support Program

Petition requesting retention of the Greater Southern Area Health Service Family and Carer Support Program, received from **Mr Andrew Constance.**

Muswellbrook Midwifery Program

Petition requesting the implementation of a community midwifery program in Muswellbrook, received from **Mr George Souris.**

Kempsey Water Fluoridation

Petition opposing the addition of fluoride to the Kempsey and district water supply, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner.**

Kurnell Sandmining

Petition opposing sandmining on the Kurnell Peninsula, received from **Mr Barry Collier.**

Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme

Petitions objecting to the criteria for country cancer patients to qualify for the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson and Mr Andrew Stoner.**

Recreational Fishing

Petitions opposing any restrictions on recreational fishing in the mid North Coast waters, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner and Mr John Turner.**

Collector Bushrangers Reserve Motorcycle Track

Petition requesting approval for the construction of a motorcycle track at Collector Bushrangers Reserve, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson.**

Crown Land Leases

Petition requesting the withdrawal of changes to the rental structure of Crown land leases, particularly enclosed road permits, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson.**

Water-Access-Only Property Policy

Petition requesting a review of the water-access-only property policy, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood.**

Willoughby Traffic Conditions

Petition requesting a regional traffic plan for the Pacific Highway at Willoughby, including a traffic study for Artarmon, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian.**

Edinburgh Road, Willoughby, Traffic Conditions

Petition requesting a right turn arrow for traffic travelling west on Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag, turning north onto Eastern Valley Way, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian.**

Grafton Bridge

Petition requesting the construction of a new bridge over the Clarence River at Grafton, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

F6 Corridor Community Use

Petition noting the decision of the Minister for Roads, gazetted in February 2003, to abandon the construction of any freeway or motorway in the F6 corridor, and requesting preservation of the corridor for open space, community use and public transport, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Barton Highway Dual Carriageway Funding

Petition requesting that the Minister for Roads change the Roads and Traffic Authority's priority for Federal AusLink funding for the Barton Highway to allow the construction of a dual carriageway, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Murrumbateman Traffic Conditions

Petition requesting a safe crossing of the Barton Highway at Murrumbateman, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Old Northern and New Line Roads Strategic Route Development Study

Petition requesting funding for implementation of the Old Northern and New Line roads strategic route development study, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Forster-Tuncurry Cycleways

Petition requesting the building of a cycleway in the Forster-Tuncurry area as shown on plans of the State coastal cycleway, received from **Mr John Turner**.

Macdonald River Signage

Petition requesting that the Macdonald River be provided with signage stating "4 or 8 knots, no skiing, no wash", received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS TREATMENT BENCHMARKS

Mr PETER DEBNAM: My question is addressed to the Premier. Given the latest Government reports show that eight out of 10 people with potentially life-threatening injuries presenting at Westmead Hospital and seven out of 10 people presenting at Liverpool Hospital are not treated within the 30-minute benchmark, what advice does he have for families from Western Sydney who are at risk?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Gosford will cease interjecting. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The improvement in triage times is one of our key priorities. That is why over the past 18 months we have opened 1,300 extra beds.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for North Shore will come to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: And why we have additional capacity in our emergency departments to deal with the ever-increasing numbers of presentations. It also involves the creation of the Emergency Care Task Force to assist with the expansion in capacity of emergency departments to enable them to deal with the ever-increasing numbers of patients who attend. I understand the honourable member's question related to a number

of specific instances at hospitals. I can provide the following advice from health agencies. In relation to one case, a statistic that relates to Royal North Shore Hospital, the advice I have from Northern Sydney Area Health Service is that the instance resulted from a data entry error and that the correct figure for the triage category one is—

Mrs Jillian Skinner: The question was about Westmead and Liverpool.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I will get to Westmead.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. We are talking about Western Sydney. Do not make up figures. We are talking about Western Sydney.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier is answering the question.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member has been giving a press conference on the four hospitals. To save him another question in Question Time I thought I would give him the figures for Royal North Shore Hospital. Westmead is coming. In relation to Royal North Shore Hospital, the advice is that it is a data entry error. In fact, triage category one figure is 100 per cent for Royal North Shore Hospital. In relation to Westmead, the advice from the area health service is that the patient to whom the Leader of the Opposition refers was intubated prior to arrival.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Intubated.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Yes, that is correct, intubated.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Gosford will cease calling out.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I am advised that the patient was intubated prior to arrival and was taken directly to the resuscitation bay in the emergency department for definitive care. As such, the patient was a triage bypass patient.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I am advised that the patient was originally assessed as a triage category two patient. However, the patient's condition deteriorated so the patient was admitted immediately to the resuscitation bay. That is the advice in relation to the Westmead Hospital from the Sydney West Area Health Service. To save the honourable member for North Shore from having to ask a question about the Royal North Shore Hospital, I also provide advice in relation to that hospital. There was a data error in relation to the Royal North Shore Hospital and the rate is 100 per cent. In relation to the Westmead Hospital, the patient had been intubated prior to arrival, classified as a triage bypass patient and taken directly to the resuscitation bay in the emergency department for care. In relation to the Nepean Hospital, the patient was originally assessed as a triage category two patient, but the patient's condition deteriorated. The patient was taken immediately to the resuscitation bay.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: You are blaming the doctors now.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The thing about the shadow Minister is that she just cannot wait.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: You are blaming the doctors.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: No-one is blaming the doctors.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: You are.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Not at all. The doctors are fantastic.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for North Shore to order for the second time. She will cease calling out.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Nepean and Westmead doctors in those emergency departments absolutely are among the best in the country. The only people who have been launching attacks on our health care professionals over the past two years are those seated on the Opposition side of this Chamber.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: We know over the past two years how members of the Opposition have come into this place to launch attack after attack on our health care professionals, yet they have the gall to say that there is some sort of criticism being levelled at the doctors at Nepean and Westmead hospitals—they are among the best emergency department doctors in the country.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr JEFF HUNTER: My question without notice is addressed to the Premier. What is the Government's response to community concerns about mental health?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: None of us can be proud of the situation faced by those requiring treatment for mental illness—not Labor, Liberal, The Nationals, State or Commonwealth.

Mr Peter Debnam: Especially you.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Leader of the Opposition might want to support what I am about to say—just for once. None of us can be proud of the situation faced by those who require treatment for mental illness—not the Commonwealth, not the State and not anyone, regardless of political persuasion. In the past few years a great deal of work has been undertaken to redress some of the inadequacies of past treatments, infrastructure and programs associated with the treatment of those who suffer from mental illness.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: Not enough.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: That is right. The honourable member for Willoughby suggests that a lot more can be done, and she is absolutely right. There is room for significant improvement. I say yes to that, and that is exactly what the Government is determined to achieve. In recognising the efforts that have been made over the past few years in addressing mental health issues, we must thank people such as Dr Brian Pezzutti and his committee for their work in undertaking an inquiry into mental health services and for their assessment of what is needed to be able to provide improved standards of treatment for people suffering from mental illness.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: We should also be thankful that in recent years more resources, including more beds in acute and subacute wards and community resources, have been directed toward improving treatment for those who suffer from mental illness. But of course, a lot more can be done. It is up to the honourable member for Willoughby to join us in our efforts to properly address the treatment of mental health issues. The heart of properly addressing mental health issues is recognition that mental health is a national issue and requires the adoption of a national approach.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: It is a national issue that requires a national approach.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: It is not a matter of the Commonwealth and State governments shifting blame; it is simply a matter of co-operation and recognising that a truly national approach should be taken to tackling national issues. It does not help for people to come into this place and cite outdated statistics to highlight that there is a problem in mental health. That is the approach that the honourable member for Willoughby always takes.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Immediately after the resumption of the House following the recent recess, there was her celebrated question about the Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill [ARAFMI]

and the association's funding. The honourable member for Willoughby got that so badly wrong because all she was interested in doing was playing politics. The grant for ARAFMI that had been cut turned out to be not a State grant, but a Commonwealth grant, yet in came the honourable member for Willoughby to this Chamber—

Mr Andrew Tink: Point of order: The Premier attacks the honourable member for Willoughby over statistics.

Mr SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr Andrew Tink: He has just admitted that his latest statistics for Royal North Shore Hospital were no good. He has had dud statistics himself, so he should not attack the honourable member for Willoughby when his own statistics are no good.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: That is typical of the Opposition's usual approach, coming in here and trying to score a political point. We all heard the celebrated ARAFMI question about how a grant had been taken away from ARAFMI, but it turned out to be a Commonwealth grant. That is not the correct approach.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: What the honourable member for Willoughby is right about is that those who have a mental illness deserve a better go and a lot of improvement needs to take place, and on that, we are entirely in agreement.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A number of members have taken to calling out merely to disrupt the procedures of this House. I will not reward those members by ejecting them from the Chamber because it seems that is the way they achieve notoriety. I remind members that there are various ways in which the Chair may impose sanctions on members who disrupt the proceedings. I will not tolerate members deliberately flouting the standing orders and calling out merely for the purpose of making a lot of noise. The House is a place in which intelligent questions are asked and Ministers provide answers. It is not a place in which members are able to make a great deal of noise merely to cause disruption.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: No doubt when she is given five minutes to give notice of her motion—

Mr Peter Debnam: Just tell the truth.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will show some leadership.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: —we will be given either more outdated statistics or misstatements.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chair finds the statement by the Leader of the Opposition offensive. It implies that the Premier is lying. The Leader of the Opposition will show some leadership and resume his seat.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order—

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order for the third time. I will not tolerate his constant interjections while I am speaking.

[Interruption]

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

Mr Peter Debnam: In relation to my point of order, I was just going to congratulate the Chair on the words uttered earlier. I think it is very important that the House listen to what the Speaker says. Intelligent questions are asked, but we are interested in the dumb answers we get here.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is openly flouting the ruling of the Chair. He seems to think that this is a playroom and that he can lower his standard of behaviour to that of an errant schoolboy. I warn the Leader of the Opposition that the Chair will not allow behaviour of that sort. The Chair will not tolerate insinuations that the Premier or Ministers are lying or the constant disruption of the proceedings of the House. The Premier will be heard in silence.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Yesterday I was asked in response to the report that was released—

Mr John Turner: Where did you get that brown tie?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Myall Lakes to order. That is exactly the sort of nonsense I will not tolerate.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I am not that far from Myall Lakes. Yesterday I was asked to commit to a 1 per cent increase in mental health funding. In response to that I pointed out how the current mental health budget provides for a 9 per cent increase, and that comes on top of the budget in the previous financial year, which also provided for a similar increase. That is an example of what I mentioned earlier about how necessary improvement has taken place. As the honourable member for Willoughby pointed out—not just in this House but also in other forums—a lot more is required to be done. The simple proposition is that those suffering mental illness really deserve a focused national approach, because there are national issues that need to be addressed.

That is why the New South Wales Government will continue to do what it has been doing as far as record amounts of funding to mental health, in both the community sector and the acute sector, and also providing extra investment in infrastructure required for those suffering mental illness, and for the support of carers. In doing that we recognise that there are national issues and that a national approach will result in an even better deal for those with a mental illness. That is why we want to work co-operatively with the Commonwealth. In that context, if the Commonwealth Minister for Health was sincere in his comments yesterday, he will find New South Wales 100 per cent co-operative in working with him to get a better deal for those with mental illness and their carers.

The issue is not about who has control, who has the power; the issue is simply about better quality of services for those with mental illness and support for their carers. They are the only issues that matter. The issue is not about power or who will control the area; it is about working together more co-operatively and doing better for those with mental illness. That is the message from yesterday's report, the message in response to the Commonwealth Minister for Health and Ageing.

I am seeking to convene a special meeting of the Council of Australian Governments [COAG], the nations leaders, and their health Ministers, so we can do just that. I will write to all Premiers to seek support for a COAG meeting, to find practical solutions to the issues that have been highlighted in yesterday's report and also in a lot of the good work that has been done in the past, in particular by people such as Dr Brian Pezzutti. We should all try to find a better deal, a better way, to improve services for those with mental illness. We should not just come into this Chamber, or into other parliaments across the nation, including the Commonwealth, to score tawdry points in a political game, in particular using figures that might be four or five years out of date.

For the benefit of the honourable member for Upper Hunter and the shadow Minister for Health I will list the national issues that the Commonwealth Government can address. For example, they include undergraduate training opportunities, particularly in relation to mental health nursing; the immigration rules around trained psychiatrists, whom we are trying to recruit from the United Kingdom and other countries; or providing greater incentives for general practitioners to be involved in the treatment of serious mental illness in the community.

Boosting community infrastructure and community support for those with mental illness involves general practice and supported accommodation and support for carers, but if general practice was more involved in the treatment of mental illness we could achieve a lot more. If general practice was more involved in support for those with mental illness we could meet more of our objectives of preventing hospitalisation, we could do

more in preventing readmissions to hospital. General practice is exclusively a Commonwealth jurisdictional matter. For the benefit of the shadow Minister for Health, those are just three ways that the Commonwealth could approach it, and we can work co-operatively with the Commonwealth, not buck-passing, not arguing with the Commonwealth, but recognising what Tony Abbott said yesterday. If the Commonwealth is sincere, New South Wales is there 100 per cent.

CROSS-CITY TUNNEL

Mr ANDREW STONER: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Roads. How does the Minister explain to motorists that immediately following the 2007 State election they will be paying \$6.40 more each day for using the cross-city tunnel, a total of \$38.20 a week, because his Government arrogantly sold out community interests in granting above consumer price index toll increases to the operator?

Mr Gerard Martin: A good question for the bush.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I always ask intelligent questions.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Bathurst will come to order. I call the honourable member for Gosford to order.

Mr George Souris: Lock the bar down, in case he wants to run away.

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI: The 64-page contract summary—

Ms Sandra Nori: The member for Upper Hunter is a disgrace. His comment yesterday was even worse. It was disgraceful.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation to order. The comments and interjections of the honourable member for Upper Hunter are offensive to this House and to every member of it.

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI: The member for Upper Hunter is pathetic and a racist. The 64-page contract summary is on the Treasury web site. The project deed for the cross-city tunnel is available for public inspection. Information about the toll price and how it is calculated is clearly spelled out in those documents. In the final stages of contract negotiations with the Cross City Motorway Consortium, adjustments were made to the way the toll price is calculated. The adjustments were necessary due to changes affecting the project that occurred between the signing of tenders and the signing of the contract.

LIVERPOOL TO PARRAMATTA TRANSITWAY

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Transport. What is the latest information on the transitway passenger boom?

Mr JOHN WATKINS: The Liverpool to Parramatta transitway [T-way] is a great public transport success—and the fact that more and more passengers are using it every month proves that. Patronage on that rapid, dedicated bus service is increasing by hundreds of thousands of passenger movements a year. Every few months patronage reaches a new benchmark, and as patronage increases so does revenue. The latest figures speak for themselves, proving that more and more people in Sydney's west are turning to the T-way because it is fast, efficient and comfortable. In its first month of operation in February 2003, just 9,566 people rode the T-way between Liverpool and Parramatta. In August 2005 that number had grown to 174,402, which is 174,000 passengers in one month, compared to 9,000 passengers in the month the T-way opened.

Next month the T-way will carry its four-millionth passenger. I travelled on the T-way service just six months ago, when it carried its three-millionth passenger. That increase demonstrates how popular and successful it has become in Western Sydney. Demand for services is so great that more frequent services and a new timetable will be introduced next year. With more and more people moving to Sydney and the Federal Government's failure to adequately address the rising petrol prices, we expect that T-way patronage to keep on growing.

It is worth listening to what passengers have to say about the T-way. Independent research conducted earlier this year showed that 98 per cent of passengers were either satisfied or very satisfied with their travel

experience on the T-way. The survey also showed that people were abandoning their cars to take up public transport on the T-way. The survey found that 4,300 former drivers had deserted their private vehicles for the switch to T-way buses; that is great for local traffic and for the environment. A caller to the Angela Catterns show on Vega FM just before 8 o'clock this morning said:

My husband catches the bus to Parramatta, we live in the Greystanes area and we actually love it ...

We find it's really fast, really smooth, it's \$3.20 each way ...

It's really well used, it's really comfortable—it's great, we really like it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Baulkham Hills will come to order.

Mr JOHN WATKINS: It is the Government's responsibility to ensure affordable, safe and viable transport for the New South Wales public. No public transport system exists to generate a profit—a reality that members of the Opposition should understand. However, as I reminded the House just this week, they did propose a public transport option that was supposed to be at no cost to government. That option, the airport rail link, went backwards to the tune of \$800 million. That is their idea of public transport in New South Wales! The T-way delivers a service that Western Sydney was crying out for—a fast, efficient and direct link between the major employment centres of Liverpool and Parramatta.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Baulkham Hills will come to order.

Mr JOHN WATKINS: More efficient public transport routes that link rapidly growing regional centres, connect with rail and other services, and take passengers where they want to go is what our metropolitan bus reforms set out to achieve. Since its opening in February 2003 the T-way has been operated by State Transit. In future, with the State Government's metropolitan bus reforms now complete, we will re-examine the options to find the best operational result. The success of this transport link means that there is no need to rush into those discussions. The T-way is working and its commuters are voting with their feet.

As I announced in this place earlier this week, 12 private and public bus companies have now signed up to contracts worth \$2.8 billion over the next seven years. Our bus reforms are guaranteeing the provision of 320 million passenger journeys to 3.8 million people in the Sydney metropolitan area—from the Hawkesbury River in the north to Engadine in the south and out to Penrith. It means more certainty for private bus operators and their staff, and peace of mind for the travelling commuters of Sydney. The highly successful 31-kilometre Liverpool to Parramatta T-way is just the first stage of Western Sydney's T-way network. New links are planned from Parramatta to Rouse Hill and from Blacktown to Parklea so people in those areas can also experience the fast and efficient bus service that the T-way delivers.

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS TREATMENT BENCHMARKS

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. When will he apologise to the parents of more than 1,000 children who presented at the Children's Hospital Westmead in August 2005 in potentially life-threatening conditions and who were not treated within the 30-minute benchmark? Does he not care about children?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Wollongong will come to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Earlier I outlined some of initiatives that the Government is taking to improve the performance of emergency departments, in particular, triage treatment and assessment, and waiting times in emergency departments. The honourable member for North Shore will never thank clinical staff in our emergency departments who have been responsible for significant improvements in access block. In relation to the triage treatment times, I have outlined some of the initiatives that the Government is taking to assist the parents of those and other children across the State who rely on emergency departments in ever-increasing numbers because they cannot rely on getting a general practitioner after hours. They have been going out backwards because of the unavailability of after-hours services, so parents are increasingly turning to emergency departments.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for North Shore has asked a question. She should be courteous enough to listen to the reply.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: There has been a 9 per cent increase in emergency departments and we have provided an additional 1,300 beds. The sustainable access plan commenced just over 16 months ago to improve the performance of our hospitals, to expand their capacity and to deal with the increasing numbers of patients attending emergency departments as well as hospitals. Those are some of the plans that this Government has in place to improve performance. We will continue backing those plans with resources so that performance in emergency departments and our hospitals continues to improve.

ESTUARY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Mr JOHN BARTLETT: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for the Environment. What is the latest information regarding improvements in the management of the State's tidal waterways?

Mr BOB DEBUS: Rivers, of course, provide a most important focus for industry, tourism and recreational activities across the State. Much of that activity focuses on our coastal river estuaries, which support thousands of commercial fishers, aquaculture industries and the recreational angling sector. They also provide valuable habitat and nursery areas for marine species and they are the sites for an array of activities of a recreational nature, including skiing and boating. River estuaries along the coast are an essential element in our way of life, both for local people and for tourists. As a result, many of them are under some form of environmental stress, or simply in need of protection and rehabilitation.

The Government has been a strong supporter of measures to protect and improve rivers through the New South Wales Estuary Management Program, which is administered by the Department of Natural Resources in partnership with local government and community groups. Today I am pleased to inform the House that the New South Wales Government has again committed significant financial support to this vital program. My colleague the Minister for Natural Resources announced further funding of \$4.1 million this financial year to assist councils to undertake a wide variety of projects. The Government is offering funding to 37 local councils for 107 projects along the coastline.

In addition, two other agencies have received funding to carry out major projects. This includes the Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee, which has been allocated \$400,000 for its continuing work on environmental restoration of that important coastal lake. It is the largest estuary in New South Wales and one of the largest in Australia, and it is becoming one of this State's real growth areas as the population continues to climb and as more people use the lake. The Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee has been undertaking significant environmental restoration work in that area since 1999, including works at Salts Bay, Fennell Bay and Edmunds Bay. Already, the New South Wales Government has provided \$9.35 million to the committee—funding that has been matched by Lake Macquarie and Wyong councils.

Councils will also match that further funding to enable the committee to start focusing on projects that include some important stormwater controls in the upper catchment. In a separate project the Department of Environment and Conservation has been allocated \$200,000 for the restoration of the Audley Weir fishway in the Royal National Park. Other projects to receive funding under the program include almost \$100,000 to Wyong Shire Council for Tuggerah Lakes and Wyong River stabilisation works; \$95,000 to Port Stephens Council for foreshore management and erosion prevention; \$50,000 to begin work on an estuary management plan for the lower Parramatta River; \$210,000 for Newcastle City Council to carry out restoration works along the Hunter River; and \$165,000 for the rehabilitation of estuaries and river banks in the Wollongong area.

Many of those projects funded by the Government also include community awareness and education components and involve local people in the decision-making process. The Estuary Management Program is a most excellent example of what can be achieved when the Government works in partnership with local councils and communities to protect the environment. There is no doubt that our rivers, coastal lakes and tidal wetlands will continue to benefit from these continuing commitments.

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS TREATMENT BENCHMARKS

Mr IAN ARMSTRONG: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Given the fact that government reports show Dubbo hospital fails to meet its own benchmarks for the treatment of patients with immediately life threatening, imminently life threatening, potentially life threatening and potentially serious injuries, what confidence can the people of Dubbo have in their hospital?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Given that the collapse of bulk-billing is felt most keenly in rural areas, it is a little surprising that the honourable member for Lachlan would ask a question—

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: —about emergency departments, and particularly attendances at them, which have increased from 1.5 million to just over two million in a little under a decade. What confidence can people have in Dubbo Base Hospital? They can have every confidence—no matter who they are or which part of the region they live in—that they will be treated at Dubbo hospital.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: Point of order—

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The same cannot be said if people are relying on general practice or bulk-billing.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: My point of order goes to relevance. These are unconscious patients who could not go to a general practitioner.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: As to the patient case in Dubbo to which the honourable member for Lachlan alluded, I can inform him that the advice from the area health service is that the patient was seen within the benchmark time of 120 seconds. As to the triage issue that the honourable member for Lachlan and the honourable member for North Shore are concerned about, triage two performance at Westmead improved by 25 per cent and by 12 percentage points at Nepean Hospital. Statewide, the triage two performance improved by four percentage points, from 73 per cent to 77 per cent.

Is there room for further improvement? Of course there is. That is precisely why this year's health budget has increased by 9 per cent. This Government is about achieving sustained improvement. We recognise that there is room for improvement, and that recognition is behind our record investment in the health and mental health budgets. The sustainable access plan was established to provide for sustained improvement in the performance of our hospitals, with particular reference to our emergency departments in recognition of the fact that they have been bearing the load as a result of the collapse in bulk-billing over the past half decade. That is exactly why there is record investment in the sustainable access plan, which is about improving work practices and systems in our emergency departments as well as backing them with extra beds.

Mr IAN ARMSTRONG: I ask a supplementary question. In light of the Premier's answer, can I assure the people of Dubbo and surrounding communities on his behalf that when they are in pain they need not board a plane because they will receive the correct medical attention at Dubbo Base Hospital? Will the Premier give that guarantee?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Dubbo hospital is one of our best rural hospitals. The staff at Dubbo hospital are exceptional. The people of Dubbo and the surrounding communities, who rely on that hospital, can be very proud. Who has been redeveloping that hospital over the past decade? It is this Government. We have just opened an extension to the mental health unit and service at Dubbo. That is the investment we have been making in Dubbo. We recognise that in Dubbo we have some of the best clinical staff in the State, and we are backing them with the infrastructure they need to do their great job. As those opposite are so interested in triage performance, they may like to know that in 1994, when the Coalition last had the chance to run the health system, triage category one performance was at 77 per cent. Category one comprises the life-threatening cases and the patients that must be seen immediately. When those opposite were running the health system the figure was 77 per cent. It has been 100 per cent. Opposition members should look at the figures.

HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR COFFS HARBOUR PARLIAMENTARY BEHAVIOUR

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: My question is addressed to the Premier. What is the Government's response to recent concerns about acts of violence in the Parliament?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I thank the honourable member for Heffron for her question and acknowledge her concern about acts of violence in the Parliament. I inform her that a precedent has been set of accepting violence and attacks in this Chamber—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members of the Government will come to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: —by the Leader of The Nationals and the Leader of the Opposition. That is what has happened. The precedent has been established. Both the Leader of The Nationals and the Leader of the Opposition have accepted that the unprecedented attack on Tuesday night by the honourable member for Coffs Harbour upon another member of Parliament should be condoned, not condemned. Their failure to rein in the honourable member for Coffs Harbour and to expel him from the party room means that they accept his unprecedented attack. Furthermore, not satisfied with accepting his behaviour, those opposite are now gloating about it. Earlier in question time the honourable member for Upper Hunter signalled to the Minister for Roads that the bar should be locked down.

Mr Andrew Tink: Point of order: Your acceptance of Tripodi in the Cabinet—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat. I place him on three calls to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: When the community was expecting the toughest possible action and waiting for some leadership—

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The community was expecting the Leader of the Opposition to rein in the honourable member for Coffs Harbour and throw him out of the joint party room, but what they got instead was a condoning of the actions of the honourable member for Coffs Harbour—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Gosford will cease calling out.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member for Coffs Harbour is a disgrace to democracy, yet those opposite condoned his actions and then started gloating. The Leader of The Nationals could not wait to say, "Well, we'll get him back as soon as we can." What kind of signal does that send to those who perpetrate acts of violence? It sends the signal that the Leader of The Nationals and the Leader of the Opposition will condone it. There will always be an excuse—as long as the circumstances permit, they will excuse violence.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Murrumbidgee will come to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: They will excuse attacks.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order—

[Interruption]

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

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition as the call. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr Peter Debnam: Mr Speaker, I am entirely happy to talk about Labor Ministers and Labor members if you like.

Mr SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr Peter Debnam: I will detail the incidents.

Mr SPEAKER: This is not a debate. What is your point of order?

Mr Peter Debnam: If you want to play politics on this issue—

Mr SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr Peter Debnam: —I am happy to help you.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: It is precisely because we did not want to play politics on this issue that we moved the censure motion ourselves. We thought that those opposite would show some leadership and send a clear signal that violence is acceptable under no circumstances.

Mr Ian Armstrong: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. The Government has the numbers and it set the benchmark yesterday for dealing with that sort of conduct in this place. The Government set the benchmark and it is the Government's own standard.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Taking a point of order does not give the honourable member for Lachlan the right to debate the issue.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: When the community was looking for was a show of leadership from the Opposition. It did not get it. Not only did the community not get it but we then had the extraordinary behaviour of the Leader of The Nationals, who actually condoned that disgrace to democracy perpetrated on Tuesday night. Not satisfied with keeping him in his party room—and the Leader of the Opposition was not satisfied either with keeping him in the joint party room—the Leader of The Nationals went out to celebrate and condone what had happened. He said that he could not wait to get the honourable member for Coffs Harbour back in the party room as soon as the eight days are over. That is a shameful attempt to explain away the most unprecedented attack that any Parliament has seen.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Clarence will come to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Of course, the honourable member for Clarence wants to contribute. He ought to read the editorial in his local newspaper, the Grafton *Daily Examiner*, which reported:

Some free advice for Nationals member for Coffs Harbour Andrew Fraser—resign from politics, book yourself into an anger management course and find a new career ... He [Mr Fraser] crossed the line of acceptable standards for Parliamentary and civilised behaviour.

Earlier the honourable member for Clarence made a joke of it. He should heed the words of his local newspaper, which reflects community standards. He should heed what the local newspaper thinks about the disgrace to democracy, the honourable member for Coffs Harbour. The *Coffs Coast Advocate* stated:

There is simply no excuse for physically assaulting an individual to make your point.

We have had two days of shameful behaviour, capped off by the honourable member for Upper Hunter earlier in question time. He motioned to the Minister for Roads that the bar should be locked down—that is, he suggested he was running away. That is disgraceful and shameful behaviour on the part of the honourable member for Upper Hunter. That is what he is about. He condones violence and says there are circumstances when one takes matters into one's own hands. He says to the people, "No matter what your argument, no matter the passion of your argument, your point or your advocacy, if you take matters into your own hands you will find support." If you are violent, if you assault people, if you threaten people, the Coalition will back you all the way.

PORT MACQUARIE ELECTORATE PLANNING PROJECTS

Mr ROBERT OAKESHOTT: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning. Will the Minister provide a progress report on important planning projects in the Port Macquarie electorate, including the Combined Emergency Centre?

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

Mr FRANK SARTOR: Some weeks ago the mayor and general manager of Port Macquarie-Hastings Council saw me about the location of a combined emergency facility for ambulance and fire services in Port Macquarie, a matter the honourable member for Port Macquarie and the Hon. John Tingle had raised with me. My department received the rezoning request from Hastings council on 29 September, and I have asked it to expedite consideration of that request. The proposal would appear on its merits to be supportable. In return for rezoning to allow this special use, Hastings council is prepared to convert up to 13 hectares of land currently zoned open space to be zoned for environmental protection, which is a huge gain for environment. I hope we can process and deal with the matter by November.

In relation to other matters, I have had representations from the honourable member for Port Macquarie about a proposed aged care facility at Harrington. I have agreed to meet a delegation of Greater Taree City Council and the Roche group of companies to explore that matter further in the next couple of weeks, probably the next sitting week. The Port Macquarie electorate contains one of two World Heritage listings in New South Wales. The first World Heritage listing is the Blue Mountains, where the Government recently approved a new local environmental plan that will protect the towns and villages of the Blue Mountains in a way they have not been protected before. The second World Heritage listing is Lord Howe Island, which is in the electorate of Port Macquarie. I inform the House that I have approved a new regional plan for Lord Howe Island. The significance of Lord Howe Island was stated by David Attenborough, who said:

Lord Howe is so extraordinary it is almost unbelievable. Few islands can be so accessible, so remarkable, yet so unspoilt ...

I am pleased to report that there are also some other interesting synergies in relation to Lord Howe Island, which was named after Lord Richard Howe. Lord Richard Howe was one of the great British admirals of the Age of Fighting Sail. He commanded the Channel Fleet in the French Revolution and defeated the French in 1794 on the Glorious First of June. It was the defeat of the French Navy in the second Hundred Years War that led to the fall of the French republic—and the inevitable rise of Napoleon. I turn to the relevance of Lord Howe Island. Lord Richard Howe had a nickname that I do not dare mention in this House. However, as the ironies of history would have it, Lord Howe never reached Lord Howe Island. There is now a fish known as the Napoleon wrasse, which frequents the waters around Lord Howe.

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

Mr FRANK SARTOR: It is a humphead fish that has a head shaped like Napoleon's hat. It is one of more than 400 species of fish found in the waters around the island group. The island has a rare collection of flora, fauna and marine life, which led to its inclusion on the World Heritage List in 1982. It is one of just four island groups to earn World Heritage status. How do we preserve it? The Government has adopted a new regional environment plan. No development will be permitted that will result in any damage to or removal of significant native vegetation; 68 hectares have been rezoned for environmental protection to maintain the scenic values of the island; and, at the urging of the Minister for the Environment, the area known as Transit Hill has been added to the permanent park preserve, linking the island's parks from north to south.

We are also protecting the ecosystem by allowing only a modest increase in housing over the next 20 years. This is the first review of controls for Lord Howe Island in 20 years. We will allow an additional 25 homes during the next 20 years. I know that members opposite would like me to say more about this, so I will. I know the members on this side will be patient with me. The other irony is that only this year a new species of fish was found, the silver trevally fish. The discoverer is a year 9 student named James Robinson from Shore school. He is one of the short-listed 2005 young scientists. He is in the gallery today as part of Science Expo, which members opposite should look at.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for East Hills will come to order.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I thank Lord the Howe Island community, the Lord Howe Island Board and the Department of Environment for assisting in achieving a wonderful result: the protection of Lord Howe Island.

Questions without notice concluded.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr CARL SCULLY (Smithfield—Minister for Police, and Minister for Utilities) [3.49 p.m.]: I move:

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Tuesday 8 November 2005 at 2.15 p.m.

Mr ANDREW TINK (Epping) [3.49 p.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out "Tuesday 8 November 2005 at 2.15 p.m." with a view to inserting instead "tomorrow at 10.00 a.m."

In support of my amendment, I foreshadow that tomorrow I will move a motion to condemn the Premier for condoning violence by promoting the Minister for Roads to the Cabinet. Ten minutes ago the Premier stood here and berated the Opposition for condoning violence. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour took his medicine and accepted his guilt. He actually proposed to actively support the motion against him, and he did so. He fully accepted his culpability and apologised. He also has resigned from the shadow Cabinet. The Premier has the temerity to condemn us for condoning violence because honourable member for Coffs Harbour is man enough to accept his wrongful actions. The first person Premier Iemma promoted into his Cabinet was Minister for Roads, Joe Tripodi, who still has outstanding against him allegations that he indecently assaulted Ms C in this building—not in the Chamber but in the parliamentary building. A complaint along those lines was given to the police and that matter has never been finalised.

The next matter against Minister for Roads is that when he was chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, the then professional director of that committee took out an apprehended violence order against him. Yet the Minister for Roads was the first person Premier Iemma promoted to his Cabinet. The former director of the Public Accounts Committee claimed, and I am quoting from the *Newcastle Herald* on 10 March 2001, that the member for Fairfield "threatened and intimidated her". This is the same member for Fairfield who ran out on tiptoes on Tuesday.

I accept that the honourable member for Coffs Harbour did the wrong thing. He accepts he did the wrong thing—that is the important point. He has done his mea culpa, he has set the example by accepting his responsibility. On the other hand, not only has Minister for Roads not accepted any responsibility, but the Premier has not accepted any responsibility for his actions. He promoted him to Cabinet, pursuant to some dirty little deal to get the numbers to become Premier. That is how venal it all this! That is how appalling and disgraceful it is! We might have let it pass by saying, okay, the wrong thing was done on our side, we accept that, we will finish the week quietly, particularly given the way in which the honourable member for Coffs Harbour spoke. I thought he spoke magnanimously and magnificently yesterday. It is the best speech I have heard in my 18 years in Parliament. It was a simple example to anybody of any age who has done wrong to admit that they have done wrong, accept responsibility for it, and take their medicine and punishment as it comes.

Mr Milton Orkopoulos: Eight days on full pay!

Mr ANDREW TINK: That was your motion.

Mr Milton Orkopoulos: That is what you agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will cease calling out.

Mr ANDREW TINK: No, that is what your Leader of the House moved the punishment would be. That was your choice on behalf of the Government to move that punishment. The motion setting out the punishment having been moved, the member for Coffs Harbour was the first person to accept it. He did so openly and fulsomely. There the matter should have rested. Had it done so, I for one would have had a quiet afternoon today.

But the Premier had another go at the honourable member for Coffs Harbour yesterday, no doubt relying on the advice—here is another thing while I think about it—of that magnificent person who is now his chief of staff, Mike Kaiser. He will never show his face in the Chamber. Why not? Because he has admitted to committing electoral fraud. He was forced to quit his seat of Woodridge in the Queensland Parliament—I am quoting here from the ABC on Monday 19 September 2005—after admitting to the 2001 Shepherdson inquiry into electoral fraud that he signed a false enrolment form in 1986. If one looks at the Shepherdson inquiry report, one sees this:

Enrolment of Michael Kaiser

In 1986 Michael Kaiser was a young member of the Party. He admitted to the Inquiry that he signed an electoral enrolment form dated 7 January 1986 enrolling him at 11 Seventh Avenue, Coorparoo, even though he never lived there.

The Premier today lectured us on propriety. He has made a free will choice to select as his chief of staff—everybody here knows the importance of a Premier's chief of staff—somebody who is an admitted electoral fraudster. How dare he come in here and lecture us on propriety. How dare he come in here and say the honourable member for Coffs Harbour should do more than was in the Government's motion by way of punishment. It is an absolute nonsense. A third great incident again underlines just what a stupid fool the Premier is. If he is going to talk about the honourable member for Coffs Harbour—

Mr Milton Orkopoulos: Point of order. I ask that you direct the honourable gentleman to use parliamentary language in this place and not offend the House.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for Epping has now made a number of attacks against members of this House and persons who are not members of this House. I direct him to confine his remarks to the question before the Chair, which is his amendment, which asks the House to meet tomorrow, be agreed to.

Mr ANDREW TINK: I will. I apologise for my language. Briefly there I was following the disgraceful precedent set by the Minister's parliamentary and ministerial colleague the Minister for Planning. He has used disgraceful and disgusting language—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will not flout the direction of the Chair. He is well aware of the difference between comments made outside the House and comments made directly to members within the Chamber.

Mr ANDREW TINK: We are talking about standards, Mr Speaker. Forgive me for getting a little angry, but with the personal track record of this Premier in promoting people who have disgraceful records I think I am within my rights this afternoon to get a little angry that we are copping a lecture for the second day in a row in relation to a man who has taken his punishment as moved by the House. The other reason we ought to be sitting tomorrow is that rather than have the Premier answer a question here and not allow us to respond—he shot out the door in true Joe Tripodi fashion, on tiptoes—we ought to have a chance to debate this face to face.

Mr Milton Orkopoulos: Point of order. The last comment is precisely why the reactions of the Opposition are so offensive. They are persisting with this snide remark about running away, and it is clearly not in order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not uphold the point of order. I remind the honourable member for Epping again to confine his remarks to the question before the Chair.

Mr ANDREW TINK: With respect, the question is whether the House should sit tomorrow. I am trying to make the case that the Premier, having answered this question this afternoon, we should come back here tomorrow to debate it substantively so we can go one to one with the Minister for Roads, the honourable member for Murray-Darling and anybody else who wants to debate propriety. If the Minister for Planning wants to debate propriety in relation to the use of language, we will debate him as well.

The gravamen of what the Premier was saying about the honourable member for Coffs Harbour was that he should no longer be a member of The Nationals parliamentary caucus. If the Premier is not to be a complete hypocrite, he might explain why he suffers the honourable member for Murray-Darling to be a member of the Labor caucus. The honourable member for Murray-Darling, drunk in the House, lunged at one of his fellow members of Parliament, honourable member for Strathfield.

Mr Tony Stewart: Point of order. The member knows that if anyone was drunk in the House it was the member for Coffs Harbour on Tuesday night, when he slurred his words, swayed, and could not control himself, and it ended in violence.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Bankstown will resume his seat.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of Order: My point of order relates to your earlier ruling about language in this Chamber. You made one ruling against us and no ruling against him. He just asserted that the honourable

member for Coffs Harbour was drunk in this Chamber on Tuesday night. No-one has ever said such a thing until now and you do not say a thing about it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members of the Government will come to order. A number of assertions have been made about other members of the House that have almost amounted to substantive attack on those members. A number of assertions have been made about persons who are not members of the House. I direct members of the Government and the Opposition to comply with the standing orders. If a member proposes to launch a substantial attack on another member, it must be by way of substantive motion. Persons outside the Chamber have little recourse in defending themselves against accusations made in this House. Members should think seriously before besmirching the reputation of members of the public. The honourable member for Epping has the call.

Mr Alan Ashton: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is nothing before the House on which to base a point of order. The honourable member for East Hills will resume his seat. The honourable member for Epping has the call.

Mr ANDREW TINK: Mr Speaker—

Mr Alan Ashton: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for East Hills will resume his seat.

Mr Alan Ashton: There is now something before the chair.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for East Hills will resume his seat. I will hear further from the honourable member for Epping.

Mr ANDREW TINK: The honourable member for Lachlan reminds me in relation to your ruling that the honourable member for Coffs Harbour is no longer in the House—he is outside the House as well—so the rule should apply to him.

Mr Steve Whan: He's a member of the House.

Mr ANDREW TINK: He is not a member who has an opportunity to respond at this time. The point is well taken. Let me not be misunderstood, I am not seeking to raise questions about anybody outside the House. Certainly I am seeking to raise matters about some members of this House with a view to having those matters debated tomorrow. That is my whole point. The House should sit tomorrow to debate issues concerning a number of members of the House precisely because the Premier has put in issue the ongoing conduct of somebody who, as far as we are concerned, acted with the greatest honour we have seen in this place in a long time after making what was—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members of the Government will come to order. Members of the Government will cease calling out.

Mr ANDREW TINK: —a very serious mistake. On the other hand the Premier suffers a conga line of people in the Cabinet.

Mr Bryce Gaudry: Point of order—

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat. The honourable member for Newcastle has the call.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat.

[*Interruption*]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat.

Mr Bryce Gaudry: My point of order goes to the operation of this House within the standing orders. You made it very clear within the standing orders that if a substantive attack is to be made against any member of this House, whether it be the Premier, whether it be the Minister or whether it be an individual member of the House, it should be by substantive motion. The honourable member opposite is not speaking in support of sitting tomorrow; rather, he is continually launching attacks—

Mr Ian Armstrong: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am already listening to a point of order. The honourable member for Lachlan will resume his seat.

Mr Bryce Gaudry: —against the democratic processes of this House, just as yesterday we saw them launched against—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Newcastle will resume his seat. I have heard enough on the point of order. I again remind the honourable member for Epping that if he wishes to launch an attack on a member of the Chamber he must do so by way of substantive motion. He cannot do so under the guise of debating the question before the Chair, which is the special adjournment motion moved by the Leader of the House. The honourable member for Epping has the call.

Mr ANDREW TINK: It is understandable that Government members are extremely delicate about the Premier's hypocrisy and their own hypocrisy.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Again, I ask the honourable member for Epping to take care with the words he uses. If he is going to launch a substantial attack on the Premier he should do it by way of substantive motion.

Mr ANDREW TINK: That is what I am proposing for tomorrow, because the Premier launched a substantive attack against the honourable member for Coffs Harbour. We think it is a disgrace because the honourable member for Coffs Harbour accepted every punishment the Government proposed. This bunch of hypocrites are baying for more, but they suffer the honourable member for Murray-Darling and the Minister for Roads amongst their number in caucus.

Mr Steve Whan: Point of order—

Mr ANDREW TINK: People who molest women—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat. The honourable member for Monaro has the call.

Mr Steve Whan: My point of order is that it has been made very clear here today that earlier the Premier was talking about the conduct of the Opposition in defending the honourable member for Coffs Harbour. Yet again in this House we hear the Opposition member straying from his motion and casting aspersions on members of the House with disdain. I note that the honourable member for Epping has not even bothered to sit down, in accordance with the standing orders, while I raise a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Monaro and the honourable member for Epping will resume their seats. There is substance in the point of order. The honourable member for Epping must show reasons why the House should agree to his amendment. He should not attack another member of the House, the Premier or anyone else, in substantiating why the House should meet tomorrow. The honourable member for Monaro has taken a point of order that is almost a debating point. I am loath to deal with it, but accusations have been made on both sides of the House as to exactly what the Premier has said. I do not believe that should be the substance of this debate. The subject matter of the debate should be the reasons put forward by the honourable member for Epping as to why the motion of the Leader of the House should be amended to require the House to meet tomorrow.

Mr ANDREW TINK: The Premier has twice now spoken about the honourable member for Coffs Harbour, who, we believe, has complied honourably and recognised his mistake. We want an opportunity

tomorrow to rejoin and respond to the Premier's ongoing attacks against somebody who has set an example by admitting his culpability and doing the right thing.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Gosford) [4.08 p.m.]: The business of the House is paramount and the business of the House relates to the sitting times of the House. The Government has moved that the House be adjourned until a certain date. The Opposition, in turn, is moving that the House sit tomorrow. The Opposition wants to sit tomorrow because it wants to debate the conduct of the Minister for Roads. The Opposition intends, at the sitting tomorrow, to debate the administration of the Minister for Roads—and what an administration it has been!

Anyone who saw the cartoon in today's *Daily Telegraph* would know how the public feels about the administration of the Minister for Roads. The Opposition wishes to debate the conduct of the Minister for Roads and his fitness, or lack of fitness, to hold office in this Parliament. These issues do not only relate to the administration of public office, they are integral to the business of the House, whether the Minister is fit to sit in the House, and whether he is fit to be a Minister. The Minister for Roads has been the subject of an inquiry by the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. The first ICAC inquiry relating to the Minister was entitled "Investigation into aspects connected with an alleged indecent assault at Parliament House on 14/15 September 2000". That report was tabled in this House.

Mr Bryce Gaudry: Point of order: The honourable member for Gosford has had since 2000, when the ICAC report was presented, to attack the Minister by way of substantive motion, if he so wished. The reference by the honourable member for Gosford to the ICAC report is purely a device to take up the time of the House instead of proceeding with the business of the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have heard sufficient on the point of order. Under the guise of debating the amendment, the Opposition is again attacking the Minister. I direct the honourable member for Gosford to confine his remarks to the question before the Chair.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: One must choose one's words most carefully and should use only material that is officially available to the House. One should refer only to the reports that you, Mr Speaker, table in the House, and they include reports from the Independent Commission Against Corruption. There should not be recourse to media or personal speculation, but rather there should be reference to ICAC reports. What did ICAC find in relation to the Minister for Roads?

Mr Milton Orkopoulos: Point of order: Clearly, Mr Speaker, the honourable member for Gosford is flouting your ruling and is proceeding to refer to the report. He is not referring to anything to do with the substance of the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I again direct the honourable member for Gosford to confine his remarks to the question before the Chair.

Mr Gerard Martin: I draw attention to the time.

Mr SPEAKER: I have already drawn the attention of the Clerk to the clock.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Tomorrow the House should debate the outstanding service rendered by the Government Whip, who acts as a timekeeper in his spare time. He can be seen at soccer matches on Saturday morning, running up and down with his little watch, calling, "Time, guys, time!" That is just one of the marvellous gifts he brings to the House. Tomorrow the Opposition wishes to debate the conduct of public administration in New South Wales. The Opposition wishes to know how New South Wales is being administered and we want to know about the fitness of the Minister for Roads to hold high office in this State.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I point out that some matters are common ground. There are some things that everybody agrees upon. The ICAC report states, " ... it was common ground that the incident involved Mr Tripodi"—

Mr Kevin Greene: Point of order: Only recently the honourable member for Gosford said it is important to choose one's words wisely in discussing a matter such as the one before the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chair is attempting to listen to the honourable member for Georges River.

Mr Kevin Greene: Mr Speaker, I therefore ask you to bring the honourable member for Gosford back to the leave of motion, which is whether the House should return tomorrow at 10.00 a.m.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have heard sufficient on the point of order. It seems to me that the reading by the honourable member for Gosford of an Independent Commission Against Corruption report that was published some years ago concerning another member of this House does not fall far short of an attack on that member. Again I direct the honourable member for Gosford to confine his remarks to the question before the Chair and to comply with the standing orders.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Honourable members, I thank the Leader of the House for allowing this debate to proceed this afternoon. The Leader of the House is most appreciative of the friendship of the Minister for Roads and for the way in which the Minister for Roads has stood by him through thick and thin for many years. I noticed the touching solicitude of the Leader of the House last night when he said to Minister Tripodi, "Are you okay, mate?" They were the first words he has spoken to the Minister for Roads since he was stabbed in the back over the premiership.

Mr Milton Orkopoulos: Point of order: The honourable member for Gosford has been the most treacherous person against his leader.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will resume his seat.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: The Opposition appreciates the opportunity to debate important matters. We appreciate the opportunity of debate that is provided by the standing orders, though that opportunity is not often used. It is only in times of great tension and great peril that it is used, such as events that occurred in the Parliament on that terrible day when we lost Bob Carr.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It being 4.15 p.m. business is interrupted. I will now put the question.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 44

Mr Amery	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Ms Andrews	Mr Hickey	Mrs Perry
Mr Bartlett	Mr Hunter	Ms Saliba
Ms Beamer	Ms Judge	Mr Sartor
Mr Brown	Ms Keneally	Mr Shearan
Mr Campbell	Mr Lynch	Mr Stewart
Mr Chaytor	Mr McLeay	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Collier	Ms Meagher	Mr Tripodi
Mr Corrigan	Ms Megarrity	Mr Watkins
Mr Crittenden	Mr Mills	Mr West
Mr Daley	Mr Morris	Mr Whan
Mr Debus	Mr Newell	Mr Yeadon
Mr Gaudry	Ms Nori	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gibson	Mr Orkopoulos	Mr Ashton
Mr Greene	Mrs Paluzzano	Mr Martin

Noes, 32

Mr Aplin	Ms Hodgkinson	Mrs Skinner
Mr Armstrong	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Barr	Mr Humpherson	Mr Souris
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Kerr	Mr Stoner
Mr Cansdell	Ms Moore	Mr Tink
Mr Constance	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Torbay
Mr Draper	Mr O'Farrell	Mr J. H. Turner
Mrs Fardell	Mr Page	Mr R. W. Turner
Mrs Hancock	Mr Pringle	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Hartcher	Mr Richardson	Mr George
Mr Hazzard	Mr Roberts	Mr Maguire

Pairs

Ms Allan	Mr Merton
Ms Gadiel	Mr Piccoli
Mr Price	Ms Seaton

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It being after 4.15 p.m. the House will now proceed to the noting of private members' statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CENTAUR PUBLIC SCHOOL, BANORA POINT, ART SHOW

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.25 p.m.]: Last Friday evening, 14 October, the Centaur Public School Art Show 2005 was opened, and the school celebrated its eleventh birthday, which was officially on 10 October. The two co-ordinators of the art show were teachers Margaret Burgess and Jenny Foster. They met with a team of parents and staff and, of course, the parents' and citizens association fundraising committee, on a regular basis for up to two terms to plan and present the art show, which was as a major fundraiser for the students. The invitations were a scrapbook of the visual art on offer and were sent to all the VIPs and business houses in the Tweed and beyond. The invitations caused quite a stir as the RSVPs came in, congratulating the students on that innovative and wonderful effort.

The range of visual art on exhibition was extremely varied, from copies of the masters to Aboriginal influences with wide-ranging mediums used to the best effect. As each piece of work was for sale to the families of the children, the committee was also involved in accessing community resources to enable parents to have their child's work professionally copied, laminated and/or framed as a memory of the special event. A great many of the school staff were heavily involved, not only the art teachers, throughout the process in collating students' works. They supervised the students in constructing the display areas and encouraging the school community to support the students.

More than 600 students from kindergarten to year 6, including the wonderful exhibited examples from the students from the special education unit at Centaur Public School, displayed a piece of their artwork in the school hall that had been converted to function as the art gallery. Each piece of the students' art work was labelled and displayed in class sections and hung on the specially designed and constructed wall hangings to ensure the lighting was appropriate and showed their work in the best possible manner. Along with the display of student work, pieces were displayed by three professional artists and photographers who are members of the school community. The opening was attended by many VIPs who have been patrons of and involved with Centaur since the school's first year.

Centaur Public School is a living memorial to those who served on the ill-fated hospital ship, which gave the school its name. The school is steeped in the history of the *Centaur* and everything that revolves around the *Centaur* theme, from the large model of the ship in the library to the uniforms with a distinct nautical theme, to its philosophy on education. House patrons have been chosen from the honour roll of the hospital ship, and the house colours are the colours of the hospital ship. The school's houses are Colefax, whose house colour is white, named after Basil Douglas Colefax, who was with the field ambulance and died aboard the *Centaur*; Moss, whose house colour is red, named after Leslie Moss, who was a crewmember on the *Centaur*; Lawson, whose house colour is green, named after William Lawson, who was in the 2/12 Field Ambulance before joining the *Centaur*; and Savage, whose house colour is blue, named after Sister Ellen Savage, the only nurse to survive the *Centaur* sinking.

I attend the school's annual celebrations of Centaur Day, which are usually held at Point Danger, where there is a memorial, on the New South Wales-Queensland border, on 14 May in any year that my parliamentary

commitments allow. This moving memorial service plays a significant role in ensuring the commitment and sacrifice of our service men and women. They are remembered and wound into a living history for the local community and the young people who attend Centaur school.

It was wonderful to see students receiving their scholastic medals and certificates from the VIPs in attendance, and to watch them interact with families and descendants of the *Centaur* hospital ship. The Tweed Heads-Ballina education director, Mr Ron Hankin, officially opened the art show. Mr Hankin, along with VIP guests, was then asked to nominate six pieces of student work for special awards. Some of the guests invited included Mr Warren Keats, Mrs Nella Hunt, Mr and Mrs Phil Butcher, Jean and Less Mooney, Danny and Margaret Ware, Mr and Mrs Finch, from Kyogle, Mr and Mrs Fendley, Mrs Dulcie Pearse, Mr Mike Fraser, Mr and Mrs Bode, Mrs Maree Judge and Dr Allan Deece, principal of Banora Point High School.

Each of those VIP guests has an historical link with the school through the *Centaur* and has maintained an active relationship with students and the community through the school's 11 years. Mrs Butcher and Mrs Jean Mooney are sisters of one of the house patrons, William Lawson. While they are well into their later years they represent for our students a tangible link with the past. The Moran sisters from Casino were invited but were unable to attend and, therefore, the special medals they present to students, who have endured and successfully overcome hardship throughout the year, will now take place during the school's end-of-year presentation assemblies.

During the opening over 150 parents and students attended, along with the special guests, and the show enjoyed the support of local businesses, which enthusiastically supported the school community by donating items that were bid on by many of the visitors to the art show. I regret that I was not able to attend this year's art show due to prior commitments, but I look forward to next year's show and to the many other events that I attend at Centaur Primary School, including the end-of-year presentation. [*Time expired.*]

[*Private members' statements interrupted.*]

PITTWATER BY-ELECTION CANDIDATES

Personal Explanation

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills) Order! In accordance with an undertaking given by Mr Speaker earlier, I call the honourable member for Manly to make a personal explanation.

Mr DAVID BARR: On Tuesday the honourable member for Wakehurst alleged by way of a notice of motion in this House that I colluded with the Labor Party to attempt to induce the Christian Democratic Party candidate in the Pittwater by-election, Patricia Giles, to run as an Independent.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order—

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order!

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order—

Mr DAVID BARR: He said I told her:

If you want to get into Parliament, drop the Christian Democratic involvement—

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order—

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! The honourable member for Gosford does not have to be rude. I heard him and was in the process of acknowledging him. If he acts with some courtesy, that courtesy will be returned.

Mr Chris Hartcher: I appreciate that. You have been courteous but the honourable member for Manly insisted on continuing to speak and that was my problem. The honourable member for Manly must show how his character was being impugned.

Mr DAVID BARR: I am.

Mr Chris Hartcher: As you well know, he must not debate the issue with the honourable member for Wakehurst. He has to show how his character was impugned.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! At this stage the honourable member for Manly is in order. I am listening carefully.

Mr DAVID BARR: The honourable member for Wakehurst alleged that I told her:

If you want to get into Parliament, drop the Christian Democratic involvement and I can deliver to you Labor Party support which has delivered into office other independents around the state.

This is completely and totally untrue; it is a malicious fabrication. Trish Giles sent me an open letter in which she states:

At no time has David Barr MP offered me any financial or campaign assistance incentives to change to an Independent candidate.

The allegation was an attempt to besmirch my name and reputation as a true Independent—

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order—

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! At this stage the honourable member for Manly is in order.

Mr DAVID BARR: —and reflects poorly on the integrity of the honourable member for Wakehurst. He should resign for attempting to mislead the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

[Private members' statements resumed.]

BRISBANE WATER MARINE SEWAGE PUMP-OUT SYSTEM

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: On 10 and 11 October respectively I received correspondence from two constituents who each wrote to me in detail about their concerns relating to proposals to construct a marine sewage pump-out system downstream from the well-known Rip Bridge, on Brisbane Water. The Rip Bridge is the boundary line between my electorate and the electorate of Peats. This pump-out system is proposed to allow boat users to pump sewage and marine waste from their boats when they arrive back at shore without having to release it into open water, which is against clean water regulations.

The facility is to be jointly funded by Environment Australia, NSW Maritime and what is now the Department of Planning but, when these proposals were initially introduced, was called the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources. As a sidenote I congratulate those departments on agreeing to fund the project, which obviously is required for the wellbeing of the waterway system. But as to the location of the marine vessel sewage pump-out, that is a problem of community concern. According to plans now before Gosford City Council, the proposed facility is to be located at Araluen Drive public wharf.

On 3 December 2001 Gosford City Council's coastline management, lagoon management and coastal planning committee made a determination that this was the most appropriate site for the facility. On 22 January 2002 council resolved to defer the project until a site inspection had been carried out and the project had been given further consideration. The proposal was met with opposition from local residents concerned about the odour the system would produce, the noise involved in operating the pumping facility, and the potential environmental impact on the Hardys Bay area. Residents were also concerned about the possible impact on the value of their homes.

Council commissioned an environmental report and that report was released in December 2002. The report suggested that the social impact on the Hardys Bay community might be high. Gosford council then conducted what it called a boat users survey to determine whether Hardys Bay was the most popular option among boat owners for the site of the new facility, which it was widely accepted was required to deal with the increase in boat activity. Booker Bay was the most popular option, followed by Wagstaff and then Hardys Bay. So Hardys Bay was only the third most desired choice.

Council consulted with the Department of Planning, the Department of Primary Industries, NSW Maritime and the Brisbane Water Users Group—a group that, despite its name, is mainly comprised of government agencies—but it resolved to support the Hardys Bay proposal regardless of community concern, community opposition, or boat owners' views that the facility should be located elsewhere. Gosford council received correspondence from the Department of Lands, NSW Maritime and the Department of Primary Industries, each detailing that they would prefer to have the pump-out facility installed on the Araluen Drive public wharf at Hardys Bay.

Unfortunately, to date council has tended to take the advice of the New South Wales Government and disregard the concerns of residents. Gosford City Council undertook a survey but many of those in the area did not receive the survey forms. It should be noted that this facility is located at a site with few other facilities. Residents who brought the matter to the attention of council are of the opinion that the facility should be located where vessels are temporarily berthed to obtain supplies, fuel and other services. Instead, the facilities are being split up, forcing vessel owners to hop from one site to another, depending on which facilities they require.

Co-locating the facility with other services, whether in public or private ownership, would allow for the constant supervision of the facility by experienced marine equipment operators. It seems that the residents' concerns are not unfounded. They live there and they understand the need for services. Unfortunately, to date council has been determined to provide them with a service they neither want nor need. At a well-attended public meeting last Monday night the mayor was amenable to residents' concerns, and I hope council now takes them on board. I also hope that council resolves to seek a new location, which can be a co-location with a private facility. I indicated to residents and to council that I will support them in relation to this issue and, if necessary, I will make appropriate representations to the Minister who is funding the proposal. Araluen Drive is not the appropriate place. Brisbane Water needs this facility, but not at Hardys Bay.

MENAI ELECTORATE COMBINED SCHOOLS CONCERT

Ms ALISON MEGARRITY (Menai—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.38 p.m.]: Last month I was privileged to attend the 2005 Combined Schools Concert celebrating "What a Wonderful World". The concert featured the talents of four wonderful schools in my electorate—Chipping Norton Public School, Newbridge Heights Public School, Nuwarra Public School and Moorebank High School. Over the years I have always found any interaction with any one of these school communities to be a most enriching experience. So I am sure honourable members can appreciate the impact of all four schools combining for a night of great entertainment.

The students' on-stage performance was a tribute to the parents and staff of all four schools. The interschool co-operation that produced such a successful event can be directly attributed to the leadership and collegiate approach of the four school principals. In effect, the night was the swan song of the former principal of Nuwarra Public School, Kerianne Knox. Only a few weeks prior to that I attended her farewell assembly. It was a highly emotional occasion because, apart from being a lovely human being, Mrs Knox is a highly competent school administrator and passionate advocate for public education. At least her departure from Nuwarra was in a good cause. She received a substantial promotion to principal liaison officer within the department. Her experience and capabilities can now be shared with principals across the State.

In fact, before she came to Nuwarra Public School Mrs Knox was the principal at Chipping Norton Public School. I met her during her time at that school, when I signed up to the school community's very determined fight to upgrade its facilities. Honourable members will recall that I have spoken in support of that campaign in this place on previous occasions. I was therefore overjoyed when the Carr Government made a commitment to upgrade Chipping Norton Public School. The school community participated patiently in the subsequent planning and development application processes, and I am delighted to inform the House that construction activities are now under way. The contract was granted to Brisland Pty Ltd and the projected cost of the project is \$3.12 million. The upgrade includes renovations to the existing administration block. Block B will be a new single-storey block, comprising two classrooms, two practical activities areas, a store, and a shared withdrawal space. Block C will include four new classrooms, four practical activities areas and other facilities. Block D will be a new library comprising associated facilities.

As honourable members will gather from that brief explanation of this extensive project, the upgrade will provide a range of modern facilities for academic and recreational activities. Sadly, the current principal, Brett Warwick, will leave Chipping Norton Public School at the end of this year to take up another appointment. I take this opportunity to thank him sincerely for his contribution as principal and for his guiding efforts during the planning processes. I might add that he was also an impressive master of ceremonies at the Combined Schools Concert. He certainly showed another side of his personality and other talents that night!

As I mentioned earlier, Moorebank High School also participated in the concert. Only this week I received the good news that work will soon be under way on the upgrade of that school's hall. The school community has made a substantial financial commitment to add to the State Government funding, and I know that it will be money well spent. Finally, I take this opportunity to wish a happy twenty-fifth birthday to Newbridge Heights Public School, the fourth of the schools that participated in the Combined Schools Concert. I was delighted to attend that school's very special Book Week celebrations. The guest speaker was our warm and gracious Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir. Other guests included Auntie Norma Shelley and Mr Kim Fillingham, the south-western region education director, amongst others.

Following the formalities every guest visited a classroom to read and talk about the importance of reading. I really enjoyed reading to class KR, and I congratulate the school on organising the event. Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir awarded the prize to the class that produced the winning Book Week poster. It was a hotly contested competition within the school and all classes were worthy competitors. Her Excellency also presented some books to the school. As I said, she is warm and gracious. Her Excellency not only received a gift for attending the celebrations but gave something back to the children. She also spoke about her years growing up in country New South Wales and the importance of reading.

I thank all four schools for allowing me to share in these many and varied experiences. They are wonderful local public schools, of which I have many in my electorate. As I said, the four schools that I mentioned participated in the 2005 Combined Schools Concert—the concerts are held every two years. Students exhibited great professionalism, exuberance and enjoyment. Everyone present was affected by the sight of children taking such joy in what they were doing so well. I offer my congratulations to everyone involved. I thank the schools for allowing me, their local member of Parliament, to share in their activities and to be enriched by the efforts of our local public schools.

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.43 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for Menai for informing us of the wonderful 2005 Combined Schools Concert that she attended. We acknowledge the honourable member's passionate support for public education. Chipping Norton Public School, Newbridge Heights Public School, Nuwarra Public School and Moorebank High School are to be commended for their considerable achievements. I am sure every honourable member enjoyed hearing what the students have done. I congratulate the master of ceremonies, Brett Warwick, the Principal of Chipping Norton Public School. We thank him for his dedication to public education and wish him well in the future. We also thank Kerianne Knox for her efforts. I commend the honourable member for Menai for raising this matter in the House.

YOUNG DISTRICT HOSPITAL ANAESTHETIST SERVICES

Mr IAN ARMSTRONG (Lachlan) [4.45 p.m.]: I raise this afternoon a matter that was reported on the ABC in Wagga Wagga on 19 October. The news item went as follows:

A crisis in birthing services at Young has prompted a call by the Australian Society for Anaesthetists for more flexible working arrangements to attract specialists to the country.

Several expectant mothers chose to be induced last week at Young Hospital before anaesthetic services were cancelled.

Greater Southern Area Health has had trouble securing a permanent anaesthetist in Young, despite the attraction of a new hospital.

The society's president, Dr Gregory Deacon, says working conditions need to be more family-friendly to make a rural lifestyle attractive for anaesthetists.

"Half the doctors trained as anaesthetists are women and they have major commitments to family and to attract and retain anaesthetists to the country I believe ... the authorities should be sitting down with a local anaesthetist and saying, 'What do we need to attract and retain young specialist anaesthetists to the town?'" he said.

Dr Deacon has also suggested that locating services in larger towns would be more viable.

He says the wider community needs to change its expectations of the availability of medical services.

"On average in Australia you have one operation every seven years, you're in hospital for three or four days," he said.

"Maybe people have to think, 'Well, okay, why don't I go to a new top-quality institution, travel a bit, stay for a few days and then come home again where I know I'm going to get the very highest quality care rather than having to try to do everything in small towns'."

As we know, Young has one of the most modern hospitals in New South Wales. The new co-located Young District Hospital, comprising a district hospital and Mercy Health Service, has been open for less than 12 months. Indeed, it was opened by the Premier when he was Minister for Health. It is a wonderful facility that has been fitted out almost entirely by the local community. It raised \$1 million and spent \$500,000 on furnishing the hospital and \$500,000 on building an oncology unit.

Dr Deacon referred to Young as a "small town" but it has an official catchment of just under 30,000 people. Young's population is just on 10,000 but the town embraces a number of others in the area, such as Temora, Grenfell, Boorowa, Harden and so on, and several nearby villages. It is a very densely populated agricultural area. I am concerned about this issue for two reasons. First, a senior doctor has talked openly about the inability of the Greater Southern Area Health Service, an arm of government, to staff and manage adequately a major facility. Second, I am concerned that several expectant mothers chose to be induced at Young hospital before anaesthetic services at the facility were cancelled. My understanding is that pregnant women are induced only when there is a medical reason for that procedure. In this case women either chose, or were advised by their medicos, to be induced because the Government is incapable of staffing its hospitals.

The management of birthing has been altered, and that is unacceptable. Any artificial measures that are introduced into normal health care must carry with them an element of risk. Birth is a natural and normal process—it must be, or none of us would be here. I ask the Government to take this matter seriously. I am only the messenger. In this case, the architect of this action is the President of the Australian Society for Anaesthetists. He is concerned about the provision of anaesthetists and the care of expectant mothers in country hospitals—in this case, a brand new, top-class facility that serves a wide area. If the Government cannot manage fundamental health services it should admit that it is incompetent and incapable of providing health services safely to the people of New South Wales. There is no point denying it and blaming someone else. We know that the Southern Area Health Service is well over budget, but let us put that aside. The fact is that several rural areas cannot attract anaesthetists because the Government simply cannot manage its affairs. That is not just my opinion; they are the facts. I do not accept that expectant mothers must be induced simply because the Government cannot manage its business. [*Time expired.*]

SANDCASTLE ACTIVITY CENTRE

Mr JOHN BARTLETT (Port Stephens) [4.50 p.m.]: This week is Carers Week. I refer to the opening of the Sandcastle Activity Centre, based at Williamtown hall, in the Port Stephens electorate. The Department of Ageing and Disability allocated \$400,000 to the centre. It would not be there today but for the wonderful work of the Williamtown Rotary Club, which repaired the hall to make it suitable for its present use. Howard Grigor, Graham Rayner, Steve Halloran and Peter Myers from Williamtown Rotary attended the opening. Approximately 748,000 people—that is, 11 per cent of the population of New South Wales—are identified as carers. The centre looks after loved ones and allows carers to do something for themselves.

The work was funded and organised by Hunter Integrated Care Inc., its chief executive officer, Peter Rothnie, and Suzanne Fuller, and Port Stephens Community Care and its president, Jeanette Antrum. Williamtown hall sits in the middle of the electorate of Port Stephens. Transport is provided for the aged and people with dementia who need care five days a week. The centre can look after 25 aged people or people in need and 15 dementia people at the same time. The centre provides a break for 200 carers during the week. Some people attend multiple times or others once or twice a week, depending on their needs. Many people from the local community attended to celebrate the provision of a service that the Port Stephens electorate has needed for a long time. I was pleased to declare the centre officially open. Jeanette and Paul Porter and John and Dorothy Burke from Medowie Lions Club also attended this community day.

In this job one always learns new things. I have learned that between 3.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m. people with dementia get restless and difficult to control. I was impressed with Sundowner Bus Tours, which picks up people with dementia and takes them for a drive, which allows the carer to do something else. The people with dementia are given activities, and they settle down and become much more malleable, which takes a lot of pressure off the carers during a busy time of the day. For example, they may be preparing meals. Activities carried out at the centre include games and cards, barbecues, mystery bus trips, singalongs, bingo, arts and crafts, carpet bowls, movies, and lots more. Benefits for carers include time out to catch up, shopping, visit family or friends, read a book, go out to lunch, sit in the garden, or simply relax. I was happy to declare the centre open. The \$400,000 a year will look after people with needs and their carers in Port Stephens.

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.54 p.m.]: The honourable member for Port Stephens has always been a passionate fighter for his electorate, which he demonstrated in his speech. Port

Stephens is a beautiful electorate in which there are a large number of retirees. He quite rightly congratulated his community on some of the innovative services it provides to take care of people, including carers. The honourable member played an active role in establishing the Sandcastle Activity Centre, at Williamtown. I acknowledge the Rotary Club and Hunter Care for co-ordinating the work that provides services for some 200 carers. The centre will assist a huge number of people, ensuring that carers have a break. The honourable member pointed out that Sundowner Bus Tours assist carers to have a break during a trying time in the evening, when they may have to do things for other family members. I congratulate the honourable member for Port Stephens on his ongoing support for such facilities and for his electorate.

RAIL SERVICES

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [4.55 p.m.]: This year we celebrate 150 years of rail in New South Wales. On 26 September 1855 the first official rail journey opened the Sydney to Parramatta line. Australia began with the standard gauge in 1831 with horse-drawn carriages on a railway in Newcastle. Over ensuing decades Australia developed more railway gauges than any other country or continent in the world, resulting in massive passenger and freight problems at State borders and wherever else the systems interfaced. The standard gauge line reached Albury on the border with Victoria in 1881. The Albury railway station was built that same year as the transfer point on the break of gauge between Sydney and Melbourne, for the line south was Irish broad gauge. The grand Albury station was one of the most important in Australia and represented the Government's territorial claim to counter the intrusion of Victorian railways into the border district in the highly competitive 1880s.

The building is over 300 metres in length with a 22-metre clock tower, original cedar joinery, and a cast iron platform with fluted columns. It is the longest platform in New South Wales, owing to its role as a changeover point. One of the most famous commentaries on this monument to poor planning and even worse customer service comes from the famous American author Mark Twain. It was in the spring of 1895 that Mark Twain embarked upon a public lecture tour of five States and became one of our best-known early tourists. The Twain party departed Sydney Central on the overnight Melbourne express and, 40 years to the day after the first official rail journey in this State, they arrived in Albury at 5.45 a.m. This is what Mark Twain had to say of changing trains in Albury:

Now comes a singular thing: the oddest thing, the strangest thing, the most unaccountable marvel that Australia can show. At the frontier between New South Wales and Victoria our multitude of passengers were routed out of their snug beds by lantern light in the morning in the biting cold to change cars on a railroad that has no break in it from Sydney to Melbourne.

Think of the paralysis of intellect that gave that idea birth; imagine the boulder it emerged from, on some petrified legislator's shoulders. It is a narrow gauge to the frontier and a broader gauge thence to Melbourne. All passengers fret at the double-gauge; all shippers of freight, must of course, fret at this; unnecessary expense, delay, and annoyance are imposed upon everybody concerned, and no one is benefited.

One would think that, 110 years after this observation, the confusion, irritation and poor communication at border points would be a thing of the past. But not so. Consider the case of Albury university students David McInerney and Daniel Ryan, who were fined \$154 each for travelling on student concession tickets to Melbourne on V-Line. Both hold student concession cards but the New South Wales cards are not recognised in Victoria, which is exceptionally unfortunate for all students in our border region who have to travel to Melbourne for work experience, sporting and cultural events, and for a host of other reasons. To their credit, V-Line and the Victorian Government responded to my representations and withdrew the fines. They also announced a possible solution for border residents travelling on an interstate journey. The New South Wales Minister for Transport was less forthcoming, leaving me to approach the Victorian Government on behalf of New South Wales students.

The New South Wales Ministry of Transport web site for travel concession indicates that students will not receive discounted fares on an interstate rail journey, but this conflicts with the CountryLink site which states that they receive a student fare on all CountryLink services, which means all the way to Melbourne. This was also confirmed by CountryLink's customer service and a senior executive, but the staff at Albury railway station sided with the Minister and now say there is no concession, unless the students have a blue Sydney transport sticker. It is difficult to get one of those stickers if one is studying full-time in Albury. All this conflicting information causes confusion for the ticket selling staff, let alone the travelling public, so one can guess what Mark Twain would have had to say about that in 2005! To cap it all off, it appears that an International Student Identity Card would get one a concession travel on both CountryLink and V-Line. So perhaps that is the answer—travel as a tourist in your own country! I received a letter last week from a Victorian mother whose daughter attends school in Albury. She is infuriated by the restrictions on student travel between the States and writes:

I can't believe that for all these years Albury Wodonga students have attended cross-border institutions this red tape has not been removed by the State Transport Departments. With Albury Wodonga actively promoting itself as a centre for learning and pitching for students from far afield, utmost flexibility for their travel options is paramount. Located on the main Melbourne/Sydney rail line should be a selling point. Rural universities need to attract more students to their campuses. Rail passenger services surely need to attract more travellers. Tourism Australia actively promotes the backpacking experience ... Surely streamlining student concession travel would encourage wider use of the Australian coach and rail system?

I commend this approach to the Minister.

WALLSEND FAMILY FRIENDLY GUIDELINES LAUNCH

Mr JOHN MILLS (Wallsend) [5.01 p.m.]: During National Child Protection Week early last month I had the honour and pleasure of launching at the Wallsend Employment and Training Centre the Guidelines for Family Friendly Business and Guidelines for Family Friendly Community Events. By coincidence, that Child Protection Week campaign was for the creation of child-friendly communities across Australia. The Helping Families to Grow in Family Friendly Communities project is funded by the Hunter Area Assistance Scheme and run by Newcastle Family Support Services. The project is known as BUDS. It recognises the important role a community plays in the health and happiness of children. The Wallsend and Blue Gum Hills area comprises new residential estates, as well as more established communities. The area is growing rapidly and is home to the highest proportion of children in Newcastle. It has a very high level of families.

With an emphasis on creating communities that are not just child friendly but family friendly, the program aims to assist the Wallsend and Blue Gum Hills areas become supportive and welcoming communities. Strong, creative partnerships between local business, government and the community are a key strategy in this. The approach is backed by Newcastle City Council's community plan research, which found that residents related primarily to shopping centres for the creation of community, and BUDS' own findings that local schools were increasingly being regarded as primary hubs of information and activity. BUDS components target key sectors of the community, including schools, business, shopping plazas, residential land developers and local families.

Central to the sustainability of the project is the creation of a Family Friendly subcommittee of the Wallsend Town Committee, the primary business group in the local area, to continue the local movement towards family friendly communities when the BUDS project finishes later this year. The BUDS components are: the production of BUDS' family friendly calendar—we are onto the second of those now—the development of guidelines for family friendly businesses and events, a poster and logo competition, and Communities for Kids, Wallsend Community of Schools' art project. At the launch two students from Plattsburg Public School made short speeches telling us what a family friendly community means to them. I want to quote some of what they said because they said it better than just about any adults could. Rebecca Alder said:

The other day Maureen from next door made some pikelets. They were delicious. We gave her some scones last week. We like sharing especially when Ernie's pawpaws are ripe. My sister, cousin and I also like visiting the mulberry tree man... He says he's glad we come over because he can't eat them all himself. Mum says that's part of what a community is. My sister forgot her key to the house one day after school. Our neighbours looked after her and rang mum. When we go on holidays people check on our house and we do the same when others go away. Dad says these are the best parts of being part of a community...

I love having so many friends living close by we do lots together. My sister thinks this is what a community needs... Being part of community is that feeling you get when you come home from a long trip... Being part of a community is a happy, safe, familiar feeling. Community is a sense of belonging.

James McMurray, aged 10, said:

I love living in Wallsend. Nearly everything I like is here. Great schools like Plattsburg, our own Plaza, my favourite shops, lots of parks full of things to do, places for emergencies, for entertainment, take away shops, the pool, the library. All of those places have nothing compared to the people who live in Wallsend, my neighbours, my school friends, strangers who greet you as you walk by, those groups who organise the Wallsend Winter Fair that really brings the people of Wallsend together. Why is it important for the Wallsend community to be family friendly? So that no one feels left out on their own or discriminated against, so that refugees can come here and feel safe and accepted, and so that kids can grow up feeling like they belong.

I have here the logo that won the competition. The winners of the logo and poster competition, which was supported by Landcom were: for the posters, Molly Soper and Sylvie Lord, from year 3, and Tirra Bradley Lyons, year 4; for the logo, Callan James, year 6. All are from Plattsburg school. Also present at the launch were Councillors Hornery and Eade, Cheryl Mills representing the town committee, Eric Johnson of Landcom, Sue Swetnam, principal of Plattsburg school, and the school's students. A family friendly business can get a logo to display if it can tick all or most of 12 points that are characteristic of being family friendly. Events can also get a

logo if they can tick all or most of 16 points. I commend the BUDS project and Jenny and Melissa of Newcastle Family Support Services for a great community-building program in the Wallsend district.

NAMBUCCA VALLEY POLICING

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [5.06 p.m.]: I wish to raise the inadequacy of policing resources in the Nambucca Valley. Police at Nambucca Heads, Macksville and Bowraville are doing an excellent job but under difficult circumstances, which are adding to the burnout factor affecting local officers. I have no doubt whatsoever that police in the Nambucca Valley are seriously under-resourced. Indeed, a submission by the Nambucca Valley Police Association dated 12 December 2004, which has been received by the hierarchy of the NSW Police, identified a number of unique policing issues. These include: a large geographic area; an increasing population—Nambucca district was recently identified as one of the fastest growing areas in Australia—increased pressures during holiday seasons; current systems and legislative requirements; multitasking roles; problems with supervision for sergeants and duty officer; first response policing; prisoner and mental health escorts; and individual staffing issues.

Police around the State face these factors but for police in the Nambucca Valley, where there is no 24-hour policing and they are remote from courthouses and lockup facilities, these are serious concerns. The time spent travelling between towns and villages impacts upon the ability of police to perform high-visibility and high-impact policing. The Nambucca Valley has a history of high turnover of staff with stress or anxiety related illnesses. The main issues appear on the surface to be staff shortages, performing normal general duties and doing multitasks, performing custody roles, completing prisoner and mental health escorts, working high levels of overtime and receiving no respite whatever due to the current staffing levels compared with the current workload and population.

The crime statistics bear out the stress on the officers in the Nambucca Valley. Between 1998 and 2004, assaults were up 22.12 per cent; domestic violence, 173.29 per cent; malicious damage, 4.72 per cent; fraud, 3.62 per cent; offences against a person, 255.54 per cent; traffic accidents and prescribed concentration of alcohol cases, 14.43 per cent; children at risk, 2,404 per cent; sexual offences, 329 per cent; murders, 100 per cent; suicide and self-harm, 50.26 per cent; and neighbourhood disputes, 2,189 per cent. In addition, mental health incidents have increased quite substantially since 1998.

The submission by the Nambucca Valley Police Association makes comparisons with other stations. The mid North Coast Local Area Command [LAC] is a level two LAC and it is compared to the New England Local Area Command, which is identified as a level three. The comparison between Nambucca Valley, Glen Innes and Inverell shows clearly the staffing levels between the two largest stations of Nambucca Valley and Inverell. There are two more general duty police units at Inverell, yet the Nambucca Valley has 8,125 more residents. The summary of individual workplace comparisons shows that the Nambucca Valley, with 15 general duty staff in non 24-hour stations comes in second in terms of the number of events per unit after Inverell, which is a 24-hour station. It shows that the staff at Nambucca have mostly higher individual work loads than 24-hour stations, while also having to perform numerous multitasking jobs, such as car crews, station duties, custody roles, answer phones, provide court security, serve summonses, et cetera. The 24-hour stations with additional staff have the luxury of designated car crews, custody managers and station officers to share the workload within an individual patrol.

The submission recommends that an urgent review of all staffing issues raised take place. It is clear that the Nambucca Valley should be provided with more general duties police to cope with the increasing workload, and with an additional detective to investigate serious crime as well as an additional highway patrol officer to deal with the increased traffic workload and trauma. The submission requests that a real allocation of seven additional general duties units, one additional detective unit and one additional highway patrol unit be considered by the Minister. The Nambucca Shire Council is pursuing the submission and a response to the requests for a review. The authors of the submission informed the council that the local area commander, who is based in Port Macquarie, supports the submission for a review. I wrote to the Minister for Police and asked him to visit the Nambucca Valley to initiate a review. Unfortunately, in a letter dated 2 September, he declined. Hence I ask the Minister for Police to commence an immediate review of staffing in the Nambucca Valley and the need for a 24-hour police station in the Nambucca shire.

JOAN SUTHERLAND PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO (Penrith) [5.12 p.m.]: I draw the attention of honourable members to the opening of the \$14 million upgrade to the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre. My husband was part of the team that helped to construct the original Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre in his work with Penrith City Council. I attended the 1990 opening of the centre, as did Dame Joan Sutherland, which was funded by a

Bicentennial grant. Dame Joan and her husband returned to Penrith to attend the centre's tenth anniversary concert and receive the keys to the city. I attended the concert in my official capacity as a councillor. In March 2004 with the Penrith City mayor I was very proud to turn the first sod for the \$14 million extension. I note that Penrith City Council and the State Government funded the project jointly. The new construction was opened officially on 3 September 2005. The \$14 million upgrade includes the 660-seat Richard Bonyngge Concert Hall, a new 380-seat Q Drama Theatre, an upgrade to the 100-seat multipurpose Allan Mullins Hall, 23 new music studios for the Penrith Conservatorium of Music—two orchestral and two ensemble rehearsal rooms—and new shared office space for the Railway Street Theatre Company.

The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, the Joan as it is lovingly called, continues to play a significant role in developing performing arts and cultural activity in Western Sydney. The Joan is the only performing arts venue in Australia that boasts a significant music-teaching faculty incorporated into its operation. The Penrith Conservatorium of Music, which is housed in the centre, is the largest institution for the teaching of music outside the Sydney central business district. Since 1990 the Joan has attracted musicians and performers of the highest international standard. It has developed a deserved reputation as a teaching centre of excellence, with many thousands of talented young and old musicians making use of the facility and its superb teaching staff. I acknowledge some of the people who performed on 3 September. The Penrith Conservatorium flute ensemble and vocal duo was accompanied by Janette Northcott.

When the Premier, the mayor and I arrived at the centre a song of the Booreberongal people was performed by Adam Hill six metres above the new entrance to the Joan. It was a visually spectacular indigenous welcome. Tamara Cisłowska played a piano piece composed by Barton Staggs entitled *Other Voices Are the Rooms*, which was sponsored by the Ministry of the Arts. Tamara was one of the first students of the Penrith Conservatorium of Music. The Railway Street Theatre Company performed. Francisco Romero, a counter tenor, performed *Handles Alcina*. Paul Rolph played the bagpipes. *Guitar Inferno* was performed by Bons Wall of sound in the atrium. The performance involved many musicians from the local area, both young and old. The Penrith City Choir performed a Bon Scott number with electric guitar and acoustic guitar. It certainly was a wall of sound. The Jessica Randall and James Johnson Ensemble—fiddle, piano accordion and harp—Dominique Anderson, piano, and Lorenzo Rositano, a tenor who has performed in this building, performed a concert in the new atrium, which is quite large. I congratulate all those involved on the opening of the extended Dame Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre.

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.17 p.m.]: Cultural and arts facilities are integral to a community. They give people the opportunity to express themselves, they provide ways in which the community can come together and they strengthen the community. The honourable member for Penrith is supporting the arts in her community. The \$14 million upgrade of the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre, which was supported by the Penrith City Council and the State Government, has enriched the Penrith community. I note the comments of the honourable member for Penrith thanking those who have done so much to ensure the upgrade of the facility, which was opened by the Premier, the mayor and the honourable member on 3 September.

GREAT AUSTRALIAN BUSHWALK

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (The Hills) [5.18 p.m.]: Last Sunday I, along with hundreds of other people throughout New South Wales, had the pleasure of taking part in the Great Australian Bushwalk, which was established by the National Parks Association in 2003 and is enjoyed by people across the nation. This year almost 100 walks were conducted throughout Australia, largely by volunteers, including 34 in this State. The overall event is sponsored by a well-known outdoor equipment retailer Paddy Pallin Pty Ltd. The program is designed to promote the national parks system and the joys of bushwalking. I have hiked all across New South Wales from the Border Ranges National Park on the Queensland border to Namadgee nature reserve, which adjoins Victoria's coastal Croajigalong National Park. The opportunity was too good to pass up.

When my staffer Andrew Collins and I arrived at Garigal National Park near Roseville Bridge at 9.30 a.m. approximately 20 other people were present, including National Parks Association Vice-President, Tim Fink, and Secretary, Judith Bennett. The ages of our party ranged from early 20s to mid 60s. They came from all over the North Shore and beyond, from as far away as Parramatta. Some were novice walkers experiencing the bush for the first time. One of them, a Japanese exchange student, not surprisingly found the Australian bush a great change from her native country. Others had walked in their youth, but had been less active in recent years.

Our tour leader was National Parks and Wildlife Service employee Sue Atteridge, whose efficiency was matched by the cracking pace she set. At the outset Sue warned us that we would encounter a lot of weeds that she said had been spread from the surrounding houses, and that was certainly true for the first couple of kilometres of the walk, where lantana was the predominant understorey plant. While the Minister for the Environment told Parliament last week that the Government is spending record amounts on weed control in New South Wales national parks, the national park estate has considerably enlarged. It is clear that more could be done in parks that are close to the city.

This Government constantly confuses expenditure with outcomes, and its weed control programs are no exception. Like so many walks in New South Wales national parks, the walk began on a fire trail—the Lyrebird Trail along the river—but it was not long before we were scrambling up a steep hill when Sherpa shoe soles proved their worth. The track followed Middle Harbour and morphed into Governor Phillip Walk on the north side of a tributary, Carroll Creek. A kilometre beyond Carroll Creek, a water pipeline crosses the river. Near here a boat had moored on a sandbank and its occupants were cooking lunch over an open fire. It was a concern that they had brought a dog with them. They were blissfully unaware they were in a national park.

I recommend that the National Parks and Wildlife Service erect signs along Middle Harbour to alert boat owners that they are entering a national park and to advise them of restrictions on their activities. North of the pipeline is Bungaroo, which is a place of considerable natural, Aboriginal and historical significance. Bungaroo—the Aboriginal name for the location—is where the tidal limit of Middle Harbour is reached. Governor Arthur Phillip walked there on 16 April 1788 from Manly Cove on the first official overland exploration of Australia while he was searching for "good land well watered" where he could grow food for the colony. One member of his party described Bungaroo, where the party camped over night, as "the most desert wild and solitary seclusion the imagination can form any idea of."

Even today there is no sign of human habitation; the houses of Davidson just 400 metres away are blocked by thick stands of bloodwoods and scribbly gums. It was here that Andrew and I separated from the main party, as I had to return to my electorate. Sue Atteridge's daughter, Holly—a highly accomplished skydiver who told us a lot we did not know about the sport—accompanied us back to the car park, which we reached at about 1.30 p.m. Everyone else in our party was having such a good time that they all went on to the Cascades, which is an additional hour and a half's round trip. That meant that their journey was considerably longer than had been advertised, which is testament to the fun they were having.

During the walk I discovered that Judith Bennett hails from Wellington, New Zealand. The father of my wife, Cherry, spent much of his childhood on Soames Island at the quarantine station in Wellington Harbour, where his father worked for the Department of Immigration. Judith is of course a stalwart not only of the National Parks Association but also of the Friends of Quarantine Station at Manly, and she has a keen interest also in the restoration of the buildings on Soames Island. One of our guides, Joe Tesoriero, used to work for Waste Service New South Wales. He is now working for himself, providing resource recovery solutions to the private sector. We had a lengthy chat about plastic bags and energy from waste while we were scrambling over the sandstone.

Back in the sixties, as a scout I used to frequent the area. I carried out my second-class hike there and I subsequently brought my own children to what was then a State Recreation Area in the 1980s. Garigal National Park was a creation of the Greiner Government. I know that the people of northern Sydney are grateful for the Coalition's foresight. I know that many people in New South Wales are similarly grateful for the Coalition's foresight in creating the National Parks and Wildlife Service in 1967. I congratulate Andrew Cox, Brian Everingham, Judith Bennett, Tom Fink, Rob Michie, Michael Irving and other senior members of the National Parks Association on their initiative in bringing our parks to the people. I encourage all honourable members to be involved in the Great Australian Bushwalk next year.

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.22 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for The Hills on drawing to the attention of the House the third Great Australian Bushwalk, for his colourful description of the local cultural activities and people whom he met, and for promoting the Great Australian Bushwalk. Two years ago the former Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, launched the Great Australian Bushwalk and I have participated in two of them.

Mr Michael Richardson: Through the Royal?

Mr PAUL McLEAY: Yes, through the Royal National Park. Unfortunately, this year I was unable to attend. However, I congratulate Andrew Cox and all the team at the Environment Protection Authority not only

on doing such a great job of promoting a healthy lifestyle and outdoor activity, but also on encouraging cleanliness, protection and promotion of the national parks. The team takes promotion of parks beyond goodwill to advocate for the expansion of parks, protection of parks and their enhancement. I congratulate the honourable member for The Hills on undertaking the Great Australian Bushwalk this year.

CARERS WEEK

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [5.25 p.m.]: Last Monday I was deeply honoured to officially launch Carers Week in the Sutherland shire at Miranda. The event was attended by about 80 people and included a carers group from the Greek community. Carers Week recognises the extremely valuable role that our 2.5 million carers undertake in families and communities throughout Australia. It is about expressing our thanks for the role of 800,000 carers in New South Wales. Carers Week provides us with an important opportunity to raise awareness of the need for ongoing support for carers, regardless of their age, their occupation or their circumstances.

There are more than 5,000 primary carers in the Sutherland shire. Primary carers provide the main support for a relative or a friend who has a disability or a chronic illness, or for a relative or friend who is frail or aged. These unpaid carers provide an astonishing 74 per cent of care in the community. But beyond the statistics lies the reality of the emotional, physical and financial toll of a son or a daughter who is supporting their mother, their father or an in-law who has suffered a stroke or has Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis. It is the reality of a wife who is supporting a husband with dementia, or parents providing 24-hour lifetime support for a child born with multiple disabilities. It is the everyday cumulative toll on a young man who makes every effort to help his parents look after an older brother who has a severe behavioural disorder. These are the circumstances I come across in my work and in my role as the local member of Parliament. They are examples of carers caring. I meet carers whose circumstances move me deeply and whose work humbles me.

Carers have been described as the "hidden army"—an army which unforeseen circumstances can force anyone to join without warning; an army for which there is no joining age. Last Sunday morning while I was walking I met a friend I had not seen for years since completing university. Naturally I asked, "How's the family?" I saw the tears well in his eyes as he told me of this 27-year-old son who, with a career and all the world at his feet, had been diagnosed with chronic epilepsy just a month ago. His son is unable to work, drive, or play sport, and is in need of care. Tuesday 13 September was "Walk a Mile in My Shoes Day" and, as it was a sitting day, I met carers from the Sutherland shire at the front of Parliament House. I listened to the speeches and accepted a pile of shoes from carers from the shire who had the time to attend.

Each of the shoes had a tag attached to it, and each tag had a short note. One that particularly caught my eye was a small shoe belonging to a five-year-old boy who lives at Lilli Pilli with his parents. Although the note obviously had been written by an older person, its message moved me deeply and made me recognise how much the need for care affects all in our community, regardless of age. The note read:

I have to help my Mum and Day with my brother Jay. Sometimes I get scared of him. My other brother has to look after me sometimes because Mum and Dad have to help Jay.

I shall keep the shoe and its tag in my office as a reminder. I will use it to raise awareness among those who have happy and healthy families but who are so quick to complain about trivial matters and so slow to count their blessings. It is very important for everyone in the community to recognise the roles of carers and thank them for their work, not just in Carers Week 2005 but in each and every week of each and every year.

It is crucial that our governments at all levels support carers and their families. Respite services are very important for carers because they assist in reducing carers' stress and the sheer fatigue that accompanies a 24/7 job. The State Government recently announced the allocation of an additional \$468 million to expand respite services for older carers. In the past 10 years the Government has increased respite care funding by 80 per cent to \$468 million annually under the Home and Community Care Program. I could go on but I recognise that in a rapidly ageing population there will always be more to do. I am heartened by the Premier's promise to address disability services, which he has nominated as one of his "personal passions."

Carers Week is about carers, their families and those whom they support. I thank the Carers Week Working Party and the carer support project manager, Mary Bills, as well as the Sutherland Shire Community Care Network for organising the opening of Carers Week and for the ongoing work they do on behalf of carers and their families. I have read the booklet "Caring—Winter 2005" and I thank all the caring organisations that operate throughout the Sutherland shire and their magnificent volunteers, who so unselfishly contribute so much. I know, of course, that many of these volunteers are carers in their own right.

I acknowledge and thank our carers for their commitment and contribution to enhancing the quality of life of those for whom they care. I acknowledge the many personal sacrifices that carers make to help those for whom they care to live in our community with dignity and respect. Carers give true meaning to the words "unconditional love". That humbles me and inspires me—as it should each and every member of our community in the most tangible way, through our acknowledgement, our understanding and our support.

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.30 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for Miranda for his heartfelt and considerate promotion of Carers Week in the Sutherland shire, launched by him last week. At the launch people had an opportunity to express their thanks to the 5,000 primary carers who live in the Sutherland shire. I attended the launch with the honourable member, which was held in conjunction with the Sutherland shire's carers picnic. Unfortunately, due to the weather, we had to change the location but, once again, Sutherland shire and St George community transport was able to assist in getting everyone to their destination. Catering was provided by Sylvanvale, the shire's favourite. There was wonderful entertainment. I confirm the support of the House for Mary Bells and the Sutherland community network. I thank the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care for all the support it has provided. I commend, once again, the honourable member for Miranda for his hard work, which the carers were able to see at first hand during the celebration.

ORANGE ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

Mr RUSSELL TURNER (Orange) [5.31 p.m.]: For some years the Government has promised a new hospital for Orange. I recall attending a few discussion meetings in 2002 and 2003, at a time when it was promised that construction of the hospital would commence in 2005-06, with a completion date of 2007-08. Recently I was told that construction might commence by 2008. The general public and those working in the hospital, including doctors, nurses and general support staff, become a little disillusioned when they see the hospital starting to fall down around them. Curtains are falling down, holes are appearing in the worn carpet, paint is peeling and the poor state of equipment is lowering morale quite dramatically.

I acknowledge that the Government has said that the new Bathurst hospital would be built before the new Orange hospital—I acknowledge that the Government has always maintained that it would build only one hospital at a time, partly because of the competitive nature of two major contracts within a short period—but I believe that the Government and the Minister for Health are letting down the loyal staff at Orange Base Hospital together with the auxiliary services by not keeping them fully in touch and confident that the hospital will be built on time. However, as I said earlier, the hospital cannot be completed on time, because its original commencement date was 2005. The Cudal Hospital, which provides auxiliary services, is going through much the same crisis. In 2003 the Government promised that the new hospital would be finished by 2004, and it is yet to be started. The contract for the demolition of the old Cudal Hospital has just been let.

I will highlight some of the issues concerning auxiliary services about when construction of the hospital will commence and also what part the auxiliary services will play in the new building, and where they may be located. The auxiliary services include Anson Cottage, with its oncology services, public dentist, breast screening unit and dialysis unit. For a number of years the local Rotary club had planned to build emergency accommodation for relatives of patients, alongside the old Cudal Hospital. Rotary is now reconsidering whether it will build the accommodation units, or wait until the hospital is constructed. Rotary is concerned that it is letting down people who donated money to build the four emergency accommodation units.

Another concern is that the staff at BreastScreen, which operates from an old, original house alongside the hospital, have been told by their clients that they will not feel comfortable going into a hospital environment. BreastScreen staff are fearful that a lot of women will forgo their check-ups because they are comfortable in the current home environment, where the staff provide that wonderful service. They will not be comfortable in a large hospital environment. The Anson Cottage oncology service staff are also concerned about where they will be located in the new hospital, and also when they will be moved into it. I call on the Minister for Health to announce a positive date for the construction and completion of the hospital. *[Time expired.]*

MS YENTA WILLIS FARE EVASION INFRINGEMENT NOTICE

Mr ALAN ASHTON (East Hills) [5.35 p.m.]: The State Rail Authority has fined a constituent of mine, Ms Yenta Willis, who lives in Revesby. This matter is quite disturbing to me. On Friday 7 January

2005—which is getting to be a long time ago—Ms Willis left her work at 5.15 p.m. and caught her usual train at Wynyard station to travel to Revesby. At Wynyard an announcement was made that all trains were running late and out of timetable order, a fairly common situation at that time. After looking at the indicator and checking with other passengers, she got on a train and expected to be taken to Revesby, where she would alight as usual. However, that train did not stop at Revesby, and it did not stop at the next station, Panania. It stopped at East Hills station.

Ms Willis spoke with her friend who was sitting next to her about whether the train was supposed to stop at Revesby. She was advised, of course, that it was, as that was the announcement that the friend heard as well. Ms Willis alighted at East Hills station and was asked by a ticket inspector at East Hills to show her ticket. She certainly did have a ticket, but it was from Wynyard to Revesby. Interestingly, Ms Willis had a yearly ticket, which cost her \$1,277. Notwithstanding that, she was booked for not having a valid ticket to travel to East Hills. This happened in January and she has written several letters to different transport Ministers, and at the moment I acknowledge that her matter is before the current Minister for Transport, the Hon. John Watkins.

Ms Willis bought her yearly ticket on 7 June 2004, so it was valid for another six months at that time. Consider this: she had paid \$600 to the Government in advance of the next six months of travel! I have never heard of anyone buying a yearly ticket—but I did teach Yenta, so maybe she listened to me. She has now copped this fine. Regardless of the fact that the train did not stop where it was announced that it would stop, regardless of the fact that the Government and/or CityRail is culpable, not Ms Willis, and regardless of whether CityRail or the State Rail Authority has stuffed up, not Ms Willis, a letter from the Minister stated:

I am advised that the regulations under which CityRail operates require all passengers to travel only between the destinations specified on the ticket they hold by boarding the appropriate train for that journey.

In a situation where a passenger is unable to make a valid ticket available for inspection on the request of an authorised officer, they are liable to receive an infringement notice.

Surely someone who is going to issue that young lady with a \$200 fine has the ability to say, "You are liable to receive an infringement notice, but because you have bought a yearly ticket, and the train skipped two stations, you will not be fined." Someone should have that discretion. Obviously there were hundreds of witnesses at that time, but how we would get them to speak up I do not know. This matter was sent to the Infringement Processing Bureau, which has said that not much can be done, because it keeps coming back to the words that Ms Willis did "travel on train without a valid ticket".

I am making these points on behalf of Ms Willis, who took this matter to her lawyers and finally brought it to me as her State member of Parliament. Even though I am speaking on her behalf I am sure this is occurring in the electorates of all honourable members. This incident occurred in January. Things are better now but they were not in January. All-station trains were skipping stations and passengers wanting to get off trains after East Hills were ending up in the Holsworthy and Campbelltown areas of the East Hills line. Ms Willis got off at East Hills but she was not permitted to get back on the train to go back to Revesby where her father was waiting to pick her up. She had to call a taxi to take her to Revesby. I would like Minister John Watkins to acknowledge how ridiculous this is. This lady, as an act of good faith, bought a yearly ticket and paid \$1,277 for it. It is not her fault that she went two stations too far; it was the fault of the train system at the time. If ever there were a case where an infringement notice should be waived and an apology given, it is in the case of Ms Yenta Willis of Revesby.

BEGA ELECTORATE POLICING

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega) [5.41 p.m.]: Tonight I wish to refer to police matters in the Bega electorate. Many members in my community are concerned that there is no 24-hour, seven-day-a-week operational police station in Bega Valley shire, a regional centre. From time to time small coastal communities such as those on the far South Coast experience small crime sprees. At the moment we are seeing such a spree on the far South Coast; a lot of break and enters are occurring in the business community.

A few weeks ago a business owner in Bega felt the need to collect the signatures of local business people whose businesses had been broken into. This is not just occurring in Bega; businesses in other towns in the shire are outraged at the level of antisocial behaviour and the incidence of break and enter offences. This is particularly frustrating for people who require the assistance of police during the evening, in the early hours of the morning and at weekends. If they call the local police station they are referred to Warilla, which is near Wollongong, some 350 kilometres away, or to Batemans Bay, which is 150 kilometres away.

Residents are annoyed that they are put through to police officers who are not located in their local area. I call on the State Government to ensure that a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week police station is opened in Bega and 24-hour policing services are available in the Merimbula, Toora Beach and Pambula area. This issue is about providing comfort to the community. Many policing issues arise, such as the need for additional highway patrols on the far South Coast. It is truly remarkable that in the past 20 years not one additional highway patrol has been added in the Eurobodalla and Bega Valley shires. We need a 24-hour operation for highway patrol officers in Bega Valley shire.

It is completely unacceptable that there has not been an increase in police numbers in highway patrols and in general duties officers and detectives in Bega Valley shire—the southern part of the far South Coast command. Merimbula business owners are frustrated at having to put up with antisocial and criminal behaviour from a group of people doing nothing other than breaking and entering, stealing whatever cash is lying around and getting out of the businesses as quickly as possible. We want to send a message to these people that we will not tolerate that sort of behaviour. Members of the business community, particularly Robert Hyson of the Bega Valley Shire Chamber of Commerce, are hoping to work closely with police to develop strategies to do that.

Mr Ross Cowley, one business owner in the Bega Valley, has spoken out publicly about the problems he is experiencing. Business owners are sitting in their cars at night in order to protect their businesses, and that is simply not on. If we had a 24-hour policing operation in the shire it would go a long way towards addressing many of these problems. A 24-hour police station in Bega would provide greater flexibility in policing resources in Eden, Pambula, Merimbula the Toora Beach area and Bermagui. This is 2005, not 1905. If we are to have a regional centre in Bega, which is what the State Government is looking to designate under its regional plan, it is critical that a 24-hour police station is part of that process.

People who require police services are sick of being referred to Warilla and Batemans Bay. We want greater police resources. It is easy for people to point the finger at local police and express frustration when, in reality, they should be pointing the finger at the Government which is not providing the resources that are required for our local police, who are doing a terrific job. We want to ensure that this issue is addressed and that we are provided with a 24-hour police station. [*Time expired.*]

TOUKLEY AMBULANCE STATION

Mr PAUL CRITTENDEN (Wyong) [5.45 p.m.]: Tonight I refer to the problems being experienced at Toukley ambulance station. On page 3 of yesterday's *Central Coast Express Advocate* is a picture clearly showing a contractor wearing protective clothing entering Toukley ambulance station to remove asbestos from that premises. Apparently, the women's toilets and several other sections of the station, for example the windowsills and so forth, are contaminated by asbestos. What is worrying in this instance is that ambulance officers have been back in the station for some considerable time.

A lot of money has been spent in an attempt to alleviate this problem and we were hoping there was no more asbestos contamination. Yesterday represents the first phase of what appears to be an ongoing asbestos removal operation supervised by WorkCover. Apparently the next phase will be to take off the roof, clean it, and seal it. The roof will then be re-pitched over the whole station with the purpose of eliminating box gutters. The fourth phase is the removal of internal walls and the ceiling to remove asbestos contamination. As I said earlier, a lot of money has been spent in an attempt to address this problem.

Last December I went to a site meeting at which there was a cast of thousands. Ambulance officers, union representatives and all those who attended were assured that the issue would be resolved expeditiously. It is now October and things are in a parlous state. Yesterday the Premier, in answer to a question without notice from the honourable member for Tamworth, referred to the new ambulance station in Gunnedah. Good luck to Gunnedah. We all know that money is tight and that the Federal Government is not being fair to New South Wales. We must also take stock of the money that is being spent and ensure that that is done carefully and prudently.

At the outset of this problem I advocated that a new station be built at Toukley. Based on the figure mentioned by the Premier yesterday for the Gunnedah ambulance station I realise that \$850,000 is a lot of money, but we have to take into account the costs involved in testing, repairs and everything else. The meeting I attended in December last year probably would have cost in the region of \$5,000. Yesterday the Premier said that the new station at Gunnedah was a result of sustained community action. Toukley ambulance station is dear to the hearts of people in Toukley, Gorokan, Norah Head, Noraville and all the surrounding areas.

I well remember how before my first election campaign in 1991 the previous Government removed paramedics services from Toukley. Despite the then Government's best efforts and the media circus it created, 400 people turned out at Toukley Park to discuss why the paramedics should stay in Toukley. One of the Carr Labor Government's best early achievements in office was the reinstatement of the paramedics to Toukley. The community believes Toukley ambulance station is very important. Everyone knows that the Central Coast has both young and ageing populations. I am pleased that the Parliamentary Secretary for Health is at the table because it is important that we get a result on this matter. I urge the Minister for the Central Coast to visit Toukley ambulance station with me to see the problems at first-hand. We must work together not only on the Toukley ambulance station but with regard to Wyong Hospital. That is a brand new hospital and we must ensure that the current health administrative arrangements deliver the right senior staff structure. I look forward to seeing the Minister achieve that goal.

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.50 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Wyong on bringing this important issue to the attention of the House. He is a hard-working local member, who always thinks clearly and seizes every opportunity to put his concerns on the parliamentary record. I am sure that his good friend and colleague the Minister for the Central Coast will work hand in hand with him on this issue, as he has in the past. As Parliamentary Secretary, I will assist the honourable member in his dealings with the Minister—but he has a much stronger relationship with the Minister than I do. I will ensure that this matter is progressed further.

CENTENNIAL PARK AND MOORE PARK TRUST DRAFT PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Bligh) [5.51 p.m.]: The Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust recently published its draft plan of management. Most of the parklands complex is within my electorate, and a majority of the park users come from the surrounding, high-density residential communities. The trust's primary role should be to provide for the open space and recreation needs of the region's surrounding residential communities, now and into the future. Basic to this is maintaining rather than diminishing open space and soft landscaping, and taking opportunities to extend parklands by reversing past alienations.

The plan of management is an important document, required under legislation to guide the trust for the next five years. It should document genuinely the principles and mechanisms that protect and promote the parklands' priorities and values. It must contain more than a collection of motherhood statements. The plan should not allow the widest of interpretations and give the trust a virtual free hand to do what it likes but make the management of the parklands transparent and accountable and provide a context for more detailed plans. Governor Macquarie gifted these lands to the people of New South Wales in 1811 as the second Sydney Common. Today the parklands are facing increasing pressures as a result of significant residential growth in surrounding suburbs. Furthermore, there will be an additional 30,000 residents in the locality as the area from the ACI site to Green Square is developed. Most residents will live in apartments, with little or no private open space, in an area that has less provision of open space than most of Sydney.

The draft plan of management has major weakness in its consultative processes. The plan process was minimal, with a few invitation-only meetings followed by a month on exhibition. The plan also has important information shortfalls. It contains no information on current users, levels of car parking or trust finances. We know that 70 per cent of users live within five kilometres of the parklands and that most users want protection of the parklands, with improvements in basic facilities. An important aim of the plan should be to rationalise land usage and facilities in order to exploit all opportunities to expand the area of the parklands. The trust must aim to reduce coverage of parklands by roads and prevent new roads such as that proposed adjacent to Sydney Boys High School. Rather, the priority should be to extend the tree canopy for city environmental benefits and to maintain and expand absorbent areas that compensate for the increasingly hard-paved, densely populated surrounding suburbs.

The plan of management must put a brake on the steady loss of soft landscaping through hard paving, building works and other alienations. In recent years the tree cover to the western end of Federation Drive has been reduced to further expose the Anzac Parade-Cleveland Street traffic interchange. A paved forecourt and a new car park for the tennis courts have also been created. These parklands are unique and important because of their size, which is unparalleled in the region and offers city dwellers relief from urban environment and traffic. The plan of management should promote peaceful enjoyment of the parklands as a priority.

Not all areas of the parklands are suitable for all activities and not all areas must be accessible by car. Activities on parklands should be allocated to the most appropriate area of the park complex, based on

minimising impacts and preventing alienation of parklands. Proposals such as a McDonald's restaurant should never be entertained. Developments should be permitted only when they provide park users with a service that has specific park relevance. Commercialisation must be strictly prescribed in terms of extent and relevance to the parklands' users. Car parking should be prescribed and controlled by the plan of management. The continued use of parklands for private, event-related car parking is contrary to proper stewardship. It causes local traffic gridlock, costing the surrounding communities both environmentally and economically. The plan of management should include a program to phase out alienation for event car parking.

Some past trust decisions have indicated a preference for monuments and formal spaces instead of basic works to enhance everyday usage. Funds expended on Federation Drive would have been better used to put flanking power lines underground or to build a footbridge across Anzac Parade. Works priorities based on park usage and values should be emphasised in the plan of management. I call upon the trust to review its draft plan of management in order to develop a plan that will reflect the needs of the user community and give the trust proper and clear guidance on its priorities over the next five years. This plan should be based on the core principle that the primary role of the trust is to provide the green lungs for the inner metropolitan area, offering the open space and recreation needs of the most densely populated communities in Australia.

EDALIVE EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [5.55 p.m.]: It is always interesting to track the way successful businesses start from humble beginnings, particularly in regional areas where some of the challenges are more significant. I note the interest of the Parliamentary Secretary, who is at the table. In Armidale last week I called in to congratulate a world leader in educational software, EdAlive, on winning a major national award for yet another innovative program. This business, led by Graham and Barbara East, literally grew from a small venture run from the sitting room of their home to the multi-million dollar venture it is today, employing 23 full-time staff, up to 12 casual workers and a team from the local Challenge Foundation.

Graham East was a primary school teacher in Adelaide who recognised very early the potential of computers in education. When he started looking for suitable material for the children he taught he found that there was very little available—he shared this frustration with other teachers. He began sourcing the best he could find on the world market and became an expert in the field. Fellow teachers began to rely on his advice and this prompted him to start up his business part time, with his wife and children providing the work force. The family moved to Armidale in 1989 to operate the new business they named New Horizons to source and sell educational software to schools around Australia. From that time until 2000 the company was the largest operation of its kind in Australia, supplying the bulk of educational software to approximately half the schools in Australia. In the years leading up to 2000 the company published a number of small educational titles that were designed to supplement the imported material that the Australian schools were purchasing. The most successful was the Down Under Collection, which the company continues to sell today. It also created a range of Australian graphics and photographic titles.

Using his experience as a teacher, Mr East and his team began to develop a line of products designed to meet the needs of parents, children and schools. The principles were that learning should be as much fun as possible, products should be rich in content and based on sound educational principles tied to valid educational outcomes, and they should be great value for money. The formula has been extremely successful and titles such as "Words Rock", "Spelling Force Baggin' the Dragon", "Volcanic Panic", "Ultimate Maths Invaders"—I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary plays that in his office—and "Typing Tournament", which I am sure would be useful to all of us, have been judged the best in their field in national awards for teaching numeracy, literacy and typing skills. The company has been a finalist for many more awards. "Typing Tournament" just picked up the Best Instructional/Training Award at the Australian Teachers of Media, Film, Television and Multimedia awards in Melbourne. That is a significant award. The program teaches students to conquer the keyboard through a mix of mediaeval jousting and other challenges and adds an historical flavour to typing tuition.

The company employs a graphic artist, animator, a curriculum development manager, technical support and marketing staff, which adds to the skill base in Armidale. It also believes strongly in working from a regional centre because it can gain access to great long-term stable staff and a ready supply of capable staff in the university student body. The Easts also cite the closeness of the community, lower costs for accommodation and running the business, and the strong academic quality of the Armidale community as good reasons to base their business in Armidale in regional New South Wales. EdAlive's community software plan is an original

creative approach to marketing to parents through schools and is currently operating in Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and is commencing in the United States of America.

The plan breaks into new markets by producing culturally appropriate versions of its titles for each education environment and ensuring appropriate cultural content. Although the company has a presence with its community software plan in a good number of New South Wales schools there are many more that would benefit from these innovative programs, as the quality of the content can make a big difference to educational outcomes. I invite the Minister for Education and Training to receive a delegation from EdAlive to discuss this issue further and to see for herself the quality of the educational software being produced by this excellent and innovative regional company.

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.00 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for bringing to the attention of the House EdAlive's innovation and creation in the region. He is a passionate advocate for his region and I am yet to take up his offer to visit his electorate, particularly Armidale. The honourable member spoke passionately about Mr and Mrs East's computer and education business, EdAlive, no doubt because of his own connection with education. He is a firm believer in young people making the most of their lives. He was a former warden of the union at the University of New England and continues to be associated with and promote that institution. This is not the first time the honourable member has spoken in this House about creative businesses in his electorate. On several occasions he has promoted local innovative businesses, particularly those that creatively broaden their horizons both domestically and internationally. I congratulate the honourable member, Mr and Mrs East and their business, EdAlive.

NORTH ROCKS HAZARD REDUCTION

Mr WAYNE MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [6.02 p.m.]: In January this year Mrs Lynne Northey of North Rocks contacted my electorate office to raise her concerns in relation to bushland behind her property. Mrs Northey indicated at that time that bushland management had spent two days, 15 and 16 November 2004, clearing an area in the bushland behind a property four houses away from her home. The bush that was cleared was stacked in piles and Mrs Northey was concerned that it only needed someone with a match to light those piles of bush and the houses in her street would be placed at risk. At that time representations were made to the Rural Fire Service. I understand that the area was inspected and advice was received that either the Rural Fire Service or Baulkham Hills Shire Council would remove the piles. On 29 September, Mrs Northey wrote to me and indicated that the piles of bush had not been removed.

Mrs Northey stressed that over the years residents of Sophia Crescent have made many requests for hazard reduction to be undertaken. She advised that hazard reduction was undertaken in 1978 and some action was taken in 2001. Unfortunately, the 2001 effort only covered a small area. She alleged that in 2001 firemen were horrified at the thickness of the undergrowth and said it was too big a task for that day and they would return in three weeks to do more. However, she states that no-one returned to undertake the work. Mrs Northey declared that in 2003 she was advised that Baulkham Hills Shire Council had asked for the area to be assessed by someone from the Shoalhaven area. She said that this person advised her that he would report to the council that hazard reduction work was needed urgently and if a fire was to start she should immediately leave her home.

Another North Rocks resident, Mr Christopher Marshall of Williams Road, has forwarded a letter to me dated 6 October 2005 outlining similar concerns. He indicated that since he moved into his home in June 1975 only two hazard reduction burns have been carried out to the bushland at the rear of Williams Road and Sophia Crescent. Mr Marshall mentioned that some local authorities may be labouring under the false impression that the area in question has undergone adequate hazard reduction in recent years. He says that this is incorrect. He believes that any discussion with long-term residents and a thorough inspection of these areas by qualified Rural Fire Service personnel would soon put paid to those false impressions. Mr Marshall declared that residents of the area are sitting on a disaster waiting to happen. He asserts that 30 years of dead fall and bush fire fuel now lies at the base of and around the large trees in these areas, to say nothing of the annual increase in tonnage per hectare of ground fuel over the rest of the area.

The problem appears to be that the land in question is owned by Baulkham Hills Shire Council. However, it is located in the geographical area for which the New South Wales Rural Fire Service, an organisation for which I have great respect, is responsible. I have made representations to the Minister for Emergency Services on behalf of my constituents. I urge the Minister to liaise with Baulkham Hills Shire Council to ensure that action is taken to provide sensible management of these high-fuel levels to ensure that

this situation does not get out of hand. Mrs Northey has stated that long-term residents of the area are now in their sixties. Some of them are Vietnam veterans suffering from various disabilities who are suffering from the lack of support from authorities to ensure that their homes and lives are protected.

My colleague the honourable member for Burrinjuck, the shadow Minister for Regional Affairs, has informed me that many inquiries have found that effective hazard reduction is necessary to reduce the intensity of fires when they occur, which is probably only commonsense. She advised me that the failure of the New South Wales Government to properly reduce the amount of flammable fuel on public lands contributed significantly to the intensity of the 2003 bushfires. I certainly do not want a bushfire that could have been avoided take hold within my electorate of Baulkham Hills. Baulkham Hills is a lovely area with plenty of areas of bushland, but everyone has a responsibility to ensure that bushland is made safe at times when fires are likely to occur. Summer is rapidly approaching; it is just a matter of months away. I ask the Minister to give urgent consideration to this matter and to ensure that hazard reduction is carried out so that these people can live with some peace of mind during the bushfire season.

Private members' statements noted.

The House adjourned at 6.07 p.m. until Tuesday, 8 November 2005 at 2.15 p.m.
