

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 13 November 2008

The Speaker (The Hon. George Richard Torbay) took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

HUMAN TISSUE AMENDMENT (CHILDREN IN CARE OF STATE) BILL 2008

THOROUGHbred RACING FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2008

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

PUBLIC HEALTH (TOBACCO) BILL 2008

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with an amendment.

Consideration of Legislative Council's amendment set down as an order of the day for a future day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

DEATH OF RALPH JAMES CLOUGH, A FORMER MEMBER FOR BATHURST

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [10.06 a.m.]: I move:

That this House extends to Mrs Clough and family, the deep sympathy of members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained by the death on 12 August 2008 of Ralph James Clough, a former member of the Legislative Assembly.

These formal motions commence every condolence motion in this Parliament. This is the first time I have moved such a motion but, of course, I have spoken in support of them. Therefore, it is my pleasure and honour to move this motion for our old friend and mate and of course very good member of this Parliament, Mick Clough. Some time has elapsed since we heard the sad news that Mick had passed away in Perth, Western Australia, following a long illness. As many people did at that time and later at a memorial service in Lithgow, I too offer my deepest sympathies to Doreen, to his children Elizabeth, Peter and David, their partners and families, and to his many grandchildren, not to mention his extended family members and his friends whose lives were touched so much by Mick and who also, of course, were saddened by his passing.

A few weeks ago I celebrated 25 years as a member in this Parliament. When I reflect on many of those years my friendship with Mick always rates at the top of the things I remember most fondly about this Parliament. In fact, Mick reminded me that the anniversary of my election to Parliament, 22 October, was also his birthday, although his birth year of 1927 gave him many more years on me. I first saw the name R. J. Clough during the 1976 State election campaign. I was only in the stages of joining the Labor Party at the time. Labor had lost the Federal election in 1975. Mick Clough was a candidate for one of the State seats that was deemed crucial for the election of a State Labor government. Mick had a strong political presence before standing as the candidate for the impending State election, although I was unaware of that presence.

The Whitlam Government had lost office in 1975 and the Labor State Opposition under Neville Wran was gearing up for the 1976 State election. The seat of Blue Mountains, the seat considered crucial to Labor, was to be contested by Mick. He had contested it in the 1973 election, but the good citizens of the Blue Mountains did not have the sense to elect him on that occasion. After election day I kept track of the progressive

count in the marginal seats in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and I remember the count of Mick Clough was one we were all watching, because it went up and down from day to day, to see whether we were going to form a government.

I met Mick when my predecessor Tony Johnson, the then member for Mount Druitt and then Riverstone, introduced me to him in the confines of this Parliament, and I learned that Mick and Tony Johnson had a long and enduring friendship during their time in this Parliament. Members might recall that Mick was probably a bit uneasy about it but on one occasion he played a joke on Tony Johnson. They were very good friends and Mick always had a great sense of humour. Mick went into Tony's office and put on his desk a box on which he had written the word "bomb". Mick said it was put on Tony's desk inside his room, but someone had put it in the outside anteroom. Of course, all hell broke loose. Security was called in and the police and the media became involved.

It was a bit of a light-hearted prank between two mates in this Parliament that somewhat backfired. There were editorials in the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Telegraph* calling for Mick's sacking. These days I suppose we would have set up some inquiry. Seeing the editorials calling for all sorts of things to happen to him, Mick told me later that he rang Neville Wran and said, "Premier, what do I do?" I think Neville said, "Get out of town and stay there." It was good advice: the incident blew over, as such things often do.

When I was elected in 1983 Mick Clough was the first person who became a new friend in this place. I had been friends with many members of this Parliament before that—people such as Bob Christie, John Aquilina and so on—but it did not take long to become a friend of Mick. You could not help liking him and respecting him. In the space of one day he could be harsh and determined to get a point over and a little later be funny, sarcastic and friendly. I liked his sense of humour. I liked the way he made fun of himself and the way he laughed. As I mentioned at the memorial service, I would just laugh at his whole-of-body quiver when he laughed. Some people have a smile that radiates from their eyes or their face; Mick Clough had a whole-of-body laugh and it was such a pleasure to see. It was so nice—warm and fuzzy, I suppose—to be around a fellow such as Mick Clough.

This place has changed since I was elected, but it has changed a lot more since the days when Mick Clough was first elected. Mick came in at a time when this Parliament was being renovated. The offices we now have were just being built to replace the old shed type buildings that fronted onto Hospital Road at the back of Parliament House. I would argue that by the time I got here this place was perhaps operating at its best. All the offices that we now take for granted had been built and the foyer and the paintwork in this place that we now see were still relatively new.

The members bar area was always open, although Mick never partook of alcohol, not that I ever saw anyway. Members of all parties would meet and games of snooker would be played more often than they were in later years. In the area where the former members room now sits was an open lounge area where all members would go to have breakfast, and there were many discussions between members of all the parties and, of course, the occasional Independent, such as Bruce Duncan, who I think represented the seat of Lismore. Mick would be there, having his breakfast and holding court. If it was not a discussion on politics it was on sport and if it was a discussion on sport it was cricket, cricket and more cricket. He would talk about the current games, especially when the West Indies or England was playing Australia.

I hope I do not offend anybody who is a cricket fan but I loved the banter with him and the humour that we shared with each other. He would mention that someone such as Viv Richards had just got 100 runs by hitting 70 balls. Although I was only ever a senior constable he would always call me "Chief Superintendent". One particular day he said to me, "Chief Superintendent, have you ever got 100 runs by hitting 70 balls?" I said, "I recall in a demonstration in the moratorium marches hitting about 70 balls and about 35 people got the runs, and they weren't too happy about it".

I would ask him if Viv Richards was as good a sportsman as John McEnroe. You would have to know Mick Clough and you would have to have been there to appreciate him but he gave me this look that he used to give me. It would crack me up each time I saw it. He would follow up with one of his favourite put-downs when he wanted to tell somebody that he or she was a bit of a drone. He would look at you and he would say, "Why me? Why is it always me?" Of course, he would win the point.

Mick Clough was one of the many Labor members who lost their seats at the 1988 elections. People such as Harold Mair, John Akister, and Terry Sheahan lost country seats. In the caucus meeting prior to the

election Mick dressed down the Government and predicted the loss of seats because of policies on issues such as national parks and gun laws. He did not just say that we would lose seats; he named the seats and pointed to the members—and he included himself in that assessment, such was his knowledge of politics and, in particular, country politics. During that period when he was out of Parliament I became a shadow Minister. I took the opportunity to go to the Bathurst electorate and would always ask Mick if he would run again. I had a dual motive. One was that I believed that he had the best chance of our winning the seat back and, secondly, it was purely personal self-interest: I wanted Mick Clough around this House again.

In the lead-up to the 1991 election he rang me, sounding somewhat down in the dumps. He told me that the party would not just endorse him for the upcoming State election, he would have to go through a pre-selection process. Mick was not a branch stacker; he did not attend every branch meeting. "It only encourages them", he would say with a cheeky grin. But, in effect, he was telling me that he did not believe he had the numbers. I played to his fighting side at that time and said, "Do you mean that you are going to quit without even asking the branch members?" I said to him, "Boy, you must have changed since the time I saw you in Parliament only a few years ago." I could almost hear his mind ticking over even though we were talking on the phone. He said that he would ask a few members before finally making up his mind. I did not help things by saying, "That's good because I did not think you were a quitter." I am glad I was not in his presence at that time because that is the last name you would call Mick Clough.

A few weeks later I got another call at the weekend. Mick said, "Chief Superintendent, you are now talking to the Labor candidate for Bathurst. I won by two votes. " I felt very honoured when he said that he would never have run if it had not been for our conversation. True or not, I was so honoured by the comment. I noted in my diary on that day that Mick's call had made my weekend. The upshot of that decision was that in the great fight-back election of 1991—the election that robbed Nick Greiner's Coalition Government of its majority—Mick Clough won Bathurst back for Labor, and, if my history is correct, he became the only man in this House to have defeated three sitting members in elections during his career.

The result also meant that Mick was back in this House during the turbulent years between 1991 and 1995. Mick, Bob Martin, the shadow Minister for Agriculture, and I would tour around the central west, always in campaign mode. Then we were back in this place taking part in the debates, and over lunch and dinner enjoying the banter and humour which seems to have changed so much since then. Special memories during that period were of Mick's campaign on behalf of farmers being evicted from their farms by the banks. The upshot of that campaign was the Farm Debt Mediation Bill. Though as the shadow Minister I had carriage of that bill that was finally passed by both Houses of Parliament, I am pleased to acknowledge in this House that the bill came about because of Mick Clough's campaign. It was the Mick Clough Mediation Bill.

His traditional Labor roots came out on many occasions and on one occasion, on seeing a list of all Labor members in the newspaper under the various factions headings, he stood up in caucus and moved "That the left faction, the right faction, the centre unity group, the Terrigals and the Troggs meet and agree to form one group and it be called the Australian Labor Party." His sarcasm did not need a vote of the caucus. In the 1995 election Labor came back into office. Mick won Bathurst again and I was to become the Minister for Agriculture. Again Mick's friendship and support were never failing. In debates and in question time he was into it every day: jumping up to make a sarcastic retort to anyone who pulled a point of order on me and backing up me and other Ministers in urgency debates, censure motions and matters of public importance—always leaving his most caustic remarks, with respect, for members of the National Party.

He told me he was retiring at the 1999 elections. I once asked him who did he think should follow him into the seat. There was no hesitation in his response: "It has to be Gerard Martin, we won't win it without him". And, of course, Gerard Martin it was. Mick was very proud of Gerard's achievements since his election and in this House. Gerard also will speak to this motion later.

Surprisingly, Mick and Doreen took up the running of a motel at Nambucca Heads, the Coolawin Gardens, and he loved to hear a few of us call him Basil Fawltly. From there Mick and Doreen moved to Perth. I appreciate that time is short, so I will mention just one anecdote. A few years ago when the Parliamentary Bowls Club played in Perth, the entire delegation visited the Clough household, where Mick and Doreen and the boys hosted a grand backyard barbecue. It was a memorable night. Mick was only in fair health but just loved being around so many current and former members. We all enjoyed it and cherished the occasion—probably even more than he did. It was a great and memorable occasion but sadly was probably to be the last time that that group was in the company of Mick Clough.

Mick Clough accurately has been referred to as an old-style Labor MP. At the funeral and memorial services many people spoke of his determination to work for his community and for battlers who needed help. But he was no soft touch, bouncing police and departmental heads, Ministers and political opponents when he felt it was necessary. How would he fare these days? But the thing I will miss most of all is just being around him, hearing the tone of his voice and competing with his sense of humour. Doreen and all the family have lost a wonderful and endearing part of their family and, sadly, this Parliament no longer has Mick Clough, something which of course is all too plainly obvious!

It was with great respect that I moved and supported the motion. This is a sad occasion, even though it was some months ago that Mick passed on. The family has lost a great person and certainly this Parliament has lost a great battler's representative in the former member for Bathurst, the honourable Mick Clough. I refer to him as honourable because that is exactly what he was. I thank members for their attention.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.21 a.m.]: It is my privilege to represent the Coalition and support the motion. I extend my personal sympathy and the sympathy of the Leader of the Opposition, who has had to attend a funeral this morning and who otherwise would have been present. I join with the member for Mount Druitt in extending sympathy to Mick Clough's family, his wife, Doreen, their children, Elizabeth, Peter and David, their six grandchildren and their three great-grandchildren. Mick was a man with an extended family and I know they are very proud of him.

The speech of the member for Mount Druitt had all the personal touches of a friend. It is very hard to match that, although I could do so easily about some of my friends. However, I will mention a couple of things that reflect well on Mick. I was elected in a by-election in 1994 and was re-elected in 1995. In my early days in the Opposition some of the frontbench members of the Labor Government were what I would have thought Mick Clough would describe as badly behaved, particularly towards a female member of Parliament. Occasionally my colleagues took points of order to draw their conduct to the attention of the Speaker whereas I always remained silent because I did not think it was appropriate for me to say anything.

I recall one occasion when Mick Clough realised that I was getting close to doing something about their conduct. He came to me after question time and said, "Jillian, don't take a point of order when that bad behaviour continues. If they do it again I'll move the point of order." They never did it again, and I was always thankful to Mick for that. I agree with the heading to the obituary in the *Sydney Morning Herald* written by my old colleague and friend, Tony Stephens, "Old-fashioned Labor man who worked for ordinary people". As the member for Mount Druitt said, he was an old-fashioned Labor man, the likes of whom we do not see very often now, although there are still a few—and they know who they are—and he had a very interesting elections history. I could always enjoy a civil conversation and camaraderie with Mick. He could stand up for what he believed was right, and that was his hallmark.

As the member for Mount Druitt has already said, in the 1970s Parliament underwent renovation. I first attended the Parliament in the press gallery in 1971, which was just before the renovations began. I remember the time after the changes were made, and I think it changed the nature of politics in this place as it so dramatically changed its appearance. In Tony Stephens' obituary he points out:

Commentators called him irascible, churlish, taciturn and wily, but he occasionally picked up strangers by the roadside and saw them safely home.

Those comments epitomise the kind of man I believe Mick Clough was. He was ferocious in defending his electorate and the people he believed needed his support as well as in standing up for what he believed were the true Labor principles and for his Labor Party colleagues when he saw them doing the right thing. His objection applied not only to bad behaviour but proposed actions of the Government, such as the privatisation of electricity which re-emerged recently.

I believe the House had a great champion for the Bathurst electorate in Mick Clough. Comments made by the member for Mount Druitt about the things they did when in Opposition, such as going around to different areas and talking to people, bring a smile to my face. As the member for Mount Druitt would know, that is exactly what the current Opposition is doing. Just last week I visited Lithgow and Bathurst. I was speaking to people about issues concerning my shadow health portfolio. That is the type of thing that good politicians do: they go out into the community, listen to people and respond to their needs. I believe that is what Mick Clough did. The Clough family have very good reason to be very proud of the way he represented his constituents in this House. I join with the Government in supporting the motion.

Mr GERARD MARTIN (Bathurst) [10.26 a.m.]: It is with sadness that I speak about my good friend, Mick Clough. I acknowledge Doreen, Elizabeth and family members who are present in the public gallery. I acknowledge Mick's sons, Peter and David, who unfortunately cannot attend because they reside in Perth. On 18 August, together with the member for Bankstown, Tony Stewart, I travelled to Perth and attended Mick's funeral. A week or two later I also attended a memorial service held in Mick's political nirvana, my home city of Lithgow. This is the third time I have had the opportunity of speaking in remembrance of my good friend Mick.

I agree with everything said by the two members who preceded me. Mick was an old-fashioned Labor fellow who was very much rooted in his community. He had three real loves of his life—his family, his Catholic church where he was a very devoted parishioner, and the Labor Party. His whole adult life revolved around those three loves. Before Mick was elected to Parliament he worked for the former Postmaster General's Department and had a very distinguished career right throughout Australia. He worked as a Morse code operator in Sydney, in Broken Hill, in Woomera in South Australia and in Leonora in Western Australia and was considered by his peers to probably be the best ever. He was an absolute expert at writing Morse code. Right to the end he could still tap out Morse code.

My first memories of Mick go back to the early 1970s when he first stood for the seat of Blue Mountains, which was then considered to be a safe Independent or Liberal seat. It was held by Harold Coates, the former Mayor of Lithgow, who had stood as a Liberal candidate many times but could never muster enough votes in Lithgow under that banner, so later ran as an Independent and was a very strong supporter of the conservative side of politics in this House. Mick decided when he was a councillor on the Blue Mountains council and very active in the community when he lived at Bullaburra and was the postmaster at Lawson and other places that he had his own style of campaigning. When we receive lectures at head office from teams of political strategists on how to campaign I am reminded that Mick had his own style.

He was light years ahead of everything that is happening now. He set himself up as the alternative member for the Blue Mountains. Anyone who knew Harold Coates would confirm that he had a bit of an ego problem. His reaction to Mick's strategy was outrage and he attacked Mick for having such temerity. Mick got boundless publicity as a result of Harold's attack. Of course, he did not win the 1973 election. In the 1976 election campaign Brian Morrissey and I were councillors on Lithgow council and took on the role of managing Mick's campaign. Mick was hoping to win the seat, but it would have required an 8 per cent swing. While that might not be considered a safe margin today, in those days it was rock solid. That election was decided by one seat. The member for Gosford at the time said that his seat was the crucial seat and Kevin Ryan at Hurstville thought that his was crucial. However, we all know that the seat that delivered Neville Wran government was the Blue Mountains, which was won by Mick Clough. We won that seat by 256 votes with an 8 per cent swing.

I still remember that night after the polling. Morrissey and I retired to the Courthouse Hotel in Lithgow, which we always did on election night, to conduct a post mortem or a celebration. At 9.00 p.m. we knew we had won even though everyone else in New South Wales had to wait a week for the results. However, the head office of the Australian Labor Party called to say that, following a complaint by the Federal Liberal member for Macquarie, the late Reg Gillard, the ballot boxes were being impounded. Coincidentally, Reg Gillard was Brian Morrissey's father-in-law. We were told to go to the Lithgow police station, which we did. We were upset because we thought it was part of some conspiracy to keep Mick out of Parliament. I remember having a discussion with the police sergeant at the station. The ballot boxes were there and I told him that what he was doing was undemocratic. He offered me two choices: "They are going into the cell and you can spend the night with them, or you can trust me." I asked him his name and he said, "Sergeant Quinn". I said, "You are a good Irishman so I will trust you." The rest is history and Mick was elected.

After that Mick's political career was fairly turbulent. He either won massive majorities or just scraped in. I remember that in one election—when he moved from the Blue Mountains electorate to the Bathurst electorate—he won by only 32 votes. I also remember scrutineering at that election. Mick never had an easy road. As previous speakers have said, he saw everything in black and white. He was as honest as they come: if he thought something was right, he went for it 100 per cent and battled to the end. He took no prisoners, as some on his own side would testify. The article that the member for North Shore referred to contains a reference to a little clash he had with Michael Egan. Egan said to Mick, "You've always been a greedy backbencher, Mick." Mick retorted, "It's there for everyone to see. You've always been a little so and so and you still are." There was no love lost there. Mick had celebrated clashes with Ministers. If they got on the wrong side of Mick he was out with the sword and into it. Mick was very loyal to the Australian Labor Party because he saw it as the party that would allow him to increase benefits for and improve the lifestyle of his constituents.

Although Mick had a very combative streak, as the member for North Shore said, he often picked up a stranger by the wayside. Just after he died a Mrs Lindsay rang me—I have known the Lindsay family for years—and said that she wanted to relate a story about Mr Clough. She told me that she worked in a chemist shop when Mick was elected and she had a brother in Westmead Hospital who had been diagnosed with very aggressive cancer. It was a struggle for the family to get to Sydney to visit him because they had to catch the train, get off at Parramatta and then get a taxi to the hospital. Mick came into the shop one day and although she was a bit shy about approaching a member of Parliament she was so stressed that she related her story to him and asked why the train could not stop at the platform at Westmead. Within 48 hours the train stopped at Westmead and trains still do to this day. Many people came to Mick with their problems. Doreen might not know this, but he would often send people away with a cheque in their pocket to pay their power bill or something such as that. Mick had great compassion; he could never leave someone wanting on the sidelines.

As I said, Mick saw everything in black and white. He was one of the smartest people I have known. There was some reference to his lack of fondness for The Nationals. I point out to the members for Orange and Lismore that it was not personal. Mick was a fantastic scrutineer: he was great at doing calculations in his head. I do not know whether he developed that skill as a result of his training in Morse code or from doing cricket statistics. On election night we would all be working on our computers but Mick would have his butcher's paper and a pencil and he would have it all done while we were still punching in the numbers. Mick would often tell a story about scrutineering in Castlereagh or somewhere out west with Jack Renshaw. He could not work out how he could be at the polling booth all day and see about 40 people come in to vote but when the ballot boxes were emptied there were 200 ballot papers. Of course, it was the old trick of the Country Party, as it then was, of ringing up the returning officer and having a word or two. Mick sorted out that stuff along the way.

[Interruption]

I will explain it later, for the member for Lismore. This was in the good old days when the Country Party was running rampant. While Mick saw the Country Party as his natural political enemy, as the member for North Shore said, he enjoyed the conversation and camaraderie of people from all sides. He was a great storyteller, but I could not relate many of his great wealth of jokes in this place. As the member for Mount Druitt said, Mick always finished things with a laugh. If you could not laugh, you had to cry, and Mick preferred to laugh. I remember him as a good friend and a political mentor.

Mick encouraged me to come into this place, despite the fact that I had no ambition to do so. Towards the end of his career he suggested that I think about it. I could have run against him in the 1991 election but I did not because of my loyalty to him and because he was the person for the job. After the defeat of 1988, which was crippling to Mick and many others, he regained the seat in 1991 with a swing of 19.3 per cent. That was very significant. As I said, I will always remember Mick as a great and loyal friend. I am pleased that we were able to keep in touch. Just before Mick died Tony Stewart and I were in Perth and we visited him. I am sorry that we did not see him again. In his later years he suffered badly, but he lived a good and glorious life. His devotion to his family, his church and the Australian Labor Party shine out. I will miss him and remember him for as long as I am around.

Mr RUSSELL TURNER (Orange) [10.38 a.m.]: It is a pleasure to support this condolence motion for Mick Clough. I acknowledge Doreen and some of his family in the gallery. Unlike the members for Mount Druitt and Bathurst, I did not know Mick very well, but he was a parliamentary colleague when I arrived in 1996 until 1999. Even before I became a member of Parliament and got to know Mick I knew that he was highly respected in Orange as a politician and a former councillor. While we did not always agree with what he said, he was respected as a person who gave much of his personal time. Councillors and politicians know how much our families sacrifice when we seek public office, as Mick did over many years.

Mick died in his eighty-first year after a lengthy illness. He was christened "Ralph James", but was always known as "Little Mick" after his father and later just as "Mick". His political career spanned 22 years, including some years in local government. He entered State Parliament in 1976 as the member for Blue Mountains and then won the seat of Bathurst at the 1981 election after a boundary adjustment, and retained it in 1984. Mick lost the seat of Bathurst in 1988, in the Greiner era. But as the member for Bathurst said, Mick then had another go in 1991 and won the seat convincingly, and he held the seat until his retirement in 1999. As I said, I got to know Mick better in 1996 when I came into the Parliament after a by-election.

Mick was an alderman on Blue Mountains City Council from 1974 to 1979 while he was a resident of Bullaburra, one of the many towns and villages one passes through as one travels along the Great Western

Highway through the Blue Mountains. I do not think the little station of Bullaburra has changed much since Mick represented that area. Australia Post or, as the member for Bathurst said, the Postmaster General's Department employed Mick for 34 years. He worked in locations across Australia, from Sydney to the Western Australian goldfields and the Woomera rocket range. One wonders how the mail was delivered out of Woomera. I do not know whether it went out by rocket.

As was noted, after Mick's retirement he and his wife, Doreen, opened a motel at Nambucca Heads. That was a surprise to me. After all the years he had spent serving people he knew and represented I thought he might have simply retired. However, being an old stalwart, he could not be kept down. He and Doreen bought a motel at Nambucca Heads, where they stayed until they moved to Perth to be close to family members. Many people, in their latter years, move around Australia to be close to family or family moves closer to them. It is fantastic that Mick was able to return to the State where he had done a considerable amount of work with the Postmaster General's Department. As has been mentioned, Mick was a true Labor stalwart whom we all respected. My father was a Labor stalwart and he had a lot of respect for people like Mick. A former Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, was always respected as a true Labor man. The member for Bathurst was quoted in the *Lithgow Mercury* as saying:

Mick was a fearless advocate and champion of the little person ...

The Mayor of Lithgow, Neville Castle, who said, "Mr Clough was never afraid to step away from the party line to represent his constituents and he could be feisty at times", expressed similar sentiments. That reminds us of the member for Blacktown. I suppose Gibbo—the member for Blacktown—has replaced Mick in some way as being a colourful member of this Chamber. One of Mick's proud achievements while representing the Bathurst electorate was the construction of the Macquarie Homes for the aged in Bathurst. It is noted that he often spoke out against his party on the privatisation of power stations—that is a bit of history there. We know which way he would have voted recently on the latest bid to sell off our power stations. But I will say no more about that. In conclusion, on behalf of the Coalition, our thoughts go out to Doreen. She and her family missed out on a lot when Mick was away attending meetings at night, et cetera. We thank you, Doreen, for that and for all that you did as an individual to help the battlers in your area. Our thoughts go out to you and your two sons and daughter. We wish you all the very best in the future.

Mr PHIL KOPERBERG (Blue Mountains—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.43 a.m.]: As a relative newcomer to this place, I am privileged to be able to speak to this condolence motion for Mick Clough. I acknowledge the presence of Doreen and some of the family in the gallery today. I did not know Mick all that well but I was a relatively young fire officer in the Blue Mountains when Mick was an alderman on Blue Mountains City Council and I got to know his character. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 14 August described Mick Clough quintessentially as an "old-fashioned Labor man who worked for ordinary people". I believe that that is Mick's hallmark. Mick passed away in August this year at the age of 80 years after a long illness. Like other members, I extend my condolences to Doreen and the family.

When Mick was an alderman he had a passion for helping the underdog. In those days, in the early 1970s, the Rural Fire Service as we now know it—it used to be called the Bush Fire Brigade—did it tough: nobody gave it any money. The council and the State would scrape up a bit of cash occasionally, but all in all it was a pretty poor show. Mick used to give passionate speeches in the council about being sick and tired of seeing volunteer brigade firefighters scavenging through Katoomba rubbish tip looking for soft drink bottles to cash in so that they could buy equipment for their brigade. I must say that no brigade ever scavenged through the rubbish tip, but Mick made a wonderful impression when debating the need for more money by citing those sorts of things.

Mick was blessed with a dry wit and sense of humour. Bob Debus, a former member of this House, tells the story of getting some sage advice from Mick on campaigning. Mick repeatedly said to Bob Debus, "What you need to do during the campaign is to ring all the pubs and clubs in the electorate and have yourself paged." During a campaign it was not uncommon to be in a pub or a club and to hear an announcement over the public address system, "Telephone for Mick Clough". Mick Clough may have been 400 miles away but that made no difference: everyone in the pub or club thought he was actually there mixing it with the workers.

Mick joined the Labour Party in 1948, when Ben Chifley was still in power. He entered public life in 1974 as an alderman on Blue Mountains City Council—that is where most of my recollections of Mick come from. He was first elected to this Parliament as the member for Blue Mountains in 1976. He was then elected in the seat of Bathurst in 1981 and again in 1991, and he retired in 1999. Mick Clough spent 20 years in this Chamber. He was a warrior for the Labor Party, making determined stands on many issues and with many

people. Mick Clough was a true Australian character: He was principled and fearless. He was received, and referred to in many circles, be it the community or the Parliament, as a good bloke—an old-fashioned Labor man who represented the ordinary person.

Mick was a tough operator, a man of integrity and honour, a man who was outspoken and, all in all, a decent human being. I feel somewhat incompetent to reflect on Mick's many virtues because members of this Chamber and elsewhere knew Mick much better and for much longer than I can claim to have known him. But my experience of him was that he was a tough talker and it did not end with rhetoric; he would follow up. It did not matter much whom he would upset or offend as long as he got for his constituents what he believed they deserved. He was never afraid to disagree with his party on matters he believed to be significant.

The member for Orange mentioned electricity privatisation. We all know how Mick would have voted on that, as we know how the current member for Bathurst, and indeed the member for Blue Mountains, would have voted on that. Mick was reported as saying on many occasions that he might be fighting a losing battle on the issue but it was not lost yet. And how right he was! I have heard many fine stories about Mick's approach to politics, both from the former Premier Morris Iemma and the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Ku-ring-gai. They referred to Mick as being a little rough but generous of heart in his intent to get results in a plucky manner. I think that is a bit of an understatement. The Mayor of Lithgow, Neville Castle, once said of Mick:

Mick often incurred the displeasure of his government by putting his people before anything else. He was never afraid to step away from the party line to represent his constituents, and he could be feisty at times.

There are many things to be admired about Mick. He said so many things that are pertinent today. My colleagues on this side of the House will forgive me for saying this but, in the context of the mini-budget, truer words have never been spoken than those spoken by Mick on 18 September 1997, when he said:

The first thing we have to do is to make absolutely certain that additional funding is taken out of Treasury. Treasury should be excluded from decisions with regard to the provision of services. We should not ask Treasury how much money they will give us to do this. We must say to the Treasury these are the things that we must provide for, these are the services that are necessary, now you go out and find the money.

How sage is that? If only that had happened. Mick acknowledged his great appreciation of other members, past and present, and their contributions to the community. However, he was not one to suffer fools gladly. He was brusque yet honest, highly respected and never afraid to speak his mind. He is a great loss to his church, to his family of course, and to the community of New South Wales.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [10.50 a.m.]: As a fellow rural member of Parliament I pay my respects to the memory of Mick Clough. The electorate of Bathurst is a neighbouring electorate, and Mr Clough served with a predecessor of mine, Terry Sheahan. I came into Parliament just as Mr Clough was leaving, but I know he was a great fighter and spoke up for what he believed in. His profile was very large in my part of the world. As a Yass lass I am a regular listener to 2CR and I would often hear Mick Clough's voice on the news grabs on 2CR and often saw him and heard of him in the media. The member for Blue Mountains mentioned Mr Clough's ability to attract attention to himself by having himself paged at a club or a pub. There were rumours that he would be paged at country shows as well. I am sure he was there most of the time but it is a great old country trick to have yourself paged at country shows to let people know you are there.

As other members have said, Mr Clough served in this place from 1 May 1976 to 22 February 1988 and again from 25 May 1991 to 5 March 1999. He was born in Warialda and died in Perth. He was a life member of the Australian Labor Party and the Catholic Club, a member of various rugby league clubs and a great fan of cricket. He was educated at St Patrick's at Strathfield and he was an Australia Post worker for 34 years. He worked in Sydney, Broken Hill and Perth, in the goldfields and at Woomera rocket range, and he was the proprietor of the Coolawin Gardens Motel in Nambucca Heads. He also served in the Citizens Military Forces as a lieutenant. In his maiden speech he mentioned various parts of his electorate—Cullen Bullen, Portland, Wallerawang, Lidsdale, the Lakes scheme, Lithgow and Bathurst, obviously. He spoke about many different issues, one of which was the four-lane highway, which is still very much a topic in this Chamber today. He said in his maiden speech:

It was not our Government that promised eight years ago to provide a 4-lane highway through the electorate ...

He went on to say:

However, the task must be tackled, and our Government will do it.

That was 24 August 1976 and here it is 12 November 2008 and we are still waiting. He also spoke of the tourist industry—that wonderful Blue Mountains, Bathurst area, that is just ripe for tourism. He spoke also of deficiencies in education in his electorate, the need for additional primary school facilities, the need for a college of TAFE at Katoomba, and the need to recognise the winter climate as something to be taken into consideration when planning. He talked about local government. He was a keen advocate, having served on local government. He also mentioned electricity during his maiden speech, and planning. He was a great contributor to this place, someone who has earned respect from both sides of politics. As a proud member of The Nationals I pay great tribute to the truly great statesman that was Mick Clough. I also pay my respects to his wife, his children and their families and wish them well during this period of mourning. Vale Mick Clough.

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [10.54 a.m.]: I take this opportunity to pay my respects to Mick Clough and, more importantly, to his family, and also to honour his memory in this place. I knew Mick fairly briefly. He left this place when I came here in 1999, but my predecessor, Bruce Jeffery, was at pains to introduce me to Mick Clough. We visited Doreen and him at the Coolawin Gardens Motel in Nambucca Heads during my first campaign, and I also met him in this place on a number of occasions. He struck me as a good bloke, a country bloke like me with similar values. I came to respect the man: you knew exactly where he stood on virtually every issue. That was a hallmark of his political career, his time in public life and, I am sure, his entire life.

He started his working career in the Postmaster General's Department, as it was then, riding a bicycle and delivering telegrams. During the war some of the telegrams he delivered contained dreadful news about the loss of a loved one. He was a self-made man and a hard worker from those times. His life experiences contributed to his values. He struck me as a man who represented a particular era in politics, an era when the Labor Party had strong roots in the country. From its genesis with the miners and shearers, it had a strong presence in country areas of the nation. I think Mick Clough personified the strength of the Labor Party in those days in country areas.

He was unique for a couple of reasons. One is that he served in this place on two separate occasions. Having lost a seat, it was typical of him to come back and successfully contest it again. That persistence was typical of his character. He was also notable for his strong resistance to the push to privatise the electricity industry in New South Wales. The current member for Bathurst has expressed similar views, and certainly The Nationals in this last round of debates expressed similar views as well because they are the views of country people. That took guts. It always takes guts for an individual member of Parliament to stand up against the wishes of the leaders, the party line as it were, and he certainly did that in no uncertain terms. I pay my respects to Mick Clough, to Doreen and the family, and I offer condolences on behalf of The Nationals on the passing of Mick Clough.

Mr JOHN AQUILINA (Riverstone—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.58 a.m.]: I join other colleagues, and particularly the member for Mount Druitt, who moved the motion of condolence in memory of Mick Clough, in expressing my condolences to Doreen, to Elizabeth, Peter, David and to their entire family and their friends. Like the member for Mount Druitt and the member for Orange, I am one of the few members left in this House who served with Mick Clough—I was elected in 1981 when Mick was re-elected as the member for Bathurst after the 1980 redistribution. Unlike other members, I did not know Mick before I was elected to Parliament. I recall well and truly when I first came here in 1981 Mick already had a huge reputation. He had already been described as a knockabout sort of bloke.

I think he somewhat distrusted academics or people like me who he thought looked slightly academic. He said to me things such as, "Young fella, just watch yourself." I liked Mick. I revered him and looked up to him because of his manner, his style and his forthrightness in saying what he thought and believed in. He stuck close to me and other members and I learned a lot from him, and that helped me through my long career as a member of Parliament in this place. I acknowledge the great contribution that Mick made.

These days we do not think a lot about the contributions that members make by the example they show to other members of Parliament but it is very important. When I was a young member of Parliament he mentored me with his experience and commitment and I am grateful for his friendship and help in those early years. Other members have said a lot about Mick's history, his style and his personable and forthright manner. Like other members I read Mick's maiden speech on 24 August 1976—they are now called inaugural speeches—in which he expressed very detailed representation of his beloved city of Lithgow. Mick used to brag that he made three maiden speeches, not one.

His first was on 24 August 1976 on his first election as member for Blue Mountains. After the 1980 redistribution he made his second maiden speech as member for Bathurst. In 1988 he lost that seat but following his re-election in 1991 he made his third maiden speech, much to the gleeful surprise of many of his colleagues. The current member for Bathurst spoke at length and the member for Mount Druitt spoke about his role in persuading Mick to contest the seat in 1991. Mick was never one to be kept silent. I recall that when he was out of office between 1988 and 1991 he still had a lot to say. I recall that he had his own newspaper column called "From the rooster to the feather duster" in which he successfully sniped at the government of the day. It also kept him in the public focus. Mick had a very long career in this Parliament, from 24 August 1976 to 1988 and from 1991 to 1999, and then successfully nominated Gerard Martin as his successor, who was elected as the member for Bathurst.

Mick had an individual style as a member of Parliament, which has already been referred to by other members, but I recall that the very day before the 1995 election I was at Parliament House with Johnno Johnson—another much revered Labor figure—and we saw Mick having lunch with others. We were in opposition, hoping to go into government, and Mick was enjoying himself. Johnno Johnson got quite irate and said to him, "Mick, you have a seat to win. Why are you here and not up there?" Mick said something like, "Johnno, you go look after your receipt books and leave winning the seat up to me. The seat's alright, mate." Sure it was, when the next day Mick was re-elected in grand style as always. That is the sort of character he was. It reflected very much the type of person he was before entering Parliament. He had a colourful history to which a number of members have referred.

Mick's Labor links go right back to Ben Chifley's time. Mick joined the Australian Labor Party in 1948 when Ben Chifley was Prime Minister. Mick's mark as a member of the Labor Party was reflective of his style as a member of Parliament. Other members have referred to his exploits as a telegram boy, a telegraphist and a postmaster. I am sure others will recall his saying how sad he was when he was a telegram boy during World War II. In those days if a telegram boy came up the street everyone held their breath and hoped that he would not stop at their house. Mick had the very unpleasant task of delivering telegrams to families advising that their loved one—father, son or daughter—had become a casualty of war. That was a sad experience for him, as Doreen, who is in the gallery, well knows as he often made mention of it.

As a member of Parliament Mick was very forthright and determined to put his point of view. As a postmaster he also stood his digs. At St Marys a policeman habitually fined postmen for riding on the footpaths. That riled Mick Clough no end and also upset all the postmen who were working for him. They reached an agreement and refused to deliver the pay cheques to the policemen living in that area. I wonder what would happen if something such as that were done today. Finally, a truce was negotiated and an arrangement was made that the postmen would not be fined for riding on the footpaths.

Mr Richard Amery: And the pay cheques arrived.

Mr JOHN AQUILINA: And the pay cheques arrived for the policemen. The member for Mount Druitt does not live far from St Marys so it may have been one of his pay cheques in question. Mick was a very colourful character and a unique person. He was much loved by his family and friends and by almost everyone who came in close contact with him, unless they were unfortunate enough, such as former Treasurer Mike Egan and former Premier Bob Carr on more than one occasion, to get the sharp edge of his tongue. Bob Carr was absolutely delighted, as we all were, when Mick quite unexpectedly came home in the 1991 elections when he regained the electorate of Bathurst. Very few members of this Parliament actually served with Mick Clough. I note in the gallery today a former colleague, former Deputy Premier Ron Mulock and his wife, Desley. I acknowledge their great friendship with Mick Clough and with Peter Cox, another great person whom we will be honouring today.

It is important to recognise that friendship as we honour Mick Clough and his outstanding contribution. Finally, as has been remarked by other speakers today, Mick Clough was indeed a great member of Parliament who stood no nonsense from anyone, whether the Premier, the Treasurer, or the Labor Party caucus. If he felt that something had to be said or done, he said it and did it in true conscience. He was a friend to many people, and he put special emphasis on loyalty. Unfortunately, loyalty is not often spoken about these days; it seems to be a quality that we are missing out on. Loyalty was a virtue Mick Clough knew very well. In this place one of Mick's nicknames was "the Bishop", which I expected the member for Mount Druitt to refer to.

Mr Richard Amery: Bishop Clough.

Mr JOHN AQUILINA: Yes, Bishop Clough, in recognition of the way in which he presided over things as a bishop would, but also in recognition that first and foremost, very close to his heart and underlying everything he did, he was a good Catholic. It is important to mention that today. I again express my condolences to Doreen, Elizabeth, Peter, David, the family and friends. It is sad that we have lost a good friend, such a committed man, such a unique character. There will never, ever be another Mick Clough. Some might say thank God, but we say our loss is a great pity because Mick was in every way a personable man, a man who loved much and is much loved.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS (Gosford) [11.10 a.m.]: As one of the few remaining members of Parliament who served with the late Mick Clough, I join my colleague the member for Mount Druitt and others on both sides of the House in making a short contribution to this condolence motion. I had the great fortune of meeting Mick Clough when I was elected as the member for Peats in 1995. I was very impressed with Mick and considered him to be a true-blue Laborite and a good friend. I extend my deepest sympathy to his wife, Doreen, and all members of his family. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Doreen. Very often the spouses of serving members of Parliament are somewhat overlooked. I knew Doreen as well as I knew Mick. Doreen has always been a great support to Mick. I am sure Mick would acknowledge that he would not have achieved what he did without Doreen's unswerving support and loyalty over all those years.

Mick was a great cricketer, a game of which most Australians are very fond and a sport that receives much more publicity than the proceedings in our parliaments. Mick and Doreen were very proud of their son Peter, who played Sheffield Shield cricket for New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia. Of course, Mick was always talking about cricket when a test match was on. We all appreciated his great love of that game. As said by other members, Mick was passionate and diligent in serving the electorate of Bathurst. I recall that there was a proposal to take sewage across the Blue Mountains and dump it somewhere within the Bathurst electorate. Of course, a suggestion like that is like waving a red flag in front of Mick Clough. I recall Mick out in the Domain tipping out a bucket of something that looked like effluent—I am sure it was horse manure—in the presence of the media and in view of all Ministers and members of Parliament. That proposal certainly did not go ahead; I think it was ditched then and there.

Mick was a sincere, down-to-earth and lovable character. We will all miss his presence. When I visited Western Australia with a number of my New South Wales colleagues we went by public transport to visit Mick, Doreen, and their family in their new home in Perth. We had a great afternoon, sharing a backyard barbecue with the family. That was the last time I saw Mick, as he was not very well at that time. It was wonderful that we were all able to be with him, because he was a great character, always ready to tell a joke. He certainly will be very much missed. Once again to Doreen, the family and all Mick's fiends I extend my condolences. Mick Clough, rest in peace.

Mr GRANT McBRIDE (The Entrance) [11.14 a.m.]: I could not let the opportunity go by without being part of the commemoration of this wonderful parliamentarian, wonderful father, wonderful husband, and wonderful friend to so many members of Parliament. I came to Parliament following a by-election in 1992. A member who joins Parliament after a by-election soon learns that everything is already taken—everyone has a seat, a position—everything. As a new member, I felt like a stranger in the camp, and no-one seemed very interested in me. Also, members just seemed to move around and knew what they are doing. Now I have been here a bit longer I realise that they are just moving and they do not really know what they are doing. At that time, I was knocked over by all the activity.

I made two mistakes: first, I made Paul Gibson my mate, and, secondly, I went to Mick Clough for advice, as I knew he was quite experienced. Mick may have given advice to people in a different way from the way he gave it to me. For me, it was like I was a five-year-old, who had to be told everything from the bottom up. I kept repeating, "I know a few things," to which he replied, "No, you don't, you just got here." I sat in the second back row alongside Mick. I wanted to have fun, to enjoy myself, which is my nature. So I would interject. Mick would just say, "No, you are not allowed to interject. You are not allowed to do that. You have to show respect to other members of Parliament." I said, "Mick, come on, give me a break, mate. It is hard enough being here." But, no, he said, "That is the way it has to be." Mick took me to his office and explained to me the rules according to Mick. As a result, we built a strong relationship.

Mick is a great character, because his spirit still lives. He was an outstanding character. Everyone who met Mick knew Mick. He had an uncanny ability to connect with people, something that every politician wants but not every politician has. Mick had the best political partner I have met, other than my wife, and that is Doreen. Doreen was the absolute master at being a political wife. She knew everyone in Bathurst; she knew

everything that was going on in the local area. Doreen was the watchdog whenever Mick was away. I am not surprised that Mick could be in Sydney a day away from an election, because his electorate was looked after by the best person to do so, Doreen. She is a wonderful person. My wife also learned a lot from Doreen when I came into this place.

Mick was a character. I have met only two people who use an old-fashioned typewriter in Parliament House. One is the member for Mount Druitt, who has a collection of about 3,000 typewriters. Recently I donated another to that collection. The second person was Mick. We knew when Mick was in his office because we could hear him typing, tapping away quite loudly on the space bar.

Mr Richard Amery: It was an Olympia.

Mr GRANT McBRIDE: And the member for Mount Druitt has about 10 Olympia typewriters. Another thing Mick could do was type, read and watch the cricket at the one time. In fact, if someone entered his office while he was watching cricket that was an invasion of his privacy, because he was a cricket aficionado. As other members have mentioned, his son played for Tasmania. Mick loved his cricket. If I wanted to ask him something while the cricket was on, I had to wait until the drinks break. While the game was on, as slow as cricket is, he could not find time to speak to me. He would say, "Come back and see me later, during the drinks break." He was a wonderful character and that was evident both in his life and his parliamentary career. He was someone who got knocked out of the ring and then climbed back into the ring and won again.

There is also another unique association between Mick and the Parliament, which is that his uncle James Arthur Clough, known as Jim, was a member of the Liberal Party and member for Eastwood concurrently with Mick being a member of the Labor Party and member for Bathurst. That has to be some sort of record. That is a great trivia question, is it not? Mick was a great character and a great member of this Parliament. Other members have spoken about his commitment to policy. When I say I met two characters in this place, I mean I made friends with two of them, both of them dangerous. Mick was one of those people who stood up in caucus and told the Cabinet, Ministers, the Premier and the Deputy Premier what he thought were the issues of the day. He was fearless in doing that.

Not only did he do that, he did it with great dignity and strength. It was not a personal attack; it was an analysis of the situation and the conclusion that came from the analysis. Mick was the sort of guy who could condense difficult issues into a few words that anyone could understand. I was going to say something about Ministers then, but I will let that pass. He got the message across; he was on song. There are people who are in touch with the community. I have a neighbour called Wally. We call him the "Wally meter" because if you want to know what the community thinks about an issue, somehow Wally always knows. Mick was the same. Mick was always aware of community thinking on an issue. He reflected the majority views of the community. He stood up in caucus and expressed those views fearlessly. He played an important role that is needed in caucus.

When he retired he bought a motel at Nambucca Heads, the Coolawin Gardens Motel. I could not understand why anyone in his or her right mind would do that. Given the life he had led it seemed to me it was time to retire and move on to other areas. I stayed at the motel for two days and over those two days I asked myself the question, "What is Mick doing here? Doreen does all the work. What is his job?" He did not have a job; he was the meeter and greeter. In some ways I thought there was a little bit of *Fawlty Towers* in it. Again it was an example of the eclectic mind of this guy. Like everyone else I am very sad to hear of his passing, but we know he has gone to another place and that his spirit lives in our hearts forever.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.

DEATH OF PETER FRANCIS COX, A FORMER MINISTER OF THE CROWN AND MEMBER FOR AUBURN

Mr JOHN AQUILINA (Riverstone—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.23 a.m.]: I move:

That this House extends to Mrs Cox and family, the deep sympathy of members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained by the death on 6 October 2008 of the Honourable Peter Francis Cox, a former Minister of the Crown.

I extend my sincere condolences and those of the House to Olive and the whole of the family, who are here in large numbers today, and say to them how sad and distressed we are at the passing of our friend and former member and Minister, Peter Cox. He served his community with great dignity and courage and has left a number of outstanding reforms in his name as a member of this Parliament.

One goes back to his maiden speech on having been elected as a member of Parliament in 1965, ironically the year that Jack Renshaw was defeated by Bob Askin, who became Premier. On 26 August, Peter Cox made a maiden speech that was absolutely riddled with issues that he was to pursue later in his life and thereby achieve a great number of reforms that were of extreme importance to this State. I will highlight three of them. One was the existence of credit unions, something that today we all take for granted in this State and indeed this nation. In the early 1960s, of course, credit unions were virtually unheard of in New South Wales. In his inaugural address, or maiden speech as it was called then, Peter Cox made a huge push for the establishment of credit unions in this State. He said in that speech:

I ask also for an immediate decision to implement a credit union Act; for representation of all interested bodies on the credit union advisory committee ... that this representation adequately include the New South Wales Credit Union League whose advocate, Mr Stan Arneil, was forced to resign following his secondment as credit union development officer, a position which he no longer holds. I ask also that honourable members examine the plan for the development of the movement in New South Wales which was never submitted to the previous Government by the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, and that this Parliament make every effort to raise the living standards of the people of New South Wales by giving them the opportunity to accept the credit union movement, as was demonstrated by the Labor Government's practical support of the movement.

Another issue he raised, which he was to return to later, particularly when he took up his ministerial post, was fair pay for public transport employees. In his maiden speech he referred to the 60,000 employees who operated the Government's buses and trains and made a huge push for their pay to be at least given parity with the pay of similar employees in Victoria and South Australia. It is hard to believe that New South Wales public transport employees at that time were being paid less than the bus and train employees of Victoria and South Australia. The third issue, which also related to transport, was that he hit out at the rising fares on private buses at that time. He mentioned quite a number of the bus companies and bus routes in his speech and indicated how their fares had gone up substantially and were not in keeping with the fares on public transport.

Later, as Minister for Transport, he was able to substantially expand the public transport system throughout the State. I think he will go down in history as arguably the greatest transport Minister this State has seen to date. If one goes back to Peter's early life one sees a man of great commitment, in some ways following in parallel the life of another colleague we spoke about here today, Mick Clough. Peter Cox joined the Labor Party a year after Mick Clough did, in 1949, during that great Ben Chifley period. Prior to that he had joined the motor traffic department in 1942, which is the origin of his great love and commitment to transport as Minister for Transport.

In 1943 Peter joined the 2/10th Battalion of the Australian Imperial Force and saw action in Borneo—an issue about which he did not speak much. Nonetheless, it is important to note that he served his country in the theatre of war. On this day it is important to honour and recognise that he was a good Catholic and that he played sport for various Catholic Youth Organisation [CYO] teams. These days I do not think too many people would remember or be aware of the Catholic Youth Organisation. I well remember that my first date was at a Catholic Youth Organisation dance in the days when it was an important institution. Peter played cricket, tennis, golf, and rugby league for various CYO teams.

As a member of the CYO rugby league team, Peter occasionally locked horns with rival CYO team member Jack Ferguson, who later became Deputy Premier of this State. In some ways both Peter and Jack were on the same side of politics, albeit from different factions, and it appears as though they also supported different teams. It is important to comment on these things as they highlight the colour and character of a man who had so much to contribute and to offer to this State. In 1981, when I first became a member of Parliament, Peter Cox was already a prominent member of the Wran ministry, having been elected as a Minister in the early days. Just after the 1976 election he was the third most senior Minister and, when in opposition, he made a tremendous impact. I attended Peter's funeral—a matter about which I will comment later.

Milton Morris, a former Liberal Minister for Transport in the Askin days, asked me whether I would give him a lift to Peter's funeral. I agreed to do so because I knew that he and Peter had been good friends. On the way to the funeral he said to me, "When I was Minister for Transport I lived in fear of Peter Cox." Prior to Peter's election to Parliament he had worked in the transport department and he knew every corridor, where everything was kept and where every note was filed. Milton Morris said that Peter elevated the leaking of

documents to a new art form—an art form that had not previously existed. He said Peter did well with the leaking of information and, when in opposition, he was a good combatant. Peter thoroughly deserved his elevation to Minister for Transport upon the election of the Labor Government.

As I said earlier, I attended Peter Cox's wonderful funeral service at which we heard eulogies from young Jack Townend, John Cox, Peter's son, and Ron Mulock, a former Deputy Premier and Peter's close friend. In his eulogy Ron Mulock also made reference to Peter Cox leaking information, thus making the life of the then Minister for Transport extremely difficult. Peter Cox, as Minister for Transport, substantially expanded this State's public transport system. I said earlier that Mick Clough had played a mentoring role, and that applied equally to Peter Cox. In 1981, after I was elected to this Parliament and the new Cabinet was formed, Peter organised a party and summoned the 13 newly elected Labor members to his room to have a few drinks and a quiet discussion. That was the first occasion on which I had a decent conversation with him.

In February 1986 I was elected to the Wran Cabinet and Peter again asked me to come to see him in his room, where we had a long, private conversation. Peter gave me some good advice, which I took, and it greatly increased my respect for the man and his work. I was fortunate to have served with Peter Cox. I think I am the only remaining person in this House who served with Peter Cox in the Wran and Unsworth cabinets. Members would be aware that in 1988 Peter and his friend Ron Mulock retired from Parliament. I referred earlier to John Cox's eulogy at his father's funeral, in which he made mention of something that many members knew about but never mentioned. It is appropriate for me to raise that issue today.

It is not commonly known, except by Peter's close friends, that during the early 1980s he succumbed to alcoholism—a matter of great distress to all those who knew him personally. It took the courage of a number of his very close friends—people who were older than me—to address that issue. To do him justice, Peter took it on the chin and took the steps required to make amends. For many years Peter was a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I say, because I know that this has been mentioned previously, that prior to his death it was his wish that this matter be made public. Through his work with Alcoholics Anonymous he corrected his life and provided leadership and inspiration for many others. It is important to recognise and to make mention of that because it shows what an outstanding character Peter Cox was.

Peter dedicated his life to politics, his family, his friends and people less fortunate than many of us. In retirement Peter dedicated his time to various causes. When he, Olive and his family moved to Manly, they worked with a number of charities, in particular, the Northern Beaches Refugee Sanctuary, of which he was a founding member. Peter dedicated his time to helping refugees from war-torn parts of the world, in particular, Africa, and helped to settle them in Australia. Peter was a unique individual who made outstanding and unique contributions to the State, his family, his constituents, and those who had the honour and the privilege of knowing him and working alongside him.

Other speakers have said that Peter was a loving husband and father, and a man who was committed to his community, his constituents, this Parliament and his electorate of Auburn, which he loved and for which he worked extremely hard. Peter was much loved in his community and was returned on many successive occasions as the member for that area. Peter was also a good Catholic, a person recognised and celebrated in the Catholic Church for his great commitment. It is not commonly known that Peter was a Papal Knight and a member of the Order of Australia. I place on the record of this House Peter's contribution to the Catholic Church. Once again, to Olive and to all his family, his friends and everyone who had the privilege and honour of knowing Peter Cox, I offer our sincere condolences. May he rest in peace. His legacy, memory and the great reforms he initiated and implemented in this place will live on when most of us are gone.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.39 a.m.]: On behalf of the Coalition and as Deputy Leader of the Opposition I am pleased to endorse this condolence motion moved by the Government. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition, Barry O'Farrell, is attending a funeral today. As has been said already, Peter Francis Cox had a very long and illustrious career in this Parliament during which he made many contributions. He has been noted as one of the best—if not the best—transport Ministers of this State. He was first elected the member for Auburn in 1965 and served until 1988. During that period he spent several years as the shadow Minister for Transport. Following the election of the Labor Government he served as Minister for Transport, Minister for Highways, Minister for Resources and Energy, Minister for Industry and Small Business, Minister for Energy and Technology, Minister for Public Works, and Minister Assisting the Premier while also representing the people of Auburn. As some members have said already, Peter Cox was regarded as a great transport Minister, and he was a credit not only to his family, but also to those he represented and who supported him.

After his death the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 13 October pointed out that he was one of seven children and attended Marist Brothers at Lidcombe when the family moved to Auburn. He was born at Bathurst. The connection of this condolence motion with current issues is ironic. Obviously, his family were battlers during the Depression. Peter's father supported the family by making funeral vases and sending the children out to sell them. Peter Cox was employed in the motor traffic department, to which the member for Riverstone referred. Having served in the bureaucracy before being elected to this place, I fully appreciate that connections—which we do not talk about very much in Opposition, but which stand us in good stead at times—are terribly important in understanding how this place works, how governments work and what needs to be done. The member for Riverstone referred also to Peter Cox's maiden speech, which I also have read. It is a fascinating speech that refers to a number of issues that he obviously held to be extremely important. In reference to the credit union movement he said:

A credit union is a self-help organization of people with a common bond, based on character and ability to pay from their income.

How important those notions are in this current climate when we hear so much about people getting themselves into trouble and borrowing so much money that they are unable to meet the loan repayments. Peter Cox pointed out that credit union movements had existed since 1849 after starting in Europe. This point struck home because one of the most interesting papers I have read about the rise of democracy referred to what happened in Italy. The north and south of Italy were being compared and reference was made to the common factors of that part of the country where democracy had developed fastest and was the strongest. Three things were considered important. One was soccer, because it brought those communities together; another was watch towers, where the community banded together to watch out for invading troops and look after each other; and the third was credit unions, because they enabled people to join forces, get their resources together and do things individually that perhaps they might not otherwise have been able to do.

He referred also to his interest and time in the railways union, and to the transport dispute at the time. Later in his speech he referred to some things that I think are important in today's climate. He spoke about the need for transparency of figures, amounts of money raised in fares, proper consultation, proper investigation and road safety. Despite these issues being raised in 1976 when Peter Cox first entered this Parliament, they are equally important today. Any number of members of Parliament today could make a speech commenting on the same issues. As has been said also, Peter Cox was a very good Catholic. He was educated at the Marist Brothers College at Lidcombe and was involved in a number of community activities, many with the Catholic Church. He served in the 2nd Australian Imperial Force [AIF] during the Second World War from 1943 to 1945 in Borneo. My father served in Borneo during the same time; it would be interesting to know if they came across each other—sadly, we will never know.

His background in the Australian Labor Party [ALP] has been well described. He joined the ALP in 1949. He won preselection for Auburn at age 39 and entered the Legislative Assembly in 1965 when, ironically, Jack Renshaw lost power. He became the Opposition spokesman for transport in 1968. He exploited the links with unions to put pressure on Ministers, including a previously mentioned Minister for Transport, Milton Morris, who, by the way, has said that despite being a sparring partner with Peter Cox, he claimed to be the second best transport Minister. I do not know who he considered to be the first best! It is an interesting point. Peter Cox set up a task force to examine the western rail line before the Granville train crash in January 1977, an event that those of us old enough to remember do so distinctly. It was a tragic event with a death toll totalling 83. On hearing the news Peter Cox was quoted as saying, "Granville must teach every government a lesson that neglect of the public transport system should never again be allowed to happen"—an important comment about which we all should take note.

He went on to make dramatic reforms in the transport system with a number resulting in an increase in public transport. It is a shame that we do not have a similar situation today. It has been said that Peter Cox had a bit of a run-in on occasion with the unions. In 1979 the unions threatened to run a candidate against him for preselection. I believe that sort of threat has been made in the past, but perhaps not with great seriousness. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* article written after his death, Peter Cox was quoted at that time saying that he "had a gutful of the unions' attitude". It is interesting to note that despite being an extremely popular member of the Labor caucus and a very strongly supported Minister he was demoted in a 1984 Cabinet reshuffle. However, he seemed to go on to have a fascinating career. He approached every appointment with great gusto and regarded them all as a challenge—something we all should emulate. Something always needs to be done when representing the people of this State, regardless of the portfolio or role we might play.

As the member for Riverstone said, it was known that Peter Cox had a problem with alcohol. But to his great credit, with the strength and support of his family, he joined Alcoholics Anonymous and was able to

rehabilitate himself. I understand he set up the Holyoke Institute of Alcohol and Drug Addiction. In my previous life as the Director of the Office of Youth Affairs in the New South Wales bureaucracy I had a fair amount of contact with drug and alcohol organisations. I will say more later about funding cuts affecting those programs, which were announced in the mini-budget. Peter Cox was made an officer of the Order of Australia. He is survived by Olive and his daughters, Patricia, Helen and Kate; his sons, John and Brian; and his 14 grandchildren. I know they would all be extremely proud of the contribution that he made to this Parliament. It has been my privilege, in his memory, to support the Government's motion.

Leave granted, by consent, on the request of the member for Riverstone to continue debate on the motion until its conclusion.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn—Minister for Local Government, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Mental Health)) [11.50 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak to the motion of condolence to honour a great man, Peter Francis Cox. As members are aware, the Auburn electorate, which I am privileged to represent, was held by the late Peter Cox, AO, from 1965 until his retirement in 1988, which also was the year his Order of Australia medal was conferred in recognition of his services to Parliament. Peter, who was a Papal Knight, died on 6 October, which is the day on which Mass was celebrated to recognise the feast of St Francis of Assisi. Peter was a railway plumber's son and a graduate of Marist Brothers in Lidcombe, as well as a veteran of the 2nd Australian Imperial Force. He served at Cowra during the Breakout and later on the front lines in Borneo, where he landed under fire. Peter was a Minister throughout the Wran and Unsworth governments. Peter was also a devoted member for Auburn and for decades a stalwart of the Australian Labor Party. His first job was being a clerk for the motor transport department in 1942.

As members have already said, Peter joined the Labor Party in 1949. Perhaps his Labor credentials were foretold. Tony Stephen's obituary in the *Sydney Morning Herald* states that in 1925 a neighbour named Ben Chifley drove Peter's mother, who was about to give birth, to the Bathurst hospital. I first knew Peter as the father of schoolfriends. I was in the same class as his daughter Helen. Helen, Kate and Patricia are present in the gallery. They, my three sisters, Jackie, Karen and Jennifer—who had not been thought of at that stage—and I attended the same school. Peter was ever present at Sunday services at the St John of God Catholic Church with Olive and his family. What I distinctly remember about Helen, Kate and Patricia's dad was that after church he would stand outside, wait and speak to people: he always had a good word to say. When I read on Sundays, he would always say, "I enjoyed your reading very much." Those characteristics were a sign of the man Peter was. He sought to support and encourage others. I will always remember that he would say a few words at the conclusion of Mass.

One of my earliest memories is of Olive. Olive may not remember this, but she came to my mum and dad's house one night. Kate may recall that her class had a get-together. Although I do not remember what year it was, Kate was in Jackie's class and we held the function in our backyard. Kate's mum, Olive, came over, like every other mum, to my parents' house, even though she was the wife of a Minister and parliamentarian. I remember that Kate's mum made a beautiful fruit salad for the class to share and for those who attended the function. My memory of Peter's family was that they presented as a family in the community and were part of the community. That is how Helen, Kate and Patricia's mum and dad wanted them to be—not the children of a Minister or a member of Parliament, but members of the community.

As a member of Parliament, Peter looked after Auburn with utmost care and attention. His influence as a Minister was statewide and considerable. People still talk about Peter and what he did for Auburn. Sometimes that makes me a little bit jealous, but it also makes me very proud because I am able to say that I knew Peter as well and I can say what a wonderful man he was. Peter served as the Minister for Transport, Minister for Transport and Minister for Highways, Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy, Minister for Industry and Small Business and Minister for Energy and Technology, Minister for Public Works and Minister Assisting the Premier. He was widely respected as a no-nonsense, efficient, capable Minister with foresight and judgement.

Many of the things we have come to know and rely on as good, sound public policy, with bipartisan and universal public support, are attributable to Peter and his determination. Things that we take for granted, such as unleaded petrol and random breath testing of motorists, were introduced under Peter's watch. He was instrumental in forming the Staysafe committee in 1982, the work of which has saved countless lives. That committee is a good example of Peter's approach to governance: he was a committed Australian Labor Party man until his death, but he knew how to work with members of all parties for the benefit of the public. The Freshwater-class ferries for the Circular Quay to Manly route are the result of his decision as the Minister for Transport in the 1970s. He also brought the first bendy buses to Sydney.

Aside from his ministerial career, he did the hard yards in western Sydney. He was a branch secretary for 12 years, secretary of the Auburn State Executive Committee for 10 years, and president of the Blaxland Federal Executive Committee for eight years. At various times he was a member of the St Joseph's Hospital Board and served for 24 years, a member of the Catholic Necropolis Trust, Rookwood, a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Transport, a member of the Lidcombe Returned Servicemen's League and the Auburn Returned Servicemen's League, and a member of the Catholic Club, which is now Dooley's, at Lidcombe. He enjoyed a lengthy, well-deserved and active retirement in Manly, where he was a member and then chair—which is not surprising—of the Manly Catholic Social Justice Group.

Peter made a genuine difference to the lives of the poor and unfortunate. Directly because of his work asylum seekers were rescued from rejection and deportation, were subsequently cared for in the community and provided with ongoing support. It is the mark of Peter as a man and of his family that instead of flowers, donations were invited to support refugees in the community. Peter Cox never lost touch with Auburn and the values of its residents. Remarkably, today Auburn has one of the highest intakes of refugees in Australia. Dad was present at Peter's funeral because I was not able to attend, which was very sad because I really wanted to be there. Dad told me later that night, "Peter's funeral was beautiful, Barbara. It was a tribute to a wonderful man." Peter Cox was truly loved and highly regarded in the Auburn community. Today I convey the condolences of the Auburn community as well as my condolences and those of my family to Olive, Patricia, Helen, Kate, John, Brian and Peter, and Olive's beautiful 14 grandchildren of whom Peter was so proud. I thank Peter for his work, his love, his faith and his commitment to community. We learned a lot from him and we valued him. May he rest in peace.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal) [11.58 a.m.]: I place on the record my tribute to Peter Cox. He was a former Minister for Transport in the Wran Government but, more importantly, he was a very fine man. I became acquainted with Peter through his great friend Mr Thomas Murphy, who was a member for Concord and who had attended the Marist Brothers school with my father. Although Peter was somewhat younger than Thomas Murphy, he attended Marist Brothers at Lidcombe. Peter left the Parliament before I came into it, and therefore I never knew him as a politician. My predecessor, Tim Moore, appointed Peter as the chairman of the bicentennial trust that administers Bicentennial Park. When I became the Minister for the Environment in 1992 I got to know him and I found him to be a very fine man. He was very encouraging to me. I remember once he took me aside after I had done a press conference and said to me, "Chris, when you make these comments at press conferences always work on the basis that you don't actually know, you've only been told. Always be careful to say, 'I am advised by my department' or 'I am advised by officers of my department'. If you say it is a fact and it turns out to be wrong, you are the one who will cop it." That was very sound advice.

On another occasion Peter said to me, "You will be asked to represent the Premier at many functions. Some you like, some you won't like, but if you are going to do your job you'll have to get out there and represent the Premier." I think I was complaining to him about some function I was being forced to attend. Peter said, "You wanted this job, you've got it. Mate"—he was very friendly—"you've got to live up to it." He represented in every sense that great strain of the Irish community in Australia who, through education and the public sector, sought to advance from being a low socioeconomic group to a well-educated and well-advanced socioeconomic group. He faced a great deal of sectarianism, as all people of Irish extraction did in the 1920s and 1930s, and he saw, as so many people did in those days, the Labor Party and the trade union movement as the vehicle for upward mobility in a personal sense but, more significantly, as a vehicle for achieving social justice in our society.

As previous speakers, including the member for Riverstone and his successor in the Auburn electorate, Mrs Perry, have said, Peter had a deep sense of compassion and a deep commitment to social justice. When his term as chairman of the bicentennial trust expired I said to John Fahey, "I'd like to reappoint him. He does a good job. He's a fine person." John Fahey said, "He was a Labor Minister and I know Tim Moore appointed him, but maybe we should be looking at someone else." I said, "John, he's regional president of the St Vincent de Paul Society." And John said—this was a mark of John Fahey—"Fine, reappoint him." There was to be no argument. Peter had the highest commendation. He spent his entire life in service to his family, his political party, his faith and his community. He was humble in his own way—I know he was a humble person—the exemplar of everything we would wish members of Parliament and Ministers of the Crown to be. To his wife and family I extend my sincere condolences. I know that Peter will rest in peace. He is the sort of man who would certainly go to heaven. I share with all other members in saying: Vale, Peter Francis Cox. May you rest in peace.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.03 p.m.]: I join all members in passing on my words of support and condolence to Peter Cox's family, and share the sympathies going out to Olive, who is in the

gallery, and the members of his wonderful family. There is an old saying: we learn more about someone when we attend their funeral. While I thought I knew much about Peter Cox, I learned much more about him when I attended his funeral service on 13 October at the Mary Immaculate Church in Manly. I think many other members, including Peter's contemporaries, certainly learned a lot that day. I was sitting behind a number of former Ministers and I saw the shocked look on the faces of Terry Sheahan and Mike Cleary when Peter's son, John, read out, for example, Peter's war service and Army service. Peter never spoke about that to me, and few members of this House knew much about it.

Labor historians, when doing any research on Peter Cox, should start with the eulogies given at the service, particularly those given by Peter's son, John, and also by our former Deputy Premier, Ron Mulock, who is in the gallery today with his wife Des. They did Peter and the family proud, and made a major contribution to Labor history at the same time. I was proud of them. Any readings of this debate today should be complemented by those contributions at Peter's funeral. Peter Cox was a member of Parliament from 1965 to 1988. When he was selected as the Labor candidate for the Auburn electorate, Jack Renshaw was the Premier and Bob Askin was the Leader of the Opposition. Labor had been in power since 1941, and Peter's election coincided with the defeat of that Government and the start of an 11-year period of Coalition Government.

Peter came into this House and went straight onto the Opposition benches, with all the challenges that came with it. For people of my generation, many of who joined the Labor Party during the Whitlam era or just after it, Peter Cox was a big name in Labor politics. From the time he was first elected to Parliament, he was the public face of Labor's transport policy, first in Opposition from about 1968 and later in the first Wran Government. During the early 1970s I started getting interested in politics, especially Labor politics. Like most young people of the time, I was taken in by the presence of the Federal Labor leader and later Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. About this time Labor lost the 1973 State election, and this new chap named Neville Wran came on the scene. A lot of focus started to go to the State party and hopes were riding high that we might have a chance at the next election.

While Federal issues dominated, I noted on the evening news the conservative-looking shadow Minister standing on railway stations and railway tracks while talking about upgrading the rail system. That chap was Peter Cox. While much credit must go to Neville Wran as Labor leader for the 1976 result, I believe that not enough credit was given to Peter Cox for delivering us that win. Indeed, my predecessor in the Mount Druitt electorate, and a former member for Riverstone, Tony Johnson, said that Peter Cox was the main reason we won that election. Whatever the history, we should all acknowledge that, without Peter's work on transport policy and, importantly, his ability to explain it, Labor would not have won that election.

Among track upgrades and the like, Peter promised a 20 per cent drop in fares. What would Treasury say today if our transport Minister said that the best way to get things going would be to drop fares by 20 per cent? Peter promised a \$5 billion, five-year program to upgrade the service, and he delivered on those promises in government. By the time I came into this place Peter Cox was among a group of highly respected senior Ministers. I do not know whether it was the rank structure, but Peter and many other senior Ministers of the time, particularly the Premier and the Deputy Premier, overawed me. I was sworn in on 1 November 1983. I sat up the back on my first day, and later moved to sit just behind where the Premier always sits.

There they all were. In addition to newer Ministers—I have already mentioned Cleary and Sheahan—there was Ron Mulock, Pat Hills, Eric Bedford, Kevin Stewart, Don Day, Lyn Gordon, Jack Ferguson, Neville Wran and Peter Cox. What a team! Imagine a new member of Parliament being confronted by that! Peter's parliamentary record and ministerial career have been spoken of in many quarters and I will not go into them at length. Unlike his long-term friends, I never had much to do with him outside the Parliament, certainly in those early days. We would chat while on the way to divisions or at the dinner table. I would watch him handle himself professionally in the Parliament, answering questions and batting back interjections from the Opposition. As an observer, I must say he did it without any stress.

We now know from John's eulogy that Peter privately battled an alcohol problem, but I saw no evidence of that. That was probably another of Peter's strengths. For some reason he started to give me more time during parliamentary sittings. During a division he would sit alongside me as the Whips counted us. He would say something to me like, "That was a good speech you made today" on whatever subject I spoke on that day. At other times he would say, "Keep going the way you are, you are doing all right." At first I thought he was just having a lend of me, but I soon realised that he was giving me much encouragement. I recall him laughing at me when I looked so embarrassed when he predicted that one day I would be a Minister in this House. I felt he was being very fatherly.

I was an overzealous new member and one day in caucus he saved me from myself. The Besco battery factory at Seven Hills had closed down. The closure had received a lot of publicity and I, being a new Labor member for the area with Labor ideals, decided that I would move in caucus that the Government buy the factory and run it as a government-owned enterprise. All fired up, I moved the motion in caucus, which was seconded by Judith Walker, MLC. We put up a good old show, citing the plight of the workers, and the need for the Government to buy the factory and run it. I even suggested we could sell batteries at a cheaper rate and supply them to the Government car fleet. It all sounded great. When Judith Walker finished her supporting speech Neville Wran leaned across the table towards Peter Cox and said in his raspy voice, "We're not going to be stuck with running some bloody battery factory, are we?" I always remember those words.

When Peter Cox stood up everyone stopped talking and listened. Rather than just crush me with a vote of the caucus Peter congratulated me on raising such an important matter and said that our arguments had a lot of merit. He asked if we would agree to have the matter referred to some committee in his portfolio of Small Business. I agreed, as did Judith. After all, none other than Peter Cox said the issue had merit and it would be given serious consideration. On the way out of caucus he put his hand on my shoulder and he assured me that he would follow up this matter. Peter, if you are listening, I am still waiting for the response from that committee—something like the correspondence committee of caucus. I understand they are still waiting for a response to Jack Lang's Lang Plan.

Peter was one of the first to wish me well when I became a Minister. I later had dealings with him on issues involving the Catholic Cemetery Necropolis Trust at Rookwood. He was so professional, always referring to me as "Minister" when we were in the company of officials of the trust. His style encouraged people to try their best for whatever he wanted on behalf on whomever he was representing. I could talk all day about Peter Cox. The participation of his family, particularly his grandchildren, in his funeral made it an especially moving experience. Today a eulogy was delivered about Mick Clough. I recognise that Nobito Sugimoto, Mick's son-in-law, represented the Clough family at Peter's funeral, which was a who's who of the Labor movement and the Catholic Church. I close not with my words but with those of Ron Mulock, whose eulogy was also memorable. The Parliamentary Library should have a copy of the eulogies, as they are a major contribution to the memory of Peter Cox and Labor history. Ron Mulock caused a few eyes to moisten when he said, in part:

I have lost a very good and special friend who was a loving husband, much loved father and father-in-law and special "Poppy" to his grandchildren.

Our last 'phone call ended this way. I said: "I'll come and see you soon, Pete". Peter responds: "Don't worry—get yourself well. You've been a good friend, Ron."

I say: "You've always been a good friend to me, Pete—see you soon mate. God bless" ...

Peter will be missed by them and many other people.

Ron was referring to his staff, Olive, the grandchildren and the family generally. He continued:

Peter, you have finished your work here. May you rest in a peace you have earned and fully deserve.

It was a great tribute by a parliamentary colleague Ron Mulock. It is a sad occasion when the likes of Peter Cox passes on. I thank the House for allowing me to make this contribution.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) [12.16 p.m.]: I offer my sympathy and the prayers of the electorate of Lismore to Mrs Cox and her family. Sadly, I did not have an association with the late Peter Cox but one of my constituents, Mike Donnelly, was a former press secretary. He has asked me to record a few thoughts that related to the electorate of Lismore. The late Jack Hurley and Alan Brown were founders of Brown and Hurley, a major truck distributor and major Kenworth specialist on the eastern seaboard. Jack was a founding member and president of the Lions Club at Kyogle, one of the first 10 clubs in Australia. The Lions Club and the district of Kyogle built what they call the Lions Road which is a short cut from Kyogle across the mountain into the back of Beaudesert. It was built with great community support led by the late Jack Hurley and the Lions Club.

Jack wanted funds for the Lions Road, but he could not get support from the government of the day. He contacted Don Day, the member for Clarence, who brought Harry Jensen and Peter Cox to Kyogle prior to the 1976 election. Mike told me they doorknocked in the Grafton and Casino areas. Peter would tell a funny story about his experience in Casino: a blue heeler chased him out of an old Queenslander house, of which there are many. I do not know who owned the blue heeler, but there was probably a good National Party supporter there

too. The late Jack Hurley had received a bit of a run around from the government of the day and he suggested that Don Day get Harry Jensen and Peter Cox up to the border. When they came up and inspected the proposed Lions Road, Jack was going to put the bite on them.

Harry promised \$30,000 and when Labor got elected he fulfilled that promise. In the 1978 campaign Peter was giving a speech from the back of a truck in Lismore when the former editor of the *Northern Star*, Cliff Murray said "Why don't you give some more money to the Lions Road?" Peter kicked in a further \$30,000. This story appears on pages 61-64 of Jack Hurley's book, the *Lions Road*, of copy of which I should send to the family. The book refers to the contribution of the late Peter Cox to the Lions Road. Mike said that if Peter ever had to travel to the Clarence, Tweed Heads, Lismore or Brisbane he preferred to travel by train.

In those days they had the luxury of putting cars on trains; no doubt they had a travel pass that entitled them to a first-class sleeper. He put the LTD vehicle on the train—there were no Hondas in those days—and it was taken off at either Murwillumbah or Casino. They would then drive north to wherever they were going. Sadly, that cannot be done now because there is no service to Murwillumbah. They would travel on the Lions Road if they were going to Brisbane and on those occasions Peter Cox would give a commentary about what the late Jack Hurley and the Kyogle Lions Club achieved with his support. He was proud of his contribution to the Lions Road. Mike says:

Peter was also a great railwayman, which also has historical links with the Kyogle area and the northern rivers. I have no doubt that he would have fought tooth and nail to protect the Casino to Murwillumbah line and now would have been very actively promoting some visionary plan to incorporate the Northern Rivers into the Queensland rail system.

Earlier today in the condolence motion for Mick Clough members recognised that Ben Chifley lived near the Cox family. Mike Donnelley told me that Peter Cox was born in Bathurst and that Ben Chifley drove Peter's mother to hospital on the day Peter was born. Peter had family connections in Gulgong and Young. Mike wrote:

When I travelled with him to the bush, we'd invariably find the Catholic solicitor in any big town was a distant relative. He was good mates with Country Party members like Wal Murray, Jack Boyd and Sir Charles Cutler. He spoke of them as men you could have a fierce yet substantial debate with in the Chamber and then have a beer with later on. I doubt if there's too much of that with the earnest young joggers and number crunchers of today. It was interesting to observe that mourners at his funeral in Manly on Monday included Nick Greiner, John Brogden and Milton Morris.

Earlier the member for Riverstone referred to Milton Morris. In verification of the words of the member for Riverstone, Mike Donnelley wrote:

Milton Morris (whose life Pete made a misery when he was an extremely effective shadow minister from 1968 until 1976)—

What has been said today encompasses the calibre of Peter Cox, and reinforces his dedication and commitment to this State. On behalf of the Lismore electorate and this side of the House, I offer our prayers and thoughts. May he rest in peace.

Mr PAUL GIBSON (Blacktown) [12.21 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the condolence motion for Peter Francis Cox. I extend my condolences to Mrs Cox, the family, and to Des and Ron Mulock. I did not know Peter Cox very well for a long time, but I had some association with him that I have never forgotten. As was said earlier, Peter was born in Bathurst. I came from Young. I remember Peter saying, "You can always pick country people". When I walk down Martin Place, nine times out of 10 I can pick out the country people. Peter would say, "We can pick country people for sure". I think Peter's dad, Edwin, worked for Ben Chifley—but I may be corrected on that—and they were neighbours. I first met Peter when I was standing for the seat of The Hills in 1975. That was probably the safest Liberal seat in New South Wales in those days.

It was very hard to get a shadow Minister to join me in my campaign, and I was standing against Max Ruddock. One day during my campaign there was an accident on Windsor Road, near Baulkham Hills Central Primary School, which was the school four of my children attended. A little girl was run over. I rang Peter and said, "What can we do about this?" Peter was in Opposition at the time, and he replied, "Look, there is a lot we can do about it. Leave it with me. What is the reaction of the people there at the moment?" I replied, "In the morning a few of us will be on Windsor Road as lollypop people helping the children safely cross the road to school".

Peter said, "That is a good idea; that is a good start". When I went to Windsor Road at 7.30 a.m. the next day to help the kids cross the road, I was tapped on the shoulder by a man who said, "I can see the problem out here now". I turned around, and it was Peter Cox. Peter worked with us on the crossing for about an hour

that morning. Not only that, he returned the next day without any television or newspaper reporters or photographers, to see what he could do about the problem. He went back on the following day as well. When I spoke to him he said, "Before you can criticise a problem, you have to know the problem. And then you have to find a solution to the problem". How very right he was.

Government and Opposition members often criticise; it is easy to criticise. Peter's point was that it is easy to criticise: criticism comes fairly cheap. The art of criticising is to provide a solution to the problem. Peter inspected Windsor Road and came up with a solution. That incident occurred in 1975, when I was beaten at the election in the seat of The Hills. In 1976, when Peter became Minister for Transport, one of the first things he did was to have a set of lights installed on Windsor Road. Neither the people of the area nor I have forgotten that. That is the sort of bloke he was.

Over the past few days I have been reading some information about Peter. Neville Wran, referring to the Government as a whole, but particularly to Peter Cox as the Minister for Transport, said, "If a government can get people to work on time, and get them home from work on time, they are 70 per cent certain to be re-elected". How right he was. If we could apply that to this State today we would be 70 per cent sure of being re-elected. Unfortunately, we have a few minor hiccups. Hopefully we can overcome them. I will not talk about Peter's war record because it has been covered fairly well. Peter's life was based on helping people. He never forgot where he came from.

I first met Peter in 1975, when I found out that he was a union man. He knew what the unions stood for and he knew how well the unions had treated workers over the years. He also had a great understanding of the working class, particularly for the low-wage earner. He based many of his policies on helping the low-wage earner. Peter entered Parliament in 1965, became shadow Minister for Transport in 1968, and Minister for Transport in 1976. He had eight years to learn his portfolio—what a great example that was—eight years to learn about transport. He was the best Minister for Transport simply because he knew everything about what he was doing. He knew the transport system backwards. His knowledge of his portfolio was unbelievable. A library article states:

Peter Cox had legislated for the re-organisation of the Public Transport Commission, providing the establishment of a State Rail Authority and Urban Transit Authority to operate as separate entities from July 1980. Under his stewardship, the New South Wales Public Transport System will continue to receive adequate funds to place it on par with world systems, giving commuters the level of service they might reasonably expect in the 1980s.

If we had carried through on that philosophy then commuters would have the service they deserve in 2008. It is worth noting that after the 1976 general election it was said that, prior to the Labor Government's return to power, Peter Cox had announced a five-year, \$1,000 million program to update and revitalise public transport throughout New South Wales. That program had realised a new deal for public transport and road users in both metropolitan and rural areas of the State. A second five-year program was begun to build on the solid foundations laid by the 1976 scheme. Following the Government's re-election in March 1974, Mr Cox became Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy, with responsibilities for such vital areas as coalmining and power generation. When Peter finally retired, he was constantly written about, and consistently referred to as the best Minister for Transport we have had. To date, I could not disagree with that.

In 1987 Peter replaced Laurie Brereton as Minister for Public Works. Laurie had his name on a lot of buildings around the place and everywhere you looked you would see "Laurie Brereton". When Peter took over he was asked whether he would follow suit. Peter Cox's answer was simply this: "I would rather grow petunias." He really meant it. He said he would resign after the 1988 election and learn to play the piano. I do not know whether he ever learnt to play the piano—the family are saying no—but his intentions were good at the time. Peter Cox received the Order of Australia. He is survived by Olive and daughters Patricia, Helen and Kate and sons John and Brian, and 14 grandchildren. The day they buried Peter Cox they buried a true friend of the worker.

Mr ALAN ASHTON (East Hills) [12.30 p.m.]: Condolence motions are by their nature sad events but they are also an opportunity to say some very wonderful things about great men, and Peter Cox was one of those. Mick Clough, for whom we had a condolence motion earlier, was another great example. Both those gentlemen were Labor icons as far as I am concerned. I am pleased to speak in support of this condolence motion for the late Peter Cox. I offer my condolences to his family, some of whom are here in the gallery and obviously there are many other family members and friends who cannot be here today.

Peter Cox was a longstanding member for Auburn and a senior Minister in the Wran and Unsworth Labor governments. His political career in this place began on 1 May 1965, which was the day Labor lost power

in New South Wales after 24 years in government. Peter's beginning in this place was at a time when we needed fresh blood and new ideas. Peter Cox retired at the March 1988 election when Labor lost office after 12 years in government. In those 23 years as the member for Auburn, Peter Cox played a vital role for the New South Wales Labor Party in opposition and in government. On 1 May 1976—notice the date—11 years later, Labor won the State election by one seat. There is no doubt that the key election issue for the 1976 election was transport, particularly the trains that allegedly served New South Wales at the time.

Peter Cox was the shadow Minister for Transport from 1968 to 1976, a long time in political terms nowadays when shadow Ministers are changed at the drop of a hat. It serves to explain the grasp Peter had on all aspects of transport issues. In 1976, Pat Rogan, my predecessor in the seat of East Hills, ran his campaign—I was his campaign director—on the transport issue. Pat campaigned heavily on the issue of the East Hills railway line service. Pat's key pamphlet that year featured a photo of him standing with one foot on the East Hills railway line, looking suitably disgusted with the then single track from Riverwood to East Hills. In the eight years that Peter Cox served as Minister of Transport we saw the East Hills line duplicated from Riverwood to East Hills and in 1986 the East Hills line was extended across the Georges River and eventually to Glenfield. Members would appreciate the great significance of that move, which greatly assisted the people of the south-west to commute to Sydney. It is easy to forget just how difficult it was in those days to get from the growing area of south-western Sydney across the Georges River, virtually only at Milperra, to get to Sydney.

I was a teacher in Green Valley for many years at James Busby High School and I knew many young people that I taught who were academically gifted but could not get a job in the city because it would take them too long to get from Liverpool and beyond to the city to take up that employment and then to get home again. Unfortunately many young people were not able to take up those opportunities because public transport was lacking in south-west Sydney. I also worked with the former Labor Minister for Education, Rodney Cavalier, in 1985 and 1986 and that is when I got to know Peter reasonably well, as one does as a policy adviser moving around this place. I undertook the usual tasks of a policy adviser and I saw Peter Cox in many different committees. As far as I was concerned Peter Cox was a wise gentleman who added great stability to the Wran and Unsworth cabinets. He certainly was a much less controversial figure than Rodney Cavalier—Rodney will not mind my saying this.

Pat Rogan and his wife, Eunice, would also like me to pass on their condolences to Peter Cox's family and friends. Pat mentioned this to me a couple of weeks ago and I said that there would be no problem with my wanting to say some nice words about Peter's service. I know personally of Peter Cox's continual support for the trade union movement—the member for Blacktown has referred to that—because in 1985 my wife, Linda, was approached by the then Miscellaneous Workers Union to work as its first female industrial officer—until that stage it had never had one—on secondment from the Electricity Commission, where Linda worked. Peter Cox was then the responsible Minister as Minister for Mineral Resources and Energy. This had to be approved by bureaucrats and we all know that various minutes have to go up through the system before they arrive on the Minister's desk. They all said no.

Without giving too much away, a call was made and the piece of paper arrived on Peter Cox's desk as the responsible Minister. Peter just wrote, "Yes, approved." I want to thank Peter Cox for that because his personal approval of that secondment showed that he did not believe that a secondment from the Electricity Commission to a trade union was a political offence. He was still in touch and had good relations with the union movement. That is something I think the member for Blacktown was alluding to. It does not do any harm for Labor members not to forget that the trade union movement and the Labor branches are still part of our structure. At that stage Peter Cox was a very senior Minister of the Government. In giving that approval, Peter Cox at the stroke of a pen made a few chips in the glass ceiling for women, although it was not called that in those days. It was a significant step forward.

I want to pass on my condolences to Peter Cox's family, his wife, children, grandchildren and friends, many of whom are here today and those outside this place. The member for Auburn, Minister Perry, referred to the fact that when you hold a seat for as long as Peter did you build up a massive amount of support. I guess one could argue that he picked the right time to retire from politics in 1988 because we copped a bashing. So many younger people have come into the Parliament on both sides but we always need to have these elder statesmen such as Peter Cox or Mick Clough. Members on the other side are in the same situation.

Peter Cox had knowledge of every corridor and filing cabinet as a result of all the years he worked in transport. He knew so much, as did Milton Morris. As a Minister, there is nothing worse than knowing that your shadow Minister knows just about as much and maybe even more than you do. The family members here today

and the Labor Party should know that Peter Cox's legacy as a local member of Parliament and Minister, and as a man, father and grandfather, was that he really made a difference for the betterment of all people of New South Wales. Peter Cox, rest in peace.

Mr GERARD MARTIN (Bathurst) [12.37 p.m.]: I rise with pleasure to speak to this condolence motion for Peter Cox and while I will be brief, I will certainly be sincere. It is appropriate today that we are honouring two great Labor men who were very good friends. Their families have continued that friendship to this day. My first experience of Peter Cox was when I was a very young mayor of Lithgow and Neville Wran brought the Cabinet to Lithgow for a meeting. He pioneered that and I was very impressed to have all those senior Ministers there for the day. I remember Peter Cox, Kevin Stewart and a number of them being there. I gave them the keys to the mayoral office and the bar and went off to do some mayoral duties. I came back some hours later and they were still there conducting matters of government from the mayor's office.

That was my first association with those gentlemen but over the years I led a number of delegations to Peter Cox. I want to place on record one area of action. We have heard him referred to as being the best Minister for Transport New South Wales has had, and apart from Milton Morris I do not think there is any dispute about that. When Peter Cox was Minister for Energy in New South Wales we had been trying for many years to get natural gas to the Central West. Bathurst, Orange and Lithgow councils formed a lobby group that went to Canberra and saw Malcolm Fraser and John Carrick and spoke to State Ministers. It was a unique situation because the Pipeline Authority was a Federal institution, the State Government had control over prices and the Australian Gas Light Company [AGL], a semi-statutory private company, owned the gas.

It was a difficult proposition and we could never get the three parties to agree. By the coming together of two unlikely characters—Gareth Evans as the Federal Minister for Energy and Peter Cox as the State Minister—something that had dragged on for years was resolved in about five minutes as a result of the pushing and urging of Peter Cox, which resulted in tremendous benefits for the Central West. Those who were involved in that campaign still remember Peter Cox's contribution, which was the real catalyst. Peter saw a need for our area to have this valuable natural resource and he was able to cut through all the barriers and get it done quickly. As a result he always had my respect.

After I became a member of Parliament Peter and I had a couple of meals in Parliament House. He had dinner with me and spoke about renewable energy—an issue in which he had a great interest. A few months ago he rang me and spoke about the possibility of solar projects in the Bathurst region. He was involved in a number of issues and he was keen to talk to those with whom he had had an association over the years. I will always remember Peter with great respect and fondness. I extend condolences to Peter's family and friends who are present in the gallery today.

The SPEAKER: On behalf of the House I extend to Mrs Cox and her family our deepest sympathies.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.

BRISBANE WATER LOCAL AREA COMMAND

Ms MARIE ANDREWS (Gosford) [12.42 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Government for delivering on its pre-election promise of providing a \$100,000 mobile police station to the Brisbane Water Local Area Command;
- (2) notes that the mobile station will be a base for police targeting crime and antisocial behaviour in areas such as parks and local shopping centres;
- (3) commends the Government's commitment to driving down crime and providing local police with state-of-the-art equipment; and
- (4) applauds the outstanding efforts by the Police Force in reducing crime and combating antisocial behaviour.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the New South Wales Labor Government on fulfilling its election commitment for the provision of a mobile police station to the Brisbane Water Local Area Command and the people I proudly represent in this House in the Gosford electorate. The Labor Government had committed to the provision of \$100,000 for this vehicle, which has been used extensively in Umina, Ettalong Beach, Woy Woy and Blackwall on the Woy Woy peninsula, Kibble Park in the centre of the Gosford central business district, and Kincumber in the Terrigal electorate. The mobile police station provides a visual police presence in those areas.

Mobile police stations are a key tool in addressing antisocial behaviour within our community. This Government is committed to ensuring that our men and women in blue are equipped with the tools and facilities that they need to best achieve their goals of providing a safe and secure environment for our community. The mobile police station is equipped with a police radio, data terminal and interview room which enable police to identify and detain perpetrators, conduct interviews and request transport or assistance, as necessary. This facility is assisting the police of the Brisbane Water Local Area Command in keeping down crime rates.

I am pleased to inform the House that the latest statistics released by the independent crime umpire—the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, or BOCSAR—show that over the past two years to June 2008 crime in the Gosford and Wyong areas has remained stable or trended down in 15 of 17 of the major crime categories monitored. The remaining two categories have seen rises, but the director of BOCSAR attributes them to higher petrol prices, resulting in stolen numberplates and petrol theft. The BOCSAR statistics have shown that the incidence of break and enter in non-dwellings in the Gosford-Wyong areas has decreased by a whopping 27.2 per cent.

I commend the police of the Brisbane Water Local Area Command for their efforts in addressing crime in the area and creating a safe and secure environment for the local community. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the New South Wales Government on fulfilling its commitment to provide these officers with the technology and equipment they need to achieve that goal. The impact of mobile police stations, most notably within the Hunter region, has shown them to be a key tool in combating antisocial behaviour on weekends, in both retail and recreational areas.

This tool goes hand in glove with increased police numbers in the Brisbane Water Local Area Command, which covers the central business district areas of Gosford, Terrigal and the Woy Woy peninsula. Since 1996 an additional 53 officers have been deployed—a massive increase in police numbers in that area. Because of the Government's commitment to ensuring that we have record police numbers equipped with the latest technology we have low crime rates in New South Wales and in the Gosford electorate. I take pleasure in commending the motion to the House.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal) [12.46 p.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

That this House:

- (1) condemns the State Government for the sale of Kincumber police station and the downgrading of Terrigal police station;
- (2) notes the reduction in police numbers for Brisbane Water Local Area Command from 251 in 2003 to only 229 in September 2008; and
- (3) calls upon the member for Gosford to have the police numbers in Brisbane Water restored to 251.

In that great game soccer there is an event known as "kicking an own goal". If ever there were a case of an own goal being kicked it would have to be the one kicked today by the member for Gosford. Under her administration as the member for Gosford, police numbers in Brisbane Water Local Area Command have fallen from a peak of 251 in 2003 to 229 in 2008, yet she is commending the Government for looking after Brisbane Water Local Area Command. Police numbers are falling. In one of its classic cons the Rees-Iemma-Carr governments, which are all spin and no substance, said, "We will downgrade Terrigal police station, close Kincumber police station and reduce police numbers, but we will give you a mobile police station that will wander around the two electorates of Terrigal and Gosford, which comprise the Brisbane Water Local Area Command, and that will look good. It will be parked outside the shopping centres and everyone will see it."

As the member for Gosford said, that mobile police station will be fully equipped but there will be no cops. I agree with one aspect of the contribution of the member for Gosford: the New South Wales Police Force and police in the Brisbane Water Local Area Command do an excellent job. However, they do an excellent job

despite a lack of support from the Government. In 1940, as the Germans advanced across Europe, Winston Churchill cried out to President Roosevelt, "Give us the tools." Police in Brisbane Water Local Area Command are asking for the tools, the numbers and the support, but they are not getting it. Terrigal police station, which was once a fully manned 18-hour police station, and which had a full complement of two cars and detectives upstairs, has been downgraded to a shopfront police station that operates 12 hours a day—from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.

In 1996 with great fanfare Kincumber police station was opened by the Minister for Police. I was there. Actually, I made a speech. In one of those foolish indiscretions of youth in politics I commended the Government for opening Kincumber police station. The Minister came up, the commissioner came up, the band played, everybody took the salute, and we had a big guard of honour. It was an extraordinary event, with afternoon tea at government expense. What happened? As soon as the band, the Minister, the commissioner and everybody had left, the Kincumber police station, which was built for 12 officers, was left with one lone officer on light duties, without a gun or a car. That is what happened to the promised fully manned new \$1.2 million Kincumber police station.

When did the police go into Kincumber police station after 1996? They never did. It was never manned. It stood there, a lonely symbol of this Government's incompetence for 12 years until finally, a few months ago, Michael Costa, the brilliant former New South Wales Treasurer, transferred it to the State Property Authority and flogged it off at a public auction. That was the fate of Kincumber police station. To make it up the Government said, "Oh, but we'll give you a mobile police station. It will circulate around the area. You'll all see it. It will terrify the hoodlums and the criminals. No-one will dare come out because they will know that this week the mobile police station will be at Kincumber, next week it will be down at Woy Woy." The member for Gosford provided a list of the places the mobile police station attended. I note that it attended far more places in the electorate of the member for Gosford than in mine. The mobile police station made one simple visit to Kincumber in my Terrigal electorate, but the member for Gosford knows that it visited Ettalong, Umina and Kibble Park in her electorate. She is doing alright. As far as spin goes, she is doing okay.

Mr David Harris: She is so hard working. What is the member for Terrigal doing?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: She is a wonderful woman and I never deny that, but the fact is that the New South Wales Government is not looking after the Brisbane Water Local Area Command or police on the Central Coast. The district's population has grown and continues to grow. Former Minister Frank Sartor in the Central Coast Regional Plan offered us, as the members for Wyong and Gosford know, another 20,000 people without any new roads, without any new railways and with declining police numbers. Let the figures be engraved into your hearts: 251 police officers only five years ago in 2003, down to 229 on 30 September 2008. I researched the figures. What has happened? Crime rates are not falling.

I used to attend the now disbanded police and community team meetings every three months. We would always be given various little charts showing that crime rates were falling: regardless of the crime, the rates always were falling. Yet somehow crime rates continue to rise in New South Wales; somehow break and enters continue to rise; somehow motor vehicle thefts continue to rise. Why? It is because 95 per cent of break and enters do not result in an arrest, and 95 per cent of car thefts do not result in an arrest. People in New South Wales now simply ring the police assistance line to report that their home has been broken into. When your home is violated or your car is stolen, what do you do? Ring the police assistance line. Only if it becomes a hotspot is there any activity. This is not due to police inactivity; it is simply that there are not enough police on the ground to carry out the duties the community expects them to perform.

The reason for the lack of police numbers to respond to incidents is the massive exit of police from the police force. Every three months we see the graduation parades, which are always well publicised, in Goulburn. We do not see the hundreds of police walking out of the New South Wales Police Force. As displayed on the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* only a month ago, it was an insult to offer the 2.5 per cent increase to the New South Wales police when senior bureaucrats were offered up to \$40,000 increases and Sydney Ferries engineers were given a 10 per cent pay increase. We are always told that Labor looks after the workers. What about the working police? Why do they not get a fair go? Why do they not get wage justice? Why do they not get from this Government the conditions, salaries and support to keep them in the New South Wales Police Force to serve the needs of the community? That is why police numbers continue to fall. That is why the Brisbane Water Local Area Command numbers will continue to decrease. The most senior police officers will tell you, "We just want the guys. We just want the troops. We just want the numbers. We want to be able to look after the community, but the Government ties our hands."

Giving the people of the Central Coast in the Terrigal and Gosford electorates this mobile police station is nothing more than another attempt at spin. Where will it be when the people need it? Where will it be when the hooners are wandering up and down the streets? Where will it be when it is needed to respond to a call? Where will it be patrolling the streets? What about high police visibility on ordinary days rather than at well-publicised events when the mobile police station comes to town? This is the ultimate example of this Government's triumph of spin over substance. When the new Premier was sworn in some nine weeks ago he said this Government will get rid of the spin and get down to substance. Yet this motion—admittedly moved some months ago in the great days of spin—congratulates the Government on allocating \$100,000 for a mobile police station while police numbers fell, while the never manned Kincumber police was sold off after costing \$1.2 million, while Terrigal police station was downgraded, and while the Erina Fair and Umina police shopfronts were closed.

We remember when the member for Gosford organised a little demonstration about closing the Umina shopfront a few years ago. It was an excellent effort and full marks must go to her. This motion is all about defending the closure of the Umina police shopfront. I ask the House to pass judgement on the member for Gosford. I call on her to get those police numbers restored so that the people of Gosford can be assured of an effective police presence.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [12.56 p.m.]: I commend the member for Gosford for her fine efforts in defending law and order in her electorate. I can speak about her efforts firsthand because all my family live in her electorate. They often comment to me about the great job Marie Andrews does as their local member. The people of the Central Coast, particularly in Gosford and on the peninsula, have a greater sense of safety and security through the actions of their member of Parliament in securing new resources to address hoodlum behaviour and crime. The Wyong-Tuggerah Lakes Local Area Command also received one of these mobile police stations. The hard work of all police departments is to be commended, which is reflected in the consistently falling crime rates.

This motion congratulates the New South Wales Government on its commitment to the people of New South Wales by introducing new mobile police stations across the State. The average cost of each unit equipped with police radio, data terminal and interview room is approximately \$106,000. The mobile police stations are essential to maintain harmonious communities. They are key tools in addressing antisocial behaviour and provide a visual police presence in the areas in which they are used. Police are able to quickly and efficiently coordinate resources in response to incidents as they arise.

Within my electorate of Wyong the Tuggerah Lakes Police R3 Squad recently was re-established for the summer. Despite what the member for Terrigal said about the mobile police station just driving around doing nothing, it will be supported by the Tuggerah Lakes mobile police station, making the squad highly effective in cutting down antisocial behaviour and consequential problems. Despite the further comments of the member for Terrigal, last summer under the command of Inspector Rod Peet the R3 squad, aided by the mobile police station, recorded 697 proactive police events, laid 102 charges and issued more than 400 infringement notices. If that is doing nothing, then let us have a lot more of it because that is a pretty impressive effort by our local police with the support of that mobile police station.

The term R3 is derived from State Plan priority R3, which seeks to reduce problems associated with louts, young gangs, noisy neighbours, public drunkenness and hoon drivers. This year the police patrols will combine with Fisheries departmental officers and Wyong Shire Council rangers on joint patrols aimed at curbing offensive behaviour, and stopping undersized fish being taken and fish bag limits being exceeded. They will be supported by the mobile police station. The squad is currently in action every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night during summer and concentrates on known trouble spots at Shelly Beach and Norah Head, among other locations. It will strictly enforce alcohol prohibitions and detain people aged younger than 16 years whom the squad deems to be at risk. Parents of at-risk children will be contacted, and referrals will be made to the Department of Community Services.

The cooperation I have outlined highlights how different departments within our community are committed to working together to create what we all take for granted—a safe and successful community. A successful, thriving community does more than simply protect its citizens; it promotes an atmosphere of harmony and trust in which people feel willing to participate and contribute to a host of activities. The people of New South Wales have said that they want to see a higher level of police visibility. In the past a key challenge

has been to introduce effective ways for this to occur. However, the mobile police stations are a highly successful initiative and send a strong message to the minority of people in our society who disrupt the harmony of our community through antisocial and criminal behaviour.

Citizens of New South Wales, and indeed the whole of Australia, have a right to feel safe within their individual communities. We all want New South Wales to be a safe and just society where the rule of law prevails. All governments, not just the Rees Government, have a responsibility to make and enforce laws that protect their citizens and property. We take this responsibility very seriously. By ensuring that we have strong, effective laws and a well-resourced police force, supported by such things as mobile police stations, we can work to protect the people of New South Wales and make our State a better place in which to live. As the member for Terrigal has re-entered the Chamber, I point out that the Wyong Local Area Commander and people in my electorate have remarked on what a wonderful support for local police operations the mobile police station has been. If the member for Terrigal does not like it operating in his electorate, we are happy to have it in Wyong because we know how important mobile police stations are as support resources for our police and in fulfilling R3 and cracking down on behaviour that the community does not want.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS (Gosford) [1.01 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Wyong for his support for the motion and acknowledge the contribution of the member for Terrigal. However, I cannot agree with many of the remarks made by the member for Terrigal. Under the Labor Government, the New South Wales Police Force has been allocated \$35 million in addition to existing programs that have already been funded. These resources provide front-line police with the information and technology they need to do their job. I take this opportunity to remind the House that in the lead-up to the 2007 election the Opposition made a commitment to cut the public service in New South Wales by 20,000 jobs. That would have had a tremendously damaging effect on front-line workforces, such as police officers, ambulance officers and many other emergency service personnel. Thank goodness the Coalition did not win government in March 2007!

Through the mini-budget, the State Labor Government ensures that it will deliver on its commitment to boost police numbers, open new police stations and, most importantly, support front-line police. Again I place on the record my appreciation of, and gratitude for, the hard work and great job done by police officers on the Central Coast in protecting our communities and making them a lot safer. In 2008 New South Wales is moving towards a fully implemented mobile police service. Steps along the way have been taken incrementally, in more recent years by police cars everywhere in New South Wales having data equipment installed. Police officers now have at their fingertips computerised operational policing system [COPS] data and have access from their vehicles to that information system.

Opposition members keep talking about shopfronts, but the community appreciates that it is far better to have a mobile police force, with police officers roving throughout our communities and ensuring that law enforcement is actively pursued to protect the community, than a shopfront. The shopfront police station at Umina was not being manned, and quite frankly it was becoming an embarrassment. The proceeds of its sale were directed towards providing more mobile police stations—an initiative of the Labor Government. The Central Coast now has two mobile police stations, one within the Brisbane Water Local Area Command and another in the northern part of the Central Coast in the Tuggerah Lakes Local Area Command. Mobile police stations have proved to be a great acquisition and resource for our police officers. Unfortunately there was a great deal of antisocial behaviour in Kibble Park in the Gosford electorate, but the presence of the mobile police station has made a tremendous difference in ensuring that police curtail antisocial behaviour and vandalism.

If the member for Terrigal is honest, he will acknowledge that the mobile police station has made a difference in the Terrigal electorate, just as the mobile police station has made a difference in hot spots on the Woy Woy peninsula. I appreciate that the State Labor Government has delivered on its pre-election commitment to provide a mobile police station to the Brisbane Water Local Area Command. Police numbers in New South Wales have increased by 30 per cent since 1995, when the Coalition was last in government. Since 1996 an additional 53 officers have been deployed to the Brisbane Water Local Area Command. The New South Wales Labor Government has been building up the police service in this State and will continue to do so by providing equipment and giving front-line police officers the support they need. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 45

Mr Amery
 Ms Andrews
 Mr Aquilina
 Ms Beamer
 Mr Borger
 Mr Brown
 Ms Burney
 Ms Burton
 Mr Collier
 Mr Coombs
 Mr Corrigan
 Mr Costa
 Mr Daley
 Ms Firth
 Mr Furolo
 Mr Gibson

Mr Greene
 Mr Harris
 Ms Hay
 Mr Hickey
 Ms Hornery
 Ms Judge
 Ms Keneally
 Mr Khoshaba
 Mr Koperberg
 Mr Lalich
 Mr Lynch
 Mr McBride
 Dr McDonald
 Ms McKay
 Mr McLeay
 Ms McMahan

Ms Megarrity
 Mr Morris
 Mrs Paluzzano
 Mr Pearce
 Mrs Perry
 Mr Sartor
 Mr Shearan
 Ms Tebbutt
 Mr Terenzini
 Mr Tripodi
 Mr West

Tellers,
 Mr Ashton
 Mr Martin

Noes, 40

Mr Aplin
 Mr Baird
 Mr Baumann
 Ms Berejikian
 Mr Besseling
 Mr Cansdell
 Mr Constance
 Mr Debnam
 Mr Dominello
 Mr Draper
 Mrs Fardell
 Mr Fraser
 Ms Goward
 Mrs Hancock

Mr Hartcher
 Mr Hazzard
 Ms Hodgkinson
 Mrs Hopwood
 Mr Humphries
 Mr Kerr
 Mr Merton
 Ms Moore
 Mr O'Dea
 Mr O'Farrell
 Mr Page
 Mr Piccoli
 Mr Piper
 Mr Provest

Mr Richardson
 Mr Roberts
 Mrs Skinner
 Mr Smith
 Mr Stokes
 Mr Stoner
 Mr J. H. Turner
 Mr R. W. Turner
 Mr J. D. Williams
 Mr R. C. Williams

Tellers,
 Mr George
 Mr Maguire

Pair

Ms Gadiel

Mr Souris

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Bills**

Motion by Mr John Aquilina agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the introduction and agreement in principle speech of the Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 immediately prior to private members' statements.

DEATH OF VANESSA ANDERSON

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [1.15 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that 8 November 2007 marks the second anniversary of the death of Vanessa Anderson,

- (2) notes that the many concerns raised by the Anderson family in relation to aspects of the New South Wales health system have not been addressed, and
- (3) extends sincere condolences to Warren, Michelle, Nathan and Amanda Anderson on the loss of a much loved daughter and sister.

In moving this motion, I note that it is exactly one year to the day when I placed this motion on the *Notice Paper* and that last Saturday marked the third anniversary of the death of Vanessa Anderson. I am sure all members will join me in extending our condolences to the Anderson family. Warren and Michelle Anderson and their family have been my constituents for all the time I have represented the Hornsby electorate. On the third anniversary of Vanessa Anderson's death the family still feels as frustrated as it did three years ago in relation to the health system. The many efforts of the family to highlight the issues in the health system have not led to much effective change. Indeed, only two days ago a health services cut was announced in the mini-budget.

Few people will forget the tragic and untimely death of Vanessa Anderson three years ago. She was admitted to hospital with a condition that should not have led to her death, but due to a series of communication problems and issues with the prescription of pain relief Vanessa succumbed to the hospital system and died at the age of just 16. Since then her parents have waged a battle to find answers about the death of their daughter and to see the system that failed Vanessa change so that no-one will have to endure the pain and grief with which the Anderson family has continued to cope. Just as safety is, or should be, a prime consideration of rail management and policy, so safety is a prime expectation in the health setting. When a person enters a hospital or healthcare facility they are placing their life in the hands of someone else. Most people live their lives oblivious to what really goes on inside a hospital until they need to enter such a place, or their relative or friend enters the facility.

This is to be expected because we aim to keep people healthy and out of hospitals, and that can be achieved with good and effective health messages. However, should an unexpected event or diagnosis occur, hospitalisation may be essential. Warren and Michelle Anderson faced this inevitability on 6 November 2005 with the following sequence of events. Vanessa, a healthy 16-year-old, sustained a depressed fracture of her skull when a golf ball struck her at Asquith golf course. She was taken to Royal North Shore Hospital via Hornsby hospital and admitted to a single room in an adult neurosurgical ward.

The family had declined to send her on another ambulance journey to Westmead Children's Hospital due to the severity of her headache. Vanessa underwent a further CAT scan and was prescribed a combination of pain relief for an extremely bad headache associated with a head injury. Her neurosurgeon did not know she was in the ward for 24 hours. Surgery was planned for the morning of 8 November but due to a combination of communication issues and the pain relief, she was found to be not breathing and unresponsive in her hospital bed in the early hours of that morning and was unable to be resuscitated.

Despite numerous meetings with hospital and Department of Health personnel, Warren and Michelle Anderson remained unconvinced they had all the answers as to why Vanessa had died in a tertiary hospital. A root cause analysis was undertaken. The family wanted a coronial inquiry, which was eventually granted and lasted for many months whilst evidence was heard. The Coroner found that Vanessa had died of an excessive amount of opiate ingestion, causing respiratory depression. Warren and Michelle continue to fight for the improvements in hospital care that could have prevented their daughter's death. I pay tribute to Warren Anderson and his family for their stoic bravery in the face of tragedy. They do not, however, want Vanessa's death to be in vain. Unfortunately, their wish is even further from being fulfilled. The mini-budget has done nothing to inspire confidence that anything has changed or is going to change. The Treasurer said:

I can advise the Parliament that the NSW Health budget of \$13.2 billion has been maintained in the mini-budget.

Local savings strategies in Area Health Services including reprioritisation of various initiatives [will lead to a saving of] \$205 million over four years ...

The mini-budget has sliced nearly \$1 billion from the Health portfolio, including cutting area health service funding by \$205 million. It proposes unworkable mergers, downgrades nurse staffing and continues Labor's health blame game instead of tackling the problems plaguing our hospitals today. That is a sad indictment on the Government and not what should be happening in the hospital system. The Australian Medical Association has produced a damning report card on the Government in relation to health care. It urges increased expenditure on health care after finding that one in three emergency patients wait more than 30 minutes for urgent treatment, which is certainly an alarming statistic. On 12 November an ABC media report stated:

The AMA's annual report card on public hospitals says there is a national shortfall of 3,750 beds.

It comes after a report, released by the Australian College of Emergency Medicine in September, found more than 1,500 Australians were dying unnecessarily each year.

This has caused outrage and much has been spoken about it in medical circles. The article continues:

The association's president, Rosanna Capolingua says ...

Enough is enough. What does it take? Do we have to have more patients die?

Those words are no solace for the Anderson family, which has fought so hard over the past three years after a non life-threatening condition of a patient turned into an extreme tragedy shortly after admission. Many other doctors in the health care system are speaking out. Yesterday a lot of media attention was given to the AMA report. On 12 November AAP reported that hospitals in New South Wales were dangerously overcrowded. It stated:

No public hospital in NSW is operating at a safe occupancy level, with chronic bed shortages pushing some past their capacity, the Australian Medical Association (AMA) says:

Australia's public hospitals are marred by overcrowding, long emergency department waiting times and chronic bed shortages.

Brian Morton, the New South Wales President of the Australian Medical Association states:

Our system is under great pressure. Fortunately our nurses and doctors work their hearts out protecting the community.

I agree with him. The fantastic personnel working in our hospitals and healthcare facilities are unfortunately under massive strains and stresses, and if they can leave the hospital system they will work elsewhere. Hence we have great staffing problems. The Andersons faced meetings, reviews, inquiries, interviews and a coronial inquest to find answers and to improve health services. Their extraordinary bravery gave so many others hope. I have moved in health circles not only in this State but in other places where the Anderson family experience has been quoted to me. It was a truly horrific event in our hospital system. What can happen to improve things? How does the Anderson family feel today, when the rug has been pulled from under it again? How can our health professionals pull the belt even tighter to cope with increasingly worse conditions?

In conclusion, I express my sincere condolences to the Anderson family. Three years after Vanessa died we do not have very many more answers or improvements in the health system. The mini-budget will not improve front-line health services—in fact, it will make it even harder to provide those services. The Anderson family, in fighting so selflessly for answers and improvements since 2005, has not been dealt with properly by the department and the Minister. The answers are just not there, and they should be.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.25 p.m.]: I thank the member for Hornsby for raising this issue. The death of a child is tragic under any circumstances. I extend my sincere condolences to the Anderson family in the death of a much-loved daughter. I remember well the dignity and bravery of the Anderson family, and pay special tribute to Vanessa's father for the way in which he gave evidence to the Royal North Shore Hospital inquiry. Clearly some very serious concerns were identified regarding the care and treatment of Vanessa Anderson. It is important to ensure that all possible causes of this tragic outcome are investigated comprehensively and addressed. There should never be another case like the tragedy of Vanessa's death. As a health worker, I will personally never forget Vanessa's care and her tragic death.

I am advised that the area health service has completed a number of reviews and investigations that have resulted in several recommendations being made. Many of them have led to the implementation of changes to practice at Royal North Shore Hospital. The changes include: a new acute pain management policy and procedures, a new targeted education package for medical and nursing staff, additional specific education in the neurosurgical and neurological wards, and new information brochures for patients and their families. The Health Care Complaints Commission has also investigated various aspects of Vanessa Anderson's care and treatment at Royal North Shore Hospital. At the end of its investigation the commission made a number of recommendations to Royal North Shore Hospital, and it is monitoring the hospital's implementation of those recommendations.

The commission's investigation also covered the conduct of a number of individual practitioners with the following results. The Director of Proceedings prosecuted a complaint of unsatisfactory professional conduct against a nurse, and the Professional Standards Committee delivered its decision in this matter in August 2008. The Director of Proceedings also initiated complaints of unsatisfactory professional conduct against two medical practitioners. The prosecutions of the medical practitioners have not yet been listed for hearing. One additional medical practitioner was referred to the Medical Board for counselling.

In January this year the Deputy State Coroner handed down his findings into the death of Vanessa Anderson at Royal North Shore Hospital in November 2005. The Deputy State Coroner made the point that the

New South Wales health system is staffed by dedicated professionals but is facing ever-increasing demands from the general public. In his summary, the Coroner called on the New South Wales Government to "consider a full and open inquiry into the delivery of health services in New South Wales". In response, Mr Peter Garling, SC, was appointed to inquire into acute care services in New South Wales hospitals. Mr Garling formally opened the special commission of inquiry on Thursday 14 February 2008, and since then has begun a series of hospital visits and public hearings. Mr Garling is scheduled to hand down his inquiry's report into acute care services in New South Wales public hospitals in late November. The Government awaits Mr Garling's findings and looks forward to his recommendations. Yet again, I extend my most sincere and heartfelt apologies to the Anderson family for their tragic loss.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Matthew Morris) left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motion

General Business Notices of Motion (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

SCHOOL STUDENT TRAVEL SCHEME

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Labor member for Blacktown described the Premier's policy to change the school travel scheme as the "worst decision ever made" and today the Labor member for Miranda has called for the decision to be scrapped because families are "very angry and outraged", will the Premier admit he has got it wrong and restore the free school student travel program?

Mr NATHAN REES: I will admit that there are difficult decisions to be made at a very difficult time—a level of difficulty that, frankly, the Leader of the Opposition is not up to. We saw his budget response yesterday—

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will remove their props from the Chamber.

Mr NATHAN REES: Difficult decisions in a difficult time. Yesterday we heard from the Leader of the Opposition, the alternative leader of this State, on his plans for New South Wales—34 minutes and zero ideas. I was not surprised, but I was disappointed. I felt better later in the afternoon when I came across the work of one of the Leader of the Opposition's colleagues, the member for Vacluse. It is a shame the member for Vacluse is no longer the Leader of the Opposition. He is someone who has a contribution of substance to make. So far he has written a number of keynote speeches for his Friday lunch forum. They are on his website. He is not ashamed of them.

Mr Peter Debnam: What is the website?

The SPEAKER: The member can give his website a plug later!

Mr NATHAN REES: It is www.peterdebnam.com.au. The policies in these speeches are on the website of the member for Vacluse. He has been writing policies for the 2011 election. So far he has written keynote speeches on number of policy areas, and here are some of them. On 20 August he wrote a keynote speech about the New South Wales infrastructure forum—and he is not even the shadow Minister for infrastructure! He delivered a keynote speech on climate change to the Rotary Club at the Hilton Hotel. However, the one that caught my eye was his keynote speech on the mini-budget. It was an outstanding contribution—thoughtful, incisive and full of policy detail. As I said, his speech is available on his website, www.peterdebnam.com.au, and I encourage all members to read it. His mini-budget reply deals with serious issues. On Premier Rees—that is, me—he said, "He is headed in the right direction."

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: On mini-budget reforms, the member for Vacluse said, "There will be winners and losers." He also said:

Naturally in delivering services and infrastructure in a democracy, there will be no shortage of people to highlight failings and criticise performance.

He had this to say on public service reform:

Either way, there is plenty of room for productivity improvements in the bureaucracy and the combination of Bureaucrat Recruitment Freeze and a Restructuring down to nine departments will deliver billions in savings and speed up decisions.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Planning to order.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. My question was about the retention of the School Student Transport Scheme—an issue about which at least two Government members would like to be given an answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will listen further to the Premier. There was a great deal more to the question than the Leader of the Opposition asked. I remind the Premier of the total question.

Mr NATHAN REES: On freedom of information reform the member for Vacluse said:

And we can introduce Open Government by reversing the FOI concepts ...

That is our policy and that is what we have been doing. The member for Vacluse also had this warning for the Leader of the Opposition:

The focus will increasingly turn to whether the Opposition has the policy solutions and the strength of our convictions to deliver real change.

He went on to state:

The question about courage is clearly for both sides of Parliament. It's not just the Govt in the firing line ...

... we must ensure we stand for something.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr NATHAN REES: The member for Vacluse is stealing the policy thunder of the Leader of the Opposition. This is a policy fix for the member for Vacluse, a policy smorgasbord that for 34 minutes left the Leader of the Opposition wallowing in nothing.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order: I refer to relevance under Standing Order 129. The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition had no "related matters" element to it; it was specifically about free school transport.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will listen further to the Premier.

Mr NATHAN REES: The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition was about travel—he is not travelling as well as he would like!

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. Members will cease interjecting. I call the member for Terrigal to order. I call the member for Bega to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: The Leader of the Opposition spoke for 34 minutes, during which time he did not have a single policy alternative or idea—just absolute policy dross.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Coffs Harbour to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: The total cost to the Government of the School Student Transport Scheme is around \$470 million a year. That is an average of around \$700 per student each year, and it can rise to \$1,500 per student. This Government introduced a co-payment to enable the subsidised transport scheme to continue: \$45 for primary students, \$90 for secondary students, with a cap of \$180 for families.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: Families that hold a Commonwealth health care card will be exempt. We know this is an added strain on families, but it is still an affordable way to transport children to their school of choice.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Hawkesbury to order.

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr GERARD MARTIN: My question is addressed to the Premier. Will he outline the conclusions of the Twomey report into political donations and any alternative views?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Terrigal to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: The member for Bathurst has had a longstanding interest in this vital matter. The system of funding political campaigns has been crying out for reform for too long. Without that reform we run the serious risk of going down the path of the American election system, where only the wealthy are able to run for public office. I do not believe that Australians are comfortable with that system. I am committed to pushing reform in this area. Last week I released a report by Dr Anne Twomey, Associate Professor, University of Sydney Law School.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr NATHAN REES: That report outlines the legal and constitutional issues that we need to consider when undertaking donation reform. It is clear from Dr Twomey's report that this will not be an easy task. The issue is difficult and complex and any lasting reforms must be addressed at a national level in order for them to be effective. I have asked all State Premiers to join with me in working with the Commonwealth to clean up donations across the country once and for all. Dr Twomey makes it clear that any attempts by one State government or by the Federal Government to reform donation laws on their own risks being undermined. I want this to work—I want it to be lasting and I want it to be significant. Right now we have a unique opportunity to develop a new system for our Australian democracy.

I am pleased to advise the House that the Commonwealth is equally committed to reform. However, when we come to the position of the Opposition we are not really sure where it stands. First, the Leader of the Opposition said that the New South Wales Government should wait for the Federal Government to act on donations. His submission in February this year to the Select Committee on Electoral and Political Party Funding recommended:

We believe that the supply-side of the political donations equation, can only be successfully reformed at a federal level. We believe this is a matter which should be part of Prime Minister Rudd's ... reform agenda and a call for national reform should be a recommendation of the Select Committee.

So, he wants successful reform, but at a Federal level. However, on Friday and again this morning he said exactly the opposite on ABC radio and on Steve Price's program on 2UE. He claimed this morning on Steve Price's program to have a position on this issue. He does not. He is all over the shop. He has more than one position. You cannot have it both ways.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: We can.

Mr NATHAN REES: You can have it both ways—apparently.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Finance to order. The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr NATHAN REES: His reforms would be a fiasco, as is his policy position generally. Down the other end of the bench we have the member for Manly, who agrees with my personal position: public funding of

election campaigns with minimal donations. The member for Manly agrees with me and has advocated for a complete ban on donations in favour of full public funding. But Barry says, "No, we're not going to do that. We want to keep donations part of the system." Where do The Nationals stand on this? Their position is even worse. First they proposed increasing the disclosure threshold to make sure the public has even less information. Then they said they want to "be able to obtain funding from a wide range of areas".

Mr Joseph Tripodi: Put the white shoes back on!

Mr NATHAN REES: That is right—put the white shoes back on. In a clear cry for help they said that their volunteers, including some accountants, had trouble filling in the Electoral Commission form. Perhaps they should seek the advice of the member for Upper Hunter, the former accountant who donated \$300 to his own account and then sought to claim it back. I take this reform seriously. It is important that we get it right and I will accept the advice from the experts that we cannot do it alone.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting, including the member for Murray-Darling and the member Lismore.

Mr NATHAN REES: But I want to hear what the community thinks, now that it has the chance to read Dr Twomey's paper and understand the issues with which we need to grapple. Her paper and the feedback we get from the community will help inform the Government's submission to the Commonwealth Government's green paper on donation reform early next year. I ask serious people, with serious contributions to make, to read Dr Twomey's paper and to let us know what they think.

MINI-BUDGET

Mr ANDREW STONER: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that after advice from two former heads of the Reserve Bank, the entire New South Wales Treasury and the 300,000 strong public service, the Premier still managed to come up with a disastrous mini-budget that threatens Australia's national growth, drove the stock market lower and was described by his own backbench as the worst decision Labor has made in 20 years, is it not time the Premier put down *The Crucible* and picked up *Economics for Dummies*?

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will cease interjecting. I call the member for Monaro to order. I call the Minister for Finance to order for the second time.

Mr NATHAN REES: Note how well thumbled that second document is! Despite repeated readings, the Leader of The Nationals is still unclear on his position on the triple-A credit rating. Yesterday Ken Henry said that the significance of the triple-A was not to be underrated. He endorsed our position on the triple-A. Following the overnight backflip of the Leader of The Nationals and his attempt to salvage some ground on a policy front, he committed to another policy initiative today—that is tremendous—but it takes his deficit to \$7 billion or thereabouts over the next four years. His triple-A rating is in shreds. He will be talking triple-C, which means massive increases in the amount of interest we pay.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of The Nationals to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: He would leave us with an economy and budgetary situation that would be an absolute nightmare.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Upper Hunter to order. I call the member for Clarence to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: Our mini-budget contained difficult decisions in a difficult period, but we are committed to \$1.9 million in reductions in payroll tax; we provided \$150 billion for upgrades of school toilets, provision of security fences and new rooms in schools; we provided \$20 million for special needs teachers, some 80 teachers across 260 sites for teaching children with difficulties such as dyslexia, autism, et cetera; we provided another \$60 million a year to Community Services for children in out-of-home care; we have secured funding for the CBD Metro; we have protected funding for the environment; we have protected the \$13 billion New South Wales Health budget; we have provided funding of \$170 million for 300 new buses, including 100 for the north-west; and we brought forward the purchase of 150 new bendy buses worth \$115 million.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of The Nationals will cease interjecting.

Mr NATHAN REES: In addition, an infrastructure program in excess of \$55 billion over the next four years—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Clarence to order for the second time.

Mr NATHAN REES: —will underpin 100,000 jobs for each year, another 3,000 commuter car spaces, an additional 14 solicitors for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and \$85 million for our Building the Country program. It was a difficult budget but it delivers on the New South Wales Labor Government's priorities.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms SONIA HORNER: My question is addressed to the Minister for Climate Change. What action is the Government taking to support communities in tackling climate change?

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I thank the member for Wallsend for her question and her interest in a very important issue. No doubt any State jurisdiction across Australia if asked to nominate the top three issues it confronts would respond with front-line service delivery in a Commonwealth-State framework, the global financial crisis and climate change. Without doubt every State jurisdiction would nominate those as the three top issues it confronts.

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: It certainly is the case that each of these complex and difficult issues requires careful analysis by governments, thoughtful policy development and leadership, as well as a willingness to take the hard decisions when needed in order to deliver long-term gains for our community. On this side of the House we have demonstrated on each of those issues that we are prepared to take the hard decisions. We are prepared to sit down and do the careful policy analysis, but at the end of the day we decide to take our community with us and shield our community from the worst excesses. We see no such evidence that those on the other side of the House can similarly grapple with these tough issues.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: You stole our policy on feed-in tariffs.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: You do not have a policy on feed-in tariffs: ask the member for Goulburn.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease calling out. The House will come to order.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity in his reply to the mini-budget to lay out his vision on these and other issues. Did we hear any vision from the Leader of the Opposition? Did we hear any concrete plans? Did we hear of one new concrete policy? No. We heard nothing.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: We heard nothing about climate change, nothing about how the Opposition would meet the challenges of front-line service delivery and nothing about the seriousness of the global financial crisis and the tough decisions required. We heard a long list of complaints and empty rhetoric. That is simply not good enough. On this side of the House we understand that if issues such as climate change are ignored they will cost more than if we take action now. That is why this Government has taken the climate change issues seriously. That is why we have secured our climate change programs in the mini-budget. We understand that the cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of action. That is what the Stern report said and what Professor Garnaut told us: it is what all the research tells us. We know that slowly but surely the unmitigated impact of damaging climate change will become more obvious and more profound. Temperatures will rise, biodiversity will decline, our water system will be stressed, more and big storm events will occur. The list could go on and on.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: What is required is a government that is prepared to take action, and that is what the Government is doing. We welcome the participation of the Commonwealth Government and the

introduction of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. For many years we called for leadership on this issue. Now that we have national leadership we in New South Wales need to consider how we can best focus our efforts on areas in which we add value.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will cease interjecting.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: Energy efficiency is one such area. It is recognised globally as an area in which the efficient use of energy not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but also may save people money on power bills and assist families by reducing the cost of power. It can also delay or reduce the need for expanding electricity generation and distribution infrastructure. The mini-budget has secured important funding to help families play their part in tackling climate change. The Government knows that families in New South Wales are doing it tough: we understand that, but we also know that it will get tougher as we make the transition to a low carbon future.

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The Government's job is to help New South Wales households and families do what they can to cushion that impact where we reasonably can. That is why I point out that the Climate Change Fund has already delivered nearly 18,000 rebates for rainwater tanks that are estimated to save more than 800 million litres of water. The fund has already delivered over 9,000 rebates for hot water systems and over 5,000 rebates for installation. Those measures are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 28,000 tonnes a year. As we have secured the \$340 million Climate Change Fund, the Government remains committed to providing \$100 million for residential rebates for items such as rainwater tanks, solar and gas hot water systems, and insulation. The Government is also committed to supporting the renewable energy sector and to energy and water saving projects in our schools.

Improving energy efficiency in our cities, homes and workplaces lowers greenhouse pollution and lowers the cost of living. It also assists families and businesses to live and operate more sustainably. Protecting low-income earners is one of the Government's top priorities. That is why we are delivering \$63 million to provide 220,000 low income households with audits and retrofits to help people cope with increasing energy prices and to help them reduce their bills. That initiative is expected to reduce the annual household bill by 10 per cent or \$95. We are also committed to working with the Department of Housing to deliver solar hot water systems and assist low-income families move away from inefficient and more expensive electric ones. We will work with small and medium businesses to assist them use less energy by producing measures that are expected to save the average small business \$7,850 on power bills over 10 years.

We have also renewed our commitment to clean coal and to working with the Federal Government to get more clean coal projects off the ground. We recognise that we are overly reliant on coal, but we need to look at clean coal technology as one of a package of measures that we will work with to try to reduce emissions and deal with climate change. There is no doubt that this is a long-term policy issue. It is an issue that requires action on many fronts, but it is action that members on the Government side of the House are prepared to take.

MEMBER FOR BANKSTOWN, THE HONOURABLE TONY STEWART

Ms PRU GOWARD: My question is directed to the Premier. Can he explain why he did not accept the resignation of the member for Bankstown when it was offered to him two weeks ago?

Mr NATHAN REES: The member for Bankstown offered his resignation. I asked him if he had done anything wrong and he said no. On that basis at that time, I declined.

NEWPIN PROGRAM

Mr ALLAN SHEARAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Community Services. Will the Minister update the House on action the Government is taking to support vulnerable families?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Let me tell the House about a couple I met recently at Mount Druitt—a couple who told their stories honestly and with optimism. I met them through Uniting Care Burnside, which runs the

Newpin Program for people who are struggling to be good parents. The couple's three children had been removed and placed in foster care. I sat down and listened as the father explained his long history of marijuana use and mental illness. We talked about the importance of his staying on medication

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

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That means you, George.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Does that mean us?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: No, the member for Upper Hunter. Their love for their children and their desire to be good parents was obvious. And I believe they have a future as a family.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who wish to engage in conversation will do so outside the Chamber.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Through the Newpin Program this couple is learning what it means to be good parents. They are regaining confidence and self-respect. Their love for their children and their desire to be good parents was obvious. I believe they have a future as a family. Uniting Care Burnside is one of more than 1,500 non-government partners of the Department of Community Services. Almost 60 per cent of the Department of Community Services funding goes to the non-government sector, which delivers critical services to support children at risk, children in out-of-home care and their foster carers, victims of domestic violence, victims of sexual abuse, and the homeless.

Non-government organisations help to break the cycle of despair that is a daily reality for many families, giving them hope, life skills and a practical plan for the future. Our other partner is the community. Fostering collective responsibility is essential if we are to succeed in creating safer communities and places where a relentlessly chronic disparity in living standards is not their daily existence. We all must take responsibility for the wellbeing of children, families and communities. Let me give members the tough reality. Over the last 6 years the number of children in out-of-home care has increased by 58 per cent to 14,667. That is 14,667 of our young people who cannot live at home in safety. A disproportionate percentage of these children are Aboriginal.

This year we will receive more than 300,000 child protection reports. Parents chronically affected by substance abuse, intergenerational violence and abuse, mental illness and entrenched poverty and a feeling of being out of control are underlying reasons for these figures. It is a toxic mix. These challenging problems have created a dark underbelly of tragedy in every Australian city, suburb and country town. In 2002 the Government began a five-year \$1.2 billion reform of community services programs under the leadership of the former Minister for Community Services, Carmel Tebbutt. As a result we have virtually doubled the number of front-line caseworkers to more than 2,200. That workforce now has a degree as a minimum entry requirement. The recruits receive more training, better support and more time in the field.

Twenty per cent of our front-line staff are Koori and they are working where they are most needed. Three thousand families are participating in the Brighter Futures Early Intervention Program. We have boosted the Helpline, strengthening the front end of the child protection system, with virtually 100 per cent of the most urgent reports being responded to within the correct timeframe. We are expanding children's services to provide universal preschool access for four year olds on two days a week. We have increased the ratio of carers to children to 1:4 and we are introducing a 24-hour Parentline and a Triple-P Parenting Program for every family with children aged from three to eight years.

These significant reforms need dedicated people and partners to make them happen. I want to thank and recognise two special groups. Our foster carers are remarkable people. They provide love, care and support for thousands of children and young people every day who cannot live with their immediate families. I am especially pleased to recognise in the gallery today Sue O'Connor, President of the Foster Parents Support Network—a group that plays a vital role in supporting many of our foster carers. Thank you, Sue.

Our caseworkers, who are the best qualified we have ever had, are unique individuals. Theirs is not a glamorous job. It is work that few of us have the skills or the stomach to undertake. When I was in Lismore last week with the member for Lismore I saw first hand the damage done to the community services centre in the recent suspicious car fire. Do not ever think that this is not a tough, challenging vocation. We are proud of our

achievements, but we are focused on what we can do in the future. Shortly Justice James Wood will deliver his report on the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection. The Government is fully committed to delivering the reforms necessary to implement his recommendations.

The children and families supported by the Department of Community Services are the families with the least protection and backup in these tough economic times. While the Department of Community Services has been able to make prudent savings as part of the mini-budget, I assure members that vulnerable families in this State will be protected. Enhanced funding has been made available for key community service delivery areas, and vital front-line services for families and children in need will not be cut. The mini-budget has provided a significant funding supplementation for the department's out-of-home care programs.

To meet continued growth in demand for children in out-of-home care additional funding of \$140 million has been provided over the next three years. This will pay for the living costs of children already in care and ensure that the costs of raising children are met. The costs include medical and dental fees, school books, clothes, excursions, and Christmas presents—things we take for granted. The additional funding will also help pay for the current expansion of services being negotiated with the non-government sector. I am also pleased that the Department of Community Services has received funding of \$8.5 million for a number of new projects focused on improving client information systems.

The \$8.5 million injection includes \$3 million to improve the user-friendliness of the department's key information delivery system. Foster care recruitment and training funding has been boosted by \$650,000. Funding of \$50,000 has been provided for Koori parenting resources to help reduce the chronic, intergenerational involvement of Aboriginal families in the child protection system. In addition, funding of \$750,000 has been allocated to reduce inner Sydney homelessness. Finally, through these significant funding enhancements, the Rees Government has ensured that those who most need our support—the most vulnerable—will benefit from enhanced services, more effective front-line delivery, better out-of-home care and genuine support for children and families at risk.

CABRAMATTA ELECTORATE REBA MEAGHER LABOR PRESELECTION 1994

Mr ANDREW STONER: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance. At the meeting the Minister attended with Reba Meagher and John Della Bosca on 5 September 1994, the day John Newman was murdered, did Mr Della Bosca suggest to Ms Meagher that she should consider running in the 1995 election for the seat of Cabramatta as it was unlikely that John Newman would be contesting his seat? Who is telling the truth—Della or Reba?

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI: That question confirms that members opposite have absolutely no questions to ask the Government. The question confirms that members opposite have nowhere to run after this Government delivered the toughest budget in its history.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: Under Standing Order 129, relevance, the question is relevant to the Minister and to public affairs. Therefore, it is right that he be asked the question. The Minister can say whether a Minister of the Crown has lied to a court.

The SPEAKER: Order! This question does not relate to the Minister's portfolio. However, as I have done on previous occasions, I allowed the situation to continue until a point of order was taken. The Minister may or may not answer the question on this occasion; he can answer as he so chooses.

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI: The question confirms that members opposite do not have any policies. Only the member for Vacluse is providing a bit of hope because he understands how good the Government is getting it.

The SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Terrigal on three calls to order.

Mr John Aquilina: Point of order: This matter is before a judicial inquiry at present. There are many precedents in the Parliament relating to matters before a judicial inquiry.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House has taken a point of order stating that this matter is before a judicial inquiry.

[*Interruption*]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order, including the member for Wollongong. I remind members that this matter is ongoing. It is a sensitive issue in respect of the legal processes. The issue is whether this is a matter within the Minister's portfolio. Clearly, this matter is not within the Minister's portfolio. If members are seeking to state otherwise, I would need to hear that that is not the case by way of a point of order.

Mr Greg Smith: Point of order: The issue before the current inquiry is whether Phuong Ngo had the motive to kill. This question does not go to that motive.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have made my position clear in relation to the matter being not within the Minister's portfolio. Does the Minister wish to continue?

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI: Yes, I do. Members opposite should know, after 13 years in Opposition, that the answer to that type of question is predictable, that is, it is a matter for a judicial officer—

Mr John Aquilina: Point of order: Once again, this matter is before a judicial inquiry. There are two issues. First, the matter is not within the Minister's portfolio. Secondly, and more relevantly, the judicial inquiry is ongoing and evidence is being taken from various parties involved. There are many precedents and Speakers' rulings on matters relating to judicial inquiries. This question should be ruled out of order while the judicial inquiry is continuing.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will hear one further point of order from the member for Murrumbidgee.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: First, the Leader of the House said that this matter is before a court. On 18 October 2007 the member for Wollondilly asked a question about a police investigation into the discovery of a child's body at Ambarvale. Neither the Leader of the House nor any other member objected to the question being asked. Government members have asked many questions about police investigations. Secondly, in terms of public affairs, when the member for Riverstone was the Speaker he allowed the member for Mount Druitt, on 19 September 2006, to ask the Deputy Premier about the Opposition's interference in the New South Wales legal system. On that occasion I took a point of order but the Speaker ruled that there was no point of order. Indeed, the Speaker ruled that the matter was part of the Minister's public affairs. This question is along the same lines.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Murrumbidgee to resume his seat. I have heard a significant amount in relation to this matter. Clearly, it is outside the Minister's portfolio. I am persuaded by arguments about the sensitivity of the matter. I rule the question out of order.

SYDNEY FERRY SERVICES

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. What is the latest information on ferry services, and related matters?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I thank the member for her ongoing interest in ferry matters, particularly RiverCat services. I am pleased to say that the Government is full steam ahead in delivering a comprehensive reform package for Sydney Ferries.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much conversation in the Chamber. All members who have been called to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: One of my first acts as transport Minister was to respond swiftly to the Special Commission of Inquiry undertaken by Bret Walker, SC. The Premier and I handed down the Government's response on 21 October acting decisively on Mr Walker's key recommendations. The Government is implementing a service contract agreement for Sydney Ferries to establish clear standards for the organisation. I expect it to be in place by the end of the year. Next month we will be seeking expressions of interest to decide whether the ferry system can be better run by the private sector in line with the Walker report's recommendations. The expression of interest process will be used as an opportunity to seek innovative fleet replacement proposals from the private sector. We have said it before: We support the procurement of new ferry vessels as they are required and we will work with the service contract holder to finalise fleet replacement plans.

The report makes it clear that ferry reform is needed and the Government's supports that 100 per cent to ensure safe, reliable and efficient ferry services for the people of Sydney. Our full response has been publicly

available on the Government website *www.nsw.gov.au* since 21 October. We are also moving swiftly to establish a ferry commuter service to Parramatta and I am sure the member for Parramatta will be pleased to learn that the expression of interest to establish that service will be issued this month. This morning I was not surprised to hear of the member for Willoughby whining about our response to the Walker report—she was probably on the phone in her black Honda. Wilma was not the only one from the Opposition having a whinge, as we have an Opposition still without a clear transport policy but ready to make hollow unfunded promises: no detail, no real decisions.

The acting Leader of the Opposition after producing a 34-minute speech in response to the mini-budget yesterday finally came up with a position on one thing at least. But do not get too excited, all he worked out was that he was against the essential reforms being carried out to student transport subsidies. How does he propose to make up the shortfall? He wants to cut public service workers. It seems to be the only solution Barry has: the default position for doomed Opposition leaders which means he is headed down the same path as Peter Debnam—and we all know where that leads, particularly Peter—the lunchtime speaking circuit that we heard about a little earlier.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order: The Minister is taking liberties with the standing orders by referring to the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Vaucluse by their Christian names.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. Members will address members by their correct title.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: We should focus on the real Leader of the Opposition. The recent newsletter of the member for Manly "Manly Matters Issue No. 3, November 2008", which is a great read, highlights some of the funding initiatives of the New South Wales Labor Government—and the benefits brought to his electorate of Manly. Here are some of those reported in his newsletter. In fact, they actually make up most of the information in his community newsletter! In regard to police he said:

Welcome to the five new probationary constables who joined the Manly police command in September.

Dee Why police station has eight new recruits bringing a much needed boost to police on the Northern Beaches.

The new police station (for Manly) will commence before 2011.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: Standing Order 129, the question was about ferries. I am not sure what the Minister is referring to at the moment. The problem with the Government is that it spends too much time looking at other people's websites instead of solving the problems.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will state his point of order, not debate it. I will hear further from the Minister.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Ferries and related matters—under the heading of transport in that newsletter it states:

There are now far more ways for people to get home safely and quickly after enjoying Manly's nightlife.

Under the Manly After Midnight strategy pubs are now closing voluntarily at 2.30am.

Importantly it has this comment about transport:

Sydney Buses provided an additional 17 services and now buses run regularly throughout the night from Manly to Mona Vale and the city.

The list goes on in that newsletter of a Labor Government delivering in that electorate. The Rees Government appreciates the praise and acknowledgement from the member for Manly. I know the acting Opposition leader is spending sleepless nights worrying about when the member for Manly will make his move. But I also know that the acting Opposition leader has been very busy writing his 34-minute mini-budget reply and attempting to keep a tight leash on Mr Four Per Cent and the rest of The Nationals rabble, trying to keep them away from those Liberal treacherous rats! The Leader of the Opposition can rest assured that on this side of the House we are 110 per cent behind him. We want him to stay right where he is. But I digress, the Government is committed to ferry reform and is getting on with that job.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that a number of them are on three calls to order.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It is plain to see that the Government is taking decisive action to improve the service delivery of Sydney Ferries. Those opposite on the other hand are, surprise, surprise, without policy and without detail.

HYBRID DIESEL BUSES

Ms CLOVER MOORE: My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier consider moving Sydney towards a more sustainable future by purchasing next generation technology of hybrid diesel buses for the 300 additional buses committed to in the mini-budget in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, noise, air pollution and fuel costs?

Mr NATHAN REES: I thank the member for her interest in this matter. I advise that in 1988 the Government trialled two electric hybrid buses. The buses had a range of mechanical and electrical faults and proved to be unreliable in service at that time. The technology has clearly improved since. However, the latest technology hybrid buses combining diesel and electronic motors are not yet commercially available in Australia. In the most recent tenders State Transit has called for bids for compressed natural gas, diesel or hybrid powered buses. State Transit has not received any tenders for the supply of the hybrid-powered buses. The European bus manufacturers have advised State Transit that hybrid-power buses may be available in Australia to be trialled by State Transit in two to three years.

Presently Euro 4 is the current standard, and most private operators are purchasing to this standard. Euro 5 takes effect from 1 January 2010 for new models. Euro 5 diesels, which State Transit is receiving in its current supply contract with Volvo, are the most environmentally friendly bus commercially available in Australia. They emit much less carbon dioxide and methane than a compressed natural gas bus. State Transit's Euro 5 diesel buses will help to reduce the carbon footprint of transport in New South Wales.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Disability Services. How are Government resources being used to improve the lives of people with a disability in New South Wales, and related matters?

Mr PAUL LYNCH: Stronger Together is the Government's 10-year plan to deliver improved services for people with a disability, their families and carers. Among the many programs and support services funded by Stronger Together is the Transition to Work Program. Transition to Work is a time limited program that aims to support and improve employment outcomes for school leavers with a disability who can transition to work within one or two years. This program has proved to be highly successful in assisting young people with a disability to find a meaningful job in the general workforce or go on to further education. The outcomes for young people who participated in the first Transition To Work Program, who left school in 2005 and completed the program in 2007, showed that of the 462 young people who participated, 252 gained a job or undertook further education to enhance their skills.

A further 115 young people transferred from the transition-to-work program to a community participation program through which they learn social skills, and take part in ongoing leisure and recreational activities so that they are better equipped to join in community activities and develop new friendships. I acknowledge also the role of non-government organisations in that sector. Transition To Work, the New South Wales Government's plan, boosts \$1.3 billion of growth funding for its first five years. Confirmation that Stronger Together funding continues—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I would have thought that this matter would be of strong interest to all members.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: Precisely, Mr Speaker. Confirmation that Stronger Together funding continues through the mini-budget has been welcomed by the sector supporting people in New South Wales with disabilities. Autism Spectrum Australia has said that the continued funding support for Stronger Together is excellent news. Catholic Social Services New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, has welcomed the news that Stronger Together will not be impacted. Of course, one of the constant challenges for service delivery agencies is to not spend too many government resources on administrative functions. The Government, of course, is alert to that concern; the Opposition is not. Indeed, the Opposition has developed to an art form the tactic of imposing unnecessary administrative burdens on the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

During the October 2008 budget estimates process, 691 questions were placed on notice for answer by the department. Of that number, the Opposition placed 657 on notice. All the questions have been answered, as they have to be, although many were unnecessary. The department estimates that it has cost more than \$150,000 to respond to those questions, an amount that would have bought more than 20 therapy places for children with a disability. Clearly, the Opposition is more interested in running up administrative costs than delivering therapy places for children with a disability.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: The answers to many of those questions were already available—

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will remain silent.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question related to the securing of Stronger Together funding. Obviously, the Minister does not believe in open and transparent government for people with a disability in this State. Otherwise he would not have—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bega is now debating the point. He will resume his seat. I have listened carefully to the Minister. The answer is relevant to the question that was asked.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: In response to the point of order, when is the member for Bega going to give back the \$150,000? The answers to many of the questions that were asked were already available in the public domain. Rather than do some competent research, the Opposition decided to get the public purse to foot the bill for work it should do itself. A number of the questions were repetitive, and certainly many suggested little comprehension of disability and community care services in New South Wales. Frankly, some questions were just plain silly. A number assumed that the department has to fulfil the role of the Federal Government; clearly the Opposition does not appreciate constitutional subtleties.

I draw attention to the following questions. Question 372, "What financial planning and funding growth has New South Wales agreed to with the Commonwealth in the event of war?" Question 379, "Has a separate agreement been brokered in the event that Australians are sent to fight under our flag in the event of peacekeeping and massive casualties arise?" As fascinating as those questions may be, they are hardly legitimate questions to be asked of the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care in the estimates process. The most ironic question was question number 212, "What percentage of the costs of these new services was for paperwork and bureaucracy?"

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: I refer to a matter of privilege. Every member of the House is entitled to ask a question on notice or without notice.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will remain silent. I call the Minister for Planning to order for the second time. I have given her my final warning. Has the member for Murrumbidgee concluded his point of order?

Mr Adrian Piccoli: I would hate to see the member for Mount Druitt's rights taken away to ask questions, as he did yesterday, about the member for Bankstown and his sacking by the Premier. I refer you to question number—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will not refer me to questions when he takes a point of order. The Minister is entitled to respond to a related question. The member is entitled to take a point of privilege at the conclusion of question time if he wishes to do so.

[Interruption]

Mr Daryl Maguire: Point of order: —

The SPEAKER: Order! I have just ruled on the point of order. Is the member for Wagga Wagga taking a different point of order?

Mr Daryl Maguire: Mr Speaker, earlier this afternoon you put members who were on one call to order on three calls to order. You have now called the Minister for Planning to order for the second time. I ask that you have her removed from the Chamber.

The SPEAKER: Order! I reminded the Minister that she was on her final call; I corrected myself. Today I have extended a great deal of latitude to all members. I remind the Minister of the time.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: In light of that reminder, I conclude by once again pointing out that the cost of 657 questions was \$150,000, the equivalent of 20 therapy places for children with a disability. Members on this side of the House are committed to boosting disability services to people in New South Wales, those on the other side seem to be committed to wasting money.

Question time concluded.

PATRICK DODSON, WINNER OF THE 2008 SYDNEY PEACE PRIZE

Ministerial Statement

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool—Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [3.16 p.m.]: Last week along with Ministers Burney and West I had the pleasure to be present at the University of Sydney, , at the awarding of the 2008 Sydney Peace Prize to a great humanitarian, Mr Patrick Dodson. Patrick Dodson is internationally recognised and respected for his human rights advocacy for indigenous people. He has devoted his life to improving the lives of Aboriginal people and advancing reconciliation both at home and abroad. Patrick's wisdom, wit and passionate advocacy, combined with his trademark Akubra and white, flowing beard, have already stamped his place as a revered and highly respected national figure. It is entirely appropriate that Patrick Dodson has been formally recognised for his contribution to reconciliation with this prestigious international Peace Prize.

Patrick Dodson is a Yawuru man from Broome, Western Australia. He is the founding Chair of the former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the current Chair of the Lingiari Foundation, a research and development organisation established in 2001 to advance and improve indigenous rights, promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and develop indigenous leadership. Patrick Dodson was born in 1947 and became Australia's first ordained Aboriginal Catholic priest. He left the priesthood and embarked on a life wholly committed to the advancement of social issues, which has seen him involved in indigenous land rights and the reconciliation movement, and appointed as a commissioner on the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

As members would be aware, the Sydney Peace Prize is an initiative of the Sydney Peace Foundation whose aim is to promote peace with justice in Australia. Peace with justice relates to a way of thinking and acting that promotes non-violent solutions to everyday problems and contributes to the development of civil societies. The Sydney Peace Prize is the only international peace prize awarded in Australia. It is an important accolade that recognises people and organisations from all over the world who through their actions have made significant contributions to global peace; whose role and responsibilities enable the recipient to use the prize to further the cause of peace with justice and whose work illustrates the philosophy and principles of non-violence.

Patrick Dodson is only the second Australian recipient of the Sydney Peace Prize. In fact it was Mr Dodson, in his capacity as the Chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, who presented the 2001 Sydney Peace Prize to the first Australian to win this prize, Sir William Deane, for his work with Aboriginal Australians. It is particularly appropriate that he receives this award in the year of the Federal Government's apology to the stolen generations, which was given on 13 February 2008. Other international peace advocates who have received this award include Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr Hanan Ashrawi, Mary Robinson, Arundhati Roy and Hans Blix. As well as receiving the Peace Prize, the recipient delivers a Peace Prize speech at the Sydney Opera House.

This year that event also featured the wonderful music of the Aboriginal Children's Choir, Moorambilla Voices, whose sound filled the Sydney Opera House at a special performance. Moorambilla Voices brings children from regional and remote locations together with the artistic purpose of creating a body of Australian music that directly reflects the life experiences of the choristers and those of the region. I thank the children and the organisers for their performance and I thank the Sydney Peace Prize Foundation and especially Professor Stuart Rees for their ongoing commitment to peace with justice. Patrick Dodson is a highly deserving recipient of the Sydney Peace Prize for 2008. A good sense of his views comes from this brief extract of an article of his in the book *Coercive Reconciliation*, in which he said:

Indigenous people are starting from a good way back in terms of all the social benchmarks with health, education and economic equity. These are the realities of our post-colonial history. As a nation we must be prepared to recognise these truths and to put

into place strategies that aim to bring some equity into the lives of Indigenous people. It will take considerable resources and it will take considerable time, as the gaps are so great. Most importantly, we must be prepared to enter into a genuine dialogue with the Indigenous community to determine the way forward in addressing the challenges that lay before us. Unless the engagement and dialogue between us is premised on the concept of 'the listening heart' then our relationship will remain out of balance and our endeavours will be doomed.

He has been at the nation's forefront for many decades in fighting for fairness and equality for all Australians. As the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs I congratulate Mr Patrick Dodson on this international recognition, and I thank him for his ongoing and passionate advocacy on behalf of indigenous peoples.

PETITIONS

Public Library Funding

Petition requesting increased funding for public libraries, received from **Mr Adrian Piccoli**.

St Helens Park Plant and Wildlife Corridor

Petition requesting that the land adjacent to the Georges River at St Helens Park be maintained as a plant and native wildlife corridor, received from **Mr Phillip Costa**.

Drink Container Deposit Levy

Petition requesting a container deposit levy be introduced to reduce litter and increase recycling rates of drink containers, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Hornsby Area Haemodialysis

Petition asking that a public haemodialysis centre be established in the Hornsby area, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Pensioner Excursion Bus Tickets

Petition requesting that South Coast pensioners be able to access the \$2.50 pensioner excursion ticket for bus travel, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

South Coast Rail Services

Petition opposing any reduction in rail services on the South Coast line, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Hawkesbury River Railway Station Access

Petition requesting improved access to Hawkesbury River railway station, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Bus Service 311

Petition requesting improved services on bus route 311, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

School Student Transport Scheme

Petition opposing any change to the school student transport scheme, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Greenwell Point and Goodnight Island Development

Petition requesting the approval of the Greenwell Point and Goodnight Island development application in its entirety, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Barangaroo Planning Guidelines

Petition opposing the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority proposal to modify Barangaroo planning guidelines, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Star City Casino Proposal

Petition opposing the Sydney Harbour Casino Properties proposal for the Star City Casino, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Pet Shops

Petition opposing the sale of animals in pet shops, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Shoalhaven Police Station

Petition requesting funding for the establishment of a new police station in the central Shoalhaven area, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Culburra Policing

Petition requesting increased police numbers in the Culburra area, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Shoalhaven Mental Health Services

Petition requesting funding for the establishment of a dedicated mental health service in the Shoalhaven, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Preschool Speed Zones

Petition asking that 40 kilometre per hour speed zones be introduced outside all preschools in New South Wales, received from **Mr Thomas George**.

Rural Fencing Damage

Petition asking that police attending road accidents in rural areas where damage has been caused to a fence call a fencing contractor to repair the damage and that the person who caused the damage be billed directly for the repair cost, received from **Mr Thomas George**.

Licence Laws for Older Drivers

Petitions asking for an inquiry into licence laws for older drivers and the implementation of a suitable licensing system for senior citizens, received from **Mr Barry O'Farrell**.

Pacific Highway Upgrading

Petition requesting that upgrading of the Pacific Highway be fast tracked and completed as soon as possible, received from **Mr Donald Page**.

COALITION TRANSPORT RESPONSE DOCUMENTS

Personal Explanation

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby) [3.21 p.m.]: I give this personal explanation for the assistance and benefit of the member at the table, the member for Riverstone, who, yesterday and today, made a number of statements in this House that he knows are inaccurate. I seek leave to table the Coalition's document "Fixing the Ferries—New South Wales Coalition Response to the Walker Commission of Inquiry" and to table the document "Towards One Network—the Need for an Integrated Transport Authority in New South Wales".

The SPEAKER: Order! As the member would be aware, the standing orders do not provide for papers to be tabled at this time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am seeking leave.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is not within the leave of the standing orders at this time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When can I seek leave, Mr Speaker?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member can seek leave to table papers at the conclusion of question time.

QUESTIONS RULED OUT OF ORDER: STANDING ORDER 126

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [3.23 p.m.]: I raise a matter of clarification or privilege. I will leave you to rule on it. I refer to rulings given by you today in this House in relation to standing order 126, which states that a Minister may be asked a question which relates to (1) public affairs, (2) matters under a Minister's administration or (3) proceedings pending in the House for which the Minister has carriage. Today you ruled the question out of order on the basis of it not being a public affair.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. I will rule on it now. The matter of public affairs relates to the Minister's portfolio.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I ask you to give a written or a detailed explanation to the House on public affairs on the next sitting day.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member seeks further clarification, I invite him to speak with the Clerk. I am sure the Clerk will give him all the information he needs. I have ruled on the point of order. The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: I have just invited the member to get one.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Building the Country Package

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.24 p.m.]: Mr Speaker—

Mr George Souris: He is not a lawyer.

Mr STEVE WHAN: You do not have to be a lawyer to be in this place. The member may not have noticed. The motion I want to have accorded priority today is very important for the people of New South Wales. Once again Country Labor is in here working for the people of country New South Wales and raising the important issues for the people of New South Wales. Once again the important thing today is that Country Labor is delivering, unlike The Nationals who are the champions of whinging. Country Labor is the one that delivers. This motion should be accorded priority because in the mini-budget the Rees Government confirmed its support for a Building the Country package of \$85 million for a rural and regional infrastructure fund. Mr Speaker, you and I served on the Rural and Regional Taskforce recently—

Mr John Williams: Point of order: Mr Speaker, the member for Monaro has given no recognition to you at all in relation to the Rural and Regional Taskforce. I think he should. This is not a Country Labor initiative.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member is in order.

Mr STEVE WHAN: For the benefit of the member opposite, I was about to get to the grovelling obsequious bit of the speech! As I was saying, you, Mr Speaker, and I were on the Rural and Regional Taskforce that travelled around New South Wales and made some important recommendations. It is important today that we talk about some of the things that people in Cooma, Wagga Wagga, Broken Hill, Grafton and

Armidale told us when we were consulting with them. One of the important things they wanted was a rural infrastructure program. Another important matter that was raised consistently in all the places we visited was more support for country libraries. That is a very important part of this package.

Another part of the package is country halls. We need to highlight today—I was very grateful to the Premier for highlighting it in this place the other day—that the Premier sees this as a first step in responding to the recommendations of the Rural and Regional Taskforce. This response shows the Government's commitment to rural and regional New South Wales, in contrast to the policy-free zone of those opposite. No doubt we will hear once again from the Leader of the Opposition about the policy it keeps waving around in this place. It is the policy equivalent of the emperor's new clothes because when you read through it you see there is nothing of substance in it. A comment was made about maintaining our triple-A credit rating—

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order. The purpose of this debate is to establish the priority of one motion in relation to another. The member is debating the Leader of the Opposition's motion. If he wants to do that we are happy to have that debate.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members know I extend a degree of latitude during these debates. If members wish me to adhere strictly to the standing orders, it will have a serious impact on every member.

Mr STEVE WHAN: To a great extent I agree with the Leader of The Nationals: this is about establishing the priority of one motion over another, which is why I was about to talk about what the Opposition leader wants to raise. No doubt he will talk about this policy of his in which he tells the people of New South Wales that the Coalition wants to ensure expenses growth will be less than or equal to revenue growth, but yesterday in his reply to the mini-budget he broke his own policy. He is opposing every single measure to try to bring expenses growth in line with revenue. He has opposed every measure designed to save money so that we can keep delivering services to New South Wales. Once again, the Opposition has a magic pudding. The shadow Minister for Community Services, who muttered away throughout question time, particularly while the Minister outlined the expenditure of new money, is opposed to the expenditure of that money—

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order: I know you show some latitude in relation to these matters, Mr Speaker, but the member is not even referring to his own motion. He has gone lock, stock and barrel into debating the Leader of the Opposition's motion. If he wants to do that let us bring that motion on.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: Point of order: The member for Monaro is clearly misleading the House. He just made a very untrue statement about something that happened in question time and I ask that he withdraw it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has expired. I did not hear the comment. Is the member for Monaro prepared to withdraw the offensive remark?

Mr Steve Whan: I made a comment about the Opposition's policy. If it is offensive—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has expired. I simply asked him whether he was prepared to withdraw the offensive remark.

Mr Steve Whan: If there was anything that the member for Burrinjuck found offensive, I withdraw it.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. The member for Monaro will resume his seat. I have always extended a degree of latitude during consideration of motions to be accorded priority so that continual points of order are not taken as a tactic to waste the time allotted to each member. Each member has only five minutes in which to state why his or her motion should be accorded priority. If members continue to take continual points of order, I will reconsider my position.

School Student Transport Scheme

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [3.29 p.m.]: I look forward to the member for Monaro supporting my motion. Schools are the most important piece of regional or rural infrastructure to any family across New South Wales, and the School Student Transport Scheme is the most important program offered to the parents of schoolchildren across this State, in particular, to those in regional

areas. At least two Government members agree with Liberal-Nationals members that the School Student Transport Scheme should stay free for those parents who currently have access to it. The member for Blacktown understands that because in the *Blacktown Advocate* he said:

This is the worst decision ever made. I will never stand for this.

He also said:

... you can't knock our traditional supporters and workers.

This motion should be given priority because yesterday in the *Blacktown Advocate* the member for Blacktown said:

About 700,000 children benefit from the free bus transport and we can't do away with it. It will kill the family budget for struggling families.

He also believes, correctly:

... children could be at risk, with the high volume of traffic and predators, if they had to walk to and from school.

The member for Miranda is the second Government member who agrees that my motion is urgent and that it should receive priority today. In today's *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* he said, "parents were outraged" and, "school communities are very angry". I look forward to the member for Miranda voting for my motion. In today's *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* he said:

I've had one parent with two kids on a tight budget express her disgust at having to pay \$90 for the pass. She also sees this levy as encouraging more parents to drive their children to school, encouraging congestion in the streets around bell times and hindering efforts to improve safety.

There could be no greater demonstration of how out of touch the member for Monaro is than when he said that was not a concern for struggling families.

Mr Steve Whan: Point of order—

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: You are earning too much money mate. You have lost touch.

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

Mr Steve Whan: The Leader of the Opposition engaged in a series of quotes. He is aware that, under standing orders, he needs to substantiate those documents rather than just read them out. I ask you to—

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Table both?

Mr Steve Whan: No. The Leader of the Opposition should be asked to substantiate his quotes. What a hypocrite! He is the leader of the party that introduced the user-pays system.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Monaro will resume his seat. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition is about to refer to the dates of the articles and to the newspapers from which he is quoting.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am happy to do so. I was quoting from an article in today's *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* written by respected journalist Murray Trembath, and from an article in yesterday's *Blacktown Advocate* written by respected journalists Kerri Griffiths and Kim Shaw, who are known to members in this place. I expect at least the member for Blacktown and the member for Miranda to vote with us today to debate a motion that would ensure the retention of the free School Student Transport Scheme.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Monaro will cease interjecting.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I expect the member for Monaro and members across this Chamber to vote for priority for this motion because of its importance to parents across this State. This is a tax on families when they can least afford it. As the member for Blacktown said, it will expose students walking to schools to greater risks, in particular, when those schools are located near major roads. Regrettably, in this day and age our

young children, in particular our primary school-aged children, are at risk of being harmed by predators in our communities. Up until this point this issue has had bipartisan support in this Chamber. Concern has been expressed about the number of children who have died as a result of traffic accidents around our schools.

Collectively we sought to resolve that issue, but this reprehensible decision will result in an increase in the amount of traffic around our schools. This decision is anti public transport. There is no better time to encourage people to catch public transport and to get them in the habit of doing so than when they are young. This decision will add to the administrative load of schools across our State and in the city. At present, given the churn of students through schools, it involves two weeks of clerical work to provide students with bus passes. What will it be like after these changes have been effected? Bus contracts have already been entered into, so where will the savings come from? What will this do to the bus industry?

If Government members had honoured their promise 10 years ago when they last hacked into this scheme and they had stopped the phantom rides—as Brian Langton said he would—and if they had delivered the electronic ticketing system that was meant to end all this there would be no phantom rides. This is a wilful act against Labor's working families, which was demonstrated by the Premier in question time today when he said, "We knew that this would be an added strain on families." This State Government is out of touch and out of ideas. The community is angry and frustrated that it is not out of time. Today it was hypocritical of the Minister for Climate Change to state in this Chamber that she knows that families are doing it tough. We want to see the Minister for Climate Change voting with us to remove this tax on kids getting to school. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion of the member for Monaro be accorded priority—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 48

Mr Amery	Mr Greene	Mr Morris
Ms Andrews	Mr Harris	Mrs Paluzzano
Mr Aquilina	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Ms Beamer	Mr Hickey	Mrs Perry
Mr Borger	Ms Hornery	Mr Sartor
Mr Brown	Ms Judge	Mr Shearan
Ms Burney	Ms Keneally	Mr Stewart
Ms Burton	Mr Khoshaba	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Campbell	Mr Koperberg	Mr Terenzini
Mr Collier	Mr Lalich	Mr Tripodi
Mr Coombs	Mr Lynch	Mr West
Mr Corrigan	Mr McBride	Mr Whan
Mr Daley	Dr McDonald	
Ms D'Amore	Ms McKay	
Ms Firth	Mr McLeay	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Ms McMahan	Mr Ashton
Mr Gibson	Ms Megarrity	Mr Martin

Noes, 39

Mr Aplin	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baird	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Souris
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humphries	Mr Stokes
Mr Besseling	Mr Kerr	Mr Stoner
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Constance	Ms Moore	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Debnam	Mr O'Farrell	Mr J. D. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Page	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Draper	Mr Piccoli	
Mr Fraser	Mr Piper	
Ms Goward	Mr Provest	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mrs Hancock	Mr Richardson	Mr George
Mr Hartcher	Mr Roberts	Mr Maguire

Pair

Ms Gadiel

Mr O'Dea

Question resolved in the affirmative.**COALITION TRANSPORT RESPONSE DOCUMENTS****Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Tabling of Documents**

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby) [3.40 p.m.]: I seek leave to suspend standing and sessional orders to table the following documents:

- (1) Fixing the Ferries—New South Wales Coalition Response to the Walker Special Commission of Inquiry into Sydney Ferries.
- (2) Towards One Network—The Need for an Integrated Transport Authority in New South Wales.

Leave not granted.**BUILDING THE COUNTRY PACKAGE****Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.42 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Government on supporting country communities through the new \$85 million Building the Country package;
- (2) notes that since 2003 Government programs have secured \$4.8 billion in business investment and more than 21,900 jobs in country New South Wales; and
- (3) calls on The Nationals to stop in-fighting with their Liberal Party Coalition masters and back Country Labor's support of rural and regional economies.

Country communities are the heart of the New South Wales economy. No doubt over the past few years rural and remote towns have faced many challenges: climate change, severe drought and global economic turmoil to name a few. The New South Wales Rees Government, with Country Labor members standing side by side, has made sure it responded to some of those challenges. The new \$85 million Building the Country package is a shot in the arm for country New South Wales. The program arose from the work of the Rural and Regional Task Force but, importantly, Country Labor members have actively lobbied for many parts of the package. We were pleased to see this announcement at the Country Labor Conference, which was held in Port Macquarie in regional New South Wales.

The Building the Country package includes \$52 million for a Local Infrastructure Fund, \$11.6 million for a Community Broadband Development Program, \$9 million towards a Country Libraries Fund, \$2.5 million for a Country Halls Renewal package, \$9 million towards a Water Adjustment Innovation Fund, \$450,000 for a Small Communities Awareness Fund, and \$450,000 for a Small Chamber of Commerce Fund. These programs will deliver new community infrastructure and upgraded facilities such as schools and libraries. They are direct responses to issues raised with the Rural and Regional Task Force as it travelled around rural New South Wales and with Country Labor members who spoke to people in many country towns.

These programs also respond directly to some motions raised by our active branches at the recent Country Labor Conference at Port Macquarie. Many motions called for more funding for rural libraries. I was pleased that the Premier responded directly to that request with the Rural Libraries Fund as part of the package. The Building the Country package will help to build an environment in regional areas that encourages investment and will complement existing programs. This package has been developed in response to many elements of the State Plan and the Rural and Regional Task Force. We are now working on developing the guidelines for people to apply for funding, and the first funds will be made available in the new calendar year.

Over the past five years the New South Wales Government's work in rural and regional areas has secured projects worth more than \$4.8 billion in investments and provided more than 21,900 jobs through country New South Wales programs. We have seen new market expansion programs, with 71 regional firms offering assistance in the 2007-08 financial year. We have worked also to strengthen the capacity of country communities to respond to changes caused by drought. From July 2004 to October 2008 more than \$22 million in project funds have been leveraged and over 270 jobs created through projects assisted under the Government's community economic development programs.

These new programs will build on the success of existing programs but, importantly, they respond to the needs directly raised by the people in regional New South Wales. What a contrast to what we hear from The Nationals, the so-called Country Liberals and Coalition representatives of rural New South Wales. We hear only whingeing, never the delivery of any programs to country New South Wales. We never hear about any policies. That is why people in regional New South Wales are starting to get sick of these whingeing Nationals. [*Quorum called for.*]

[*The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.*]

For years the Government has supported country economies and business by implementing programs to build rural and regional infrastructure—something that clearly the Opposition does not wish to hear about. The Government's initiatives throughout rural New South Wales contrast markedly with the approach of the Opposition, which simply whinges and whines but never delivers. Evidence of the Opposition's approach is its response to the mini-budget, which this week delivered \$85 million in new funding to country New South Wales. The Opposition has opposed all measures to try to keep budget growth under control in tough economic times, but when the Government announces initiatives the Opposition claims that, if it formed government, it would fund this program and that program; in other words, in government, the Opposition would adopt a magic pudding approach. That does not work. It does not deliver for country New South Wales.

People in country New South Wales who well know how government budgets work also know that it is not possible to promise to do everything, and that political parties have to be able to fund their programs. That is what the Government has done. We have put in place funding. Very importantly, when the Premier announced increased funding at the Country Labor Conference at Port Macquarie a couple of weeks ago, not at Kirribilli where The Nationals held their conference, he said that this was a first step in responding to the needs of country New South Wales. On the Government side of the House, we are keen to work with the Premier to deliver even more for the people of New South Wales.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee—Deputy Leader of The Nationals) [3.49 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the motion for urgent consideration moved by the member for Monaro. The member for Monaro referred to the Labor conference held in Port Macquarie. As we know, the Port Macquarie area has been the scene of a couple of by-elections recently.

Mr Steve Whan: What happened?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The Nationals got a 23 per cent swing against a former Independent.

Mr Steve Whan: Who won?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Peter Besseling. Did the member for Monaro not hear the results? Does he not read the paper? But then if knowing the results involves reading, obviously the member for Monaro would not know about it.

Mr Gerard Martin: Was it won by The Nationals?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It was won by Peter Besseling, and I congratulate him. It was a fine performance by The Nationals' Leslie Williams, and produced a 23 per cent swing. From memory, there were approximately 11 candidates, but I do not recall a Labor candidate being part of the campaign. So in love with country New South Wales is the Labor Party that it did not even bother to stand a candidate in the Port Macquarie by-election!

Mr Brad Hazzard: They could not get anyone interested in the debate, and they could not get anyone to stand in Port Macquarie.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: There was no interest. Labor could not get anyone interested enough to stand as a Labor Party candidate in Port Macquarie. Based on the Port Macquarie by-election, Labor's vote in Port Macquarie is zero. It is probably no surprise that Labor would hold its country conference in Port Macquarie to try to get its vote up to 0.5 per cent or 1 per cent. Apparently a couple of hundred people attended the conference.

Mr Gerard Martin: Three hundred delegates.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: No doubt 150 of those were Young Labor people who were bussed in from Sydney and the Hunter Valley. Perhaps the other 150 were the result of a Tripodi-Meagher approach—approaching people at the local McDonald's and paying them to turn up to their conference. The whole "conference in Port Macquarie" thing is a bit of a sham. I suggest that members opposite cease interjecting and allow me to talk about the \$85 million package foreshadowed by the Premier in Port Macquarie and announced in the mini-budget last Tuesday. I point out that \$85 million over four years comes to approximately \$20 million a year, and that is fine.

But let us examine what the mini-budget took away. The Government scrapped the back-to-school allowance, which is worth \$57 million. Let us assume that one-third of New South Wales schoolchildren live in the rural areas of the State. That means that \$20 million has gone straight out of the rural economy over four years. In a single measure, Labor has taken from country New South Wales what it purports to add through the mini-budget. Taking into account only one measure, country New South Wales is back to zero. The Government also scrapped the School Student Transport Scheme.

Mr Steve Whan: No!

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I stand corrected. The Government has not scrapped it, but instead has made parents pay \$45 for primary school students and \$94 for high school students, with the expense capped at \$180 per family. That is another \$33 million a year that has been taken away from families in rural New South Wales.

Mr Gerard Martin: No. That amount relates to the whole State, not just rural areas.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Okay, but \$11 million a year amounts to \$44 million over three years that is coming straight out of the rural economy of New South Wales. The Government has introduced licence fees for childcare providers at the rate of \$700 a year for small services and up to \$1,100 for large services. Over four years, that will cost people \$18 million, and that amounts to another \$6 million a year that will be ripped out of rural New South Wales. The Government also has imposed Department of Primary Industries cuts that will result in eight offices being closed in places such as Condobolin, Temora, Griffith, Berry, Glen Innes, and the upper Jindabyne Trout Hatchery—which, as a keen fly fisherman, devastates me particularly.

Mr Steve Whan: In that case, you should join my campaign to keep it open.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Obviously, it is a very unsuccessful campaign, given that the member for Monaro is supposed to be part of the Government. The member for Monaro goes around his electorate saying to people, "I'm terrific because I'm in the Labor Party; I'm in government." I remind him that he is meant to be able to do things, such as save the hatchery in upper Jindabyne, but his failure to do so is a sign of his ineffectiveness within the Labor Party. The Department of Primary Industries cuts will amount to \$40 million over four years. The Government also has scrapped the northern New South Wales Petroleum Products Subsidy Scheme, which will amount to \$44 million a year, or \$136 million over three years. That applies to regional areas on the North Coast only.

The Government proposes cuts to Pacific Highway funding amounting to \$330 million. The Government also has deferred projects under the Country Towns Water and Sewerage Program, thereby setting back projects worth \$36 million. Area health service cuts will amount to \$250 million over four years, which is another \$60 million a year that will be lost. In one announcement, the Government with the one hand gives us \$85 million and rolls out a couple of the old favourite Labor Party members to say, "\$85 million! Aren't we terrific! Aren't we wonderful!" but with the other hand reaches into every single pocket of country New South Wales people and rips out \$250 million to \$300 million at the same time.

Government members are hypocrites if they claim that the \$85 million is a bonus to rural New South Wales. Given what the mini-budget has taken from rural New South Wales, I suggest plenty of people would say, "Give us back our lives as they were before the mini-budget and before you took all that money out of our

communities." As for the Government's announcement that it has generated business in New South Wales by securing \$4.8 billion in business investment, the more significant matters are those that have not been mentioned. The Inverell Supercoat pet food factory in the State's north west will close in March next year, leaving 160 people out of work. Boral's Walcha timber mill closed on 12 August this year and 23 local jobs were lost.

In 1999 when Labor was in government, the King Gee work wear factory in Kempsey closed, with the loss of more than 70 local jobs. The pasta manufacturing business at Whitton in the Murrumbidgee electorate moved to Victoria. The member for Lismore has mentioned many times in the House the number of businesses that have moved to Queensland because payroll tax and other business tax rates are far more attractive there than they are in New South Wales. I urge the people of New South Wales, particularly those who live in regional areas of New South Wales, not to believe any of the rubbish being spoken by members of the Labor Party this year.

Mr GERARD MARTIN (Bathurst) [3.56 p.m.]: In response to a couple of the matters raised by the member for Murrumbidgee, I will first address the issue of payroll tax. I remind the House that when the Coalition left government, the payroll tax rate was 8 per cent, and that was slashed by one-quarter when Labor won office. One can imagine that if the Treasury bench was occupied by members of the Coalition, payroll tax would increase immediately. The Coalition's record on payroll tax was woeful, and so was the threshold level. I welcome this opportunity to address the House.

Notwithstanding what members opposite who represent 4 per cent of Australia might have to say and notwithstanding the disdain The Nationals have for a couple of treacherous rats in the Liberal Party post Port Macquarie, Labor will get on with the positive side of government. The \$85 million Building the Country package consists of seven new programs. If we want businesses to invest in country areas we must ensure that the infrastructure is there to support the investment. The \$52 million Local Infrastructure Support Fund will support infrastructure projects that are directly linked to economic development opportunities.

We have already heard from a number of country mayors. The President of the Shires Association, Councillor Bruce Miller from Cowra, said that this is a wonderful incentive. Through this fund we will help to smooth the way for businesses to grow in or relocate to our areas. The fund will help to offset the costs of developing specific infrastructure projects that directly influence a business investment project. Of course, infrastructure is not all about bricks and mortar. That is why we are putting \$11.6 million over five years into helping small and remote towns set up community-based, high-speed broadband networks. We know what a magnificent job the Rudd Government will do in this area, with the tender process closing in about a week. We will fill in the gap for that extra 2 per cent.

The Community Broadband Development Fund supports the 2 per cent of country towns in New South Wales not covered by the national broadband network. The Building the Country package will also encourage rural communities affected by the drought to build a competitive advantage. That is why the Water Adjustment Fund will provide \$9 million over five years to help communities affected by water reforms invest in innovative water-saving technologies. Coming a little closer to the Bathurst electorate, we have already assisted Benex Technologies to establish a concrete block manufacturing project. That involves an investment of \$6 million and the creation of 20 jobs.

If anyone watched *The Inventors* a couple of weeks ago they would have seen the company win the invention of the week. We have also assisted Emirates Hotels with its \$112 million eco-development resort, which is well under construction in Wolgan Valley just north of Lithgow in my electorate. In addition, we are running a number of Lean Manufacturing workshops in Bathurst. We are on the ground helping businesses. This is a positive package. It is much better than the negative carping of members opposite.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [3.59 p.m.]: In the short time that Country Labor has supported the Premier he has introduced 16 new taxes and charges, and the Government will gouge more than \$3.3 billion over four years from the long-suffering taxpayers and residents of New South Wales. The member for Murrumbidgee has detailed the increases in taxes and charges. I will point to just a few that need to be highlighted. The \$85 million package was announced at the Local Government and Shires Associations conference two weeks ago. The mayors who commented after the announcement were unaware that they were about to be sliced and diced by the Treasurer and the Government in the mini-budget delivered only days ago. With the atrocious attacks on regional New South Wales, a couple of things that have not been noticed need to be highlighted.

Not only has the Government attacked the school bus system and the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program—indeed, it has delayed them—at a cost of more than \$50 million; it has removed the fuel

subsidy of 1.2¢ a litre for all fuel transported by rail. That will affect people in country areas because fuel is transported by train to regional and rural New South Wales. In addition, the Government did not announce that five rail services will be cut, at a cost. We have talked about the back-to-school allowance and the attacks on capital works. I point out that the mini-budget provides for a cutback in funding for police communications. I am glad the member for Bathurst spoke about this because I have been told that the Lithgow police assistance line will be amalgamated with the communications centre and located at Prospect.

The member for Bathurst, whose electorate is about to lose police communications, touted the Government's \$85 million fund that will help establish a brickworks and create 20 jobs. We welcome jobs. Perhaps some of those who are about to lose their jobs as a result of the communications amalgamation can apply for a job at the brickworks. Not only will communications be amalgamated; other centres such as Tamworth and Warilla will be lost, Wagga Wagga is under threat, and Newcastle could be amalgamated and located at Tuggerah. Labor electorates are about to lose jobs, so Government members should not say that this fund is wonderful. The mini-budget provides for a sham of a fund, which the Premier announced two weeks ago. The Premier conned the mayors into thinking that the fund will be great for country areas, but it will come at a cost to communities, particularly in terms of funding the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program. These 16 new taxes and charges will come back to haunt Country Labor.

Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI (Maitland) [4.02 p.m.]: Country New South Wales is a driving force of the economy in this State. That is what this \$85 million fund is all about: it will fund grassroots, on-the-ground, real projects for people in country New South Wales. Some \$9 million over five years has been allocated to help our libraries. Libraries are not simply houses for books; they also contain information on Roads and Traffic Authority online records, work centres for Higher School Certificate students and all kinds of digital equipment. The funding will help libraries throughout country New South Wales. Also, \$2.5 million over five years has been allocated for country halls. When we think of cultural and artistic icons we think of country halls. These are real projects on the ground to help country communities.

The country halls in my electorate are used often. Some halls that need maintenance work will benefit from this money. Also, there is \$450,000 allocated to establishing a chamber of commerce. These are on-the-ground improvements that will bring together local stakeholders to improve things in our communities. There is also \$450,000 over five years for tourism to improve the economy of local country towns. These are real projects. I continue to listen to members opposite but I do not hear any ideas. As for the mini-budget, one cannot go out the front door these days without hearing about the importance of the triple-A credit rating. One cannot pick up a paper or listen to the radio or television without all the pundits and commentators telling us of the importance of the triple-A credit rating. We all know that the triple-A credit rating must be maintained.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition, during his reply to the mini-budget speech, waved a piece of paper and said he would provide an innovative solution to save New South Wales. What was written on the paper? The first thing was to maintain the triple-A credit rating. What a great idea! Why did we not think of that? Who thought of that? Obviously members opposite are not interested in this debate as there is no-one on the Opposition benches. That shows their interest in this debate. Today the Opposition released a policy that will blow the budget by \$7 billion. Yesterday the Opposition wanted to maintain the triple-A credit rating; today it has a policy that will blow the budget. What will it be tomorrow? It depends on what day one asks them about their policies. They flip-flop every day of the week just to get a political news grab and for political expediency. The people of New South Wales are starting to see through the Opposition, just as they have seen through the Coalition at the past four elections. And they will continue to do so. Members opposite were sent to the sin-bin at the past four elections because they did not have any ideas.

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.05 p.m.], in reply: The Opposition's interest in country New South Wales is clear: they did not even bother to have anyone in the Chamber during a debate on a matter of importance to country New South Wales. The member for Murrumbidgee popped in, gave his diatribe and left again without hearing anyone else's contribution. The member talked about the Port Macquarie by-election. I am more than happy to respond to his comments. Was that not the by-election where the Leader of The Nationals called the Liberals "treacherous rats" because they campaigned for the Independent candidate? I think it was. Was that not the by-election after which the Leader of The Nationals said that he wanted to blindfold Alby Shultz and shoot him because of his actions during the by-election campaign? Absolutely!

Mr Daryl Maguire: Point of order: The member for Monaro is meant to respond to issues raised in the debate, not introduce new material.

ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity): Order! The member for Murrumbidgee raised the subject in his contribution to the debate. The member for Wagga Wagga was not in the Chamber at the time.

Mr STEVE WHAN: If the Opposition Whip had bothered to stay in the Chamber he would have heard his colleague raise this issue. The Opposition's hypocrisy knows no bounds. It says it believes in balancing revenue and expenditure, but it opposes all measures introduced by this Government to try to do that. If Opposition members were to put their policy into practice their cuts would have to be much bigger than this Government's cuts. The Opposition might follow its policy advisers, the *Daily Telegraph*. Yesterday in an article it stated that this Government should actually take a Kennett approach and sack 7,000 teachers and introduce a \$100 poll tax for every household in New South Wales. We know that the *Daily Telegraph* writes most Opposition questions in this place. Is that what the Opposition is also advocating? It seems to me that Opposition members will say anything to get a headline, but without making the budget books balance.

The member for Wagga Wagga made disingenuous comments about mayors. Quite rightly, mayors welcome funding for libraries. They welcome the changes in the mini-budget to State Emergency Service funding, which brings that under the same model as the Rural Fire Service and reduces the burden on local councils. Very importantly, in this debate we heard the member for Maitland highlight the important new funding for community halls that he hoped a number of halls in his electorate would receive. Because the people of Maitland have an excellent Country Labor member I have no doubt that they will indeed get a good share of the funding for community halls. Unlike members of The Nationals, Country Labor members approach constructively the job of government and delivering for rural New South Wales. Country Labor members get results—they do not whinge, they do not bag people, and they offer policies.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 51

Mr Amery	Mr Gibson	Ms Moore
Ms Andrews	Mr Greene	Mr Morris
Mr Aquilina	Mr Harris	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Beamer	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Mr Besseling	Mr Hickey	Mrs Perry
Mr Borger	Ms Hornery	Mr Piper
Mr Brown	Ms Judge	Mr Sartor
Ms Burney	Ms Keneally	Mr Shearan
Mr Campbell	Mr Khoshaba	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Collier	Mr Koperberg	Mr Terenzini
Mr Coombs	Mr Lalich	Mr Tripodi
Mr Corrigan	Mr Lynch	Mr West
Mr Daley	Mr McBride	Mr Whan
Ms D'Amore	Dr McDonald	
Mr Draper	Ms McKay	
Mrs Fardell	Mr McLeay	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Firth	Ms McMahon	Mr Ashton
Mr Furolo	Ms Megarrity	Mr Martin

Noes, 34

Mr Aplin	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baird	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Souris
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humphries	Mr Stokes
Mr Cansdell	Mr Kerr	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Constance	Mr Merton	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Debnam	Mr O'Dea	Mr J. D. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Page	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Fraser	Mr Piccoli	
Ms Goward	Mr Provest	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mrs Hancock	Mr Richardson	Mr George
Mr Hartcher	Mr Roberts	Mr Maguire

Pair

Ms Gadiel

Mr O'Farrell

Question resolved in the affirmative.**Motion agreed to.****DISABILITY SERVICES****Personal Explanation**

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE, by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. During question time the Minister for Disability Services sought to impugn my reputation and that of my colleagues in relation to—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will remain silent. I cannot hear the member for Bega.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: In particular, reference was made to a series of budget estimates questions relating to ex-service men and women who have been impaired during armed conflict around the globe and whether they will now fall into the realm of the Commonwealth-State/Territory Disability Agreement and, therefore, become the responsibility of the State Government. We were talking about young veterans with disabilities. I felt that my reputation was impugned in relation to that. I was disappointed that the Minister sought to make light of that in the House at question time.

The SPEAKER: Order! It being before 4.30 p.m. the House will now proceed to Orders of the Day (for Bills).

**OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT (LIABILITY OF VOLUNTEERS) BILL
2008****Agreement in Principle****Debate resumed from 24 October 2008.**

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.20 p.m.]: Throughout New South Wales there are approximately 850 reserves that are administered under trust boards, and about 6,000 volunteers contributing their time to manage Crown land reserves. The Government acknowledges that they do a fantastic job and is very conscious of their need for protection. However, while the Government supports the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Liability of Volunteers) Bill 2008 in principle, it opposes the timing of its passage for reasons I will outline. The issue of the liability of volunteer officers on boards, community trusts and other such entities in New South Wales was canvassed in the Government's review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000. At that time the Government explained that there have been no prosecutions of volunteer officers since modern workplace safety legislation was first introduced in New South Wales almost 25 years ago. Not since the days of Neville Wran have there been any prosecutions of volunteers on occupational health and safety issues.

The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Liability of Volunteers) Bill 2008 is designed to create a crisis where none exists, and would soon be irrelevant as we move to national legislation. Mindful of the contribution made to the community by volunteers, WorkCover's policy is that it would be counter-productive to prosecute volunteer directors. It should also be remembered that prosecutions for breaches of workplace safety laws are made only as a last resort; that is, when all advice and assistance has failed and when there is a clear public interest to be served. However, given the concerns raised by volunteers, the Government responded by including a proposal to amend the provisions related to the liability of officers of corporations with regard to volunteers in its Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2006. The Government confirmed that position in its consideration of the subsequent Stein inquiry report in June 2007.

Notwithstanding the Government's position, given the recent announcement by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard, MP, of a national review of occupational health and safety laws with the aim of harmonising the legislative framework Australia-wide, it would be premature to amend the New South Wales legislation at this point. For that reason the Government opposes the passage of this private member's bill at this

time. Having said that, I assure the House that this in no way diminishes the Government's commitment to encouraging volunteering in New South Wales. Indeed, it is a target of the New South Wales State Plan to increase the proportion of the total community involved in volunteering by 10 per cent from 2002 to 2016. To achieve that target, approximately 37 per cent of the State's population will need to be volunteering in 2016. Recent actions taken to achieve the target include the appointment of a Minister to the new position of Minister for Volunteering, responsible for providing a central point within Government to encourage the building of community participation and harmony through volunteering.

ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will resume their seats. Members who wish to conduct private conversations will do so outside the Chamber.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The Government also announced, through the Premier, a \$7.8 million Premier's Community Service Award initiative to encourage year 9 and year 10 students in New South Wales government schools to become involved in community service. Another action to achieve the target is that all students who complete a minimum of 20 hours community service will receive the new Premier's Community Service Award alongside their year 10 School Certificate. The award creates 10 annual education scholarships of \$2,000 each for the most outstanding young volunteers and one annual school grant of \$5,000 to the school with the best volunteering record.

Finally, a volunteering roundtable was hosted jointly by the Minister and the New South Wales Centre for Volunteering on 22 June 2007. The roundtable engaged experts, peak community organisations and heads of government agencies in a discussion around the Government's objectives to lift the volunteering rate and diversify the volunteer workforce. It is our belief that volunteering brings together people of all generations and communities through shared experiences. I repeat: The Government supports the principles of the bill. However, this is not the time for the passage of such a bill. National legislation will soon be introduced, and I am confident that the ideals of this bill can be met in a different forum.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal) [4.26 p.m.]: Indeed, it is tragic to hear the words of the member for Macquarie Fields. Again and again in this House we are invited to hear ministerial statements reflecting upon the worth of volunteers in our community, their heroism and their commitment to the service of others. Yet the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Liability of Volunteers) Bill 2008 exposes a flaw in the Civil Liability Act, which the Labor Government has failed to correct, notwithstanding that the Civil Liability Act is now some six years old. In acknowledgement of that, the member for Macquarie Fields admitted that, in principle, the bill is worthwhile. However, because it is an Opposition bill the Government is determined not to support it.

It always boils down to the rationale that the Government will not support anything, any idea, from the Opposition. The Government believes that it alone has a monopoly on wisdom and that it alone has a monopoly on parliamentary legislation. Accordingly, liability will continue to affix to directors or corporations whose organisations contain volunteers, one of who may have acted outside the realms of protection afforded by the Civil Liability Act. The bill gives a director of a corporation that is a statutory body—be it the Surf Life Saving Association, the Red Cross or any community or philanthropic organisation—the same protection as its members would have. That is what all legislation seeks to do. How ironic! It is only a week after Parliament voted on the extraordinary Local Government Amendment (Legal Status) Bill 2008, which transformed local councils across New South Wales from bodies corporate into bodies politic—a 500-year-old Tudor concept—simply to satisfy the demands of the United Services Union.

The Government is prepared to introduce and support legislation like that. The member for Macquarie Fields, who is a decent person and who has a personal commitment to community service—if I praise him enough he will be embarrassed by what I will say—is not prepared to support a bill that will provide a statutory shield to directors of corporations who themselves service their community. Individuals in organisations up and down the coast and throughout New South Wales that are serving their communities can be protected, but not their management committee, and not their directors, if that management committee has a statutory or corporate status. How extraordinary! How ridiculous! The Opposition has exposed a lacuna in the legislation and brought it before Parliament to be corrected. Yet the Government is not prepared to accept it. What is the excuse given by the member for Macquarie Fields on behalf of the Government? It is that the Government awaits national legislation.

It did not await national legislation on the Civil Liability Act. There was no idea of national legislation on the legal status of councils across New South Wales—150 councils whose legal status was transformed

overnight by a bill rushed through this Parliament—but we have to await national legislation to protect people whose only objective is to serve the community. They gain nothing from it themselves because profit organisations are not protected by this bill. It is the not-for-profit organisations that gain nothing for themselves but that simply seek to serve the community in which they operate. This is the way this Government treats those people. The next time this House sits through a ministerial statement praising the volunteers and saying how wonderful they are, saying what great work they do and paying tribute to them, there will be a sense of irony. The member for Macquarie Fields and his colleagues will support the ministerial statement knowing that they refused to pass this legislation. The bill would provide a statutory shield of liability for the directors of those bodies that they will be lauding and endorsing by way of a ministerial statement.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [4.30 p.m.]: I find it absurd that the Government refuses to endorse the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Liability of Volunteers) Bill 2008, which is an extremely sensible and practical measure. It was introduced in another place by the Hon. Rick Colless. When the Hon. Rick Colless brought the bill to our attention more than a year ago, I think, it was an obvious solution to a real problem faced by volunteers in New South Wales. There are around 850 reserves in New South Wales administered under trust boards and there are about 6,000 volunteers who contribute their time to manage Crown land reserves. Trust board membership is an honorary position and people are appointed by the Minister administering the Crown Lands Act. They are not entitled to any financial benefit from the position. They can recoup out-of-pocket expenses only if they are incurred while carrying out their duties.

Like many other members in this place I often advertise through my column in the local newspapers when these positions on boards become vacant. We are actually invited by the Minister administering Crown lands to advise our constituents that these positions are vacant. There is a real risk in accepting a position because there is a very real possibility that those board members could face prosecution. This bill was introduced to remove the potential for volunteers to be prosecuted under the occupational health and safety legislation. We have had correspondence related to this from people who would put their names forward as members of boards of trusts if it were not for this very real threat that, despite the fact that their time on these boards is voluntary, they can be prosecuted under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The Hon. Rick Colless put forward this very sensible bill, the object of which is to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 to provide that directors or persons concerned in the management of a corporation who are volunteers are not personally liable for prosecution for a contravention of the Act by the corporation. It is a very simple bill; it is not complicated. We have kept it simple for the Government so it understands it. It will directly benefit those 6,000 volunteers serving in New South Wales at the moment. I bring to the attention of the House a letter from Phil Harris of Trustee State Park, in which he said:

I feel there are many people qualified that should be on trusts that won't be because of this possible liability. The ones that should be on trusts you would hope have had previous management experience and have been successful in what ever field they have been in. This I would think would place them at most risk because if they have been successful then they would most likely have the most to lose. Ask yourselves would you risk losing every thing that you own and have worked hard for to work in a voluntary position working to manage something for someone else. I suspect the answer to this is no so why expect everyone that is currently on a trust in NSW to do the same?

It is a very good question. I think Phil Harris reflects the feelings of a lot of potential trust board members in relation to this matter. We received other letters, which have been outlined in another place. It is important that we take every action possible to ensure that the liability of trust volunteers under the Occupational Health and Safety Act does not act to the detriment of encouraging the very people who we need to manage those trust boards from applying for the position. It is not a difficult thing for the Government to get its head around. It is something that The Nationals have very sensibly put forward because we truly value all those volunteers who work very hard in our local communities.

Indeed, our lands could not be managed properly without those boards. We welcome and encourage actively the participation of volunteers in positions on the boards of those trusts. However, with this occupational health and safety threat hanging over their heads, despite the fact it is an honorary position, we believe we will see fewer and fewer people volunteering for these trusts. I pledge my support for this bill. I encourage the Government to change its negative attitude in relation to it and to recognise that it is important for volunteers in the State. I urge the Government to support the bill.

Mr PAUL PEARCE (Coogee) [4.35 p.m.]: I echo the statements made by the Parliamentary Secretary in relation to the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Liability of Volunteers) Bill 2008. We respect the role of volunteers and we respect the fact that the principles involved here have merit. However, we have to look at the broader picture in relation to occupational health and safety issues and liabilities. I reiterate that the

legislative changes to exempt volunteer directors are just one component of an extremely important and sensitive legislative process. The Government has said before that it will not sell the success of current workplace safety laws down the river before consensus can be achieved on some of the most difficult points. These laws have led directly to vastly improved workplace safety outcomes.

The WorkCover Statistical Bulletin for 2006-07 showed that the number of serious workplace injuries in New South Wales fell by 7 per cent on the previous year and total workplace injuries were down 3 per cent. The incidence rate for workplace facilities has more than halved since the WorkCover scheme commenced in 1987, and reduced by 6 per cent on last year. Importantly, fatalities among young workers aged under 25 reduced by 14 per cent over the previous year. Traditionally high-risk areas such as agriculture, forestry and fishing, transport and storage, and construction have also experienced reductions in injury rates. The reforms have also led directly to an annual saving of more than \$5.5 billion to the State's economy and a boost in productivity that will add well over \$600 million in gross State product every year. These are not advances that the Government is prepared to jeopardise. On the contrary, amended workplace safety legislation will build on these outcomes. The Government is committed to ensuring that New South Wales is served by world-best workplace safety legislation, and this is what we will deliver to Parliament in good time.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater) [4.37 p.m.]: I support the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Liability of Volunteers) Bill 2008. My comments relate to the liability of directors of surf lifesaving clubs in relation to occupational health and safety matters. Obviously surf clubs are a vital community organisation and we take our occupational health and safety obligations very seriously. Certainly in instructing the bronze medallion one of the very first issues we talk to prospective members about is their occupational health and safety responsibilities. I can say from personal experience that we take them on a tour of the club and show them the various slip hazards and equipment hazards. It must be appreciated that volunteer rescue organisations such as surf lifesaving clubs operate in an environment that is intrinsically hazardous. Beaches and the surf are intrinsically hazardous environments and there are enormous risks involved in being a volunteer lifesaver.

Directors of our surf clubs, who are already under huge administrative burdens—it is an amazing thing to be a director of a lifesaving club, and they do a terrific job in the community—are at risk if we do not repair this legislative gap. The last thing they need is some contingent liability that might affect them negatively at a time when they are trying their best to help the community. I support the inclusion of proposed subsection (5) after subsection (4) in section 26 of the principal Act simply because we must ensure that this gap is closed. I heed the comments of Government members that there must be some sort of comprehensive system. That might be the case, but we need to close the gap in the meantime and we can then get on with the business of more comprehensive reform.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) [4.40 p.m.], in reply: There is no higher order of activity in our community today than the activity that is undertaken by volunteers. The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Liability of Volunteers) Bill 2008 has already been debated in the upper House and I acknowledge the contributions of those who spoke today in debate on the bill and congratulate the thousands of volunteers in this State. We have to fill a gap in the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 that clearly disadvantages—and to some extent prejudices—those who volunteer to help run, manage and administer not-for-profit organisations in this State on Crown lands, parks, showgrounds and so forth.

Government members and Ministers in the upper House have acknowledged that there is a gap in the legislation. I thank all those who contributed to debate on the bill, which has been agreed to in the upper House. The member for Pittwater said that we are looking at the inclusion of one simple provision in an important Act—the Occupational Health and Safety Act—to protect our workers and provide them with safe and well-administered workplaces, some of which are recreational. The Hon. Rick Colless in the other place is seeking to fill that gap by including proposed subsection (5) after subsection (4) in section 26 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which is entitled "Offences by corporations—liability of directors and managers". People must know what they are doing and must be held liable for their actions. Subsection (4) states:

In the case of a corporation that is a local council, a member of the council (in his or her capacity as such a member) is not to be regarded as a director or person concerned in the management of the council for the purposes of this section.

People in our community who act in a quasi or voluntary capacity are already covered under this Act. We are seeking to include proposed subsection (5), which states:

... a director or person concerned in the management of a corporation who is a volunteer is not liable to be prosecuted under that section for anything done or omitted to be done by the person as a volunteer.

In that proposed subsection "volunteer" has the same meaning as the meaning in section 60 of the Civil Liability Act 2002. The member for Macquarie Fields spoke at length about the need to encourage volunteering in our community. I and many other members have spoken about this issue because it is the Government's intention to include a volunteering program in our school curriculum, which is an indictment on our community. That program will be introduced into schools in an attempt to revitalise the volunteering culture on which this country was built. Most of the things in this country that are culturally based cost this country nothing, and I am sure the Government appreciates that they were all built by volunteers. It would be good to highlight that volunteering culture in our schools.

People are no longer volunteering for things such as school coaching because of the liability issue. I note that a number of members in this Chamber are former members of the education fraternity. I am sure they are aware that for many years we have had an integrated system in our schools, in particular in the area of sports coaching. That work was not done by teachers after school hours; rather it was done by mums and dad who came in to coach football, netball, soccer teams and the like. However, they are no longer volunteering their services. Over the past decade there has been a reduction in the number of people volunteering because of this liability and litigation culture.

New South Wales is currently ranked second after California as the most litigious State in the world. If we are to promote volunteering in our community we need to establish why people are no longer volunteering. This is a structural rather than a legislative issue. If we ensure that the legislation is right it will encourage volunteering in our community. This amendment to the Occupational Health and Safety Act is essential to encourage people to act in a voluntary capacity on behalf of our community and, in many cases, on behalf of the Crown. Our amendment seeks to remove that liability. I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for referring to the need to expand our capacity to volunteer.

The member for Terrigal referred to gaps in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, an issue that we do not take lightly. We must amend the legislation to improve community outcomes. The member for Burrinjuck referred to removing the liability for volunteers and said we had kept our four-line amendment simple. We kept our amendment simple so as not to confuse members, the Government and people in the community, and we have received unprecedented support for it across country New South Wales. The Hon. Rick Colless spent an enormous amount of time dealing with the 6,000 or more volunteers who manage our land reserves—an issue referred to earlier today by the member for Burrinjuck. We kept our amendment simple for a reason: it is good legislation and it should be supported. The member for Coogee said that this legislation had merit and I thank him for reinforcing that. When this matter was debated in the upper House, Government members said it was long overdue. The Hon. Mick Veitch said:

The Government has listened to the concerns of volunteer board members; I believe that future legislative changes will address these concerns.

Here is the legislation, which should be addressed now. I remind Government members that this legislation has been under review for three years. It does not take three years to amend one small piece of legislation. The Government might be waiting for its Federal counterparts to progress the issue, but that is no excuse for the delay. The Hon. Christine Robertson said:

Members will recall also that the initial draft amendment bill proposed that the Act be amended to exclude volunteers from prosecution. However, the Government has been unable to achieve consensus among key stakeholders on other aspects of the draft legislation.

Unnamed stakeholders are jeopardising our volunteering culture because of certain aspects in the draft legislation. We have consensus from Government members in the upper House who acknowledged this legislation but who did not necessarily vote for it. The challenge now is for Government members in the Legislative Assembly to support this amendment and to fill the gaps in this legislation. It is quite simple: it addresses all the concerns that have been raised. One of the more specific issues refers to those volunteers who take on the mantle of managing lands in cooperation with the Government, particularly through the Department of Lands. The Minister acknowledges that 6,000 volunteers help to manage our Crown lands; the departmental handbook describes their role at length. On the insurance and liability aspect the Minister said:

These arrangements cover, for some circumstances as described in chapter 8 of the handbook, trust members, trust employees and volunteers.

The Department of Lands does not cover a number of extreme activities, which is the gap the Minister has acknowledged. The guide already acknowledges the gaps within the system. The list of extreme activities is

quite comprehensive, including some 25 sports ranging from equestrian events to other extreme sports. Virtually every sport is considered an extreme sport these days. I suppose camp drafting and bull riding, through to bungee jumping and activities like orienteering, could be considered extreme sports by some people. This bill seeks to address that anomaly and we ask the Labor Government for its support. Mr Richard Fraser, Trust Secretary of the Bathurst Showground, wrote sometime ago to the Minister about insurance cover for trust board volunteers. The Minister responded on 15 February 2008 as follows:

I note that some trust boards have expressed a desire that s.121 of the Crown Lands Act be amended so that it offers wider protection. I also note that trust board members do not have greater personal liability for criminal acts than other corporate directors (including those in many volunteer organisations in NSW) or even general members of the public. However, I have been considering this issue for some time and have referred the matter to Cabinet and other agencies for comment. I will contact reserve trust boards if there are any developments regarding this issue in the future.

There has been a development: the upper House passed the amending legislation to close the gap in the existing legislation and we ask the Labor Government in the Legislative Assembly to do the same. It is a simple piece of legislation with potentially wider ramifications because it clearly targets the voluntary culture we are trying to regrow in New South Wales and this country. It is incumbent on us to remove any of those impediments and liabilities. I ask the Government to support this amendment on behalf of the people of New South Wales who so valuably and generously give of their time.

Question—That this bill be now agreed to in principle—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 39

Mr Aplin	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baird	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Souris
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humphries	Mr Stokes
Mr Besseling	Mr Kerr	Mr Stoner
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Debnam	Ms Moore	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mr J. D. Williams
Mr Draper	Mr Page	Mr R. C. Williams
Mrs Fardell	Mr Piccoli	
Mr Fraser	Mr Piper	
Ms Goward	Mr Provest	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mrs Hancock	Mr Richardson	Mr George
Mr Hartcher	Mr Roberts	Mr Maguire

Noes, 46

Mr Amery	Mr Greene	Ms Megarrity
Ms Andrews	Mr Harris	Mr Morris
Mr Aquilina	Ms Hay	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Beamer	Mr Hickey	Mr Pearce
Mr Borger	Ms Hornery	Mrs Perry
Mr Brown	Ms Judge	Mr Sartor
Ms Burney	Ms Keneally	Mr Shearan
Mr Campbell	Mr Khoshaba	Mr Stewart
Mr Collier	Mr Koperberg	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Coombs	Mr Lalich	Mr Terenzini
Mr Corrigan	Mr Lynch	Mr Tripodi
Mr Daley	Mr McBride	Mr West
Ms D'Amore	Dr McDonald	
Ms Firth	Ms McKay	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Mr McLeay	Mr Ashton
Mr Gibson	Ms McMahan	Mr Martin

Pair

Mr O'Farrell

Ms Gadiel

Question resolved in the negative.**Motion negatived.****Bill not agreed to in principle.****LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2008****Bill introduced on motion by Mr Kevin Greene.****Agreement in Principle**

Mr KEVIN GREENE (Oatley—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [5.02 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Rees Government is determined to tackle the growing problem of antisocial drinking and alcohol-related violence. While the total number of non-alcohol related assaults decreased in the last two years, alcohol-related assaults actually increased by 4.7 per cent. In 2007, 21,000 alcohol-related assaults occurred across the State. Two weeks ago the Premier unveiled a comprehensive package of initiatives designed to improve our ability to tackle this problem. This bill implements a number of those initiatives. It amends the Liquor Act 2007, the Local Government Act 1993 and the Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Act 1998 to require a six-hour closure each day for all new liquor licences, effectively freezing the issuing of new 24-hour liquor licences; give police and council enforcement officers new powers to confiscate and tip out alcohol in alcohol-free zones; and introduce new penalties for minors who use fake identification to enter licensed premises or obtain alcohol.

Before outlining the nature and intent of these amending provisions, I remind the House that the overwhelming majority of the people in this State do the right thing when it comes to enjoying a drink. They are more than capable of enjoying a drink or two now and then without getting themselves involved in violent situations. We must keep that in mind when considering what should be done to reduce alcohol-related crime and antisocial behaviour. Furthermore, we have to acknowledge that this is a complex problem and that there is no single solution. That is why the package announced by the Premier two weeks ago seeks to tackle the issue in a range of different ways, including: imposing new conditions on high-risk licensed venues to reduce incidents of violence, increasing police powers and introducing new ways of dealing with antisocial and unlawful drinking, and providing high-visibility policing around high-risk precincts.

I turn now to the details of the bill. We know that most alcohol-related assaults occur late at night. Accordingly, making changes to late-night trading forms a key part of our approach. As per the Premier's announcement two weeks ago, this bill will result in a freeze on the issuing of new 24-hour liquor licences. The bill will require a six-hour closure each day to be included as a condition in all new liquor licences granted after 30 October 2008—the day on which the Premier announced the freeze. The six-hour closure will also apply to all existing liquor licences that have extended trading granted after 30 October 2008.

The Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority will approve the closure period. It is expected that this period will generally be between 4.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. The authority will determine closure periods on a case-by-case basis to ensure they take into account factors such as the operation of the venue, local circumstances and the needs of the broader community and patrons. Transitional provisions are included to ensure that where the authority has not yet approved a closure period for licences granted after 30 October but before the Act commences, a 4.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. closure will automatically apply. This 4.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. period can subsequently be varied by the authority if necessary. The six-hour closure requirement will apply to licences granted by the authority under the Liquor Act 2007, which commenced on 1 July this year, as well as to applications for licences lodged before the commencement of the new Liquor Act, which are granted under the former court-based system.

The bill allows exceptions to the six-hour closure period to be prescribed by regulation. The sorts of exceptions the Government will consider will include, for example, international hotels so they can meet the

needs of tourists who may be arriving throughout the day and night. The bill also allows hotels and motels to continue to sell liquor to residents for consumption in private rooms during the six-hour closure. Breaches of the new licence condition will be an offence and will carry a maximum penalty of \$11,000. More significant breaches can lead to disciplinary action by the authority with higher penalties up to \$55,000 or ultimately suspension or cancellation of a licence. The Government is also tackling problems associated with extended liquor trading through a review of existing 24-hour licences and late trading venues. This review will be undertaken using enforcement tools included in the Liquor Act 2007.

The Liquor Act provides a raft of flexible compliance and enforcement tools for police, the Director of Liquor and Gaming, and the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority. Where a review indicates it is necessary, directions can be issued to licensees and conditions can be imposed on licences to improve venue management and operations. Lockouts can be imposed on venues to reduce patron migration. When necessary, trading hours can be reduced on a case-by-case basis. In addition, all existing 24-hour trading venues will be examined to improve venue operation and patron behaviour. This will involve liquor inspectors and police inspecting these venues during their peak and risk-trading periods. The Government will also work with the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority to develop guidelines to apply to applications for extended trading.

The guidelines will assist industry and regulators in determining what trading hour approvals are reasonable. They will take into account local circumstances, the need to promote community safety and the need to ensure liquor trading does not have a detrimental impact on the local and broader community. These guidelines will be a key factor when considering extended trading applications, approving six-hour shutdowns, and reviewing 24-hour licensed premises. The unsafe consumption of liquor in streets, parks and other public places is another cause of antisocial behaviour. That is why, under the Local Government Act, councils are able to deal with the problem locally and on the ground through the declaration of alcohol-free zones.

This bill will amend the Local Government Act to give police and enforcement officers more powers to enforce these zones. This includes the removal of mandatory warnings prior to any enforcement action being undertaken, enabling police and enforcement officers to act immediately. Under the provisions in the bill, a police officer or an enforcement officer will have the power to confiscate liquor from a person who is either drinking in an alcohol-free zone or in immediate possession of liquor in an alcohol-free zone and there is reasonable cause to believe that the person is about to drink, or has recently been drinking, alcohol in the zone.

Police and enforcement officers will be able to immediately confiscate the alcohol and dispose of it by tipping it out, sending a clear message to the offender that their behaviour is unacceptable. This is an immediate and greater deterrent than issuing a \$22 fine, as is provided for under the current law. The bill therefore also abolishes this provision. The removal of the mandatory warning still allows police and enforcement officers to use discretion and warn persons who appear to be unaware of the alcohol-free zone. Local councils and police local area commands will work together to promote effective enforcement. To assist councils that wish to play a greater role in enforcing alcohol-free zones in their local communities, the bill also allows greater scope for council employees to be authorised by the Commissioner of Police to be enforcement officers for the purposes of enforcing alcohol-free zones.

Under current provisions in the Act, council enforcement officers may only be appointed in relation to specified alcohol-free zones during special events. The bill amends the Act to enable enforcement officers to be authorised by the Commissioner of Police on an ongoing basis. These enforcement officers will then be able to exercise the new confiscation and tip-out powers in line with the amendments provided for in this bill. As is currently the case, it will be up to individual councils to apply to the Commissioner for Police for authorisation if they wish any of their employees to perform the role of enforcement officer. The bill also extends the maximum period of an alcohol-free zone from three years to four years to align it with the council election cycle and to cut red tape. We must also discourage young people from developing drinking behaviours that place themselves, their mates and the community at risk.

The bill therefore includes amendments to deter young people from using false identity documents to purchase alcohol and enter licensed premises. Section 129 of the Liquor Act already makes it an offence for a minor to use a false evidence-of-age document in order to gain entry to, remain in or obtain liquor from licensed premises. The bill amends the Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Act to allow regulations to be made to impose new licence sanctions against minors who commit an offence under section 129. Following this amendment, the Government will bring forward regulations to require young people who use fake IDs to stay on their

provisional driver licence for an additional six months. The regulations will provide that where the offender is not a current licence holder, the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] will impose the additional six-month period when the licence application is made.

Those regulations will provide that the RTA will not take any action if the licence application is made more than five years after the offence, and this sanction will apply to offenders who are 14 years and older when committing the offence. As I outlined at the beginning of this speech, this is a complex problem with no single solution. That is why, in addition to the new initiatives in this bill, the Government is also targeting specific, high-risk venues identified by the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research as being associated with alcohol-related assaults. We know that there are problems associated with these venues, such as assaults, glassings, intoxication and disturbance to nearby areas. The Premier has announced that new targeted conditions will be imposed on the most at-risk venues in New South Wales.

These will include a mandatory 2.00 a.m. lock-out, controls on alcohol service, a requirement to utilise plastic or polycarbonate containers after midnight, no service of alcohol shots, limits on drink purchases after midnight, and ten-minute alcohol service time-outs each hour after midnight. These conditions are based on recent experience in Newcastle and Wollongong as to what is effective in reducing risk and improving venue operations. They will be imposed by regulation on specific venues using existing powers contained in the Liquor Act, which allow licence conditions to be prescribed. There is therefore no need to amend the Liquor Act to achieve this outcome. A high-level implementation team will oversee these new arrangements and advise the Government when and where changes are needed.

If new problems arise over the summer new conditions can be added or existing conditions can be varied. New venues can also be targeted if necessary. Over the coming months the Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing and the NSW Police Force will work with the liquor industry to replace these targeted conditions with a statewide sanctions scheme for high-risk licensed venues. The scheme could start with mandatory conditions such as lock-outs, with sanctions escalating if necessary. Alcohol-related violence is a growing problem in our community and the Rees Government is determined to deal with it. This bill is one component of a multifaceted response to address antisocial behaviour and alcohol-related violence in our community. It will improve our ability to tackle this problem by restricting 24-hour trading, giving police more power to deal with drinking in alcohol-free zones, and introducing new sanctions for minors who use fake ID to obtain entry to licensed premises or buy alcohol. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Grant McBride): Order! Government Business Orders of the Day (for Bills) having concluded, the House will now proceed to private members' statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Question—That private members' statements be noted—proposed.

CESSNOCK HEALTH SERVICES

Mr KERRY HICKEY (Cessnock) [5.17 p.m.]: The provision of health services in the Cessnock electorate is of major concern to many members of my community. There is a doctor shortage throughout the electorate, and doctors are working with more than 2,800 case patients on their books. Doctors have a heavy workload, which is causing concern about the health of patients and impact on the ability of doctors to do their job succinctly. There is a doctor shortage at Kurri Kurri hospital and Cessnock hospital, which results in a lack of service to the community. Most patients in Cessnock are transferred to John Hunter Hospital or Maitland Hospital. The major parking problem at John Hunter Hospital has a big impact on many members of my community. Although a shuttle bus to John Hunter Hospital has been provided, people who drive from Cessnock to use the shuttle bus must still pay for that service. They have the angst of attempting to read a timetable, then catching the bus, before getting into the hospital to see their loved ones.

Maitland Hospital is overdeveloped and is becoming overcrowded. John Hunter Hospital has a similar problem. There is a need for better service delivery across the lower Hunter and better outcomes for the community. It is time for the Cessnock and Kurri Kurri hospitals to be looked at in a positive light. More services should be provided at those hospitals to ensure that there are better outcomes for the whole of the lower

Hunter area. The ear, nose and throat specialists at Kurri Kurri hospital do a terrific job. However, at present Kurri Kurri is considered an industrial area. The Hunter Economic Zone will create massive employment across the community but there must be better service delivery to not only the industrial area but the whole community.

Cessnock Hospital has been deteriorating for a long time. The Hunter New England Area Health Service needs to look at what is happening at these two hospitals. When people present themselves at Kurri Kurri hospital they either follow a yellow line into the hospital emergency department or a red line into the outpatients clinic. When people first enter the hospital they think it is closed. The doors must be unlocked and they must follow these lines. At the front of the hospital they walk past an ancient lung machine, which looks like it should be in a museum. Frankly, that sight would be enough to scare people who are violently ill or having major seizures. The elevators do not work.

It is time that the area health service put dollars back into community hospitals to ensure their longevity. The future of housing development alone in the Cessnock area also has to be looked at long term. The population growth at Bellbird, Hinton, Paxton, Millfield, Ettalong and Branxton will be immense and that must be taken into account in relation to the provision of hospital services. Area health services should put in better facilities to attract more doctors away from the Sydney area into regional areas so that better services are delivered in those communities. Why would doctors not want to come to the Cessnock electorate with its fine wines and great restaurants? It is time for the Minister to put in something with a rural, remote and metropolitan areas [RRMA] classification and talk to his federal colleagues to address of a shortage of doctors in Cessnock.

Doctors can earn just as much money on the north shore, where there are more doctors, and spend their time off with their families. Doctors in Cessnock have double the caseload and less time off to spend with their families. There needs to be some change to the RRMA classification so that Cessnock, where there is a critical doctor shortage, is regarded as a country area. Singleton has no doctor shortage. It is only a matter of time before a doctor's workload becomes too onerous. Problems will occur, and the local community will be denied the care it needs. It is bizarre that people have to travel to see doctors at Maitland and Newcastle for their health needs. I ask the Minister to look at health delivery problems across the Cessnock electorate.

NARRABEEN CATCHMENT AREA

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater) [5.22 p.m.]: Narrabeen catchment area is a rarity among Sydney's suburban sprawl—a wide coastal lagoon flanked by hills bristling with native bushland. Its lakes, estuaries, valleys and precipices are home to diverse populations of flora and fauna. Its woodlands, rainforests, swamps, wetlands and riparian areas support native mammals, reptiles, birds and fish, some of which are highly endangered. Aboriginal rock art and middens that are 8,000 to 14,000 years old also feature in the area. Local families and those from further beyond enjoy the watercourses and bushlands of Narrabeen Lagoon as places of respite, calm and fun. More than 1,000 people visit the area every day.

But the Narrabeen catchment has been and remains under threat. Urban expansion has compromised this fragile ecosystem through weed infestation, water pollution, siltation and urban sprawl. As Narrabeen Lagoon is a catchment area, much of its biodiversity depends upon the vitality of its aquatic system. In heavy rain, water can carry topsoil, chemicals and oils into the catchment, which can be directly destructive to native flora and fauna or can introduce nutrients that encourage weed or algal outbreaks that choke the waterways. This means that the ecosystem, for all its rich diversity, only functions and survives as a whole. How each parcel of land is used is at the centre of any effort to preserve and rehabilitate the life of Narrabeen Lagoon.

While locals can do many things in their households to minimise impact, the State Government can protect the Narrabeen catchment as well. It can protect it from further degradation by doing away with the complicated web of ownership and regulation that currently frustrates its use and it can act to expand Garigal National park to include all sensitive bushland, especially floodplain swamp, forests, coastal heath and coastal wetlands, which are poorly represented in the existing reserve system. The Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment have played a crucial role in lobbying the New South Wales Government and the public to protect this threatened area. I thank Tony Carr, Connie Harris, Jacqui Marlow, David James, David Palmer, Ian Hehir, Jim Somerville and so many others for their efforts and congratulate the entire group on securing a \$1.9 million grant for rehabilitation work.

However, as they rightly identify, if the catchment area is to be definitively protected government intervention is required. Garigal National Park encompasses about 40 per cent of the catchment area, and that is all that has been protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act to date. However, despite strong efforts by

parliamentarians such as Jim Longley, the member for Wakehurst and Terry Metherell, the fate of the rest of the land, which includes the mouth of the lagoon and the lakes area, remains uncertain. The current New South Wales Government has not inspired confidence in its ability to manage the Narrabeen catchment area. Three years ago, Bob Debus, then Minister for the Environment, promised that 72 per cent of Oxford Falls crown land, all of which falls within the catchment area, would be protected forever, that extensive consultation with the local community would take place regarding the exact nature of land use, and that a management plan would be finalised before any action was undertaken.

Yet the final report found that only two-thirds was to be reserved and the rest was marked with the highly uncertain status of "investigate disposal". No rationale was given as to why those decisions were made. The community has not been consulted and already one parcel of land has been de-gazetted and sold. As of August 2008 the management plan process had not started and developers attempted to bypass local councils using the infamous part 3A procedure to gain approval for proposed development in this sensitive area. The areas marked "investigate disposal" continue to be at risk of being leased for development. Even land marked for environmental protection is left open for further urban expansion. The legal status of land as crown reserve means environmental protection can be revoked without an assessment of the impact that future development might have, without community consultation and, unlike a national park, without the approval of Parliament. To revoke the reserve status, all the Minister must do is place an advertisement in the local paper and publish it in the gazette.

The Narrabeen catchment area requires a comprehensive protection and management plan that addresses the long-term threats faced by this ecosystem. Sanctuaries like Narrabeen catchment are simply too precious to be placed under a scheme of environmental protection vulnerable to the whim of the Minister of the day. In addition, it is not sufficient for an integrated ecosystem to be divided into at least four different levels of environmental protection with four different sets of rules. The most appropriate solution for the Narrabeen catchment area is to expand the Garigal National Park to incorporate the remaining unprotected sensitive bushland. More robust, definitive and transparent environmental protection is required if the largest coastal lagoon area in the greatest metropolitan area is to be protected and rehabilitated, not just for the life of a government but so that future generations may enjoy this wonderful resource just as we enjoy it.

RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr NINOS KHOSHABA (Smithfield) [5.27 p.m.]: I refer to the Relay for Life event that was recently held on 27 and 28 September 2008 in my electorate of Smithfield. This was the first time the relay was held in Smithfield and I was privileged to have been selected the patron for such a worthy cause. The relay had 43 teams and 425 people registered, with at least \$32,000 pledged income. I will say that the people of Smithfield did not disappoint. The Relay for Life is about working together to beat cancer and create awareness. It is about celebrating life and joining with our friends and neighbours as a community to assist in making a difference to the lives of those people who are or potentially will be diagnosed with cancer. In this year alone, more than 34,000 people will be diagnosed with cancer in New South Wales.

I understand that life poses significant challenges for us as individuals, but it is when we as individuals band together that we achieve our greatest accomplishments. The support for this event through the high number of team registrations is an example of such an accomplishment. The benefits of this accomplishment flow directly to the New South Wales Cancer Council. The Cancer Council funds more cancer research than any other charity in the State. In addition, the council also provides a number of services that help everyone, especially cancer patients and their families. Some of these services include: the cancer Helpline, where specialist nurses provide members of the public with information and support about cancer; the publication and distribution of information booklets such as *Understanding Cancer* which give readers detailed information about specific cancer types, treatment and psychological issues; connecting diagnosed cancer patients with trained volunteers who have been through a similar experience; and professional education and training by supporting health professionals with training and resources in cancer prevention, management and patient communication.

As members know, the Cancer Council has a difficult but important role in supporting thousands of people affected by cancer. The Relay for life is special because it not only aids the Cancer Council in its battle with cancer, but also gives participants the chance to meet new people and make some new friends. It enables the community to get together and fight for a common cause. The Relay for Life is indeed about having fun and working together as a team to achieve something difficult. The participation of the 43 teams over the 24 hour period was a testament to their commitment to help one another. For some participants the relay was easy and

for others it was hard, but the common theme I observed was that no-one gave up. Participants worked hard to offer each other a helping hand and to provide encouragement to their fellow team members and competitors when needed, which is something we should all aspire to do in our everyday lives. I take this opportunity to pass on a message from Pina Asekona, a representative of the New South Wales Cancer Council, who stated:

The Fairfield and Smithfield Community has generously shown their support for The Cancer Council New South Wales and its mission to defeat cancer. I feel extremely proud to be involved with a community so committed to an event as important as the Fairfield Relay for Life.

The great attendance at the relay proves that the people of my electorate of Smithfield are committed to this cause. My electorate is multicultural and diverse, but we Australians are more than willing to go that extra mile to ensure our fellow neighbours are looked after, and that makes me proud to be the State member for Smithfield. The relay would not be possible if it were not for the efforts of certain people and organisations. The Cancer Council and the relay organising committee should be praised for their hard work in organising the event. Within this organisation, people such as Pina Asekona, Ravina Joudo, Allanah Falappi and Sinilia Radivojevic, who worked tirelessly to ensure all the working parts for the event fell into place, deserve recognition.

I acknowledge also Fairfield City Council for being very supportive and instrumental in the preparation for and conduct of the relay. Council staff including Daniel Favotto, Andy Chin and Mouhamad Elrifai should be applauded for providing invaluable logistical and promotional support to ensure the relay was a great success. Finally, the *Fairfield Advance*, a sponsor of the event and one of Fairfield's local newspapers, really did get behind the relay by promoting the event to the whole community, ensuring the relay got the attention it deserved. I know that there are many members in this place who have participated in and supported these events in their electorates, and I congratulate them for their assistance. I look forward to the many other Relay for Life events that will occur in my electorate in the future and I am sure it will grow stronger as the years go by.

REGIONAL AIR SERVICES

Mr RUSSELL TURNER (Orange) [5.32 p.m.]: I voice my concern at the announcement by Regional Express Holdings Ltd. terminating its Air Link Service out of Mudgee and blaming the Rudd Labor Government's decision to abandon the en-route rebate for that termination. As Mudgee is part of my electorate, I am certainly aware of the ramifications of that termination. I do not know how much of that decision by the management of Regional Express, known as Rex, was based on the Federal Government's abandonment of the rebate. The Howard Government introduced the rebate, which was designed to support air services to regional communities through the provision of \$6 million in annual funding.

The Rudd Government's decision to abandon the en-route rebate will mean that many marginal airline routes to towns such as Mudgee, Dubbo, Cobar, Bourke, Walgett, Lightning ridge and Coonamble will no longer be commercially viable. That termination will impact on the Mudgee population of about 8,000 and on probably another 10,000 or 12,000 in the catchment area who use that daily air service. It is absolutely vital that towns the size of Mudgee have an air service. Medical specialists travel from Sydney to Mudgee for a day or two. Wine experts and tourists travel to Mudgee to experience its thriving wine industry. Local people need to travel from Mudgee for certain medical services in Sydney. Many people have utilised that air service. I am told that Rex has about 8,000 passenger movements per annum out of Mudgee.

I would have preferred that Rex management look at ways of expanding the market rather than cut it off overnight without consultation with me or with the Mid-Western Regional Council, which is based in Mudgee. I note that the general manager and the mayor of the council travelled to Sydney today to consult the chief executive officer of Regional Express, which ran the Air Link Service, in an endeavour to convince Regional Express to not proceed with its termination of services. Some years ago, before the redistribution, Cowra was in my electorate. Regional Express pulled its service out of Cowra, and I know what a difference that made. I know how inconvenient it is for people who have to either drive to Sydney or leave home an hour earlier in the morning to travel to Orange for the nearest available air service.

I know what that cancellation means to towns the size of Cowra. Today there was some good news. Aeropelican Air Services, based in Newcastle, is interested in taking over some of the ports that Air Link is pulling out of, especially Mudgee. Aeropelican stated that it would be interested only if it can get viable landing slots in Sydney. Those negotiations are continuing. Aeropelican needs to consult with the Mid-Western

Regional Council regarding landing charges, and will investigate passenger numbers and how it may increase numbers to make the service viable. I hope that Aeropelican's pending application is successful. I am sure that the council will assist in any way it can, as I certainly would.

I call on the State Government to get involved wherever it is appropriate. I call on the Federal Government, which may need to get involved, to make sure that Aeropelican Air Services gets all the support possible, because that will be needed. Air services are marginal these days, with high fuel prices and the general downturn in business, but an air service is absolutely vital for medical services and tourism in Mudgee. I call on the State Government to assist wherever possible to make sure that there is no gap in the provision of air services to Mudgee and other western towns.

MEMBER FOR BANKSTOWN, THE HONOURABLE TONY STEWART

Mr TONY STEWART (Bankstown) [5.37 p.m.]: This week I have commented in the House regarding my insistence on the truth about issues and allegations that surround me. My constituents in Bankstown have asked me what I intend to do to determine the truth. Today I have been to see my legal counsel, Mr John Kelly, SC, in relation to a report undertaken by Ms Chris Ronalds, SC, into allegations surrounding my conduct at a Garvan Institute function held on 22 October 2008. I discussed with Mr Kelly, SC, my strong concerns that, in my view, the report and its findings are a denial of natural justice and that due process simply has not been followed. Mr Kelly, SC, advised me that, in his view, I have a sound basis to initiate a judicial review of the report on the grounds that I was denied natural justice. I have instructed Mr Kelly, SC, to commence legal proceedings in the Supreme Court of New South Wales. Proceedings will commence shortly.

CASTLE HILL ELECTORATE TRANSPORT SERVICES

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (Castle Hill) [5.38 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about the mini-budget and its impact on my electorate, particularly in the area of transport. There has been extensive media coverage of the decision to scrap the North West Metro, which would have been of enormous benefit to my constituents. This, of course, was a commitment by former Premier, Morris Iemma, and replaced an earlier proposal to build a heavy rail line from Epping through Castle Hill to the Norwest Business Park and Rouse Hill. That earlier proposal dates back to 1998 and the Government's Action for Transport Plan. The original plan was to build a two-station line to Castle Hill with an optional extension confirmed in 2002 to extend it to the Rouse Hill Regional Centre.

The betrayal of my constituents by this Government is virtually beyond parallel in the history of New South Wales. Not only have people whose properties are directly affected by the railway line had to put their lives on hold, but many people have moved to The Hills because they believed that a rail line was coming. And why would they not? After all, this year the Government has spent millions of dollars on television advertisements extolling the virtues of the North West Metro. The truth is, when the proposal blew out from a \$600 million, two-station heavy rail link to a \$12,000 million 17-station extravaganza it was never going to be built. The Premier has given us his alternative: buses. He has said that 100 buses will be delivered some time in the future. I guess that is better than the never-never, which is the delivery date for the metro. But without improved bus priority along the M2 and better interchange facilities around Wynyard and Town Hall, my constituents will still be condemned to travel times of up to 90 minutes for the foreseeable future. If buses are the solution, the mini-budget should have allocated tens of millions of dollars to ease these bottlenecks.

But it is not just the residents of Castle Hill and West Pennant Hills who would have benefited from the North West Metro who have been duded by this Government. The residents of Carlingford also have been duded. There has been a massive amount of publicity given to the Government's decision to scrap the North West Metro but almost none to another devastating decision in the mini-budget: to scrap the passing loop on the Carlingford line at Rydalmere. As well as building a line from Epping to Castle Hill, Action for Transport also committed to completing the Parramatta to Epping link and extending it to Chatswood. This line would be an extension of the single-track Carlingford line, which currently terminates in the only railway station in Baulkham Hills Shire and in my electorate. This line has the worst services of any line in the CityRail network, so poor that many people choose to drive to Epping to catch the train or, worse still, to drive to work even though they live only a short distance from Carlingford station.

Of course, the Government's outrageous congestion tax on the Sydney Harbour Bridge may change that. Many people will simply not be able to afford the more than \$90 a week in tolls it will cost them to drive from The Hills to the city via the M2. In fact, the people of Carlingford have been expecting a through line to

Epping since 1994, when the Fahey Coalition Government promised to convert the Carlingford line into a two-track Parramatta-Epping link. The key difference between Labor and us is we would have honoured our promise. But this Government was not satisfied with breaking its promise to extend the Carlingford line to Epping and Parramatta. In September 2005 as part of its timetable revamp it decimated the services. The number of direct services to the city was slashed to one a day and the number of direct return services to zero. If people catch anything but the 7.00 a.m. from Carlingford they have to change at Clyde.

I have made representations on this issue on many occasions to the Government and through my local media. I have held two meetings on public transport with Carlingford residents, following a survey I sent to every household in Carlingford. The survey identified the following issues as of primary concern: lack of direct train services into the city; lack of frequency—currently the trains run at best every 30 minutes but more generally at 45-minute intervals, even during peak hour, and every 60 minutes in the middle of the day; lack of parking at Epping; and difficulty for older/disabled people in changing platforms at Clyde. Clyde station is in the middle of an industrial suburb. Not only does it not have lifts, but also at night the station is almost deserted. It is all too easy to miss a connection, which necessitates a wait of up to an hour. Women, in particular, do not feel safe in this environment, so much so that constituents I have spoken to have chosen to catch a cab rather than sit round on the empty platform.

Residents in the northern part of Carlingford also mentioned the lack of buses at the Oakes Road bus station as being a major concern. So members can see Carlingford residents feel they have been well and truly short-changed by this Government. But it gets worse. For some years the Government has insisted that when it completed the \$38 million passing loop at Rydalmere in 2010 it would be able to improve frequency. This was another Labor lie. The mini-budget scrapped the passing loop, meaning the current totally inadequate rail service—the worst in Sydney—is all Carlingford residents can expect under this Government. The passing loop would have allowed trains to run every 15 minutes.

If platforms on the line that can currently accommodate only four-car trains had also been lengthened to accommodate six-car trains, the line would have been able to integrate into the Sydney system, with direct train services running to and from the city through peak hour. At the moment CityRail will not let those four-car trains occupy slots in the Sydney system during peak hour. From a public transport standpoint my electorate has been hit by a double whammy. Not only have we lost one rail line, but also we have had promised improvements to another scrapped. There seems to be no end to the pain Nathan Rees and Labor want to inflict on residents of Castle Hill. Make no mistake: My constituents will have their say in March 2011, when members opposite will be lucky to find a single person voting Labor in Castle Hill.

HUNTER POLICE LOCAL AREA COMMANDS

Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI (Maitland) [5.43 p.m.]: I wish to bring to the attention of the House that on 2 May 2008 the then Minister for Police, Hon. David Campbell, visited the lower Hunter at Raymond Terrace to announced the realignment of the area command boundaries for the New South Wales Police Force. This saw the announcement of the creation of the new Port Stephens Local Area Command, the merging of the Waratah Local Area Command and the Newcastle Local Area Command to form the new Newcastle Local Area Command, and the creation of the new Central Hunter Local Area Command, the former Lower Hunter Area Command, which is in my electorate. That had the effect of halving the size of that command from around 7,000 square kilometres to around 3,500 square kilometres. That has resulted in the creation of a very strong police presence of 172 officers covering the area of Maitland and Cessnock.

This process was not easy. It was undertaken in consultation with the Police Association and the hierarchy of the police force in the area. It was managed, coordinated and largely achieved through the driving force and efforts of the new Northern Region Commander, Lee Shearer. I have known Commander Shearer for quite some time. She is a lawyer and a former police prosecutor with whom I had some dealings in my days as a prosecutor. She has done very well in her career and it is not hard to see why. She put an enormous amount of effort into the creation of these new commands and has done an excellent job. We now have more police on the streets and more patrols taking place. New squads are being formed, such as anti-theft and drug squads, at Maitland police station to cover the new Central Hunter command. In the past three months the statistics have shown that crime has fallen slightly in and around that area, which is great news.

We still have some issues with antisocial behaviour in the suburbs and drink-related crime in central Maitland. They are being looked at but it is good to see that things are happening. I pay tribute to Lee Shearer for a great effort in coordinating this new realignment of the boundaries. It is certainly showing signs of success.

I also wish to take this opportunity to mention that there is a new local area commander in the Maitland station, Superintendent John Grolton, from Muswellbrook. With officer David Nixon, who is committed to community policing and Senior Constable Brian Coffey, who is the police liaison officer, we are seeing a greater emphasis on community policing and on involving members of the community as representatives of suburbs to make sure that all stakeholders are involved in cutting the crime rate even further but, more importantly, targeting malicious damage, graffiti, vandalism and alcohol-related crime. I welcome Superintendent Grolton to the Central Hunter command. I met with him recently and had a very good discussion about the way forward.

I also announce that a new first-response agreement has been reached with the police and management in consultation with the Police Association for the Maitland area and that is working very well. I see good things ahead for our police service in the Maitland area. They do a fantastic job. It is not an easy job. Two members of my family—one immediately family and one extended family—are police officers and have been for quite some years. It is a very difficult job. Policing has changed over the years. It is now more of a community-related job involving all stakeholders in the community. Nevertheless, police face very difficult situations every day of their working lives. I can say from my experience that the worry is there as to what kind of jobs they are going out to. They should be given our full support and assistance in any way possible. They encounter all kinds of situations. They have to be counsellors, psychologists and rescuers as well as police officers. I pay tribute to police throughout New South Wales and, of course, in my electorate for continuing to do a great job to make sure we are protected. The feedback I have received from the community in general is that they are seeing more patrols and more police on the streets. It is great to see the new command system is working so well.

CENTRE FOR TROPICAL HORTICULTURE, ALSTONVILLE

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina) [5.48 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the State Labor Government's plans to close the New South Wales Centre for Tropical Horticulture at Alstonville, between Ballina and Lismore. This is a very important centre for plant research in New South Wales, especially for the horticultural industries. We all know that the New South Wales Government has got itself into quite a financial predicament, thus it is cutting services and putting up taxes. One of the cost-cutting measures outlined in the recent mini-budget was the closure of eight of the Department of Primary Industries' facilities in New South Wales, the Centre for Tropical Horticulture at Alstonville being one of them. What an incredible loss this will be, not just for northern New South Wales but the entire State. The New South Wales Government currently recognises the centre at Alstonville as the key facility in the State to support subtropical horticulture.

Staff members conduct a wide range of research across a range of sub-tropical crops, including macadamias, bananas, avocados, passionfruit, low-chill stone fruit, custard apples and coffee, and they are about to do work on blueberries. The Minister for Primary Industries described the plans to close the Alstonville facility and seven others around the State as a "restructure of operations to make them more efficient". The Government said it is now making tough decisions to set up the Department of Primary Industries for the future. Let me tell members for whom it will be tough: It will be tough for the farmers who benefit from the research. It will be tough for the entire North Coast, which has a unique climate and specialised crops. It will be a major blow for the horticultural industry.

The Alstonville Centre for Tropical Horticulture is located on 48 hectares of prime real estate on the edge of Alstonville. Anyone who drives out there will see rows of fruit trees, bananas and avocados, where scientists conduct research and experiments. There are experimental plantations of mangos and custard apples, and plantations of lychees, coffee, kiwifruit, jackfruit and the Davidson plum can be found, not to mention macadamias. Originally that site was a dairy farm. The Department of Primary Industries said that the property was purchased in 1956, with the first research officer starting work in 1960. Forty-eight years adds up to a lot of research and a lot of work, but if the Government gets its way all that will be gone.

This centre at Alstonville currently provides research and industry development services for horticultural industries on the North Coast. There are jointly funded projects with industry as well as the Queensland Government and the CSIRO. Scientists are looking for ways to help farmers to be more profitable, to increase their yields and, importantly, to adopt sustainable practices to farm better and smarter and in more environmentally friendly ways. These include trying to find more natural solutions for the controlling of pests, for example, through the use of wasps, and improving soil health and reducing erosion by doing research on shade-tolerant grasses.

The State Labor Government has a financial black hole due to its financial management incompetence. Doing away with critical research centres such as the one at Alstonville does not make sense and is not good

policy. Frankly, it is short-sighted and stupid. How would we replace the loss of that facility and the knowledge and expertise of the staff members who work there? Some of Australia's best scientists are working at that centre and their loss would be a major blow for horticulture in Australia, not just in New South Wales. I imagine that the New South Wales Government has its eye on that 40 hectares of land and is counting the dollar signs as its figures out how much it would get if the farm were carved up for real estate, as this centre borders on a residential area.

I urge the State Labor Government to reconsider its decision and allow the Alstonville Centre for Tropical Horticulture to continue to operate. Does the New South Wales Government realise how much the horticultural industry is worth to the North Coast? Macadamias alone are worth over \$100 million in income and a lot of valuable research into macadamias is being done at that centre. Farmers, the agricultural industry and the community cannot afford to lose that expertise or the work that is currently being carried out at Alstonville. I urge the State Labor Government to reconsider its decision and enable the Alstonville Centre for Tropical Horticulture to continue to operate. If the Government wants to sell that property could it at least consider relocating the research arm to the nearby Department of Primary Industries facility at Wollongbar so that scientists are able to continue their work?

The Minister for Primary Industries said that this decision was part of a process and that the Department of Primary Industries would continue to do what it does best—that is, servicing rural communities. Closing the Alstonville Centre for Tropical Horticulture would not assist in servicing rural communities on the North Coast of New South Wales. The work carried out at the centre is specialised and relevant to that region and beyond. I call on the New South Wales Government to rethink its decision. If it does not change its mind at least it should consider the compromise that I have suggested—relocating the horticultural centre to Wollongbar and making it part of the Department of Primary Industries facility. At least in that way we will be able to retain existing scientific expertise. If the Government is insistent on closing the Alstonville Centre for Tropical Horticulture it should fully investigate the transfer option to Wollongbar before it makes any rash decision.

GADEN TROUT HATCHERY, JINDABYNE

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.53 p.m.]: Tonight I want to comment on one aspect that was referred to in the mini-budget this week. However, before doing so, and unlike Opposition members, I acknowledge that New South Wales has had difficult circumstances forced upon it as a result of the international economic situation. It is naive for Opposition members not to recognise a \$770 million drop in GST revenue as a serious challenge. When Coalition members were in government they left us with about four times the level of net government debt that we will be seeing over the next few years. I strongly oppose one aspect in Tuesday's mini-budget and I will be campaigning to have it overturned. On Tuesday morning I discovered that one of the cost-saving proposals in the Department of Primary Industries is the closure of the Gaden Trout Hatchery in Jindabyne.

Gaden Trout Hatchery has been in existence for 50 years. Its founders gave it to the New South Wales Government on the understanding that it would continue the work of developing trout fingerlings and stocking rivers and lakes. That hatchery produces about 1.2 million fingerlings a year and I estimate that it costs about \$700,000 to operate—certainly less than \$1 million. Recreational fishing in the Snowy Mountains region generates more than \$70 million to the local economy. Gaden Trout Hatchery has received extremely strong support from the local community, in particular, anglers in the region and the freshwater angling community right around New South Wales. Steve Samuels, President of the New South Wales Council of Freshwater Anglers, criticised the proposed closure and said he would support my efforts to keep the centre open. He pointed out that the hatchery generates 700 direct jobs and each year 35,000 visitors fish for trout in the Snowy Mountains region.

It is vital to keep open the Gaden Trout Hatchery, which produces rainbow trout for the whole of southern New South Wales. It is the major breeder of brown trout in the State, apart from a few other centres that breed them from eggs. If it were not for the Gaden Trout Hatchery there would be no salmon industry in Tasmania. People from Tasmania went to the Gaden Trout Hatchery when they wanted disease-free stock to start their commercial salmon industry. I have received dozens of emails and phone calls about the Gaden Trout Hatchery and I have already taken action in relation to them. As soon as I found out about the proposed closure of this hatchery I went to the Premier's office, expressed my anger and said that the decision was ridiculous and short sighted. Decisions on issues such as this do not relate to budgetary line items that reveal how much revenue has gone in or out of the budget of the Department of Primary Industries.

The broader economic benefit of the activities that are undertaken at the Gaden Trout Hatchery have to be taken into account. As I said earlier, the activities at that hatchery generate \$70 million for our local economy. I put that in writing to the Premier and the Treasurer to back up my personal lobbying, and I prepared a petition that is now circulating in the Monaro electorate. On Sunday I will attend the Snowy River Festival, where I will circulate that petition. At 11.00 a.m. on Sunday a rally will commence at the Gaden Trout Hatchery. I invite all members to attend that rally. I call on those who support the hatchery to join me in this campaign to ensure that this decision is overturned. I am confident that it will be overturned. Once those in Sydney who made the decision see the logic and economic flow on from this, I am sure they will reconsider this so-called savings decision.

I refer now to a positive issue in the mini-budget. For many years the budget of our local area health service has been stretched to the limit because of the battle to get locums. Locums are employed at our hospitals because of the shortage of doctors as a result of the failure of the former Federal Government to train enough doctors to staff our local hospitals. Area health services constantly fight to gain the services of these locums, thus increasing the price that they are paid. A measure in the mini-budget will ensure that the price that locums are paid is controlled. That measure will also ensure that area health services do not bid against other government-owned health services. I am sure that some doctors will not like this decision but it will be welcomed by local communities and by health services, and it should be welcomed by Opposition members as it will help health services to provide these services within their budgets. We face a massive challenge in health. The Auditor-General said that if we cannot stop this increase in funds our total health budget would be eroded by 2033. I do not think the member for Burrinjuck would criticise these measures. We should all be working together to tackle some of the cost blowouts that are occurring.

GOULBURN SALEYARDS

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn) [5.58 p.m.] What a sorry saga the Goulburn Saleyards has become! Goulburn gave away its council saleyards for \$100 on the promise of new saleyards. Eight years later it has almost nothing to show for it. The town is angry; it wants to know why. In 2000 Goulburn City Council concluded that it could not afford a major environmental yards upgrade. It decided to sell them in exchange for new saleyards further out on Mazemet Road. As the town found out later, the council of the day did not manage it well. Instead of a formal and open tender process, the yards, totalling around eight hectares, were sold off for \$100 to Kattle Gear Australia—a very cheap piece of real estate. Council provided the mortgage for Kattle Gear to buy an adjoining 1.9 hectares for \$165,000.

Not surprisingly a later probity report was scathing of council's poor process. But the deal was simple: to offset the millions new yards needed to be built, Kattle Gear could redevelop the old site as an industrial subdivision. Kattle Gear and its associated companies, reputable saleyard builders and managers, would also operate the yards until at least 2010. It sounds fair, but it has not worked out. A deed was agreed to between the council and the companies. Eight years later it took an application under freedom of information [FOI] legislation, a reference to the New South Wales Ombudsman and considerable time for the contents of that deed, which was marked confidential, to be released to me. Having read and re-read it and consulted widely, I understand the reluctance to make it public: The deed is a dud.

The deed assumed a partnership and a lot of goodwill. It assumed also that the new yards would be operating within three years. It assumed that in the meantime the old yards would be upgraded by Kattle Gear to stop the effluent problems and that council would provide money along the way, not just through the very cheap land, but also with engineering, planning and development assistance to a value of \$85,000 plus the construction of an effluent pipeline and treatment pond for the existing yards at a cost of \$220,000, all in the year 2000 dollar value. The Mazemet Road site was assumed to be suitable: a big risk to take without a thorough assessment. Council took that risk with this deed. Council also had to stump up almost \$600,000 for development works. Of course, Kattle Gear and associated companies were to contribute towards these development works, and they have.

The deed contained some protections: if the new yards were not commenced by March 2002, the council could acquire the old yards—but no price was specified. If the yards were not finished by 2003, council could also acquire the new land. The same conditions applied for the establishment of a retail centre. If the new yards did not operate until at least July 2010, council could claim damages. None of this has happened. Instead the two sides have fought each other to almost standstill. Why? From reading the deed it can be seen that no-one thought anything would go wrong. Instead, everything that could go wrong has gone wrong. Eight years on

there are no new yards, but the problems with effluent continue. Council still contributes to the cost of managing the pollution—the very problem that started all this—and the town is still unhappy. At least two other groups are looking to build regional yards elsewhere.

There are other losers caught in this problem. The stock and station agents using the yards were stuck with a special levy of 0.5 per cent of turnover for environmental works—more than double the levy paid at neighbouring yards. They estimate it has cost them \$1.5 million over eight years, which cannot be seen in improvements. Now truck operators also are paying exorbitant fees for truck wash facilities to meet water quality standards required by the Sydney Catchment Authority. The effect of all this is that agents and truck operators avoid Goulburn yards whenever they can, and sales have dwindled. Kattle Gear is not happy either: a single industrial block has not been sold to fund the yards. Why did council and the Kattle Gear group have a falling out? Why did the deed and associated contracts include so much wriggle room? The contracts included the following term, "The parties agree that due consideration shall be given to any delay arising from inclement weather and or unreasonable delays arising." Surely a delay of five years is more than unreasonable?

Why did the then council not exercise its rights to re-acquire land and seek damages? An environmental impact statement for the Mazemet Road site proposal is about to be put on public exhibition. This needs to satisfy the Sydney Catchment Authority in particular, but also the concerns of neighbours and the town of Goulburn. That is when the moment of truth will arrive. If the site is rejected, will Goulburn have any yards at all? If on the other hand the new site passes the test, the town will heave a huge sigh of relief, reputations will be reborn and the question then must be asked at the highest level, "What took them so long?"

ANIMAL SUPPORT ORGANISATION VOICELESS

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [6.02 p.m.]: Tonight I acknowledge the achievements of Voiceless, a Paddington-based organisation dedicated to giving animals in Australia and across the globe a voice. Animals play many roles in our lives: they are our companions, we use them to produce and test products, we race them and we employ them. Despite our reliance on animals, or perhaps because of it, we often fail to protect them from cruelty, putting profit over our responsibilities as civilised beings. Brian Sherman and his daughter Ondine set up Voiceless in May 2004 with its mission to promote respect and compassion for animals, to increase awareness of the conditions in which they live and to take action to protect animals from suffering. This year Brian visited me with staff from the Voiceless legal arm: corporate counsel Katrina Sharman, Australia's first full time animal lawyer, and lawyer Sarah Kossew, to discuss animal welfare matters.

While they informed me of the depressingly cruel fate of so many animals in Australia, particularly factory-farmed animals, they also told me about many achievements that will promote a more humane culture within Australian parliaments and the wider Australian and international community. The Voiceless legal arm works to improve legal protection for animals, it monitors enforcement of existing laws and it educates the legal profession about animal law. I understand it is the first of its kind within an Australian animal protection organisation. An important Voiceless legal arm achievement was to get animal law courses taught in eight law schools in the Asia-Pacific region. These students could be our future leaders and Ministers in this Parliament. Their exposure to animal law means they will graduate with an understanding of how the law fails to protect animals. They will know how the law can reduce suffering.

Through its legal arm, Voiceless runs public animal law lectures that tour law schools across Australia. My staff attended a lecture given by an Indian animal advocate who uses the Indian constitutional mandate for compassion towards all living creatures to defend animals in court. He achieved mandatory labelling of animal-derived products. Voiceless supported Australia's first pro bono animal law service at Redfern Legal Centre, which manages a register of legal practitioners willing to do animal rights work, supporting animal cruelty prosecutions and building animal protection case law. Voiceless developed an online discussion forum where over 250 solicitors, barristers, students, legal academics and law graduates in Australia and New Zealand discuss animal law topics, including bills before Parliament.

Voiceless plays an important role in educating the community about the fate of factory-farmed animals. Its legal arm published a report on animal-derived food product labelling, which reveals the loopholes that allow food producers to escape scrutiny about their animal product use. While egg labelling allows millions of consumers to boycott battery-farmed eggs, where chickens are kept in cramped conditions and undergo cruel procedures such as beak trimming, other products with egg ingredients do not have to indicate how eggs were produced or whether the product contains any egg ingredients. There are similar problems with free-range meat ingredients in products. Most people do not condone cruelty and want to make informed purchases. I call on the Government to review this report and introduce stronger labelling requirements.

Voiceless initiated an advertising campaign on factory-farmed pigs in newspapers, magazines and bus shelters. Factory-farmed pigs account for 90 per cent of pigs raised in Australia. These pigs are denied light, undergo painful procedures such as tail docking and teeth clipping, and are kept in sow stalls where they cannot turn to care for their young or take steps—after giving birth on concrete floors. More consumers are refusing to support these practices with the free-range meat market growing with consumer awareness. Through its grants program, Voiceless supports groups that improve animal welfare. Previous grants include \$5,000 to Choose Cruelty Free for an animal product testing booklet, \$10,000 to People Against Cruelty in Animal Transport for billboards on the live export industry, and \$10,000 to Pet Rescue to raise awareness about puppy farms.

My Lord Mayoral Salary Trust also supports animal welfare. This year Doggie Rescue received \$25,000 towards training to rescue abandoned dogs from death row. Last year Cordelia's Canine Rescue received \$10,000 to carry out responsible pet ownership education. In 2006 the Factory Community Centre received \$15,700 to reduce animal cruelty in public housing estates and local schools. Animal welfare is not a fringe issue. Most people do not condone cruelty and believe that animals should be protected from harm. I applaud Voiceless in raising awareness about animal welfare and bringing together the legal community to improve animal protection. I call on the Government to make animal welfare a priority and work closely with Voiceless to develop humane animal legislation.

OLDER DRIVERS COMPULSORY THIRD PARTY INSURANCE PREMIUMS

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [6.07 p.m.]: A Lake Macquarie resident has brought to my attention that this year his renewal notice for compulsory third party insurance shows an increase from \$241 to \$503—an increase of 109 per cent. The letter accompanying the premium notice advised that motor insurance history has been adopted as a factor in determining the price of the green slip. The letter also says that insurers may consider factors such as the age of the vehicle and the ages of the driver and owner when determining premiums. Despite these generalisations, the letter did not say why the premium had been increased in this case. The same insurer issued a media statement in March 2007 headed, "Older drivers are safer than most". The media release is based on the company's own information and states:

... analysis of [the company's] national car accident insurance claims data shows that drivers aged 65 and older make up the lowest proportion of these claims—just nine per cent.

The media statement also states:

When our senior drivers do make an insurance claim, our data indicates that the cost of the claim is much less than other, younger drivers.

It continues:

The research provides an interesting counterpoint to the view that older drivers are less safe on the roads due to their age and some medical conditions typically associated with getting older.

Nothing in the media statement indicates that these statements cease to apply when a policyholder turns 80. This appears utterly inconsistent with the reference in the accompanying letter to claims history. Basing premiums on the age of the owner and driver is contrary to information stated on the Motor Accident Authority's website in mid July when this particular renewal was issued. The website advises that premiums will be based on the class of the vehicle and the area in which the vehicle is usually garaged. No other criteria for calculating premiums are mentioned, but insurers appear to have made age the main factor in adjusting premiums.

Earlier this year I made some comparisons between insurers and across age groups to see what the triggers and the differences are. These examples are based on a hypothetical 17-year-old vehicle garaged near the centre of the Lake Macquarie electorate. I know there will be variations for other vehicles in other locations, but I expect that the results will be similar. I found variations between insurers, but the most significant differences are on renewal notices for existing customers as they reach age thresholds. The 109 per cent increase that I first mentioned was on the renewal for someone who had just turned 80.

Other insurers apply age thresholds too. Premiums quoted for a second company linked to the Motor Accident Authority's website show that when a driver turns 71, the premium increases from \$376 to \$492. This age-related increase is striking, and the age at which it applies is inconsistent with the 80 years of the first company I mentioned. The age penalty can be verified with other insurers. A third company reduces premiums

with driver maturity from ages 55 to 69 until they reach a low of \$265. However, after this premiums increase overnight to \$300 for 70 year olds. Interestingly, the calculator on the Government's Motor Accidents Authority website shows that this same company's premiums do not rise from age 70 to age 99.

Mr Steve Whan: I hope I get to experience that.

Mr GREG PIPER: The member for Monaro is declaring an interest. Premiums vary significantly between insurers and there is no consistency on whether age determines premium. One insurer has the same premium for ages 20 to 99. Others introduce penalties at a variety of ages. One has its lowest premiums beginning at age 27 and maintains that level until age 99. The inconsistencies and contradictions seem to defy explanation, but they illustrate that some companies see age as a condition that can be penalised.

Older drivers in the Lake Macquarie electorate have made it clear to me that they feel as though they are under attack as a result of the Roads and Traffic Authority's proposal to limit older drivers to a 10-kilometre radius from home and now through the unannounced, unexplained and unjustified age penalty built into some compulsory third party premiums. Older drivers feel that they are under attack when all they ask is to maintain their lifestyle, independence and dignity. The \$10 increase in this week's mini-budget has added to their pain. I know that the Government can see the justification in this, but I believe that it should be questioning the companies' attacks on older drivers. I call on the Government to make the insurance companies either justify these age thresholds or remove them.

Question—That private members' statements be noted—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Private members' statements noted.

ASSENT TO BILL

Assent to the following bill reported:

Children (Criminal Proceedings) Amendment (Youth Conduct Orders) Bill 2008

BIBLE SOCIETY NSW (CORPORATE CONVERSION) BILL 2008

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

The House adjourned at 6.13 p.m. until Friday 14 November 2008 at 10.00 a.m.
