

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 24 March 2009

The Speaker (The Hon. George Richard Torbay) took the chair at 1.00 p.m.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

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

COMMONWEALTH BANK ROOTY HILL BRANCH CLOSURE

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.07 p.m.]: In recent weeks the community in parts of my electorate, particularly in and around Rooty Hill and Mount Druitt, has been shocked by the news that the Commonwealth Bank intends to close its branch at Rooty Hill effective from 24 April 2009, just one day before Anzac Day. The community was shocked not only because of the branch closure but because of the way the bank has handled the matter. Elected representatives, community members and local businesses received the news in a brief letter from the regional manager, Ms Julie Willding. There was no prior consultation with the local community, community groups, local councils or members of Parliament. The letter I received gave the explanation that the closure follows "a review of the Commonwealth Bank's footprint in the Rooty Hill-Mount Druitt area."

There was an immediate reaction to the news. Many letters and emails were sent to the bank and to my office. A petition was organised by local businesses, led by Mr Maurice Lynch, who has run the pharmacy on the north side of the rail line at Rooty Hill for some 40 years, and Mr Colin McKenzie, the newsagent on the southern side of the rail line and owner of probably the longest-established business in the town, going back to the late 1950s. Whilst the many people, including me, who use this branch could vent our anger and direct insults at the bank and its decision, most have been restrained out of respect for a branch and staff that have served the area well for more than 40 years. Having said that, I want to know how a commercial decision could be made that closes a branch in a substantial shopping centre like Rooty Hill yet, for example, leaves one branch open in the neighbouring town of Doonside and two in Blacktown. It will close the only bank in the town and the only bank of any kind on the southern side of the railway line between Blacktown and St Marys.

Yesterday I walked the shopping centre and found that 61 businesses are operating on the north side. The businesses include a hotel, two pharmacies—one of which is operated by Mr Lynch—five real estate agents, legal businesses, a number of medical centres, a dry cleaner, a pet shop and numerous food outlets and restaurants, including fresh food and grocery stores. A community legal centre is situated about 100 metres out of the centre and more businesses are located alongside the Uniting Church, and there are three other churches. The Commonwealth Bank branch in question is situated on the southern side of the railway line, along with some 22 businesses including a Teachers Federation Credit Union, one real estate agency, a newsagent, a hotel, a hairdresser and many food outlets. Also there is evidence of new shops soon to open. Last year a new IGA store opened, and it has been successful in drawing new customers to the centre.

As not only the local member of Parliament but also a long-time customer of the Commonwealth Bank, I ask the bank's management to review this decision. If the bank had problems at this location I am sure that I, my Federal colleague Roger Price—who, in recent days, has held a number of meetings with senior officers of the Commonwealth Bank—Blacktown City Council and local residents and businesses would be prepared to work with the bank to improve its presence in the shopping centre. I repeat my earlier point: It is the only bank of any brand on the southern side of the railway line between Blacktown and St Marys and, of course, it is the

only bank in Rooty Hill. That in itself is an important reason for the Commonwealth Bank—out of loyalty to its many hundreds if not thousands of customers, who have supported that bank through the decades—to review this decision. On 23 March 2009, Mr Lynch, the pharmacist I mentioned earlier, wrote to Mr Geoff Wearne, General Manager, New South Wales-Australian Capital Territory Corporate Financial Services, referring to the impact of the closure of the bank on the local community. The letter stated:

The North and South sides of Rooty Hill Road are full of local business and banking trade. Taking away and closing the only bank in Rooty Hill disadvantages the bank's reputation, trade and greatly affects and inconveniences local individuals and businesses like the local aged care facility—Our Lady of Consolation Nursing Home that houses and cares for over three-hundred residents.

There is another nursing home in the area and another shopping centre is a few hundred yards out of the centre. I ask the Commonwealth Bank to support the local community, which has supported it over many decades.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.12 p.m.]: I thank the member for Mount Druitt for raising a most important issue that affects the Rooty Hill and Mount Druitt communities: the closure of the Commonwealth Bank branch in Rooty Hill. It is the only bank in the area—and we all know how important it is to have a bank in our local communities. Banks certainly revitalise business strips, and small- and medium-size businesses rely on banks to provide branches in local areas. The member rightly highlighted the fact that after 40 years of service to those communities—during which time the branch enjoyed community support—it is inappropriate to close the branch, particularly without consulting community groups, residents, local businesses, and the State and the Federal members of Parliament.

The member for Mount Druitt suggested a number of options. Commonwealth Bank management should consult with the local community, review its decision and reconsider continuing to operate in the area. I wonder what will happen to the bank's employees when that branch closes. Frequently the media advises that banks make record profits. The Commonwealth Bank should review its decision to close the branch and confer with the local community in an endeavour to continue its operations.

PORT STEPHENS ELECTORATE ROADS

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens) [1.13 p.m.]: In my electorate there are concerns about the state and safety of main roads in and around Port Stephens. This issue came to the fore following a tragic crash in which two cars collided head-on, leaving a 12-year-old girl and her father injured and Mrs Lee Doyle, a much-loved and respected Raymond Terrace woman, dead. The crash occurred on Richardson Road, the main road connecting Raymond Terrace to Salt Ash. Richardson Road is single carriageway and extends from Raymond Terrace, weaving around Grahamstown Dam to Nelson Bay Road at Salt Ash. The speed limit on the road is 60 kilometres and 70 kilometres per hour in the built-up areas of Raymond Terrace, but for most of its length it is 100 kilometres per hour. As soon as news broke of the tragic car crash, people asked, "Why hasn't something been done about this road?"

The New South Wales Labor Government has reacted to that question by announcing that it will review the speed limit on the road. That review may give the Government the opportunity to take credit for doing something—although, in actual fact, reducing the speed limit along the road will do very little. Following the completion of the Raymond Terrace bypass, Richardson Road is the recommended route for all northbound traffic from Hexham to the Tilligerry and Tomaree peninsulas. The traffic includes trucks servicing those communities as well as the many tourists who treble the population during the summer months. That additional traffic adds to traditionally high local traffic volumes, as residents of the eastern end of Port Stephens travel to Raymond Terrace, Maitland and beyond to shop, visit and work. I have used that route at least twice a day for the past 25 years.

In the original draft of the Lower Hunter Strategy by the former Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, rural land adjoining Cabbage Tree Road and Tomago Road was proposed to be rezoned to industrial—a proposal that was dropped from the final strategy. The Tomago Road-Cabbage Tree Road route is a much shorter alternative route than Richardson Road from Hexham to Williamstown and beyond. Williamstown is home to Newcastle Airport, the fastest-growing regional airport in Australia, and RAAF Williamstown, which is fast becoming Australia's main air force base. Recently the Minister signed off on the Defence and Airport Related Employment Zone at Williamstown, and other lands are being considered for rezoning at the western end of this road corridor.

The maintenance and upgrading of roads is an expensive business and I ask the Minister to meet with Port Stephens Council to determine whether the Cabbage Tree-Tomago Road corridor should be considered for

rezoning. An industrial zoning would necessitate a divided carriageway along the length of the corridor and much of the traffic using Richardson Road would use the Cabbage Tree to Tomago Road route. Commonsense would indicate that the hierarchy of those two road corridors be determined so that future efforts can be concentrated properly.

Ultimately, Port Stephens roads desperately need the attention of the New South Wales Labor Government, which has neglected them for too long. We in Port Stephens particularly have next to no public transport options, especially on the Tomaree and Tilligerry peninsulas. Therefore, we are extremely reliant on private motor vehicles. Tourism is also a major factor in the need to make major improvements to the Port Stephens road network. The population of the Tomaree peninsula triples over the summer break, and the huge majority of tourists come and go by road. Many of those tourists, particularly those from the suburbs of Sydney, get their first experience of single-lane, 100-kilometre-per-hour driving as they breast the wall of Grahamstown Dam on Richardson Road.

It is a disturbing statistic that since the turn of this century on average six people have died per year on roads within the Port Stephens local government area and all but 10 per cent of those people have died on rural and residential roads, not on the Pacific Highway. With a population of 60,000, Port Stephens residents have a one in 10,000 chance of dying on one of our roads in any particular year. This is a horrifying ratio and I call on the State Government to do all it can to help Port Stephens and Great Lakes councils make our roads safer by providing adequate roads funding.

ROCKDALE ELECTORATE ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Mr FRANK SARTOR (Rockdale) [1.17 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a matter that has plagued the electorate of Rockdale for a number of years, that of hoons and associated serious antisocial behaviour. When I was elected as the member for Rockdale in 2003 one of my first tasks was to tackle the hoon problem, which was of serious concern to me and to my constituents along the Botany Bay foreshore. On 1 May 2004 I convened a public meeting for residents of Dolls Point, Sandringham and Sans Souci to discuss their concerns. As a result of that meeting, and given the longstanding nature of the problem, it was agreed to implement a number of quite severe measures to limit access for hoons frequenting the area, especially late at night.

The measures included the installation of one-way spikes and boom gates in a number of streets in Dolls Point and Sandringham. To assist police in finding hoons, some no-stopping zones were declared in a number of streets between the hours of 10.00 p.m. and 5.00 a.m. Spikes were installed also in the St George Sailing Club car park exit and boom gates were installed at several access points along Cook Park. While hoons were disturbing and frightening the community around Dolls Point, Sandringham and Sans Souci with their late-night antics including noise, antisocial behaviour, threatening behaviour, sex, brawls and drugs, other hoons were making life very unpleasant for the patrons of shops and restaurants in Brighton-Le-Sands.

In 2003 I also established and chaired a local hoons task force involving the police, Rockdale council, the Roads and Traffic Authority, and members of the local community. We met regularly and introduced a number of key traffic restrictions around Brighton-Le-Sands also. These measures were supported by a persistent campaign by police involving various high-profile operations in the area. Many fines were issued and cars were often confiscated. As a result of concerted action from 2003 to 2007 the hoon problem was substantially reduced. However, a new wave of offensive hoon activity over the past summer has prompted renewed concern.

On 19 February I convened another meeting of residents of Dolls Point, Sans Souci and Sandringham to discuss their concerns about the increase in antisocial and hoon behaviour in the area. Many residents told of the following problems: speeding, dangerous driving, urinating in public, suspected drug activity, sexual activity in public, loud late-night noise, violence and threatening behaviour. I thank local area commander Detective Superintendent Helen Begg for attending the meeting as well as Inspector Gary Charlesworth, Rockdale mayor Bill Saravinovski and councillors Shane O'Brien and James Macdonald.

As a result of the meeting, a residents working group has been established to find solutions to the issues raised. The first meeting of the working group was held on Friday 6 March. During the meeting the group agreed, by consensus, to request Rockdale council to consider a number of additional measures, including the installation of boom gates and spikes at Vanston Parade-Lena Street and Ida Street; Vanston Parade to become a one-way street; and the installation of traffic-calming devices along Dickin Avenue, Primrose Avenue,

Clareville Avenue and Riverside Drive. Police also have increased patrols along Vanston Parade and Ida Street, issuing more fines to offenders, and Rockdale council recently purchased a portable camera, which is being trialled in skate park. Should the trial prove to be successful, the camera could be used in a number of other hot spots.

This coming Saturday I will host another public meeting for residents of Brighton-Le-Sands along The Grand Parade to discuss their concerns about hoon and antisocial behaviour in and around Cook Park at the Brighton-Le-Sands and Kyeemagh end. Council officers and the police will be in attendance also to listen to their concerns. Meanwhile, apart from the beachfront areas, there is a resurgence of hoon activity in the Arncliffe-Bardwell Park area. This is also raising concerns, which I draw to the attention of the Minister for Police. St George police have been very cooperative and are following up on all these issues.

While I understand that the Minister's main focus at present may well be bikie gangs, I believe the return of some high-profile anti-hoon police operations may be necessary next summer. Some may see hoon behaviour as little more than mischievous behaviour or a nuisance. However, the stories I hear suggest it is often much more serious than that, and in all probability is often associated with criminal behaviour. Hence I raise my concerns in this House and hope that we can continue to give the local community all the support it needs and, over time, eliminate this dysfunctional behaviour.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.22 p.m.]: I thank the member for Rockdale for highlighting the problem of antisocial behaviour by hoons that is causing concern within his electorate. The member also identified a number of areas in which he has been quite active since his election to this place in 2003. In February this year he convened community meetings and established a residents working group, which has brought together a number of stakeholders in his community to deal with a resurgence of hoon activity in the area. We will all see some type of hoon activity in our communities from time to time, and it can be very distressing.

The member for Rockdale has highlighted how antisocial such behaviour is for patrons of the major shopping strips that we all know very well, and he has made some recommendations to Rockdale council. The member has always been very successful not only in identifying issues in his electorate but in bringing all stakeholders together to achieve positive outcomes. As Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Police, I would be more than happy to work with the local member and the area command in his community to see what anti-hoon operations could be considered in the near future.

SUMMIT CARE EMPLOYEE ENTITLEMENTS

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [1.23 p.m.]: On 30 June last year, Summit Care—a disability-based care organisation—ceased its operations in Broken Hill, owing many of its employees full redundancy, annual leave and superannuation entitlements. Currently, local business providers also are owed outstanding funds. As a result—and quite rightly—the 31 Broken Hill former employees of the failed organisation and the relevant business providers have been left seething and asking just how and when they will be paid their entitlements. Just a month ago I declared publicly that the Government, which awards such tenders, should ensure that more stringent safeguards exist for employees who work for non-government agencies such as Summit Care that receive State Government funding. I believe because Summit Care won the tender for this business in Broken Hill and because employees and businesses were funded by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, the department should be responsible for enforcing the rules and ensuring that all affected individuals receive their appropriate settlements.

However, after pursuing the matter on behalf of my constituents and receiving a letter from the office of the Minister for Ageing and Disability Services on 22 January, it became evident that the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, despite appointing the tenderers for its services in Broken Hill, would not claim responsibility for the payments owed to former Summit Care employees and business providers. The Minister's response claimed that the relationship between the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and Summit Care made it just one independent entity contracting for the provision of services. As such, the Minister said that the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care does not have any jurisdiction in enforcing the payment of entitlements, and therefore cannot intervene.

To me this was a great misrepresentation of the truth. It is not the responsibility of the Office of Fair Trading to ensure that the 31 former employees and unpaid business providers receive their entitlements, as the Minister for Disability Services said in his correspondence to me. Rather, it was the responsibility of his office

and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care to undertake a process of due diligence regarding Summit Care and other prospective tenderers before appointing the successful tenderer. The Government has put its head in the sand on this issue, and it is simply not on. I refer to comments made by the Minister for Disability Services on 3 December last year in response to a question from the member for Shellharbour about how the Stronger Together package was improving services for people with a disability. At the time the Minister claimed that one of the key challenges for a civilised society was to ensure that it is genuinely inclusive—that is, to make sure that each member of our society is treated as an individual human being and that their human rights and individuality are recognised and accepted.

That said, why are the rights of the former employees of Summit Care—carers of people with a disability—not being followed up by the Minister's department when surely the Minister has a duty of care to ensure that they receive their outstanding entitlements? The Minister simply wants to pass the buck on this issue and has remained unaccountable in all correspondence. Claiming that his department and Summit Care are two separate entities and that therefore the Government is not liable to help former employees seek their entitlements is baseless, vague and irresponsible. I draw attention to the case of a former employee of Summit Care who, as at 28 May last year, was owed \$17,305.23 by the organisation upon being notified of her redundancy.

As of December last year Summit Care had paid her only \$1,000 of what she is owed, with no accompanying payslip. She is still owed \$16,305.23, and that is not good enough. This person is not alone: 30 other former employees are not being paid their dues. Summit Care still operates in Queensland and Victoria: the company has not been declared bankrupt and is still capable of paying its outstanding bills. The Government has been good at maintaining the chain of responsibility in past legislation. These rules are good for everyone, and this chain of responsibility stops with the Government. These workers do not have the ability or the means necessary to pursue this debt. Under the chain of responsibility I believe the Government has a duty to ensure that those employees are paid their entitlements.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE (Drummoyn—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.28 p.m.]: I thank the member for Murray-Darling for highlighting those concerns on behalf of the former employees of Summit Care. He highlighted a number of industrial issues. I remind the member that there is something called an industrial instrument, and obviously those former employees would understand their award or enterprise agreement entitlements. It is unfortunate when employers do not give employees their entitlements, especially in relation to redundancy, superannuation and long service leave. If former employees are union members, they have the opportunity to seek advice. I am not sure whether they are: the member has not highlighted that they are union members. If they are not there are still a number of ways in which they can go to the Industrial Relations Commission and seek redress either through Small Claims or retrieval of their entitlements. New South Wales has strong industrial laws that protect former employees in retrieving their entitlements. I thank the member for taking the time to bring forward important issues on behalf of these former employees.

AUSTRALIAN NAVAL ASSOCIATION STATE CONFERENCE

Mr GRANT McBRIDE (The Entrance) [1.30 p.m.]: On 28 February I had the pleasure of attending the New South Wales section of the Australian Naval Association's State Conference at Diggers at The Entrance. The Australian Naval Association began in 1920 as the Ex-Navalmen's Association. It is the premier organisation outside the navy looking after the interests of both serving and former navy members. The association embraces men and women of all ranks and has the motto "Each for all and all for each". The principles of the association are to unite and develop friendship among all former and currently serving naval personnel and to promote and assist activities in the wider community to improve the health and wellbeing of its members. The Australian Naval Association is not just a social club: it supports naval service personnel in a numbers of ways—representation to Government on veterans' issues, support for the disadvantaged, advisory and counselling services, mentoring advice to young members, assistance for naval cadets, and financial assistance. Within its membership is a wide range of experience and knowledge covering all aspects of naval life.

The recent State conference and annual general meeting was the fifty-eighth conference and it was held in my electorate for the first time. In recent years conferences have been held at Rooty Hill, Penrith and the Blue Mountains. Next year the conference will be held in Orange, in the Central West. The Tuggerah Lakes subsection, along with its president, Peter Ashpole, organised the recent event and secured the services of Lieutenant Steven Reynolds, CSM, to be master of ceremonies for the proceedings. Lieutenant Reynolds is the Officer in Charge of the Fleet Logistic Support element of the Royal Australian Navy. Special guests of the

conference included Rear Admiral Nigel Coats, AM, Fleet Commander, Royal Australian Navy, Noel Jackson, the President of the New South Wales section of the Australian Naval Association; Bob Graham, the Mayor of Wyong Shire; and Bob Cooper and Bill Humphries, State vice-presidents of the association.

Rear Admiral Coats inspected the cadets from Training Ship *Hawkesbury*, which is a training base on the banks of Brisbane Water on the Central Coast. He was very complimentary of their high standard of presentation. After officially opening the conference the rear admiral went on to say that he was proud to be a member of the Australian Naval Association and to be a part of the good it is doing in the wider community. He gave accounts also of the new navy and its role in protecting Australian borders and in other activities around the world. It was interesting to listen to the rear admiral because, like many people in Australia, I was unaware of some of the navy's activities, not just around our borders where responsibilities are increasing daily in pulling up ships and fishing boats engaged in illegal activities, but also in providing protection for Pacific nations from intrusions into their waters. The technology used in the navy is increasing and the point was made that the equipment the navy has now—aeroplanes, helicopters, ships, landing barges and all the hardware and software that goes with them—is at the cutting edge of available technology worldwide.

The rear admiral also pointed out that the navy would visit Sydney Harbour. I did not have the opportunity to see the arrival of the ships. Some members may have seen it: television and other media outlets covered it. It was quite a sight. I wondered how they were going to anchor all those ships, and run Sydney ferries and all the other activities that occur on the harbour. The navy also had to renew its permission to enter the city. More than 2,000 sailors from the Royal Australian Navy were in Sydney during that event. The national President of the Australian Naval Association, Les Dwyer, also addressed the conference with information about members accessing the HMAS *Sydney* virtual memorial, which commemorates the 645 men lost on HMAS *Sydney* on 19 November 1941 during World War II. Les Dwyer went on to say, "It is a great honour for the naval association to provide the perpetual means for future generations to remember the *Sydney* and her brave crew as well as share in the unique personal histories of the sailors who died in Australia's greatest maritime tragedy." For me the day was an experience in appreciating the men and women of the navy who serve the people of Australia in both peace and war. In conclusion, I acknowledge the contribution made by all to a very successful conference.

TRIBUTE TO NORM JENNINGS

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury) [1.34 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to a very special Australian and good friend who passed away recently. Saturday 14 February 2009 was the day Australia lost an ingenious inventor and Rouse Hill lost a favourite son. I speak of none other than Norm Jennings, who was born in 1934 in Riverstone and grew up to invent one of Australia's most iconic products, Dynamic Lifter. As far as great Australian inventions go, Dynamic Lifter was on par with the Victa lawnmower and the Hills hoist. Dynamic Lifter was that much-loved but smelly garden product produced by pelletising chook poo. It was invented 40 years ago by none other than my great mate Norm Jennings of Rouse Hill. The original factory on the corner of Commercial Road and Withers Road is now long gone, but the unmistakable smell of Dynamic Lifter in gardens across this country and around the world will linger forever.

Norm Jennings was the quintessential blond-haired, blue-eyed Australian and loved everything about his beloved country. He loved learning about how things worked and he especially loved working on cars. Norm, who was clever with his hands, loved nothing more than making something old new again. It was this passion that eventually led him to mastering the art of turning smelly old chook poo into one of the most marketable garden products in the world. Norm was formerly an engineer, learning his trade at Clyde goods yards near Granville. After moving to Rouse Hill he bought land and became a poultry farmer. But, while the chooks were laying, he felt there was a waste product that might be marketable. Norm's father and uncles used to collect the poultry manure under the cages to fertilise their vegies to see who could grow the biggest tomatoes or capsicums.

Norm, knowing how good chook poo was as a fertiliser, tried to make it into something a woman or a housewife could use in the garden, which was no easy task. Norm's great mate of more than 50 years, another Rouse Hill icon and successful businessman, Jack Iori, continually berated him about wasting his time and said that it would never work and he should give up, but Norm persisted. Norm used his engineering skills to make machines to sterilise the droppings and turn them into pellets. Trials of the product that followed, conducted on wheat in 1970 by the Department of Agriculture, showed a 150 per cent higher yield than any chemical fertilisers on the market at the time. Farmers who witnessed the trial results suggested the rapid growth resembled something like dynamite. That was when Norm's wife and business partner, Nadia, came up with the name Dynamic Lifter, which is now available all over the world.

Poultry manure was well known as probably the best organic matter for growing vegetables; however, the acid in the raw manure had a tendency to burn plants. Norm quickly discovered that if the manure was anaerobically composted the acid content could be eliminated. And that is what made it the perfect garden fertiliser. Norm marketed the product himself and once said in a radio interview in South Australia that he was going to eliminate the smell. For an hour after the interview women rang in from everywhere to say, "Please don't change the smell." They felt if it did not smell it would not work! The product is now widely used in the United States, Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Norm married his wife, Nadia, in 1956, and they were very close. They had three children and numerous grandchildren. Norm loved his family dearly but always had time for other people and supported his community through his membership of service clubs. Norm was a foundation member of Kenthurst Rotary Club, giving up much of his time on behalf of good causes for those less fortunate. Norm never forgot his humble beginnings and treated everyone he met with the greatest respect, speaking ill of no-one, except Labor Party members.

Norm's other great love was fishing and he delighted in taking anyone he met out to his favourite fishing spots around Smiths Lakes. If anyone ever became seasick he would take them back close to shore, where he would tell them to swim the rest of the way as he had to get back to the fish, especially if they were biting, and he certainly meant it! Many a special guest or relative was left soaking wet after a friendly fishing trip with Norm. Almost a thousand friends and relatives turned out at Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Kellyville on Tuesday 19 February to farewell a man many said was larger than life itself—Norm Jennings, a great bloke, great Australian inventor and great Australian. May he forever rest in peace.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.39 p.m.]: I thank the member for Hawkesbury for acknowledging his great friend Norm Jennings and for highlighting his story in the Chamber. What a great man: to invent Dynamic Lifter! He was from Rouse Hill and, as the member said, he was a symbol of what is good and what is Australian. It was amazing to hear that the product came from such humble beginnings and is now exported to many countries. I thank the member for Hawkesbury for highlighting that fact. We extend our condolences to Norm's family on his passing. I am sure that he will be missed in his community. It is great that the member had such a close friendship with Norm Jennings, and I thank him for recounting his story in this place.

QUEANBEYAN COMMUNITY CABINET MEETING

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Small Business) [1.41 p.m.]: Queanbeyan hosted a community cabinet meeting on 10 February and a follow-up meeting two weeks ago. I will detail some of the great achievements that resulted from those meetings and from enabling people to meet directly with Ministers in their community in an undaunting forum. Enabling people to speak directly with Ministers and heads of departments is a positive Rees Government initiative. About 200 people took advantage of the opportunity to attend the Queanbeyan public meeting and they raised a number of issues. The event included a Cabinet meeting and one-on-one meetings. People were able to line up to meet with Ministers. In fact, it was a bit like a parent and teacher night, where teachers are seated around a room and parents line up to speak with them. A public forum was then held at which people could ask questions of and raise other important issues with Ministers.

People took the opportunity to raise a number of important issues in our region, including the future of Rusten House, which was the original hospital facility built on the Queanbeyan Hospital site. I am very pleased that the Premier announced at the follow-up meeting that Rusten House would be handed over to the community rather than sold off. That was a terrific win for the community. The need for a ring road around Queanbeyan was also raised. The Premier could not provide an immediate response because assessment work still needs to be done. The Queanbeyan City Council has received funding from the Roads and Traffic Authority to undertake a traffic study to ascertain future needs and a decision about the appropriate location will be made on the basis of that study. Some people supported the Edwin Land Parkway option, which is the southern ring road option, but some opposed it because it would take cars past their homes. A number of issues are yet to be resolved in that regard.

Tourism Snowy Mountains raised two issues with Ministers: the Roads and Traffic Authority's proposal to require snow chains to be used on four-wheel drive vehicles and the status of the Cooma airport. The Premier took immediate action on the Roads and Traffic Authority proposal and rejected it, much to the delight of the Snowy Mountains tourism industry. The Government and I also are continuing to work to get the Cooma

airport up and running again. The Queanbeyan Children's Special Needs Group Inc. was also successful in gaining additional recurrent funding after its discussions with Minister Lynch. It is a fabulous organisation that services preschool-aged children with disabilities. The Department of Lands was also popular. The Kings Highway was raised by a number of people, particularly residents of The Ridgeway who were seeking alterations to plans for the new entrance to the development. They had some success, but a number of safety issues must be taken into account.

The event was very impressive and I was pleased to welcome some of the initiatives the Premier announced, including the allocation of \$80,000 for Queanbeyan City Library from new funding available for country public libraries that resulted from the rural and regional task force recommendations. It is terrific to see that funding going to Queanbeyan. I also had the pleasure last Thursday of announcing that \$200,000 from that fund has been allocated to the Monaro Regional Library and Information Service. That is a great tribute to the work the community has done. All in all, the community Cabinet meeting was a terrific initiative and it attracted very positive feedback. Comments included, "It was really great having these people here today"; "A wonderful opportunity"; "We never get the chance to see the people from Sydney and this was that chance"; and, "You do know that the information has got to the people who need to see it."

People took the opportunity to meet with Ministers and heads of departments and some very positive things have come out of the process. A number of planning issues are being followed up and the Premier was able to report back on a number of public transport issues. The Government's efforts contrast starkly with the Opposition's efforts a couple of weeks later, when the Leader of the Opposition came to town and told an audience of roughly 40 people about his policy discussion paper. However, he was unable to explain how his economic policy would work while revenue was declining because of the current economic conditions. Most importantly, as the local newspaper observed, the Opposition failed at any stage during the presentation to offer any alternative policies. Unfortunately, it sought to spread old rumours about our hospitals that have been addressed and resolved. The Government listened to the community and responded positively, but the Opposition was negative, negative, negative.

MAIN ROAD 90

Mr JOHN TURNER (Myall Lakes) [1.46 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House Main Road 90, which is in the Greater Taree City Council area. I raise in particular correspondence I have received from the Minister for Roads and misleading statements made by the Roads and Traffic Authority that are unfortunately reflected in recent correspondence from the office of the Minister under the hand of the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads. The section of Main Road 90 that is of concern is a 14-kilometre stretch between Krumbach and Nabiac providing access to people travelling to the New England area and to the Darling Downs. It is in absolutely atrocious condition, and the community and council have been concerned about it for some considerable time. Like other members of Parliament, I travel many kilometres and this is the worst road I have experienced while I have been a member.

The council has assessed the road and has said that the required upgrading and extension would cost \$7.5 million, which it cannot afford. The road also provides a bypass when accidents occur on the Pacific Highway and, as such, it can carry heavy traffic from time to time. It is buckled and potholed; in fact, it is a nightmare. I asked the Minister to see a local delegation, including council officers and me, to discuss the issue. I wrote to him about seven months ago and he has finally responded with a historical statement about money allocated under various programs, but he did not agree to see the delegation. His Parliamentary Secretary acknowledged that the road is used as a bypass when accidents occur on the Pacific Highway and stated:

I understand that the RTA is aware that the road has been used on a few occasions in the last three years—

That is wrong. The letter continued:

... and it is expected that the damage caused during these occasions would be very minor, if any at all.

The damage is substantial and the road is already decayed. The Roads and Traffic Authority has washed its hands of the issue. I appreciate that it is a regional road, but the council does not have the capacity to undertake the necessary repairs. We were able to secure some State and Federal money to repair another part of the road, but sadly no funding was provided to repair this section. We now have a good stretch of road running into a terrible stretch. I acknowledge the work done by Marion Thomas and Helen Legg, who gathered 596 signatures from villages and towns in the area. They wrote to the general manager of the council stating:

We wish to reiterate our feelings about the MR90 as it is in need of complete restoration. Bandaid solutions are not working.

Jo Ayres of Kundibakh said, "Better to fix the road than to pay for a funeral"; and Suzanne Allen of Krambach said, "Very dangerous, someone is going to die." I concur. That road is one of the worst roads I have ever travelled on. Even slowing down and driving to the conditions does not ensure a safe journey. The car sways all over the place, the road edges are crumbling and there are humps and hills everywhere. John Taylor of Krambach said that Main Road 90 should be named Pothole Way. Barry Conn of Krambach said that he was sick to death of continuous potholes and bad edges. Eleanor Gendron of Krambach said, "Disgusting. It is a highway bypass!"

Col Moseley of Dyers Crossing said, "Fatality waiting to happen"—a statement to be found regularly throughout the petition. People are concerned about the condition of the road and the fact that fatalities may occur. Mick Hansen of Dyers Crossing said that there were smaller craters on the moon than on this road. Ron Lawson of Firefly said, "Goat tracks are in better condition. Disgraceful and dangerous." I ask the Minister to revisit this issue with a view to assisting council with funding. This road is beyond the capability of council to fix: it requires State Government funding.

POLDING LEARNING CENTRE, ST MARY STAR OF THE SEA COLLEGE

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [1.50 p.m.]: I inform the House of a recent and most auspicious occasion that Bishop Peter Ingham and I attended, that is, the opening in the Wollongong electorate of the Polding Learning Centre at St Mary Star of the Sea College. The opening of the Polding Learning Centre was made possible with the help of the New South Wales Government's interest subsidy scheme. The Polding Learning Centre provides children with a much-needed space for quiet reflection. The Education Act explicitly recognises two important principles: first, that the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents; and, second, that the principal responsibility of the State is the provision of public education.

The Government fully respects those principles in its approach to the funding of schools and it supports the right of parents to choose the type of education that suits their children, while undertaking as its primary obligation the provision of a high-quality public education system that is open to all. In support of this approach the Government provides funding to both government schools and non-government schools—non-government schools that have met the requirements for registration and that do not operate for profit. As part of the 2007-08 budget delivered on 19 June 2007 the Government has changed the way it provides assistance to non-government schools for building works. Non-government schools are now eligible for capital grants for building projects that provide educational facilities to cater for increased student enrolments, or for refurbishment of existing structures to provide adequate teaching spaces.

Schools that were previously not in a position to borrow money were unable to take advantage of the interest subsidy scheme, but they are now benefiting from this fairer system. In 2008-09 the Labor Government is investing \$11.8 billion in education and training. The 2008-09 New South Wales budget provides more than \$811 million for non-government schooling, which includes per capita recurrent grants, capital subsidies, and supervisor subsidies. Consistent with its obligations and commitments, the Government provides in excess of \$10 billion to conduct the public schooling system. As the local member I am committed to helping to ensure that taxpayer funding is distributed fairly according to the needs of a school. Through initiatives put in place by the Government the college was able to borrow \$5 million to fund the two-stage building program, which meant that the college was able to reduce the burden of debt that is shared by the parents through college fees.

I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes to all students and staff. I hope that they enjoy this first-class facility and I encourage them all to use this impressive building to further their studies. The building provides children with a quiet space for reflection and also with magnificent views. I am proud of the efforts of staff, teachers and students at that centre. I also wish former principal Mrs Fay Gurr all the best in her coming endeavours. Over the past few years it has been a pleasure dealing with her. I know that her departure will impact on all levels of the college. My granddaughter attends that school so I have seen firsthand the commitment and dedication of teachers and the good work that they do. It was appropriate and fitting for Bishop Peter Ingham to attend the opening of the college and to endorse the efforts of teachers.

Principal Mrs Fay Gurr will be sadly missed. On many occasions parents have told me of her preparedness to meet with them at any time outside what would be considered to be normal school hours. Her dedication and commitment to that school is second to none. The school, which is located in the middle of the Wollongong electorate, provides a magnificent service—something that future generations will look back on with pride. I am sure that Mrs Fay Gurr will reap congratulatory rewards for having the foresight to proceed with a facility such as this.

WESTMEAD HOSPITAL SPEECH PATHOLOGY SERVICES

Mr WAYNE MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [1.55 p.m.]: On 14 May last year the then Minister for Health announced in this House that she had attended the official opening of the new Westmead Cancer Care Centre. She stated that this centre meant:

That cancer patients can now be cared for in the one location and by the same team of medical experts throughout the course of their treatment.

Sadly, today I bring to the attention of the House the reduction in staff that has occurred in the speech pathology area, which provides ongoing treatment for people who have suffered from cancer. Keith Harwood, one of my constituents in Baulkham Hills, brought this issue to my attention. Keith has been endeavouring to obtain an appointment with a speech therapist but he has had no success. In February 2003 this gentleman was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and he has undergone no less than six operations. Thankfully, Mr Harwood has kept his humour as he told my staff that he thought he had a season pass to the operating theatre. Mr Harwood has also faced three lots of radiation treatment.

Mr Harwood, as part of his ongoing care, is required to undergo speech therapy every couple of months. I am told that people such as Mr Harwood who have undergone a laryngectomy can have difficulty in swallowing so speech therapy is essential. Despite Mr Harwood's harrowing experiences over the past few years he has continued in his role as a software engineer. His job requires him to speak with clients and, therefore, it is essential for him to undergo regular speech therapy visits. I understand from Mr Harwood that he wrote to Professor Boyages, Chief Executive of Sydney West Area Health Service, objecting to the reduction in staff in the speech pathology department at Westmead Hospital. He referred to the fact that one lady had resigned whilst on maternity leave and her replacement had not had her contract renewed.

Mr Harwood advised Professor Boyages that he depended on these ladies for his continuing power of speech. Without them he is reduced to writing notes and doing Dalek impressions with an electro-larynx. Mr Harwood said it seems to him that the goal of the health service should not be meeting management objectives and budgets decided by politicians and bureaucrats; rather, the goal of the health service should be the efficient and effective delivery of services to patients—services for which taxpayers are paying. Inquiries that I have made indicate that some members of staff have expressed anger that there is a freeze on filling positions at Westmead. Mr Harwood said to me that the demand for health services could not be regulated by budgetary means and that people were not in a position to say, "I cannot afford to have cancer this year. I will have to put it off until next year." Mr Harwood assured me that if that could have been done he would have done it.

The then health Minister in her speech in this House on 14 May last year referred to the Federal budget, which confirmed the extension of the current Australian health care agreement for a further 12 months, with an extra \$1 billion provided to public hospitals. Where has this money gone when speech therapists are not being replaced to provide the necessary ongoing care for cancer patients such as Mr Harwood? I call on the Minister for Health to take immediate action to ensure that the necessary speech therapists are employed to meet the essential needs of people such as Mr Harwood. Mr Harwood is trying to get on with the rest of his life, notwithstanding the critical health issues that he is facing. He needs regular speech therapy to enable him to continue in his occupation.

Mr Harwood wants to live his life as normally as he can, notwithstanding his tragic health condition. I find incredible the lack of speech therapists in Westmead Hospital—a major hospital in western Sydney. I ask the Government to address this issue and to ensure that basic services are provided for the people of western Sydney—services to which they are entitled. This lack of services is exemplified by the predicament in which Mr Harvard finds himself today. What the Minister promised last May has not been forthcoming—another broken promise by this Labor Government!

RURAL LANDS PROTECTION BOARDS REFORMS

Mr PETER DRAPER (Tamworth) [1.59 p.m.]: The establishment of the new Livestock Health and Pest Authorities in New South Wales under the Rural Lands Protection Amendment Bill 2008, which reduced the number of rural protection land boards from 47 to 14, can be described as nothing short of a public relations disaster. During the alleged consultation period, my office received over 1,100 letters objecting to the forced Rural Lands Protection Amendment Bill 2008 amalgamations. Many other country MPs were similarly inundated. When the member for Monaro introduced the bill, he said:

The reforms are designed to secure the future viability of the board system, and renew its purpose relevance across the rural sector.

He then attempted to support the changes at the time by saying:

It is no secret that some boards are struggling to remain financially viable in a time of growing demands for their services.

The Government justified the new system on the basis that amalgamations would streamline activities and make more money available for frontline services. However, for many landholders the first contact they had with their new Livestock Health and Pest Authority was a rate notice containing a massive increase to charges. My office has been deluged with queries and objections about these rate notices. The best way I can highlight these concerns today is to quote directly from some of the correspondence I have received. The following letter covers many of the concern. I have received:

I have property in both the Armidale and Tamworth regions. I am writing to express my anger at the recent rate rise. Tamworth LHP A rates have increased 47% (pest insect levy excluded) and Armidale LHPA rates 24%. I also take issue with the notional carrying capacity of the Armidale area property. Its capacity is rated at 3/Ha, which is in excess of the Tamworth property, but is much lighter country with timber belts and rocky outcrops—features the Tamworth property does not possess. It is beyond my belief that the LHPA could possibly justify any increase, let alone one that significantly exceeds the CPI, having only recently amalgamated the RLPB's into larger areas under the guise of spreading overheads and reducing costs. I guess I was under the misapprehension that the reduction in costs would be to me, not our destitute State Government. Additionally, having property in both regions, documents the disparity between areas in making these assessments. This is nothing but a money grab. Be assured that I am far from impressed and will now be supporting the movement that proposes to dismantle the RLPB's, now LHPA's, due to the excessive charges and lack of relevance in modern agriculture.

Another example is:

Reference is made to a Rural Lands Rates Notice that I received, concerning our property on the outskirts of Tamworth. My concern is that the Rates have been increased to \$128.20, from the previous year of \$66.43; which in real terms is an increase of 94%. After speaking with a staff member at the Tamworth Office yesterday, who was very helpful, I decided to appeal this major increase in fees, for which I believe we get very little in return. I can't seem to fathom the Notional Carrying Capacity of my 41 hectares, and, in fact, purchased this property, to mainly use as a residential address, on the outskirts of town. Our cats and our dog help with the eradication of the vermin and to date, I have had no assistance from the RLPB. I am sure that if I, as a local business operator, increased my prices, by 94% in one year, I would be laughed out of town, and would soon be out of business. A change of name from Rural Lands Protection Board, to the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities, and a glossy brochure that was enclosed with the rate notice, certainly don't justify a 94% increase in fees, for one year.

One of the saddest letters was from a 70-year-old aged pensioner, whose husband is in hospital with dementia, so she is living on her own on her 40-hectare hobby farm. Her rates were \$66.75 last year and this year she is being charged \$137.45. She is not happy that the Government continually changes things to save money, while allegedly making things more efficient. She said that most changes have a negative affect on her ability to continue living on her property. She has been trying to sell because she is now on her own, but it is not the right climate at present and she is truly struggling to make ends meet. On top of this, there are anomalies, with landowners right across the State being charged for the reintroduction of a pest insect levy, yet in northern parts of the State ticks are the issue, not locusts. These farmers have to pay a locust levy when they do not get locusts, but are left to deal with ticks without a similar level of coordinated support.

Every country representative, Labor, Liberal, National or Independent, would be well aware of the anger generated by the changes to the board system. My office is receiving daily complaints regarding rate increases of up to 100 per cent. I feel extremely sorry for the staff in Livestock Health and Pest Authority offices, as they have to wear the anger engendered by these changes. This has been a textbook lesson in how not to introduce a new system, which from the word go was a widely unpopular move. Sadly, it seems clear that the Government will not back away from these ill-advised changes to what was formerly a very well run RLPB system in the Tamworth district. We had good management, excellent people with very strong local knowledge and it was a financially sound organisation. I think that the anger coming from local farming communities is both understandable and fully justified.

OBSERVATORY RESORT HOTEL CARBON EMISSIONS REDUCTION

Mr PETER BESSELING (Port Macquarie) [2.04 p.m.]: With focus this week on the worldwide participation by many countries, businesses, community groups and individuals in Earth Hour and the benefits associated with reducing energy consumption for the benefit of our planet, I make particular note of the efforts of one local business in Port Macquarie, which is taking on the challenge to reduce its carbon footprint. In April 2008, the Observatory Resort Hotel, located along the Port Macquarie foreshore at Town Beach, made the progressive and bold decision to move forward with an ambitious plan to become entirely carbon-neutral by 30 June 2012. The first step in understanding its current energy usage and practices that would impact on the hotel's carbon footprint was to undertake an exhaustive on-site energy audit, which was carried out by independent, Sydney-based environmental consultants, the Carbon Reduction Institute.

The audit measured carbon emissions in the business from various appliances and management practices, from things like electrical sources such as lighting and heated swimming pool facilities to waste production and even the use of the vehicles of the staff when travelling to and from work at the hotel. A formal commitment was then made to become entirely carbon neutral over the following three years, with a reduction in emissions of 25 per cent over the first year of 2008-09—something that has almost been achieved. The program and its outcomes will be strictly monitored by the Carbon Reduction Institute to maintain the integrity of the process and its achievements. For the owners of the Observatory, Chris and Trish Denny, along with their partner Margaret Chant, to enter into this commitment and this program was by no means an easy decision or one that was motivated purely by money or marketing.

To merely undertake this commitment has resulted in significant challenges to the hotel, some of which it has overcome, some that are yet to be faced and some that will continue throughout the ongoing, day-to-day business of running a busy accommodation facility in a regional town. The Observatory was one of many tourist accommodation facilities built in 2003 to deal with the increasing visitation to the mid North Coast and to Port Macquarie in particular. One of the key challenges in the implementation of the program was that unlike many of the contemporary architecture or buildings, none of the existing infrastructure had been designed with the principal goal of energy efficiency in mind, which put forward some significant hurdles for the hotel when trying to deal with aspects of lighting, heating and cooling in particular. With over 88 rooms in the building, these issues remain an ongoing challenge in the quest to remain on course to achieving the hotel's objectives.

Another challenge has been the cost of the implementation of the reforms to the way in which the hotel operates through management practices, the cost of new equipment and consumables and the ability of the hotel to recover the capital investment that has been made up-front to initiate some of the more efficient practices. There has been a complete understanding that whilst the hotel has the noble pursuit to become carbon neutral by 2012, it remains first and foremost a 4½-star accommodation facility in a popular tourist destination that gives priority to providing its guests with a wonderful, relaxing holiday experience. Whilst the cooperation and involvement of the hotel's guests will always remain a key feature in the success or otherwise of the program, this could not occur at the expense of the holiday experience nor could the guests be made to feel guilty for enjoying a relaxing holiday in a resort hotel.

This also remains a challenge for the hotel with regard to charging clients to cover the costs of the program, as at the moment clients are reluctant to pay over and above regular room rates for environmental initiatives. The hotel owners are wearing the costs of the program until clients become more willing to consider that community attitudes and social responsibilities are worthy of supporting through increased room charges. This is yet another example of communities within the Port Macquarie electorate leading the way forward with positive initiatives that will hopefully one day become standard practice and consideration for accommodation facilities throughout the world. It is thought by the monitoring authorities that the Observatory is the first 4½-star resort hotel in Australia to implement practices to become totally carbon neutral—yet one further example of our regional community punching well above our weight on the national and international stage.

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

Private members' statements noted.

[The Assistant-Speaker (Ms Alison Megarrity) left the chair at 2.09 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

RULES FOR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The SPEAKER: Order! I wish to make a ruling in relation to the form and content of questions seeking information during question time. Over a period of time questions seeking information of Ministers have contained references to "alternative policies" and/or "related matters" upon which points of order have been raised. Standing Order 126 explicitly provides that questions seeking information may be asked by any member to Ministers relating to public affairs, matters under the Minister's administration and proceedings in the House for which they have carriage. Under this standing order questions seeking information in relation to alternative policies are strictly out of order, as they are outside the scope of a Minister's responsibility. This position is also reinforced in Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, twenty-third edition, at page 350, which states:

Questions are out of order if they relate to opposition party policies rather than to the government's responsibilities.

In addition, Standing Order 128 provides that questions cannot be debated. Questions seeking information about a particular Government policy, and then in a second part inquiring as to alternate policies, clearly infringe the standing order as they are provoking debate rather than seeking factual information or pressing for action. Whilst I will not allow questions to Ministers that directly seek comment on alternative policies, I will allow Ministers to make comparisons to alternative policies, including Opposition policies, or alternative proposals during the course of their answers.

On a similar note, I remind all members that it is the practice of this House that long questions, involving multiple questions within a single question, will be regarded as being out of order. This is consistent with previous rulings of the Chair that have required members to re-state their questions on the occasions that multiple questions have been asked within a single question. However, a question with multiple parts will be regarded as being in order, so long as the constituent parts are clearly related. In order to avoid these pitfalls and to stay within the confines of the standing orders, I encourage all members to avoid asking lengthy and involved questions and to frame their questions in terms of seeking factual information or pressing for action. On the other hand, Ministers are reminded that lengthy answers are undesirable, should be confined and should be relevant to the subject of the question.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The SPEAKER: Order! I wish to draw members' attention to the proper use of personal explanations in the House. A personal explanation is a vehicle to enable a member to briefly—I emphasise, briefly—explain any matter that reflects upon the standing, character or integrity of that member, or reflects upon that member in a personal way. Accusations made against a member by another member of the House are only able to be refuted by way of personal explanation if such accusations cast aspersions upon the member's character. Because they are required to be brief, personal explanations must be confined to a statement of the precise reference and must not debate the issue. *New South Wales Legislative Assembly Practice, Procedure and Privilege*, first edition, at page 98, states:

In practice, a member should confine remarks to 'This is what was said; these are the facts.'

A personal explanation should not be used by members to refer to remarks made by other members during debate that simply do not conform with their own views, nor to refute allegedly inaccurate statements made about them or a Minister's answer during question time. A personal explanation is also out of order if a new matter is introduced by a member under the guise of a personal explanation. It is not within the scope of a personal explanation to call for a member to withdraw words used in the House. Members should also take into account that in a robust Chamber such as this, they should not be too sensitive about remarks made about them in the thrust and parry of debate. Lastly, I remind members that, under Standing Order 62, personal explanations are made with the leave of the Speaker. Accordingly, I will not hesitate to withdraw leave at any point that I deem a member has misused or abused the opportunity to make a personal explanation.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bill reported:

Nation Building and Jobs Plan (State Infrastructure Delivery) Bill 2009

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor:

J. J. SPIGELMAN
Lieutenant-Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 16 March 2009

The Honourable James Jacob Spigelman, Chief Justice of New South Wales, Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that, consequent on the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir having assumed the administration of the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, he has this day assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

DEATH OF SERGEANT BRETT TILL

Ministerial Statement

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie—Premier, and Minister for the Arts) [2.21 p.m.]: The death of any serving Australian soldier in war is a tragedy for the nation and especially for his family and loved ones, but for the people of New South Wales there is a special poignancy in the loss of Sergeant Brett Till. Sergeant Till was

born in Campsie and lived in Sydney. He was among the most skilled and decorated Australian soldier to lose his life in this war. Sergeant Till's duties required courage and resourcefulness of a high order. He was an explosive ordnance disposal technician, one of that select group of engineers whose job it is to locate and dismantle roadside bombs and other improvised explosive devices.

Sergeant Till was defusing such a device during a routine clearance task in southern Afghanistan last Thursday when it exploded with tragic consequences. He was a soldier who gave his life to making conditions safer for his comrades in arms and for the suffering people of Afghanistan. He had been eight years in the Army, trained as a combat engineer, and was posted to Afghanistan less than a month ago, serving as an engineer with the Special Operations Task Group. He was a quiet professional, a devoted husband and a devoted father. Known as Tilly to his mates, he was respected by all members of his regiment. His decorations included the Australian Active Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Australian Defence Medal and the NATO International Security Assistance Force [ISAF] Medal.

Sergeant Till was the tenth Australian soldier to die in Afghanistan and the fourth to be killed by an improvised explosive device. Let us never forget as we go about the everyday business of our lives in this peaceful and fortunate country those brave Australians who are staying the course in this bitter struggle, putting their lives on the line against Taliban terrorists. I know all members will join me in saying to our serving men and women abroad, "We salute your sacrifice, your selflessness, your courage, your sense of duty. We are privileged and honoured to be called your fellow citizens. Your names will not be forgotten."

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [2.23 p.m.]: Last week was a sad day for Australia—our ninth and tenth servicemen were killed in Afghanistan; the ninth, a 21-year-old, Corporal Mathew Hopkins, and as the Premier said, the tenth, the slightly older Sergeant Brett Till. The last time this House met we were, in part, praising the efforts of our defence forces for their work during the Victorian bushfires. Equally praiseworthy were their efforts during the floods following the cyclones in northern Queensland. But there can be no greater danger than those who were sent overseas in the current circumstances to fight terrorism, whether in the Middle East or in Afghanistan. We are close to Easter and to Anzac Day. It is a time for us to remember the sacrifice of all the Brett Tills and all the Mathew Hopkins who have given their lives in defence of the freedom that we enjoy in this place, the freedom that enables this Parliament to debate robustly matters that concern the New South Wales people, the freedom that allows the Federal Parliament to debate vigorously issues that concern our national prospects.

The one connection between all the conflicts in which Australians have fought and died, the connection that is made with the likes of Mathew Hopkins and Brett Till, is the honour that we owe them for ensuring that we have the living standards that we enjoy today and the freedoms that we enjoy today and knowing that those freedoms will be passed on, not just to Sergeant Brett Till's 10-year-old and 7-year-old but the child who is about to be born, and also to the newborn son of Corporal Mathew Hopkins. A year ago I was preparing, as were a number of members of this House, for a walk through New Guinea. These words are inscribed on the granite columns of the Isurava War Memorial: "Courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice". That epitomises the service that Sergeant Brett Till gave with his life in Afghanistan last week.

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

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr NATHAN REES: I inform the House that in the absence of the Minister for Education and Training, and Minister for Women due to illness the Deputy Premier, Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, and Minister for Commerce will answer questions on her behalf.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANG LEGISLATION

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: My question is directed to the Premier. Will he guarantee that infighting between his Minister for Police and Attorney General will not further delay—or water down—giving police the much-needed tough, South Australian-style power to smash criminal bikie gangs?

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will remain silent.

Mr NATHAN REES: I can inform the House that this morning the New South Wales police raided a home in Auburn. The police executed search warrants in response to recent drive-by shootings in the area. As a result of this raid a 26-year-old man has been arrested and taken into custody. This is excellent police work—getting results in the fight against gang-related violence. I shared in the community's shock and abhorrence at the brutal fight that occurred at Sydney airport last Sunday. The violence between two outlaw motorcycle gangs left one man dead and witnesses traumatised. I was sickened by these acts of violence, which spilled into a public place threatening the safety of families and children. Today I announced that the New South Wales Government would provide innocent bystanders with free counselling.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Terrigal will come to order. This is a very significant issue. The Premier has the call.

Mr NATHAN REES: We think that counselling is an important issue. The counselling will be available through the Victim's Support Line. People who witnessed the attack can access information and support by dialling 1800 633 063 around the clock, seven days a week. Anyone traumatised by this horrific event can also access face-to-face counselling. Around 320 approved psychologists and social workers are available to provide up to 20 hours of counselling. The service is free and completely confidential. Organised crime gangs have no place in our community. They are gangs who use violence to protect their own criminal interests, including the manufacture and distribution of drugs and other criminal enterprise. The New South Wales Government will equip the police with the powers and resources they need to tackle organised crime gangs.

Yesterday I joined the Minister for Police and the Attorney General to receive a full briefing from the Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione. After that meeting the police commissioner and I announced that more resources would be deployed immediately. Seventy-five additional police officers have joined the Police Gang Squad, building a force of 125 officers dedicated to bringing these criminals to justice. In addition, I announced that a reference to the Crime Commission would be made. I can inform the House that at midday today the Management Committee of the Crime Commission, which is chaired by the police Minister, has established a new reference or operation, called Leeton, to crack down on the activity of bikie gangs.

The Government has given the New South Wales Crime Commission strong powers to deal with serious organised crime. Reference Leeton will use all the broad powers of the Crime Commission to help police break up these criminal syndicates that masquerade as motorbike enthusiasts. The Crime Commission will focus on the drug manufacturing and distribution aspects of the bikies' trade. Working closely with police, investigators will gather evidence to help bring offenders to court and to jail. The New South Wales Crime Commission will also do what it does well: go after the drug cash and tainted assets. For all their rough appearance bikies are also sophisticated criminals who launder their money through a variety of businesses.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Murray-Darling to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: The Crime Commission will use the full force of its powers, including the power to compel witnesses to answer questions or face criminal penalties. The commission will use the Criminal Assets Recovery Act to take the proceeds of crime from the outlaw motorcycle gangs. The Government has given the Crime Commission strong powers to deal with serious organised crime, including powers to summon witnesses and force them to answer questions, and powers to require the production of documents and other relevant information to be produced. Stiff penalties are attached to the refusal to comply with the commission's orders—namely, up to two years jail or a fine of \$2,200.

The commission also has powers to form joint taskforces with police to carry out investigations. These powers ensure the strongest law enforcement measures are available to joint taskforces. This will allow the full force of the Crime Commission to be brought to bear as we hunt down these criminals. I can also inform the House that the Government will support a national approach to fighting outlaw motorcycle gangs. Critically, we will seek to engage Commonwealth agencies to work cooperatively with the States to fight organised crime gangs who shift their operations across State boundaries. The Government will ensure police have the strongest powers available to fight crime. Anti-outlaw motorcycle gang laws in place in South Australia—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order: To quote you, Mr Speaker, this is a very significant issue. I remind the Premier of the question under Standing Order 129. The question was simply to seek an assurance that infighting between his Minister for Police and Attorney General will not—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier's answer is relevant to the question asked.

Mr NATHAN REES: We will get to infighting shortly, and it will be between the shadow Minister for Police and the shadow Attorney General. Anti-outlaw motorcycle gang laws in place in South Australia have been under consideration by the Minister for Police and the Attorney General.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: Yesterday I ordered an urgent review of all laws dealing with gang-related crime. The New South Wales Government is considering tough laws allowing the prohibition of criminal groups and their members, increasing police intelligence networks, and restricting gangs' access to industries deemed to be high risk—for example, security, or bouncers. Laws governing the confiscation of the proceeds of gang-related crime will also be examined. These measures come on top of the tough powers and resources the New South Wales Government has already provided our Police Force. Our anti-gang laws have so far resulted in 232 charges for 252 offences, 164 for participating in a criminal group and 40 for assault of a person as part of a criminal group. Operation Ranmore targeted illegal activity by outlaw motorcycle gangs, resulting in 902 arrests and 2,027 charges. The tough covert search powers—the very powers the Opposition seeks to water down—will give police the ability to conduct searches without alerting owners. Watch for the Leader of the Opposition's confected outrage on this issue.

This is a time for strong police action, for support for the police and for responsible cool-headedness. The Leader of the Opposition has previously objected to the Government's tough laws relating to alcohol-related violence—laws which initial figures from the New South Wales Police Force show a 56 per cent drop in assaults across declared venues between December 2008 and January 2009 compared with the same period 12 months prior, and no glassings across declared hotels since our new laws came into effect. The Opposition opposed the Government's tough laws relating to alcohol-related violence.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: That's not true.

Mr NATHAN REES: It is true, and you know it. It is an embarrassment to the Leader of the Opposition, particularly as he attended the pubs fundraiser a few weeks later. It is a gross embarrassment to him, and he knows it. The Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated that he is not—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order: I make no apology for raising funds for—

The SPEAKER: Order! What is the Leader of the Opposition's point of order?

Mr Barry O'Farrell: I make no apology for raising funds for the Matthew Talbot Hostel.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is well aware that that is not a point of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr NATHAN REES: Is it responsible of the Opposition to seek to water down our covert surveillance laws? Clearly, it is not. Those powers are vital in the fight against outlaw motorcycle gangs.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: Saying one thing in the upper House and something completely different in the lower House is par for the course for the Opposition. The Opposition is divided, lazy and policy-free. Compare this with the New South Wales Government's timely, responsible approach: more police, the Crime Commission's Reference Leeton and the examination of new laws to deal with this scourge.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: It is a calm, reasoned approach to a serious issue. The New South Wales Government will use all powers and resources available to fight organised criminal gangs.

FEDERAL STIMULUS PACKAGE AND HOUSING

Ms ALISON MEGARRITY: My question is addressed to the Minister for Housing. What is the latest information on the delivery of the Rudd Government's stimulus package?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I thank the member for Menai for her question and her interest in social housing, one of the most important issues of our time. Over the next three years the Commonwealth and New South Wales governments will invest more than \$3 billion to build about 9,000 additional social housing homes in New South Wales—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members on both sides of the House will remain silent. The Minister for Housing has the call.

Mr DAVID BORGER: This will give us an opportunity to house 17,000 disadvantaged people, and will create up to 37,000 jobs and apprenticeships across New South Wales at a time when it is needed the most. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to secure jobs and investment in New South Wales, to provide essential new housing, and to better integrate and salt and pepper social housing in places that are close to shops, jobs and opportunities. Because the rationale behind the stimulus package is to limit the effects of the economic downturn on the Australian economy, 75 per cent of the houses funded by the Federal Government will be delivered by December next. The New South Wales Government realises that to meet these numbers and time frame, we need to marshal the resources of the private sector as well.

The Government will pull out all stops to meet the deadline. It will cut red tape, fast-track approvals, and find new and creative ways of partnering with the private sector to meet goals. Two weeks ago the Government met with the private sector and launched a request for proposals from the construction industry. The Government wants to add around 3,000 new homes in social housing by buying existing development application sites; multi-unit housing packages. In those two weeks 888 organisations have downloaded the proposal documents. The Government has also been quick to organise a series of briefings for local building, construction and property industries on property and building construction in key cities and towns across the State. The industry briefing sessions are a great opportunity for the construction industry to understand what work is on offer and what time frame the Government is working towards. So far sessions have been held in Parramatta, Wollongong and Bathurst, and there will be sessions in Newcastle and Coffs Harbour this week.

The four sessions held so far have been a resounding success. I met with more than 500 people at Parramatta and the Minister for the Illawarra met with more than 125 people at the Wollongong session. It is very encouraging news and proves that the construction industry in New South Wales is hungry for opportunities. I am advised that Housing NSW has completed an initial review of all the land that Housing NSW owns and has identified 602 development sites across the State. Surveyors and project managers are now assessing all of these sites in detail. Because of the large scale of the project—9,000 new homes in three years—we need a small army of builders, architects, carpenters, brickies, plumbers, surveyors, engineers and landscapers to help build these homes. In April the Government will open the list for approved tenders and new companies will be able to submit their interest and provide more jobs for New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members who wish to conduct meetings should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr DAVID BORGER: As part of the plan, the New South Wales Government has been allocated an additional \$130 million for maintenance and repairs. That investment will mean an additional 31,000 public housing properties will have work that includes the installation of new bathrooms and kitchens, painting, new carpet, plumbing and rewiring. The Commonwealth Government's investment complements the State Government's maintenance funding. In fact, last year I stood with the Premier in my electorate when it was announced that more than \$200 million from future budgets would be brought forward to enable 10 years maintenance work for social housing tenants to be done in two years. The Opposition was not interested in that and voted against it. Scott Morrison, Malcolm Turnbull and Barry O'Farrell have the same policy: no policy, and they do not support jobs or stimulus. The Government understands that and there is nothing more to be said, as there is no Opposition policy.

The Government will invest close to \$500 million for repairs to social housing in the next few years. That investment will create thousands of jobs. For example, I refer to jobs for young kids working with Boys' Town and for young Aboriginal kids who join a minibus at 6.00 a.m. to do landscaping at public housing properties across western Sydney. We live in difficult times with unprecedented economic challenges. It seems that everyone knows that except the members opposite. The New South Wales Government has recognised the seriousness of the situation and has invested heavily in the economy to support jobs and ease the pain on families. That is why over the next three years the Commonwealth and the New South Wales governments will invest \$3 billion to deliver an additional 37,000 jobs and apprenticeships across New South Wales. But let us

not forget that members opposite have a very different view. Astoundingly, they oppose this necessary action to support jobs in New South Wales. The shadow Treasurer said that the stimulus package will have a negative impact on every family in this country.

Two-thirds of the stimulus package is on infrastructure, and I will enlighten the House as to its impact so far. In the last three weeks the Government has spent more than \$1 million on maintenance across the State in addition to normal expenditure. As a result of that funding an extra 106 Australians are now employed. However, they would not have been employed if Opposition members had their way. There is more to come. The Government is investing heavily in the construction industry because it knows that industry is one of the greatest creators of job opportunities in the economy. The construction industry has a huge multiplier effect to help people in all electorates, including Opposition electorates. The Government is investing this money to keep the economy strong and provide families with jobs—it is as simple as that. But what is the Opposition's plan? Nothing, except to vote against the very thing that will help secure jobs, investment and homes. Business leaders such as Roger Corbett, the Chief Executive Officer of Woolworths, are calling on members opposite to support the Government stimulus package. They are saying, "Get on the bus, Barry." Mr Corbett said:

I would like to call upon the Opposition here in New South Wales, Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell, and the Federal people to pull together to close this gap because speed is the essence.

Every day the Opposition is proving that it is happy to ignore all advice and gamble with jobs for a few cheap political shots. As the Prime Minister has said, these are extraordinary times and they call for extraordinary measures. Families are struggling to meet mortgage payments, they are struggling to juggle grocery bills—

[Interruption]

This is a very serious issue, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Terrigal to order for the second time. Government members will remain silent.

Mr DAVID BORGER: Both the Commonwealth and the State Government are doing something about it by providing jobs and homes for people who are doing it tough. The Government is delivering an additional 37,000 jobs to the people of New South Wales through the public housing stimulus package alone. It is a real boost to employment and to the state of the economy. The economy cannot afford, nor do families need, an Opposition to vote down measures that protect families and jobs or, worse, an Opposition that does not know what it supports.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE RENOVATION

Mr ANDREW STONER: I direct my question to the Premier. How can the Government justify spending \$1 billion on renovating the Sydney Opera House when it has failed to upgrade Dubbo and Tamworth hospitals, where more than 1,500 people are waiting for elective surgery and cancer patients are forced to travel long distances for radiotherapy treatment?

Mr NATHAN REES: Once again the Opposition is simply wrong and it has taken its research from a newspaper article. The Government has not committed any funds to the refurbishment of the Sydney Opera House—as was the case one month ago, as was the case this week and as will be the case next week. The priority for capital works in New South Wales, not in any specific order, include roads, schools, hospitals, et cetera—not the Opera House. As worthy as the Opera House is, it is not at the top of the list. However, like hundreds of other projects, it will be considered in the run-up to the budget.

ROAD PROJECTS AND JOBS

Mr PHIL KOPERBERG: My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads. Will the Minister advise the House how the Government's program to improve roads throughout New South Wales is assisting in the retention and creation of jobs?

Mr Andrew Stoner: The \$300 million out of the Pacific Highway is a good start.

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

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: Stop leading with your chin, Andrew. If you want me to talk about the Pacific Highway and your hopelessness on that road, I would be more than happy to do so. I thank the member for Blue Mountains for his question and his interest in the roadworks that are occurring in his electorate. The Great Western Highway upgrade is an issue that is very close to his heart and also to the hearts of the member for Bathurst and many of their constituents who use the road on a daily basis. Last week, together with the member for Blue Mountains and his predecessor, the Hon. Bob Debus, I attended the opening of the Leura to Katoomba section of the upgrade of the Great Western Highway—a project that runs for 1.6 kilometres and cost over \$85 million.

As pleased as the member for Blue Mountains was with the roadworks, the heritage preservation work and the environmental safeguards, he did not miss the opportunity to remind me of the vital nature of these works and the need to maintain our funding for this important road—a message often reiterated to me by the member for Bathurst. I assure the House that the Rees Government will continue to upgrade the Great Western Highway. That is why we have committed \$360 million towards this upgrade. We also welcome the Federal Government's contribution of more than \$20 million this financial year as part of its \$100 million commitment to works on the highway. This investment by the State Government and Federal Government means that with this project we are supporting in excess of 210 jobs directly and 660 jobs indirectly—that is, 870 individuals, or 870 families, are being supported by this project alone. In these uncertain economic times this project is supporting jobs in the Blue Mountains area.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting, including the member for Manly.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: We are providing certainty for business and stability for employees. Last week I was in Katoomba with the member for Blue Mountains, where I had the opportunity to meet some local residents. I met David Holmes, an entrepreneur who runs a great business. He conducts bus tours up and down the Great Western Highway, speaking with pride about the area, employing locals and showcasing some of the most beautiful and historic parts of the Blue Mountains. He uses this road and the area's historic, cultural and environmental aspects, which the Roads and Traffic Authority is at pains to protect, to run his business and turn a profit.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Terrigal that he is on two calls to order.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: That is why we are working with local councils, residents and environmental groups to ensure that the area's local history and beauty is not compromised with the new road. I also met local businessman Mr Todarello of Faulconbridge, who, with his family, owns and runs a renowned fruit shop and nursery on the highway. His business, like many others, benefits daily from the increase in the number of travellers and tourists to the area. The opening of each new project speeds the journey of thousands of commuters each day, giving them the flexibility to stop at local businesses, such as the Todarello's, along the way.

We are helping to stimulate the economy at the local level, which helps to soften the impact of the current economic downturn. The impact of this project is not just about the here and now. It is not just about 870 families getting their next pay cheque. The Rees Government's commitment to jobs is much broader and deeper than that. This Government is creating infrastructure that will help facilitate the economy in the Blue Mountains and central west regions. We realise that the Great Western Highway is a major artery that pumps life into the Central West and stimulates the economies in the cities of Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo, Mudgee, Parkes and Forbes. This highway helps local tourism, local farms and local wineries. By opening up the region we are attracting investment to the region and providing the stimulus that the area needs. That is what this Government is all about: jobs, the economy and investment. We have the runs on the board, and we will continue to show them.

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

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: You have not even answered your own question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Willoughby is waiting for the call. She will do so quietly.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I welcome the interjections from the other side, because the Opposition is doing its bit, particularly one member.

Mr Alan Ashton: Name him!

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I will. According to the *Sunday Telegraph*, the mid North Coast is experiencing a surprising boom in the panelbeating and insurance industries. They are bucking the trend. The Leader of The Nationals is supporting jobs by regularly crashing his taxpayer-funded car.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: Mr Speaker, prior to question time today you ruled that lengthy answers are undesirable. The Minister's answer, or statement, has been going for about six minutes. The Minister is embarrassingly not across his brief. He has to read every word, even his criticism of the Opposition. He has spoken long enough and is now speaking on issues that are not relevant to the question. I ask that he be directed to resume his seat.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister for Roads to return to the leave of the question.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: In a whirlwind of job creation the Leader of The Nationals has pranged his Calais five times and—

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: Mr Speaker, the Minister is clearly canvassing the ruling you made not more than 20 seconds ago. If he wants to talk about driving records, he can talk about the Premier's driving record. Why doesn't the Roads and Traffic Authority leak your records?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will resume his seat. Again, I ask the Minister for Roads to move on and to return to the leave of the question.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I know it pains the member for Murrumbidgee to have to defend his leader. It takes him a while to get up and do so. The Government is investing in the Blue Mountains region. The people of the Blue Mountains are already benefiting from the massive investment in infrastructure, and they will continue to benefit in the coming years.

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

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: The four-lane upgrade between Emu Plains and Katoomba is expected to be open by 2013-14, subject to confirmation in future budgets. This represents a massive commitment by Labor governments over the past decade, having prioritised this road as one of the most vital pieces of infrastructure in the State. I am pleased to advise the House that the preliminary planning for further upgrades between Katoomba and Mount Victoria has already begun. I have had many discussions with the member for Bathurst, the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Macquarie Fields. The Roads and Traffic Authority is working closely with the community and the council to finalise designs. The Federal Government has allocated \$2.4 million for planning and will provide another \$200 million for construction. That is in stark contrast to the efforts of the previous Federal Government, when the Coalition's mates gave us almost no money for infrastructure. We are very pleased to talk about the thousands of jobs that we have created and will continue to create in the Roads portfolio in the coming years.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE RENOVATION

SOUTH-WEST RAIL LINK

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: My question is directed to the Premier. Why is the Premier willing to spend \$1 billion to renovate the Sydney Opera House while the people of the south-west have had their rail link cancelled, forcing them to continue to suffer in traffic queues on the M5?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Bathurst to order. Government members will come to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: Notwithstanding the clarity of my previous answer on this issue, the answer is that the Government is not spending \$1 billion on the Sydney Opera House, as the member for Willoughby asserts.

[Interruption]

The issue is public transport, and our record on this issue is very clear. Hundreds of new buses are coming online.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: More than 700 new train carriages are on order, the CBD Metro is ticked off for \$4.8 billion and—

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. The question is specifically about the south-west rail link and the Premier is failing to answer that question.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: As we have said previously, the South West Rail Link will be delivered in two stages, and the staging will be influenced by the development of land in the south-west growth centre. Stage one is an investment of \$856 million and involves a major upgrade to Glenfield station and a transport interchange. Also included is a new multi-level car park with approximately 700 new spaces, new train stabling facilities at Auburn and power supply upgrades. Other key work in stage one will be the construction of the North Junction flyover and the Glenfield Junction works. Those works will allow for the complementary construction of the southern Sydney freight line.

I am advised that the Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation has already appointed a consortium of construction and design firms for the Glenfield Junction Alliance to deliver the Glenfield transport interchange works, including the station upgrade. The Glenfield Transport Interchange Review of Environmental Factors went on public exhibition for comment at the end of February for a period of four weeks. Site investigation works are already underway at Glenfield and, following planning approval, construction of the Glenfield transport interchange will commence this year. But that is not all. On-time running for our train system more broadly is at 95.3 per cent. That compares with 88 per cent in 2005-06.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: Rail patronage for 2008 was 305 million passenger journeys, which is a 5.7 per cent increase over 2007. That is 315,000 extra passenger journeys each week. For buses, there were 191 million trips in 2007-08—an increase of four million over the previous year. Newcastle bus and ferry services also had 12.5 million trips for 2007-08—an increase of 51,000 trips over the previous 12 months. Across the metropolitan private bus network there was an increase in patronage of 9 per cent, and for Sydney Ferries patronage was up 400,000 to a total of 7.2 million. On top of that, we are investing in public transport growth. As I said, there are more than 600 new rail carriages under the public-private partnership; 122 outer suburban carriages, with more to come; 1,400 rail carriages; the recently opened Epping to Chatswood rail line; and the Rail Clearways Program.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: All the feedback from passengers on that line is that it is very good.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: Also, there is \$56 million for more commuter car parking spaces—

[Interruption]

We will get to rail lines—we will discuss the airport line if you like, Barry. It happened on your watch.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr NATHAN REES: Our record on public transport is well established.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: It is prudent spending, responsible spending, and it is leading to an increase in patronage—

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

Mr NATHAN REES: —on our rail system, an increase in patronage on our buses, an increase in patronage on our ferries, and an easing of congestion on key road routes. That is a public transport policy; that is what public transport is about. In contrast, the Opposition has a public transport policy that has not articulated a single new bus, not articulated a single new train carriage, and not articulated a single new road. Instead, there are more bureaucrats. It is a non-policy.

SYDNEY WORLD MASTERS GAMES 2009 AND JOBS

Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO: My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism. What is the latest information on the World Masters Games and the impact it will have on jobs in New South Wales?

Ms JODI MCKAY: I thank the member for Penrith for her question. She certainly knows the effect that the World Masters Games will have on western Sydney, in particular. Today marks 200 days until Sydney plays host to the 2009 World Masters Games from 10 to 18 October. It is the largest multi-sport event in the world and it gives us the chance to showcase our city and again demonstrate our superior experience in staging major events.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Murray-Darling to order for the second time.

Ms JODI MCKAY: It is good to see the member for Terrigal in the Chamber. We will see mature-age sports men and women from all over the world converge on Sydney for nine memorable days of serious sport and serious fun.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting, including the member for Murrumbidgee and the member for Willoughby.

Ms JODI MCKAY: Most importantly for our State, this is about serious spending. Initial estimates for the World Masters Games indicate the event will bring around \$50 million to the State's economy—and much of this spending will occur in western Sydney, with the event's home at Sydney Olympic Park and hubs at Blacktown, Bankstown, Penrith and the central business district. As a government we have committed \$8.5 million to this event as well as in-kind services, so this is quite a return on our investment. We expect around 25,000 people to compete in the World Masters Games. One-third of these will be international visitors, one-third will come from interstate and one-third will come from New South Wales. The international competitors will come from more than 100 countries, but the largest groups we are expecting will come from Canada, the United States of America, New Zealand and Europe, and they will bring their friends and families with them.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The member for Murrumbidgee and the member for Willoughby should conduct their conversation outside the Chamber. The Minister for Tourism has the call.

Ms JODI MCKAY: The history of previous World Masters Games reveals that one in two competitors will also bring friends and family. Research also indicates that Games competitors will holiday in the host country either before or after the Games, which means they will spend valuable dollars on travel and other tourism-related activities, supporting jobs in New South Wales and providing a great boost for the economy. We expect that the current global economic situation will impact on people's decision to travel to the Games; however, there will be no better time to visit Sydney. With 200 days to go until the Games in Sydney, 6,700 people have officially registered, and that tally is growing daily. In addition, an impressive 15,000 room nights have been booked through the Sydney 2009 World Masters Games Travel Office in accommodation across Sydney. More than two-thirds of those room nights are outside the Sydney central business district. Parramatta, Sydney Olympic Park and Blacktown are the most popular areas outside the central business district, but rooms have also been booked in Penrith, Bankstown, North Ryde and Liverpool.

The 2009 World Masters Games will reaffirm the ability of large-scale events to stimulate the economy. An independent economic impact study estimated that the last World Masters Games held in 2005 in Edmonton, Canada, injected \$52 million into that country's economy and created more than 1,400 direct jobs. As members will be aware, the Sydney 2009 World Masters Games Organising Committee was established in 2004 and has been working hard to plan and deliver this event. It may be of interest to the House to know that the Opposition supported the establishment of the organising committee at the time, but I highly doubt that this support was in recognition of the fact that the Games would deliver jobs and investment for New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The Minister for Tourism has the call.

Ms JODI MCKAY: It had more to do with the fact that those opposite thought they were a walk-up start for government. That was particularly evident when the Opposition said:

In 2009 the Coalition will oversee the Games as the Government of the day.

Mr George Souris: There is no way I would have said that.

Ms JODI MCKAY: That was not sourced to you.

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

Ms JODI MCKAY: I am pleased that the member for Upper Hunter and others in the Opposition support the World Masters Games. I encourage them to take their support to a different level. The member for Murrumbidgee might be interested to know that a person does not have to be a professional athlete to compete in these Games.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will cease interjecting. The Minister for Tourism has the call.

Ms JODI MCKAY: He is very keen; he wants to know what he can compete in. Anyone is welcome to have a go and compete in one or more of 28 sports on offer. For instance, I am sure that the shadow Treasurer would be a chance in the individual pursuit.

The SPEAKER: Order! I urge the Minister to complete her answer.

Ms JODI MCKAY: Members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals may even consider entering the orienteering competition, because it might point them in the right direction with their policies.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: There is no standing order against corny rubbish, but there is one about tedious repetition. Mr Speaker, I ask you to bring the Minister back to the question or to sit her down.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Minister of my earlier ruling about the length of answers. I ask her to conclude her answer. The member for Clarence will come to order.

Ms JODI MCKAY: I have not checked for the member for Clarence whether boxing is included. Unfortunately for the Opposition, fence-sitting is not a sport at these Games. If it were, it would be the only chance members opposite would have of winning an event.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE RENOVATION

RAIL FREIGHT CONCESSIONS

Mr ANDREW STONER: My question is directed to the Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Fair Trading will come to order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: How can the Premier even consider spending \$1 billion on the Sydney Opera House when his unsuccessful mini-budget removed rail freight concessions provided to mining companies west of the Blue Mountains? That decision will cost places like Lithgow and Bathurst hundreds of jobs.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: The Government also recently announced that children under the age of 16 accompanied by mum, dad or a guardian will be able to travel anywhere in New South Wales for \$1 for three months. The Leader of The Nationals has a bewildered look on his face.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: That is the single biggest shot in the arm for rural and regional tourism in living memory. The Government understands the flow-on effects—

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

Mr NATHAN REES: The Government does understand the impacts on regional businesses—the local butchers, the hairdressers and the newsagents all share some of the pain. The Minister for Primary Industries is working closely with industry and relevant unions examining the haulage concession changes. Options under consideration are designed to address community and industry concerns and they underline this Government's continued commitment to maintaining jobs and regional development in these difficult times.

QUEENSLAND OIL SPILL

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Ports. What is the latest information on the assistance the New South Wales Government has provided for the clean-up of the Queensland oil spill?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Murray-Darling to order for the third time.

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI: I thank the member for her topical question on this the twentieth anniversary of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill disaster. On this day 20 years ago more than 34,000 tonnes of oil spilled into the pristine Alaskan coastal environment when the supertanker ran aground in Prince William Sound. On another important historical note, I take this opportunity to congratulate Anna Bligh on leading Labor to a fifth term in government in Queensland and on becoming the first Australian woman to be elected Premier. New South Wales is well placed to lead and assist authorities in the event of any pollution incidents involving ships along our coast. The recent spill in Queensland of nearly 250 tonnes of oil demonstrated the importance of having appropriate arrangements in place to respond to shipping incidents and to manage the potential environmental consequences.

This incident occurred on Wednesday 11 March when the container ship *Pacific Adventurer* lost 31 containers, each containing ammonium nitrate, while travelling en route to Indonesia via Brisbane during Cyclone Hamish. The falling containers ruptured the ship's fuel tanks, causing it to leak heavy fuel oil, and unfortunately the oil came ashore on Moreton Island, Bribie Island and the Sunshine Coast. The following day New South Wales was asked to provide assistance to the Queensland clean-up under national plan arrangements. I am advised that New South Wales provided 18 trained officers at the height of the operation to assist in the clean-up. Thirteen personnel have been used as shoreline team leaders responsible for supervising teams deployed to clean up sections of the shore, two have been used in an on-water response capacity, one has been used in a waste management planning capacity, and two have been used as operations officers responsible for supervising the clean-up of the shore on Moreton Island.

I am also advised that New South Wales personnel have been used in operational, planning and management roles. New South Wales currently has three personnel in Queensland and one officer from NSW Maritime is acting as an operations officer on Moreton Island, where he is second in charge of the 300-plus people still involved in the clean-up. In addition, two personnel from the Newcastle Port Corporation are being used in an on-water capacity close to the ship. Those personnel will return to New South Wales later this week, but a further three personnel will return to Queensland on Thursday as part of a rotation of interstate resources. It is important that we protect our magnificent marine environment. The New South Wales Marine Pollution Act was enacted in 1987 to protect the marine environment from potential pollution caused by ships. Under this legislation it is an offence to discharge oil or chemicals into State waters.

The Act provides NSW Maritime and the port corporations with the powers necessary to prevent, respond to and clean up oil and chemical spills on the water and foreshores. In the case of a chemical or oil spill, prosecution action can be launched against the owner and master of the vessel under the legislation. Australia has a national strategy for dealing with pollution from ships called the National Plan to Combat Pollution of the Sea by Oil and Other Noxious and Hazardous Substances, commonly referred to as the "national plan". The State, Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments are all signatories to the national plan. The plan provides a national framework for responding promptly and efficiently to marine pollution incidents.

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

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI: It is great to know that all States can work together productively, as they did in response to the incident that occurred in New South Wales a couple of years ago, to ensure that we get the best result possible when preserving our marine life and coastal areas.

MARIJUANA CULTIVATION ALLEGATION

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: My question is directed to the Minister for Disability Services. What action did he or his department take after receiving a report about alleged commercial marijuana cultivation in a government-run home for people with disabilities?

Mr PAUL LYNCH: I would be delighted to make some inquiries if the member would bother to provide the details.

ILLAWARRA JOBS

Ms NOREEN HAY: My question is addressed to the Minister for the Illawarra. What action is the Government taking to create and support jobs in the Illawarra?

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

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Last Wednesday the members for Wollongong, Heathcote, Shellharbour, Kiama and I, as the member for Keira, hosted a visit to the region by the Premier and the Cabinet. A community cabinet meeting was held on the campus of the University of Wollongong and a forum was held in the evening. The 250 to 300 local residents who attended asked questions of, and sought solutions from, the Government and the forum was a great success. Earlier in the day the Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Nathan Rees, opened the TRUenergy gas-fired power station on the Tallawarra site. A power station that once operated there was closed by the last Liberal Government and the employees were sacked.

With this Government's support, TRUenergy has invested \$430 million to establish an electricity generating facility that will produce 65 per cent less greenhouse gas and deliver 27 permanent jobs. Earlier that day, the member for Wollongong and I, along with the Premier, took the initial journey on the Gong Shuttle, a public transport initiative of this Government for the central business district of Wollongong. It links the university campus with Wollongong Hospital and the Wollongong central business district then back to the innovation campus, the Illawarra TAFE and the university.

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

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I will give the House an update on some comments about that service from a gentleman named Tom Hunt, project manager—transport, Wollongong University. He said, "The Gong Shuttle is fantastic news for the university and its students, so many of our students can use the service and benefit from it, and the route directly accesses a great range of services and places for the students." In some comments to 131500, the public transport information line for the whole of New South Wales, a caller stated, "It is a great service." The caller is very supportive of the shuttle. Another caller said, "I would like to compliment the Wollongong shuttle service." The caller said she thinks it is great and she will be a regular user of it.

This is an entirely new service, with nine new vehicles on the road. That will lead to about 17 new bus driver jobs and a number of new jobs for people involved in the maintenance of those vehicles. So, in two initiatives—one delivered in conjunction with the private sector and one funded by the Government—we see in the order of 50 jobs created. The member for Kiama joined the Minister for Lands on a new coastal walking route—something the member has been working on for a deal of time in order to build tourism infrastructure in the Kiama area. On Friday the Minister for Housing, as he indicated to the House earlier, was in Wollongong in the company of the member for Wollongong and me to work with local builders to give them information as to how they can be involved in the housing stimulus package. That was well received also.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: One significant announcement made in the region during the Premier's visit and the Cabinet meeting was a \$3 million injection in the Illawarra Advantage Fund. This funding is in place to encourage private sector investment in the economy and in jobs growth. It has had a deal of success over recent years, with 115 businesses expanding their projects. That translates to around \$217 million in

business investment and the creation and retention of more than 2,500 jobs. It is an initiative of this Government, giving a shot in the arm for the future through the injection of \$3 million. One of a number of job roundtables will be held in the region in about a month's time, and I look forward to the Premier's involvement in that initiative.

The other significant thing the Government has done to maintain jobs in the region is to support the growth of the port of Port Kembla. We have seen the injection of \$170 million of capital, both from the Government and the private sector, in the growth and expansion of the port of Port Kembla—a project that the New South Wales Opposition has bagged time and again. I noticed the member for Vacluse has stuck his head up; he has nightmares about it. The member has nightmares about his performance on *Stateline*, when he said that it was not going to happen. He had a position in Sydney, the shadow Minister for the Illawarra had a different position in Wollongong, the then candidate for Goulburn had a different position on the Southern Highlands, and the member for Terrigal had a different position wherever he was standing at the time. But the Government stood rock solid and we have seen an expansion of jobs and of trade through the port of Port Kembla. I look forward to more of that.

Through the Illawarra Advantage Fund and, step by step, through service enhancement by service enhancement, this Government will provide services in the region and we will see the jobs growth that we have talked about. The Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Mental Health) was in the region a couple of weeks ago and opened a new older person's mental health facility at Wollongong Hospital, creating about 25 new medical professional jobs as well. They are just three initiatives and almost 100 direct jobs, and there will be more of them to come.

Question time concluded.

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON BROADBAND IN RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

Membership

Mr JOHN AQUILINA (Riverstone—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.25 p.m.], by leave: I move:

That:

- (1) (a) pursuant to section 1 of schedule 1 of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998, Robert Anthony Furolo be appointed to serve on the Committee on Children and Young People in place of Geoffrey Corrigan, discharged; and
- (b) a message to be sent informing the Legislative Council.
- (2) that Anthony Paul Stewart be appointed to serve on the Standing Committee on Broadband in Rural and Regional Communities in place of Steven James Whan, discharged.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee—Deputy Leader of The Nationals) [3.26 p.m.]: Although the Opposition will not object to those important changes to the membership of the Committee on Children and Young People and the Standing Committee on Broadband in Rural and Regional Communities, it is important to foreshadow some further changes to committees that are surely going to happen soon. I have the latest odds from Centrebet, which has Carmel Tebbutt at \$2 to be the next Premier—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will resume his seat.

Mr John Aquilina: Point of order: The speech of the member for Murrumbidgee has absolutely nothing to do with the motion I moved. The member for Murrumbidgee should note that it is the Government's prerogative to work out who will be members of committees, and what he says has absolutely no relevance whatsoever to the Government's agenda.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I uphold the point of order of the Leader of the House. I remind the member for Murrumbidgee that I always allow a little latitude, but not that much.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am simply foreshadowing possible future changes to committees. The most frightening thing is that Nathan Rees is \$21 to be Premier after the next State election—the same odds as Steve Whan!

Mr John Aquilina: Point of order: Were this a classroom, the member for Murrumbidgee would be on detention by now. The member is clearly flouting your ruling and is totally out of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will abide by my previous ruling.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We always take a very conciliatory approach to changes in committee membership, but given the uncertainty about who will be Ministers and who will be Premier—perhaps the Deputy Premier will take over—there will be significant changes. We will not oppose the motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.

ROAD PROJECTS AND JOBS

Personal Explanation

Mr ANDREW STONER, by leave: Earlier today the Minister for Roads made a statement that clearly impugned my reputation. He stated that I was supporting the panel beating industry by regularly crashing my taxpayer-funded vehicle. That is a complete fabrication. I have never crashed my taxpayer-funded vehicle. The *Sunday Telegraph* item to which he referred had the details of a number of insurance claims, which had been leaked by the Premier's Office. None of those could possibly be construed as referring to my crashing my vehicle. The Minister has deliberately sought to damage my reputation as the shadow Minister for Roads by making a blatantly untrue statement under parliamentary privilege. He should withdraw the untruth or make the same statement outside this Chamber and face the consequences.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Minister for Roads will cease interjecting.

OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANG LEGISLATION

Personal Explanation

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL, by leave: During question time the Premier tried to imply that I had been doing deals with the Australian Hotels Association. The only fundraiser I have attended with the Australian Hotels Association in months was also attended by the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Both he and I had functions at Parliament House up for auction in support of the Matthew Talbot Hostel. I place it on the record that I made the first three bids on his table and I am pleased to continue to use my offices to raise money for bodies such as the Matthew Talbot Hostel.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to the Legislation Review Act 1987, of the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 3 of 2009", dated 23 March 2009.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON BROADBAND IN RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

Report

Mr Paul Gibson, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Beyond the Bush Telegraph: Meeting the Growing Communications Needs of Rural and Regional People", dated March 2009.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Paul Gibson.

PETITIONS

Public Library Funding

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

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**.

National Parks Commercial Developments

Petition opposing the construction of commercial developments in national parks, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Pambula Hospital

Petition seeking the reinstatement of services to the Pambula Hospital and better coordination between Pambula and Bega hospitals, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

Hornsby Palliative Care Beds

Petition requesting funding for Hornsby's palliative care beds, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Tumut Renal Dialysis Service

Petition asking that the House support the establishment of a satellite renal dialysis service in Tumut, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

Schofields Railway Station

Petition praying that Schofields Railway Station remain on its current site, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian**.

Hornsby and Berowra Railway Stations Parking

Petition requesting adequate commuter parking at Hornsby and Berowra railway stations, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Bus Service 311

Petition praying that the Government urgently improve bus service 311 to make it more frequent and more reliable, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Caged Birds Trade

Petition requesting that legislation be introduced to stop the trade of caged birds, and ban trading and selling of Australian native birds, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Pet Shops

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

Sow Stalls

Petition requesting a total ban on sow stalls, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Alstonville Tropical Horticulture Centre

Petition opposing the closure of the Alstonville Tropical Horticulture Centre, received from **Mr Donald Page**.

Griffith Agricultural Research Station

Petition opposing the closure of the Griffith Agricultural Research Station, received from **Mr Adrian Piccoli**.

Condobolin Agricultural Research Station

Petition opposing the closure of the Condobolin Agricultural Research Station, received from **Mr Adrian Piccoli**.

Temora Agricultural Research Station

Petition opposing the closure of the Temora Agricultural Research Station, received from **Mr Adrian Piccoli**.

Glen Innes Agricultural Research Station

Petition opposing the closure of the Glen Innes Agricultural Research Station, received from **Mr Richard Torbay**.

Iron Cove Bridge Project

Petition opposing the construction of an additional bridge over Iron Cove, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian**.

Berowra Traffic Noise Abatement

Petition requesting that noise levels be reduced on the F3 Freeway at Berowra, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Hornsby Electorate Homeless

Petition requesting funding and resources to map homeless people in the Hornsby electorate, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**Federal Stimulus Package and Jobs**

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.33 p.m.]: The global economic crisis cannot be ignored. There is no more important issue for our families than job security. We are facing the most severe global economic downturn since the Great Depression. That is why we need to debate this motion today. As families across the State learn to deal with the challenges of the current economic crisis, they want to know they have a Government that is doing everything it can to support jobs. Governments need to step up to the mark and to build the infrastructure that our families need. We need an explanation from members opposite as to why they refuse to support our families by persistently voting against the Rudd stimulus package. That is why this motion deserves priority.

State Economy

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [3.34 p.m.]: Nothing that this House does in the next hour or two will stop a single dollar coming into New South Wales to support social housing, schools or roads as a result of the Rudd Government's stimulus package, a stimulus package supported by both sides of politics—and I am not sure how often it has to be said for the likes of the member for Macquarie Fields. Nothing that this Chamber does in the next two weeks, I suspect, will kick-start a State stimulus package to match the Federal package that would seek to protect New South Wales jobs and to bolster the economy because nothing in the motion by the member for Macquarie Fields seeks to have this Parliament accept its responsibility to families across this State, including the Macarthur area, to try to protect jobs and ensure families get through these difficult times.

However, what this House can do today is send a very clear message to the Premier, Nathan loose-lips Rees, that his priorities are wrong. Four and a half months ago he came into this place, crying poor. He introduced a mini-budget that raised taxes and charges upon families and businesses across this State, cut important infrastructure projects, including a train line in the electorate of the member for Macquarie Fields. He

said that tough decisions had to be made because of these difficult economic times. It is now 4½ months later and, according to the brief speech to date of the member for Macquarie Fields, we are in even worse economic times and families are doing it tough. However, the Premier seems to have found a lazy \$1 billion, but will he use that money to build rail projects into Sydney's south-west or north-west?

Will he reopen the Murwillumbah to Casino rail line? Will he use that money to provide upgrades to the Princes Highway, the Pacific Highway or roads across the city? Will he use that money to make sure police stations across the State are open 24 hours a day or to upgrade schools that do not have halls or that have too many demountables? Or, more important, will he use that money on the single biggest concern to families across the State, whether they live in city or country areas, that is, health? We know that Dubbo and Tamworth hospitals continue without any upgrade. We know that the Government is squibbing on building hospitals around the city and that in country areas 32 maternity units are being closed. In the Macarthur area, we are aware of the rot at the Campbelltown and Camden hospitals where a maternity unit costing millions of dollars was opened but to date has never been used. Ambulances have to take patients to Campbelltown Hospital.

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

Mr Steve Whan: Point of order: The Leader of the Opposition should be justifying why the motion should have priority. He is giving a list of allegations without substantiation and failing to acknowledge the great work that is being done on things such as school halls.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister for Emergency Services to resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Only the Minister would think that hospitals were not an important issue, but if he does not think they are important, what about funding for the Queanbeyan bypass? Surely that is an issue. This Government has a lazy \$1 billion, but it wants to put that into an Opera House upgrade before it deals with issues that create problems for families in this State every day—problems with our roads, transport system, hospitals, schools and police stations. I heard someone opposite say no he does not. I read a double-page spread and an editorial article in the *Daily Telegraph* on Saturday. The second paragraph said, "Nathan Rees has confirmed that he wants to press ahead with \$1 billion upgrade of the Opera House". The fourth paragraph said, "Mr Rees yesterday exclusively confirmed to the Telegraph". I know the meaning of the words "mendacious" and "mendacity". If I were to use the word "liar" I would be put out of this place but loose-lips Rees does it day in, day out. Three times in question time today the cock crowed.

Mr Steve Whan: Point of order: I know that the Leader of the Opposition loves giving people nicknames but I ask that you ask him to refer to members by their appropriate titles.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The serial liar who is Premier should start telling the truth. He promised a \$1 billion upgrade and he needs to fix the problems across this State for the families of this State.

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

Mr Steve Whan: Point of order: Mr Speaker, I ask you to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the unparliamentary language he just used.

The SPEAKER: Order! A member is entitled to ask another member to withdraw unparliamentary comments.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Is the member concerned that I was calling him a serial liar? If he is concerned that I called him a serial liar, I withdraw the comment.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 49

Mr Amery	Mr Gibson	Ms Megarrity
Ms Andrews	Mr Greene	Mr Morris
Mr Aquilina	Mr Harris	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Beamer	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Mr Borger	Mr Hickey	Mrs Perry
Mr Brown	Ms Hornery	Mr Sartor
Ms Burney	Ms Judge	Mr Shearan
Ms Burton	Ms Keneally	Mr Stewart
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 Costa	Mr McBride	Mr Whan
Mr Daley	Dr McDonald	
Ms D'Amore	Ms McKay	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Mr McLeay	Mr Ashton
Ms Gadiel	Ms McMahon	Mr Martin

Noes, 40

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

Pair

Ms Firth

Mr Constance

Question resolved in the affirmative.**FEDERAL STIMULUS PACKAGE AND JOBS****Motion Accorded Priority****Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.48 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments' progress in investing \$3 billion to deliver an extra 37,000 jobs and apprenticeships across New South Wales as part of the Federal Government's \$42 billion stimulus package;
- (2) notes that the New South Wales Government has already identified 602 sites on Housing New South Wales land which may be capable of redevelopment;
- (3) congratulates the New South Wales Government on already spending \$1.2 million from the Federal Government's Nation Building and Jobs Plan stimulus package on maintenance, employing an extra 106 people; and
- (4) calls on the New South Wales Opposition to support the Federal stimulus package which is vital to supporting jobs and apprenticeships across New South Wales in the global economic crisis.

The New South Wales Government is moving quickly to ensure we are supporting jobs now, when it is needed most. This is a big task—one that will see \$3 billion invested to build about 9,000 additional social housing homes and deliver an extra 37,000 jobs. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It is an important job, because behind those 37,000 jobs are families trying to make ends meet. We know from the Commonwealth Government that we need to move quickly to support jobs. That is why 75 per cent of the new houses funded by the Federal Government will be built by December 2010.

Just this morning the Premier met with the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Secretary to brief more than 250 representatives of the building, construction and services industries on the progress the New South Wales Government has already made in the delivery of the Commonwealth's Nation Building and Jobs Plan. The Minister for Housing said earlier that the Government will cut red tape, fast-track approvals and find new ways to work with the private sector to ensure that the infrastructure project progresses. Earlier this month the Government made a request for proposals from the construction industry for new housing projects. Since then 888 organisations have downloaded the proposed documents. That is proof that the Government has moved quickly and that the private sector has welcomed the plan.

A series of briefings for local building, construction and property industries across New South Wales have been organised so industries understand the time frame. More than 500 people attended the session held at Parramatta. The construction industry in New South Wales has welcomed the Government's proposal with enthusiasm and commitment. It is a shame that the New South Wales Opposition has not done this also. The sessions have also been held at Wollongong—where 125 people attended—and Bathurst, and further sessions are to be held at Newcastle and Coffs Harbour this week as part of a plan to target key cities and towns. In welcoming the New South Wales Government action, Graham Wolfe, the executive director of the Housing Industry Association, said:

The New South Wales Government's call for properties and developments, planned or underway, presents a significant catalyst that builders and developers and for building projects that need investment to sustain them.

Mr Wolfe also encouraged anyone with a project to strongly consider submitting a tender. Through a review conducted by Housing NSW into its land holdings, the New South Wales Government has also been working hard to identify 602 sites that may be capable of redevelopment. The Government has been allocated \$130 million for maintenance and repairs as part of the Federal Government's Nation Building and Jobs Plan. That plan that will see an extra 31,000 public housing properties get new kitchens and bathrooms, painting, plumbing, rewiring and carpet and will create extra jobs for plumbers, tilers, painters, fitters and electricians in New South Wales. That is on top of the investment by the New South Wales Government in maintenance that has been brought forward to boost the economy and amounts to \$470 million for maintenance and repairs.

This financial year alone, that \$470 million investment from the Commonwealth and New South Wales governments will create 630 new jobs. Next financial year it will create a further 1,800 new jobs, and over the next two years the maintenance backlog in New South Wales will be reduced by a massive 75 per cent. In the last three weeks the New South Wales Government has spent \$1.2 million from the Federal Government Nation Building and Jobs Plan stimulus package on maintenance around the State. All you have to do is drive around my electorate to see the new work that has begun.

There have been 106 people employed by contractors as a direct result of this new funding—jobs that the Opposition would rather see lost. As the Minister for Housing said, this is the beginning and there is more to come. The New South Wales Government is investing heavily in the construction industry because it is the greatest creator of job opportunities—something the Opposition refuses to recognise. There is no room for political scoring at a time like now when we are facing the most challenging set of financial circumstances since the Great Depression. Families across the State are worried about their jobs and want to know they have a Government working towards supporting their jobs now and for the future. The Rudd Government's stimulus package will support jobs in the global economic crisis. The New South Wales Government understands that and has moved fast to implement infrastructure projects with industry, business and the community.

Let me now inform the House of some of the plans of the State Government to support the jobs of the families in New South Wales. On 17 February 2009, Premier Rees visited my electorate and announced 6,000 new government apprenticeships and cadetships over four years. An additional 1,000 apprentices will be employed every year for the next four years: a \$370 million investment in jobs for young people over seven years. Only last week I met the workers at Liverpool Hospital where the Government is investing \$257 million in the redevelopment of that hospital—a project that will provide 450 construction jobs and 800 ongoing jobs.

I know that those opposite would never have built that wonderful new facility. It will be the biggest hospital in New South Wales and there has not been one word of acknowledgement from those opposite. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [3.55 p.m.]: Dr Andrew McDonald has spent some time being obfuscatory, mendacious and quite misleading of the public of New South Wales. Not for one moment has the Coalition opposed spending massive money as an infrastructure stimulus in New South Wales. Not once has the Coalition done anything to indicate its opposition to increasing the number of jobs in New South Wales through infrastructure spending. What the Coalition has done is to express concern about a failed State Labor Government that after 14 years has one of its more junior members stand up in this House and tell us, with a great degree of excitement, that gee whiz 31,000 public houses are going to have new kitchens and new bathrooms. Well, whoopee do! What that really tells us is that for 14 years maintenance of infrastructure on important issues like social housing has been completely ignored, but it does not stop there. I move an amendment as follows:

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

this House condemns the Government for its failure over 14 years to:

- (1) provide infrastructure renewal including across hospitals, schools, roads and public transport; and
- (2) instigate its own State stimulus package to protect jobs.

For nearly a decade and a half we have had a State Labor Government that has failed to provide any renewal of the State's infrastructure for hospitals, roads, rail sector, police stations, et cetera. The Government has also failed to provide a reasonable level of public housing in the electorates that need it. In some electorates there are waiting lists of up to 14 years for public housing. On any criteria that is a fail. The Government has a history of promises, more promises and more promises but no delivery. In the time the Government has been in office we have seen an increase in road usage, to the point where the travel times on roads have slowed. Recent figures from the Audit Office indicate that it is 11 kilometres per hour slower on the M5 Eastern Distributor than it was four years ago, 6 kilometres per hour slower on Victoria Road, 5 kilometres per hour slower on the M2 Lane Cove Tunnel-Gore Hill Freeway, and five kilometres per hour slower on the M4 Parramatta-City West link. That tells us that the State Labor Government has ignored the road system in and around Sydney and across New South Wales. If funds had been put into our roads infrastructure over the past 14 years we would not have the residents of New South Wales now sitting in gridlock.

What about our hospitals? Close to home, a northern beaches hospital has been promised for years. One former Minister for Health told me that the Manly Hospital was one of the worst he had visited in physical surroundings but it had excellent medical, nursing and ancillary staff. The Government promised to build a new hospital. Successions of Ministers for Health have promised a hospital but where does it stand at the moment? There is no indication as to when it will be built. In fact, the current Minister for Health, the one-time Minister for Iguana-gate, has failed to even respond to a request for a meeting with the members of Parliament representing the northern beaches. The Minister cannot fit us into his busy schedule. But in two years time it will not matter because the State Coalition will deliver the commencement of the construction of that northern beaches hospital. What about the Tamworth and Dubbo hospitals? On 23 May 2008 former Minister for Health Reba Meagher promised a \$135 million redevelopment of Tamworth hospital. What has happened to date? Nothing! Nor has there been any work done on the upgrade to the Dubbo hospital referred to by the independent member in that area and constantly supported by the Coalition.

The Opposition wants the Government to make a fair dinkum effort and get on with the task of providing necessary jobs for the people of New South Wales. In the lead-up to the mini-budget last year, our new, inexperienced and incompetent—and it now appears loose with the truth—Premier Nathan Rees indicated that he could not see any sense in spending money on infrastructure renewal. In fact, he wanted us to tighten our belts even further. He was leading the only government in the entire western world that decided that was a sensible economic strategy. In contrast, Kevin Rudd announced that the Federal Government would spend billions of dollars on infrastructure projects. Now the State Labor Government is riding on the back of a Federal Labor Government that recognised and understood the need to create jobs in New South Wales and other States across Australia. That is a critical need because as at March 2009 New South Wales has a 4.3 per cent unemployment rate. We now sit just behind Tasmania, the Northern Territory and South Australia.

South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory typically have been towards the bottom of the pile, and it appears that New South Wales is now sitting just below them. South Australia has a 4.5 per cent

unemployment rate; the Northern Territory, 4.7 per cent; and Tasmania, 4.9 per cent. New South Wales has a 4.3 per cent unemployment rate. In comparison, Western Australia has a 3.2 per cent unemployment rate and the Australian Capital Territory has a 2.7 per cent unemployment rate. The Premier does not understand, and did not understand in time, the need to provide a stimulus for jobs in this State. Whether we are talking about Penrith, the western suburbs, the southern suburbs or the northern suburbs, we need jobs. The State Government must introduce a job package, not ride on the back of the Federal Government's stimulus package. The Coalition says to the Government: Deliver your own package and stop riding on the back of the Federal Government.

Ms LYLEA McMAHON (Shellharbour—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.02 p.m.]: The Opposition is gambling with New South Wales jobs and its economy. Whenever tough decisions need to be made, whenever Opposition members need to be tough and stand their ground, where are they? They are simpering and dithering, sitting in a corner and looking up dictionaries to find three-syllable words. That is what they are doing. They attempt to look clever and tricky, nothing more. There is no substance at all to Opposition members. If they bothered to do any research, they would see that we launched a new maintenance contract in August 2008. A major part of the problem is that we are dealing with the legacy of the Howard Government, which ripped out \$1 billion worth of funding from public housing in the decade that it was in government. Where was the Opposition then? It was nowhere to be seen. Its members were sitting in a corner looking up dictionaries, trying to be clever and tricky. The Opposition did nothing about that issue.

The motion is in relation to jobs and the economy. In the Illawarra, the Coalition, when it was last in government, closed the Tallawarra power station, cancelled the Maldon to Dumbarton rail line and closed Kiama Hospital. Yet today Coalition members talk about the importance of health. They are disgraceful hypocrites. They left a great big gaping hole in the ground at Wollongong Hospital just for mosquitos. Now we have fantastic services available there. Let us not forget that they are against the \$470 million maintenance program funded by the New South Wales Government and the Federal Government's Nation Building and Jobs Plan. This investment will create 630 new jobs in this financial year and over 1,800 new jobs in the next financial year. It means that the maintenance backlog in New South Wales will be reduced by a staggering 75 per cent over the next two years. Work in this area has already commenced in my electorate.

New South Wales families deserve better than the Opposition is offering. They deserve a Government that is doing everything it can to support jobs. Today the Minister for Housing informed the House that we are moving quickly with the plan to support jobs, as we face this global economic crisis. We are working with industry, business and the community to look at ways to ensure that projects are on track to meet the Federal Government's deadlines. Housing NSW has completed an initial review and identified 602 sites for future development. Interestingly, the only job that Opposition members are interested in is the Leader of the Opposition's job. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) [4.05 p.m.]: Government members are thick, stupid or deaf. Three times last week and three times the week before we supported the Rudd Government stimulus package. I called it the bailout package because that is exactly what it is.

Ms Lylea McMahon: Point of order: As the member for South Coast knows, any reflection upon a member of this House must be made by way of a substantive motion.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: That is not a point of order. I was being hypothetical. Obviously the member for Shellharbour was not listening. Three times last week and three times the week before the Opposition supported the Kevin Rudd stimulus bailout package for the New South Wales Government. As the Leader of the Opposition said, and as the member for Wakehurst said a mere 10 minutes ago, we are concerned about the lack of a stimulus package by the State Government. Government members make speeches supporting the Kevin Rudd stimulus package, but that is all they have got—the Kevin Rudd bailout package. I am concerned that the motion notes that 602 sites on Housing NSW land already have been identified. I am concerned because over the past couple of weeks I have had deputations from Shoalhaven City Council that the council and the community will not be consulted about the sites. On certain sites in Nowra a house could be demolished and perhaps 20 public housing units, up to two or three storeys high, erected with no consultation.

Ms Lylea McMahon: Scaremongering.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: That is the truth. It has come from Shoalhaven City Council.

Mr Matt Brown: You are scaremongering.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: The member for Kiama interjects. I believe he previously had responsibility for this portfolio. The fact is the Government has done nothing for 14 years in regard to social housing in this State. One cannot jump over the waiting list in Nowra. The maintenance issues in Nowra are deplorable, as they are in Bomaderry in the electorate of the member for Kiama. The member did nothing about it when he was in a position to do so. The Government should not hang off Kevin Rudd's stimulus package, when it has done absolutely nothing for 14 years about public housing in this State. Government members come into Parliament and gloat about what Kevin Rudd is going to do on their behalf because they have failed. The member for Shellharbour is so new to this place she has no idea what she is talking about. She does not listen, she does not know, she does not understand.

Mr GEOFF CORRIGAN (Camden) [4.08 p.m.]: I will leave the main rebuttal to the member for Macquarie Fields, who moved this excellent motion. I simply say that the Government will not accept the amendment moved by the Opposition. It is important that I deal with the issue raised by the member for South Coast that the Government will suddenly stick 20 units on a block of land. It will not occur without consultation. Councils will be consulted. The Government has no intention of trammelling the rights of existing residents. There will be an opportunity for the member's local council to make sensible comment, if it wishes. Councils will not redevelop without that consultation.

Last Wednesday a constituent stopped me outside my office and said, "Geoff, I'm in the building industry. I have never been out of work in my life"—I think he was in his mid-forties—"How can I get some work? Where is this stimulus package money? How can I find out about it?" I pointed out to him that that week he could have gone to Wollongong or Parramatta for an information session on where the money is going in housing, which has been mentioned particularly today. He was delighted. In fact, he telephoned my office yesterday to thank me for putting him on the right track. He feels confident that he will be able to pick up some work.

Before I became a member of Parliament I was on the board of MG My Gateway, which used to be called Macarthur Group Training—an excellent company whose objectives are the same as this motion: to deliver apprenticeships. I have spoken about MG My Gateway in my private member's statements. The company delivers apprenticeships every year. This money from the Rudd stimulus package provides an opportunity for all apprentices to gain employment. Members should not think I do not know what I am talking about: I have a son who was a bricklayer and two sons who were carpenters. The eldest bloke is now in the personal development industry and another son works in the mines, but I still have a son who is a carpenter and I know what is going on in the building trade at the moment.

The Opposition might make light of the \$1.2 million that has gone into housing maintenance, but it is not a light matter. That is good money that is going to make life better for people living in social housing. I am sure members opposite will support that money being spent. As a result of the New South Wales Government providing 17 consecutive years of economic growth and secure banks, Australia is well placed to respond to the global downturn, and the New South Wales Government has no higher priority than investing in infrastructure and jobs. Over the next four years the New South Wales Government will have the largest infrastructure program of any State government in Australia—a \$56 billion program that will sustain 150,000 jobs each year. I think we should be congratulated, not condemned.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.11 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Shellharbour, the member for Camden, the member for Wakehurst and the member for South Coast for their contributions to the debate. I believe the debate can be summarised in one word: whoopy-do, which is the word the member for Wakehurst used to describe 31,000 families in New South Wales who will have major renovations to their houses over the next few years. Clearly, members opposite have never lived and worked under a Liberal government in south-west Sydney. They always talk about the lack of infrastructure, yet over a period of years the Howard Government gradually disinvested in all the public services that our families need. One example is health.

A Labor Government built Campbelltown and Liverpool hospitals. I worked in both hospitals when New South Wales had a Liberal Government and it was extremely difficult. It was not just Campbelltown and Liverpool hospitals; a Labor Government built Sutherland, Bathurst and many other hospitals. The Howard Government also withdrew from housing. It gradually withdrew money by stealth from public housing. That is why this stimulus package is so welcome. Everybody in the State should wonder how it would be in the worst economic crisis since the 1930s if we still had a Conservative Government in Canberra doing what it did.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: The member for Macquarie Fields should be summing up and addressing what has been said about his motion. At no stage did his motion or the amendment refer to the Howard Government; it referred to the Rudd Government. Madam Acting-Speaker, I ask you to bring him back to the leave of the motion and the amendment.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Diane Beamer): Order! I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary will address his remarks to the motion and the amendment.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I think it is a hypothetical Tory government. I will talk about what we have done for infrastructure in south-west Sydney. We have new roads, new schools and new hospitals, all of which have been delivered by the New South Wales Labor Government over the past few years. As everyone has said, now more than ever people needs jobs—they need the jobs that the Rudd stimulus package will provide; they do not need comments such as, "This is spending like a drunken sailor." Kevin Rudd is there to help the people of New South Wales; he is doing it because they are the ones who need governments to step up to the plate. This is not a time for politics; this is a time for jobs for our people. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 52

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

Noes, 34

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

Pairs

Ms Firth	Mr Hartcher
Mr West	Mr O'Farrell

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

The SPEAKER: Order! It being before 4.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to Government business.

PARKING SPACE LEVY BILL 2009

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 11 March 2009.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby) [4.25 p.m.]: The Opposition will move in the upper House that the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009 be referred to General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 to ensure that the major concerns created by this bill and this policy area are appropriately addressed. The State Government has failed to address a number of outstanding issues arising from this bill or to respond to comments made by the Auditor-General regarding the processes involved. I make it clear that if the Minister for Transport does not tell the House today in his reply that he will support the referral of this bill to the committee, the Opposition will have no option but to oppose it. I will outline the many reasons that the Opposition cannot support the passage of this bill at this time. First, the levy collection process lacks transparency. Not only are members of the Opposition and stakeholders saying it; the Auditor-General is saying it. I refer to the Auditor-General's report entitled "Connecting with Public Transport", dated 2007, which states:

There are no criteria for how the funds available from the *Parking Space Levy* are allocated in aggregate to interchanges, car parks, bus ways, bus layovers, transitways and the like ...

Should these alternatives be assessed for likely impact on reducing congestion in the levied centres? There is no explanation of the decisions made. There appears to be scope to improve the transparency of this process.

He goes on to state:

... the Ministry ... now needs to improve transparency in how *Parking Space Levy* funds are allocated to other infrastructure projects by the use of criteria (including extent of achievement of the object of the PSL legislation) and evaluation of the relative merits of alternatives.

It greatly concerns the Opposition that the State Government has not addressed the Auditor-General's warnings and improved transparency in the allocation of these funds. For that reason, the Opposition will respond to industry and public concerns by moving to have this issue referred to an upper House committee so that the Auditor-General and other stakeholders have the opportunity to outline their concerns. The next issue of concern is the quantum of the increase. This bill proposes to increase the levy for central business district or category one spaces from \$950 to \$2,000 per annum per space. That is a 110 per cent increase in one year, which is about 30 times the consumer price index. That is totally unjustified. The Opposition does not oppose the levy as such, nor does it object to increasing it from time to time in line with the consumer price index. But why on earth has the Government imposed a 110 per cent increase over 12 months? That increase is not justified or explained.

I have read the bill and the agreement in principle speech, which was delivered by the Minister for Ageing on behalf of the Minister for Transport. However, I still cannot understand why the Government thinks it is acceptable to increase a levy by 110 per cent over 12 months. The Government has also increased the number of areas that are subject to the levy. The levies imposed in eastern Sydney, on the North Shore and in Parramatta will increase from \$470 per space to \$710 per space, which is an increase of about 50 per cent. Small businesses will be adversely impacted as a result of levies in non-central business district areas being increased by 50 per cent over 12 months. Once again, that increase has not been explained or justified. The State Government has failed to explain these massive hikes.

We are talking about a three-digit increase when it comes to the central business district and North Sydney. It is totally unjustified, especially given that outside the central business district—in Bondi Junction, Chatswood, Parramatta and St Leonards, for example—there will be a 50 per cent increase, from \$470 to \$710. Again, that increase is totally unjustified, especially in this climate when there is pressure on small business. We are also concerned about the lack of consultation with the industry and little consideration being given to

unintended consequences, such as job losses and the potential impact on revenue. As some operators have indicated, the bill will make some operators' businesses unviable, and the increasing demand for car spaces will again put pressure on the industry.

We are concerned about the dangerous precedent that this bill will set as to what the Government considers to be an acceptable levy increase over a 12-month period, especially in the current economic climate, without explaining its position. The Government failed to consult with the industry. I was shocked. Reading the agreement in principle speech, one would assume from the Minister's comments that the Government consulted widely. The speech contains statements such as, "The industry thinks this" and "The industry thinks that." One of the major points of feedback we have received from many industry stakeholders is that they have not been consulted, and they are deeply upset that such a levy is being imposed without consideration of the unintended consequences and without their consultation. This is contrary to what was said in the Chamber.

In the agreement in principle speech the Minister said the legislation will provide certainty to parking space owners. But those very parking space owners do not want the bill and have urged us to oppose it. How can the Government contend that it is providing certainty for stakeholders? How can the Government contend that it has consulted when people have come to us worried that their concerns have not been addressed? Another consequence of the bill that the State Government has not considered adequately is the impact on casual parking. Many people use car spaces on a casual basis if they need to keep important appointments in CBD locations, whether in Sydney or in the other centres I have mentioned—doctors appointments, meetings with various professionals such as accountants or lawyers, or important family commitments.

They may not rely on their cars every time and may try to use public transport occasionally, but the casual parking rate will substantially increase as a consequence of this bill, and the State Government has failed to address that issue. That will impact on every single person who uses casual parking. The cost of casual parking will increase substantially under this bill and the State Government has remained silent on that issue. That affects every citizen of this State. The Government contends that the \$58 million extra that will be collected every year from this levy—currently the Government receives \$51 million from the car space levy so the new total will be \$109 million—will be spent on public transport services, particularly interchanges. At face value people may think that is a noble objective, but unfortunately this bill does not offer any comfort because clause 11 (3) (c) of the bill—a new provision—allows the Government:

... money to finance initiatives for the communication of information to commuters, including initiatives that make use of new technologies ...

That is outrageous. The bill will now allow the State Government to spend the car space levy not on transport interchanges or transport services, but on communication. We all know what "communication" is code for—public relations. The State Government argues that the object of the bill is to increase revenue by unprecedented levels in order to improve public transport services, yet it has snuck in a provision to allow it to spend this money on communication. That is preposterous and utterly unacceptable. Our concerns continue. Another issue the Government has failed to address in the bill is exemptions for new technologies and other issues such as carpooling. There are no incentives in the bill to allow exemptions for people who use hybrid vehicles or green technology or who carpool. If I am wrong on this point I stand to be corrected—and I would like the Minister to say so—but there does not appear to be an exemption for emergency vehicles or other such vehicles.

The State Government had the chance to make this levy more relevant and fair but it missed that opportunity. Again, that is another argument as to why the bill needs to be referred to an upper House committee—to make sure all those issues are considered appropriately and to ensure that members of the public, who will suffer as a consequence of the bill, know they have been considered. Unintended consequences such as job losses, the impact on casual parking and the potential waste of spending the levy on communication—as is clearly spelt out in clause 11 (3) (c)—coupled with the Auditor-General's comments of two years ago about the lack of transparency of the transport fund within the provisions of the bill, cause us enormous concern.

The Government has also failed to provide efficient public transport options that negate the need for parking spaces. The people who rely on car spaces, whether on a casual basis or for work purposes, often are not able to access public transport, for whatever reason. If public transport services were such that people had appropriate options it would offer a greater incentive for reducing car travel. But the Government has not provided adequate public transport options. Opposition members would be the first to say that when people are able to they should leave their cars at home. We want to see a reduction in car use, we want to see a reduction in congestion on the roads and we want to see increased public transport patronage. But, unfortunately, not everybody has those options.

You may want to use a car space on a casual basis because you need to get to a doctor or specialist appointment or you may need a car space for a particular work commitment—some people who have jobs that are not highly paid but which rely on car use need occasional access to parking spaces. These unintended consequences have not been considered. This is yet another example of the State Government not doing its homework and offering some figures written on the back of an envelope. It appals us to realise that the Government is considering a levy increase of 110 per cent in the CBD and North Sydney, and 50 per cent in other areas, without explaining why. In the case of the CBD and North Sydney, that increase is about 30 times the consumer price index. In other regional areas it is an increase of about 15 times the consumer price index.

If I may indulge myself for a second and consider the impact of the bill on my community of Chatswood, the Chatswood Chamber of Commerce has spoken to me time and again about the effect on small businesses. Larger shopping centres are exempt from the parking space levy, and we accept that, but small businesses pay it. If you run a small business with one or two employees and one of them needs a car, you have to pay that levy every year. We know the State Government does not have a lot of consideration for business people, but the levy affects business people in Parramatta. Again, the State Government has not consulted the small business communities in Parramatta about this bill and the impact it will have on them. The bill will also impact on small businesses in St Leonards, in parts of North Sydney and in Bondi Junction, but that was not even mentioned in the Minister's speech to the House. That is totally unacceptable.

There are also concerns about the way in which the State Government has categorised the regions and the leviable areas. Even within the CBD there are two different criteria, and many stakeholders are concerned about the unintended impact that will have on some businesses, and particularly on the rate of casual parking in those areas that are designated differently. I will address specifically some of the issues raised by the many stakeholders in the community. The NRMA has opposed the levy increase and has put question marks over the process. The Sydney Chamber of Commerce has similar concerns, and Executive Director Patricia Forsythe states:

The imposition of a 110 percent increase on the existing parking levy could not come at a worse time for business big or small and in particular in the CBD of the City of Sydney where job losses have been significant.

The peak body for city business is telling Parliament that an unintended consequence of the bill could be job losses if the legislation is passed in its current form. Patricia Forsythe continues:

The SCC understands that the purpose of the bill is to discourage car use and encourage public transport use in certain key centres. The SCC does not oppose the principle but we ask that it be recognised that for some businesses, such as those with representatives in the field, driving a car is integral to doing a job ...

A 110 percent increase will have a significant impact on the costs of all businesses impacted by the levy. Rather than a review at some point in the future the SCC urges that the bill be referred to GPSC 4 for an immediate review.

Similarly, the Property Council states:

The proposed doubling of the parking space levy will unfairly target workers and business who are poorly serviced by public transport. We are urging you to oppose the bill and support a full review of the parking space levy.

The Parking Operators Association understandably has concerns and has provided a position paper that I urge every member of the House to read before voting on the bill. It outlines some of the unintended consequences of the bill. Brett Mathews, Executive Director of the Parking Operators Association, states:

... this proposed increase will be counter-productive as the industry will be forced to close parking bays that become unviable due to the Levy increase.

So much for the State Government increasing jobs—an unintended consequence of the bill could result in the loss of many jobs. Brett Mathews further states:

We ask that you put the increase on hold until a full and proper review of its impact can be undertaken.

Industry is greatly concerned about the bill and the Opposition is concerned about its direct and unintended consequences. I ask the Minister when he replies to the debate to support the Opposition's recommendation to have the bill referred to an upper House committee; otherwise we will be forced to oppose the bill. The Opposition is concerned about the inclusion of clause 11 (3) (c) in part 2, which means that money from the levy will no longer go into public transport interchanges and services. This is of concern because of the Government's lack of transparency with respect to where funds from the levy go. Clause 11 (3) (c) states:

There is payable out of the Public Transport Fund:

(c) money to finance initiatives for the communication of information to commuters ...

The parking space levy will be able to be used to subsidise or pay for public relations. The Government has failed to address the concerns raised by the Auditor-General two years ago about lack of transparency with respect to where funds are allocated; it has turned its back on the recommendations and included an additional provision allowing it to spend money on public relations. Mums and dads will have to pay extra for casual parking in order to attend a doctor's appointment while the Government takes more money to spend on public relations rather than providing better public transport. That is unacceptable, especially since the quantum of the increase is totally unjustified and the rationale for it has not been explained. I reiterate that if the Government does not accept the Opposition's bipartisan proposal to refer the bill to an upper House committee—which the Opposition supports as being the best way forward—we will be forced to oppose the bill.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.45 p.m.]: I support the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009. The bill will simplify, streamline and enhance the Parking Space Levy Act, and put public transport facilities and services where they are needed most. These changes will make it easier to administer the parking space levy and will enable more and better options for making public transport more accessible. They will encourage more people to leave their cars at home and make New South Wales a better place in which to live. The Government is committed to increasing public transport use. The State Plan reflects this commitment with its target to increase the public transport share of trips to and from the Sydney central business district to 75 per cent. The types of projects funded by the parking space levy, such as car parks at stations and new transport interchanges, can make a great difference to achieving this goal by improving public transport services and facilities and attracting people to public transport.

Transport is one of the most important issues for this State and one that affects us all. I speak not only on behalf of my electorate but also for the wider Sydney metropolitan area when I say that many growing areas across Sydney are benefiting every day from the parking space levy through less road congestion, better public transport facilities and better coordinated public transport services. The parking space levy was introduced to discourage car use in major commercial centres, encourage the use of public transport and improve air quality. The levy funds public transport infrastructure projects that make it easier and more convenient for people to access public transport services.

Funds raised through the parking space levy are spent on bus, rail and ferry interchanges, commuter car parks, bus shelters, taxi stands, kiss-and-ride facilities, bicycle lockers, light rail systems and better passenger information and security systems. Recent projects include the Liverpool to Parramatta and north-west transitways, upgrade of the Parramatta transport interchange, building new commuter car parks and the installation of secure bike lockers at railway stations. The bill will remove inconsistencies in the Parking Space Levy Act and make its intentions and outcomes clearer. Clearer rules mean more efficient administration and more time to get on with the job of improving public transport services. It is a decisive step towards a more competitive and efficient New South Wales.

Let us consider the people who contribute to the parking space levy. These are people who have commercial parking spaces in Sydney's central business district, North Sydney and Milsons Point, and also at Parramatta, Bondi Junction, St Leonards and Chatswood. With this bill, the people contributing to the scheme will have clearer guidelines and rules. For example, people in the City of Sydney will have a map defining the levy area, and this map will not be affected by any changes to council boundaries. This enhancement to the legislation will remove any possible ambiguity by defining the area to which the parking space levy will apply. The bill will not change any boundaries in the City of Sydney levy area, but will provide certainty for people in the City of Sydney so they will be free to make better business and personal decisions.

The parking space levy contributions will be used for facilities that will improve public transport—for the interchanges, car parks, bicycle lockers and other facilities that the scheme provides. Projects funded by the parking space levy must improve access to public transport. This means finding the best solutions, which can include enhanced communications and other facilities not currently in the legislation. The bill will enable a greater range of services and facilities to be offered with the revenue received from the parking space levy program. For example, it will allow the funds to be used for public information initiatives such as using new technologies to communicate with commuters. This clearly will enhance people's public transport experience and encourage more people to leave their cars at home. I support the proposed amendments to improve and enhance the Parking Space Levy Act. It has served the people of New South Wales well, and with these changes it will be even stronger.

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly) [4.50 p.m.]: I support the shadow Minister for Transport, the member for Willoughby, in opposing the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009 and suggesting that it be referred to an upper House

committee to do the work that should have been done before the bill was brought to this place. Reducing cars and traffic congestion in the Sydney central business district is an objective we all support. But this legislation is not about achieving that goal. Once more, we have a quick grab for cash from a government that is desperate to fill the holes in its leaking budget. The Government's failure to consult with key stakeholders on this legislation shows that this is nothing more than an opportunity to plug a hole in a leaking budget.

The consequences of the bill appear to be that jobs will move out of the city—I will touch on the irony of that shortly—an extra tax will be imposed on businesses when they can least afford it, more pressure will be placed on our public transport system with no plans to deal with that from what we can determine, and the loss of affordable parking for people who need it simply to get to work. The member for Cabramatta spoke about that, but we will cite examples from Darling Harbour and areas of my electorate. It is suggested that the bill is about protecting the environment. However, the bill is a missed opportunity to engage in consultation and to create a sustainable city of Sydney. If introduced properly, the legislation could have significant impacts in terms of creating the sort of city we want to live in. I acknowledge the vision of the member for Sydney with regard to these initiatives, and I am aware that she will speak about that.

Certainly the bill is an opportunity missed. It does not provide discounts for hybrid cars or carpooling, it does not provide incentives for car sharing, and it does not provide for more spaces for bikes. All those matters should be front and centre in the bill. Yet the Labor Government has failed to put the people first, to think strategically, and to think broadly about the sort of city we want and how we can support it with legislation such as this. For those reasons the Opposition will seek to have the levy deferred until proper consultation has taken place, the impact of the change is determined, amendments are made to support more sustainable modes of transport, and details are provided on how the funds have been, and will be, used. The member for Cabramatta went through a list that was provided to him. However, based on the Auditor-General's comments, no ideas have been offered as to how these funds have been used. That is one of our major criticisms with regard to the bill.

The parking space levy was introduced in 1992. It was designed to discourage parking in key city areas and promote the use of public transport, which are initiatives the Opposition totally supports. From what we can determine, the parking space levy remains the sole source of income for the Public Transport Fund. The levy is supposed to provide funding to improve public transport, including funding for capital works such as multi-use interchanges for rail, bus, ferry and taxi services, and parking at transport interchanges. The current levy is \$950 and, importantly, has been increasing in accordance with the consumer price index [CPI]. The Opposition cannot understand why the Government decided, without any foresight, to raise the levy by almost 30 times the CPI. The shadow Minister spoke about the quantum of the increase, and her concerns are very much justified.

The purpose of the bill is to discourage the use of cars in key areas of Sydney. The bill extends the areas now covered by the levy to include parts of the following areas: the City of Sydney, North Sydney, Milsons Point, and the central business districts of Bondi Junction, Chatswood, Parramatta and St Leonards. The levy will increase in the Sydney central business district and North Sydney area from \$950 to \$2,000. In the other areas it will rise from \$470 to \$710. The benefit of the levy to the budget is \$58 million annually. The Opposition proposes that the legislation be deferred. We question the timing of it and its provisions, and the quantum of the levy increase. All those matters should be investigated by the upper House committee.

This goes to the core of what the Auditor-General is concerned about. The bill allows for the money raised, which goes into the Public Transport Fund, to be used for anything the Government wants. Despite the claims that have been made, clause 11 (3) (e) provides that there is payable out of the Public Transport Fund "money that is directed to be paid from the Fund by or under this or any other Act". In other words, the funds raised can be used under any Act of Parliament. That is an example of why we have concerns about how these funds have been, and will be, used. Why have a clause that says that at any point in time the funds raised can be used for whatever purpose the Government chooses? The funds should be directed solely to creating a sustainable city and improving public transport.

The Government's lack of homework on the bill is stark. We ask that the Minister respond to this point and explain how the Government got to this position. We ask the Minister to explain why the stakeholders were not consulted in relation to the levy. The first that parking operators knew about the levy was when the mini-budget was brought down. It is an insight into the Government's culture of decision making and the processes that go on within the Government. The Government's attitude is, "We don't need to consult. We are happy to look for opportunities to raise revenue and to forget about the consequences. We'll just get on and do it." If the Government did its homework and engaged in consultation with the stakeholders it would find that not

only would it potentially be able to raise the revenue it is looking for but it would create strategic opportunities to create sustainable cities, and at the same time reduce congestion and invest in public transport. Consultation must be at the core of legislation.

Another issue of concern is economic modelling. I will ask the Treasurer to release the modelling—if it exists, and I look forward to hearing the Minister's response—to show how many of the 36,000 car spots are likely to become vacant and the impact on public transport. If the levy is raised and there are fewer cars on the road, we ask: In what areas will there be fewer cars, what public transport links are provided for people, and are those public transport links adequate? They are fundamental questions and I look forward to seeing the modelling. There is no doubt that our public transport cannot cope at the moment. The modelling should also show what impact the levy will have on jobs in the central business district. A group of mums in my electorate have raised with me that because of the timing regarding child care they have no option but to drive their cars to the central business district. Some of them park their cars in areas around the Sydney central business district such as Darling Harbour, which has a cheap parking rate of about \$12 a day. Given the limited public transport options, what will be the impact of the levy on those mums and other people who drive into the city so they can get home to look after their children?

Will we see jobs go as a result of this levy? The levy is another cost imposed on businesses that are doing it tough. We have all heard that 200 jobs a day are being lost in New South Wales. We do not want more jobs to be lost. The car parking industry believes the impact of the levy is that potentially the industry will lose 10 per cent to 15 per cent of its workforce—which is about 3,000 jobs. We need information about that. I am sure the modelling will reveal the figures, but I am interested to hear how the levy has been determined. The modelling will also give an insight into how the Government goes about its decision making. We are already the State of no confidence. If we want another reason for businesses to move interstate, this sort of process provides it. In the Sensis Business Index released a couple of weeks ago Christena Singh said:

It is the first time in the 15 year history of the report that we have seen business confidence at negative levels in any state or territory.

It is ironic that Graeme Wedderburn uses the Parliament to try to get everyone on the Government side to forget that the mini-budget existed and to simply talk about jobs, jobs, jobs. Here we have a new levy being introduced that may well have a significant impact on jobs yet the Government provides no modelling on it. The Government simply does not care; it chooses to forget about reality. As I have said before, public transport is absolutely overloaded. With regard to planning, today we heard about a proposed CBD metro that has no public transport links to it. Again, the Government's decision making is lacking. Through my research I found that some of the funds raised under a number of existing levies have not been collected. In terms of trusting the Government to implement a new levy, a good start would be to make sure it collects funds raised under its existing levies.

I can cite a number of individual cases in St Leonards and Chatswood in which the Office of State Revenue did not collect any revenue for six years. In one case, the owner was not even aware of the liability because he thought he was out of the zone, being in Greenwich instead of St Leonards. He then received a bill from the Office of State Revenue saying, "We want your six years of tax, and by the way the interest is 15.75 per cent." Clearly the question must be asked: Does the Government know what it is doing in relation to this levy? I will refer to the Auditor-General in a moment. Surely the Government needs to be confident that it has collected all the funds raised under its existing levies. The Minister for Roads in 2000, the Hon. David Campbell, said in relation to the Parking Space Levy Amendment Bill:

A significant provision of this bill is the legislative requirement that the revenue raised is quarantined, earmarked, targeted—whatever word one wants to use—to the stated purpose of improving public transport infrastructure and its development. No ifs, no buts; it is a clear and unequivocal legislative requirement.

When we look at what the Auditor-General said, those comments made back in 2000 were nothing but words. How can we trust how those funds will be used without far more transparency? The Opposition will ask the upper House committee to look at exactly how those funds are to be used. It wants to see the fund allocation process of the Government and to understand how the funds have been used and where they are going. The Opposition maintains that the levy should be deferred until the Government has modelled the impact of increased levies on existing businesses and current jobs, has considered all possible exemptions for the use of carpooling, hybrids and bikes to encourage more sustainable transport, and has developed a vision of a modern sustainable city. However, the detail of the levy makes little reference to those aspects, and a real opportunity

has been missed. The Opposition would ask the committee to look at those options and would suggest that perhaps 25 per cent of car parking in the central business district should be set aside for car pool spaces, to start the behavioural changes that are needed to reduce congestion.

Another option is to improve public transport so that fewer people use cars. Those are the sorts of ideas that should be seriously considered. The Opposition also seeks a review of the timing of applications given the costs to be paid upfront by operators and their inability to pass on some of those costs because of the length of leases. That review should be part of any consultation. All parking operators have to pay the fee on 1 July and their leases will run through the year. Businesses will be asked to bear the burden of the Government's levy but some will not be able to pass it on. What will be the impact on the jobs of people that businesses do pass the levy on to? Also, fringe car parking should be allowed in Darling Harbour or St Leonards to help mitigate the congestion that is creeping into the central business district. I ask all members to have a close look at the 2007 report of the Auditor-General before voting. I quote these very pointed remarks of the Auditor-General:

There are no criteria for how the funds available from the Parking Space Levy are allocated in aggregate to interchanges, car parks, bus ways, bus layovers, transit ways and the like. We noticed no evaluations of how this expenditure furthered the object of discouraging car use in those business districts bearing the tax.

In other words, there is no process. We do not know how the funds are being used. They have no connection with reducing congestion: it is about the cash! The Auditor-General says it! It really is an indictment of the Government that today it had another chance to do it properly yet it has completely fluffed it. The Opposition emphasises that this is an opportunity for a green solution. The Opposition opposes the bill because it is an example of the Government's rushed attempts to put documents together. The Government also rushed through its loosely termed mini-budget, but the Government side of the House seems to have forgotten that.

This bill does nothing more than fill a gap in the budget. It is not part of a considered strategy. It is not about reducing congestion. It is not about creating a sustainable city. Its purpose is to fill a hole in the budget. All members would like less traffic congestion. The bill is not a solution to that problem. I believe the bill will make things worse and will also impact on jobs. All stakeholders need to work together to determine how the long-term objective can be achieved. The green alternative needs to be considered. People should not be penalised individually for the Government's mismanagement of its finances. The bill is an example of all that is wrong with the Government. The upper House committee will provide an opportunity to consult with the industry to help reduce congestion, provide incentives for creating a sustainable city and, ultimately, improve public transport.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [5.04 p.m.]: As a regional member I commend the Government for working to improve the Parking Space Levy Scheme. The scheme has already been a great success and with the proposed changes it will expand the types of facilities it will deliver to the people of New South Wales. And it will do this even more efficiently with clearer guidelines and definitions, giving people more certainty that the rules are clear and consistent for all. The parking space levy has provided transport infrastructure to the people of New South Wales since 1992. Its aim is to discourage car use in major commercial centres, encourage use of public transport and improve air quality. It has contributed to many improvements over the years, including car parks at railway stations and major interchanges.

On the Central Coast we have seen examples of this with commuter interchanges at Woy Woy, Gosford and Wyong stations. We have seen money spent to increase facilities for the people of the Central Coast. The levy has been a good thing for New South Wales but the Act is in need of some housekeeping to keep it abreast of developments and changes in legislation since 1992. The proposed improvements to the Act will simplify and clarify the requirements of the levy to make it easier for those who contribute to the levy, and also makes it simpler to administer. The proposed changes will simplify statutory requirements, by making the Act consistent with the Taxation Administration Act 1996. This will avoid complexity and improve consistency across different legislation, so that people have clearer rules about what is required.

The parking space levy has been providing facilities to attract people to public transport. More people using public transport is what the Government is aiming for, and this is already happening. Under the scheme a new commuter car park and interchange is to be constructed at Tuggerah. It will provide better security for people who want to leave their car and travel by public transport. We have a commitment of a further 100 places at Wyong station and I am sure there are more Central Coast parking projects in the wings that will be funded through the change in legislation. We are seeing patronage growth, particularly at critical peak times, on our

buses and CityRail trains. That is good news for public transport, but we need more. Anyone in the regional outlying areas of Sydney knows that streets are being taken up by people trying to find a safe place to park. The levy will increase the chance of building those facilities faster.

In the State Plan the Government has committed to further increasing the proportion of people using public transport. We need to continue to work to make public transport attractive, and the Parking Space Levy will play a role in this. The proposed improvements will introduce more ways in which the levy may be used to improve public transport, such as better communication for passengers, so that more people may be attracted to public transport. More people on public transport means less road congestion, better air quality and a more efficient and productive New South Wales. The better we make roads, the more cars will use it. In regional areas we understand with the provision of better public transport options and safer car parking facilities there is less of a need for six or seven lane highways as people are able to leave their cars at home.

The parking space levy bill will provide positive outcomes, not only for those people who use the new facilities, but also for others who will benefit from reduced road congestion and cleaner air. The levy benefits not only regular commuters, but also businesses that are affected by road congestion. By improving the legislation we will ensure that the levy remains modern and effective, to get the most benefit for the people of New South Wales. I agree with the proposed changes because they will have a positive impact on this State, particularly my electorate.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [5.08 p.m.]: The Parking Space Levy Act redirects funds from car parking in areas of high traffic congestion, including the central business district of the city, to public transport projects rather than to consolidated revenue. The Parking Space Levy Bill expands the types of projects the levy can fund to include, in addition to the construction and maintenance of public transport and infrastructure, information and communication with commuters. I share the concerns expressed by the Opposition spokesman on transport about directing funding away from the main objective, that is, to provide public transport infrastructure.

We urgently need to shift to a more sustainable and efficient transport system that meets Australia's needs in the twenty-first century and beyond. Traffic congestion and travel times in Sydney are increasing, as a result of policies that favour investment in vehicle transport over other forms of transport. If congestion and travel times continue to increase, Sydney will lose investment, jobs, economic growth and quality of life. The Bureau of Transport Economics estimates that under a do-nothing scenario the cost of Sydney's traffic congestion would rise from \$3.6 billion a year in 2005 to \$8 billion a year in 2020. In addition to the detrimental economic impact of this congestion, the associated health and environmental costs across Sydney are estimated at \$1.4 billion a year. Therefore, policies and funding must shift to give priority to developing healthy, low-emission transport modes, including public transport, cycling and walking.

Sydney needs a planned, sustainable and integrated transport system that provides for public transport, as well as the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. We urgently need to invest in city transport infrastructure to help us prepare for a more sustainable future that enables a transition to a new lower carbon economy. In a recent University of Technology Sydney report, transport expert Doctor Garry Glazebrook calculated that in 2006 Sydney residents and the New South Wales Government invested \$40 billion on cars. That figure included accidents, pollution and road subsidies. The study concluded that cars are the most expensive form of transport and that more money, specifically an additional \$1 billion a year, must be redirected to public transport.

Green Square, the major urban renewal area in Australia, is an example of failed transport planning policies. Apartments have been and are being constructed to replace former industrial uses. But there is no additional transport infrastructure to support the 30,000 residents and workers in the area. As apartments are approved and built, there is growing anger from existing residents about car generation and congestion, and investors see this as a turnoff. The City of Sydney Infrastructure Australia submission called for a Green Square light rail loop linked to Redfern and Central transport interchanges. Light rail could be constructed relatively quickly and the service would offer high-quality and convenient mobility for residents and workers. It would be a plus for the global city. Funds from the parking space levy for this project would have obvious benefits to Sydney's transport.

The City of Sydney submission also proposed an inner-city light rail loop to provide efficient and reliable transport through central Sydney, which is aligned with our 2030 vision for a central city spine dedicated to public transport and pedestrians. Inner-city light rail could provide much-needed additional

capacity on short distance, high-volume routes, while providing the opportunity for buses to be redeployed to outer metropolitan areas where flexible transport routes are needed. It also would reduce vehicle congestion and significantly improve surface transport, creating opportunities for cycleways, better pedestrian access and, I stress again, the economy of the State and the nation.

The car space levy should contribute to inner-city light rail, which would create flow-on benefits for many Sydney public transport services and drastically reduce inner city congestion. This bill provides for funding of public transport projects to and from leviable areas. I foreshadow that I will move an amendment to ensure that the parking space levy fund public transport projects within leviable areas. The parking space levy also should extend to investment in cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, which provides enormous potential to reduce car use and congestion, as well as having enormous health and economic benefits. Projects such as the proposed inner-city cycle network, with 160 kilometres of separated bicycle roads and 70 kilometres of upgraded shared paths, would provide a viable alternative to relying on cars and overcrowded public transport. It is another excellent opportunity for this parking space levy funding.

Car spaces also are needed for car share schemes, which provide members with access to a car and reduce car ownership. Members rely on alternative methods of travel, such as public transport and cycling, but have access to a car when needed on weekends or to go away. The scheme promotes public transport, walking and cycling and takes cars off our roads. As I said, I foreshadow I will move an amendment to exempt spaces dedicated to car sharing from paying the levy. Public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure in Sydney, Australia's only global city, should be world class. People should not have to depend on cars to get around. I seek the Government's support for my proposed amendments.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [5.14 p.m.]: As has been indicated by the shadow Minister and shadow Treasurer, the Opposition has major concerns about the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009, particularly in relation to the way the bill has come about and the lack of consultation with major stakeholders. We are generally concerned about the lack of transparency, the justification for this parking space levy increase and, most importantly, the provisions in section 8 of the bill, which mean that there will be an increase every year based on the consumer price index.

The previous four speakers have talked about the importance of supporting public transport. The Opposition believes that the Government has failed completely in facilitating and improving public transport. In the face of that failure right across the electorates of New South Wales, it is ironic that the Government moves to effectively increase the levy from the figure preceding the mini-budget last year to the figure referred to in this bill, that is, \$2,000. A few minutes ago Government advisers indicated to me that the Opposition should not be concerned because this bill is not the immediate instrument for increasing the levy. They advised that it occurs by way of the budget process. That may be the case, but the Opposition is opposed to a massive increase in the levy, without justification and transparency, which can be very damaging to small business, business generally and particularly jobs.

At the time the cognate bills went through for the mini-budget, the focus was on the mini-budget and the urgency for the Government to address the economic needs of the State. At the time former Treasurer Costa indicated certain aspects and the Premier indicated that he did not believe we needed any economic stimulus. The mini-budget and the message reinforced through this bill reconfirms that the Premier does not have a real interest in economic stimulus. He has an interest in making a cash grab, not in ensuring growth in jobs in New South Wales. The fact that we have gone from a levy last year of \$950 to a levy of \$2,000—which will increase every year under section 8 of this bill—indicates that the Government is purely and simply interested in a cash grab. It is not interested in a logical and sensible approach to encouraging public transport usage. It is not interested in ensuring in any transparent way that those funds are used to create jobs. Even the Auditor-General has highlighted it is very difficult to track this money and to ensure that money that has been raised in the past will be used for the purposes stated by the Government.

The Opposition would not have any problem with an appropriate level of taxpayers funds being used for improvements to facilities such as interchanges where people park their cars and get onto public transport. We do not have a problem with that at all. That begs the issue of such a dramatic increase, which effectively is a tax hike, without any transparency or clarity about how the funds are to be spent. If the Auditor-General can say to the Government in no uncertain terms that it has failed to make clear how those funds are applied, then the Opposition would not be doing its job if it failed to hold the Government to account and try to get to the bottom of how these funds are being used.

The shadow Treasurer and the shadow Transport Minister have both indicated to the House that the Opposition's preferred position is to see this matter fully explored so that those who should have had a say on the implementation of this levy have the opportunity to do so. For that reason, if the bill is defeated in the lower House and it moves to the upper House we will certainly seek to have an inquiry into the processes that surrounded the Government decision-making on this effectively doubling of a levy—what the average person in New South Wales could regard only as a tax rip-off. It means some people will have to find another \$1,000 a year to park their car just to go to work, and I notice the bill makes it clear that it will apply to people in the government service including police officers, teachers, educational workers—

Mr Anthony Roberts: Ambulance officers.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Ambulance officers. It appears to apply to anybody in the government service. A thousand dollars in one hike is, effectively, the best part of about \$1,700 to \$2,000 of pre-tax money, and people will have to use that to be able to park their vehicle in order to carry out the sort of work they do to look after the public. The levy is being doubled at a time when jobs are under stress, when business is under stress, when across the world we know that people are being put out of work, that thousands a day are losing their jobs, and at a time when the Prime Minister of this country is in Washington talking to President Obama about what steps we can take to encourage the growth of jobs and to stop the massive tide of economic recession. But what have we got from the State Labor Government? What have we got from loose-lips Rees? We have got a sleight-of-hand tax—another tax bounced on top of the public in New South Wales.

It is a cause of concern to the Opposition. It is a cash grab—effectively, a \$58 million cash heist. It is interesting that the Government says this bill introduces a levy that is going to encourage people to use public transport. That logic defies rationality. If more people use public transport would that not cause a reduction in the income tax that the Government expects to get from this levy? It seems to me that if the Government is saying it will see a \$58 million increase—from \$51 million to \$109 million—the suppositions of this tax are predicated on a falsehood. The Government says fewer people will be parking in those spaces, but those parking spaces that continue to exist will have to produce a return; therefore, those car spaces are in fact going to still be used and still produce the tax, which means that the people the Government says will end up on public transport certainly will not end up on public transport.

It is a government rip-off. It is a State Labor heist on the public of New South Wales and, as the Auditor-General says, we cannot see how it will be spent. This situation should be looked at very, very closely, but in the absence of an opportunity to have it looked at closely—and the Opposition has made it very clear that we will oppose this bill in the lower House and will seek to have the matter referred to a committee in the upper House—we oppose this parking space levy rip-off.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [5.23 p.m.]: I oppose the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009. It is an audacious and unjustified revenue grab introduced with a lack of parking industry consultation and without regard to current economic circumstances. The Minister for Transport has further avoided scrutiny by including regulation within the bill, thereby avoiding any obligation to create a regulatory impact statement. The bill increases the levy for parking in the city of Sydney, North Sydney and Milsons Point by 110 per cent. It also increases the levy for parking in Bondi Junction, Chatswood, St Leonards and Parramatta by around 50 per cent. These increases cannot be justified and will adversely impact upon employment in the parking industry and businesses that rely on parking. This bill therefore must be opposed.

The stated object of the bill is to discourage car use in leviable districts by imposing a levy on parking spaces, including parking spaces in parking stations, and by using the revenue to encourage the use of public transport; in particular, public transport to and from those districts. The bill repealed the Parking Space Levy Act 1992, the current Act, which was introduced by the Greiner Government. The object in the bill before the House is important because it alters the object in the current Act. I refer to the introduction of the words "in particular" preceding the words "public transport to and from those districts". This, in conjunction with the general nature of clause 11, will enable the Government to fund any public transport initiative from the Public Transport Fund.

The Minister for Planning is cramming people into high-density housing in northern Sydney, placing great pressure on existing infrastructure, while the Minister for Transport wants to increase their parking prices and use that money to fund public transport projects elsewhere and to pay for advertising to highlight that fact. It is a further illustration of the Government's contempt for northern Sydney. Of course we support and want better and greener public transport as well as less traffic congestion, but this bill does not guarantee delivery of those aims.

The agreement in principle speech on this bill was delivered by the Minister for Disabilities on behalf of the Minister for Transport. It focused on a number of technical and administrative improvements, which provide increased clarity and efficiency. These improvements may be welcome. However, the Minister failed to address the most troubling aspect of this bill. Schedule 2 of the bill establishes a base rate of \$2,000 per annum for parking in the City of Sydney, North Sydney and Milsons Point, which represents an increase of 110 per cent. It also establishes a base rate of \$710 per annum for parking in Bondi Junction, Chatswood, St Leonards and Parramatta, which represents an increase of around 50 per cent. As other speakers have pointed out, these increases cannot be justified, especially in the current economic climate.

New South Wales has the highest unemployment rate in Australia. Unemployment in New South Wales stands at 5.8 per cent, whereas the national average is 5.2 per cent. New South Wales cannot afford to jeopardise the jobs of those in the parking industry and those in businesses that rely on parking in category 1 and category 2 areas. The Parking Operators Association has already indicated that this bill will increase unemployment in the industry and will force operators to close parking bays. In the current economic climate this hypocritical Government should be taking all reasonable measures to preserve jobs. Increasing the cost of parking seems an odd strategy for increasing employment in the worst-performing State while it faces a global financial crisis. The Government should introduce more reasonable increases calculated in light of current economic conditions, or none at all. The Legislation Review Committee identified a serious deficiency in the Minister's approach to this bill. By including regulation in the bill itself the Government has avoided the obligations imposed by section 5 of the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989, which requires that:

Before a principal statutory rule is made, the responsible Minister is required to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, a regulatory impact statement complying with Schedule 2 is prepared in connection with the substantive matters to be dealt with by the statutory rule.

Regulatory impact statements are important because they require the Minister to include the objectives and the reasons for them; alternative options for achieving the objectives; an assessment of the costs and benefits of the proposed rule, and that of each alternative option, including those related to resource allocation, administration and compliance; an assessment as to which of the alternative options involves the greatest net benefit or the least net cost to the community and a statement of the consultation program to be undertaken. The available evidence suggests that the Minister for Transport has seriously departed from standard regulation-making processes by not preparing a regulatory impact statement or even properly consulting with the industry concerned. It is clear that the Government is primarily interested in correcting its past fiscal mismanagement with this blatant revenue grab.

The Legislation Review Committee also had concerns about the proposed legislation commencing by proclamation rather than by assent as a potentially inappropriate delegation of legislative power. I have raised that issue previously in this Chamber in respect of other bills. Unfortunately, this arrogant Government refuses to justify its actions or to address those concerns, which are shared, I might add, by its own members on the Legislation Review Committee. This bill cannot be supported. It is economically reckless and fails to consider properly the relevant stakeholders. At a time when New South Wales has the highest unemployment in this country and we are facing a global financial crisis, the Government wants to implement job-destroying increases in the parking levy. This is not an appropriate solution to the Government's waste and mismanagement.

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (Castle Hill) [5.32 p.m.]: The Parking Space Levy Bill 2009 increases the parking space levy in the central business district and North Sydney by more than 100 per cent, from \$950 to \$2,000 per annum, and by about 50 per cent in satellite central business districts such as Chatswood, St Leonards and Parramatta, from \$470 to \$710 per annum. This measure is designed to raise another \$58 million to plug the Government's budget black hole. That is a long way from the stated objective of the bill, which is to discourage car use in leviable districts by imposing a levy on parking spaces and by using the revenue to encourage the use of public transport. It would be a terrific objective if we had any public transport to improve.

This bill impacts particularly on my electorate, as did the entire mini-budget last year, because the Government has not only significantly increased taxes—this bill will impose an additional tax on my constituents—but also cut the local public transport improvements that were promised. I am not talking only about the North West Metro or rail link, whichever the Government was proposing to build—and that is bad enough—but also the Government's cuts to the Carlingford rail service. The Carlingford station is the only station in my electorate. We have a clayton's rail service; that is, the rail service you have when you do not have a rail service. The Government said it would build a passing loop at Rydalmere. On the basis of the uses to which the Public Transport Fund can be put, money raised as a result of the passage of this bill could have been spent building that passing loop.

However, the mini-budget also scrapped that project, which would have significantly improved the service provided to constituents using the Carlingford line. It was not good enough for the Government to scrap the north-west rail link; it also scrapped that passing loop. The Government has also introduced time-of-day tolls on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Commuters are charged an extra \$1 if they travel across the bridge between 6.30 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. Of course, that is when everyone travels across the bridge because that is when they must travel to get to work on time. The Government has also narrowed Epping Road. It has converted sections of a perfectly good three-lane road into the city into a one-lane road and in the process has made it as difficult as possible for my constituents to get to work. The time-of-day toll increased the cost of travelling to work in the city and back home to \$18 a day, or \$90 a week.

To add insult to injury, the Government now proposes to charge people an extra \$1,000 to park in the city. Not only is it not providing an alternative form of transport for those who have no choice but to drive into the city, but it is also taxing them to the hilt. This measure will impact not only my constituents who work in the central business district and who must drive to work but also those who have businesses in Parramatta. This bill will impose a 50 per cent increase in the Parramatta central business district, not a 3 per cent, 5 per cent or even 10 per cent increase, which might be consistent with the inflation rate or the consumer price index. Today Government members talked about the wonderful things they are doing to create jobs. However, the Parking Operators Association states:

The parking industry calculates the loss of 10% to 15% of its employees, with a crippling knock-on effect to redundancy decisions for businesses in Sydney's CBD.

That represents 4,000 to 6,000 jobs, which is a very significant number. The association goes on to state:

Additionally the exorbitant increase to the Levy will be totally counter productive in achieving the Government's targeted revenue as the industry will be forced to close down, and remove from the market, spaces from car parks residing in marginal areas.

The whole object of the legislation will be undermined by the economic effects. I heard the member for Wyong and the member for Cabramatta talking about the benefits that the parking space levy has delivered to their electorates. I point out that the levy was introduced by the former Liberal Government. The levy paid for a multistorey car park at Thornleigh station that many of my constituents use if they get there early enough because it is a good facility. However, the levy has not provided a parking station at the Oakes Road bus station on the M2. Members might respond, "So what?" The previous Government promised that it would build that bus station and provide improved public transport for people living in Carlingford and West Pennant Hills. However, this Government scrapped that proposal, despite the fact that the money was rolling in.

The Baulkham Hills local traffic committee, of which I am a member, has repeatedly considered further parking restrictions in an ever-widening radius out from the Oakes Road bus station to look after local residents. Of course, the further we force people to park from a train or bus station, the less likely they are to use public transport. That has been a totally counterproductive exercise. We should remember that this Government also opposed the M2 and, therefore, the dedicated bus lanes along that road and the only public transport connection we have to the city—that is, The Hills express bus service.

Under proposed section 11, the levy will provide revenue for the Public Transport Fund, which will be used to finance public transport services, projects that facilitate access by public transport to and from leviable districts—that is, parking facilities—and initiatives for the communication of information to commuters. If that fund were being used to improve information about and access to public transport, the Opposition would support it. However, members can bet their bottom dollar that at election time money will be taken from the fund to finance the Government's propaganda campaign, as happened in the lead-up to the last election. This Government will use large amounts of that money to employ public relations consultants and spin doctors.

The Opposition believes that this legislation should be subject to an upper House inquiry to determine whether the 110 per cent increase in the central business district levy and the 50 per cent increase in the satellite levy are justified; the impact of that increase on jobs—that is, whether we will lose 4,000 to 6,000 jobs as the Parking Operators Association has predicted; whether there are any environmentally friendly options—my colleagues have outlined them; and how the money raised should be spent. The Opposition has concerns in all of those areas and I am sure that members can understand why we oppose this legislation. I am particularly personally aggrieved by the Government's intention to levy yet another tax on my long-suffering constituents.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.39 p.m.]: I join my Coalition colleagues in expressing concern about parts of the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009, particularly the

huge increase in the parking levy. We would like this bill referred to a committee of the Legislative Council and we will be opposing it in this Chamber. I will not go into a great deal of detail, because that has been covered by my colleagues, except to point out the history of this parking levy. The Greiner Government introduced the levy for central business district car parking spaces in 1992. The intent of the levy seems benign and admirable: to discourage car use and encourage the use of public transport. The problem is, there has been no real attempt to do that for the constituents of my electorate or the people who drive through it. As a consequence, my electorate has huge traffic problems.

In his agreement in principle speech, the Minister referred to projects currently being funded by the levy, including Holsworthy, Wentworthville and Woy Woy commuter car parks; Morisset, Windsor and Tuggerah interchanges; and other projects at Hurstville, Bundeena and Cronulla. While they may be fantastic interchanges and of benefit to people in those areas, Military Road is identified by the NRMA and many others as one of the worst traffic nightmares in the State, but we have had not one cent of the money spent on providing an interchange for that area. Yet, North Sydney central business district was included in this parking space levy boundary by the Labor Government, and that levy is now going to be increased by 110 per cent. This is quite appalling, and I raise it particularly on behalf of my constituents.

I also raise a point that has been of great anxiety to people living in a pocket of Lavender Bay where not one commercial building or business is included in that boundary, yet it has been levied. It has captured three churches, which are fabulous, beautiful, heritage buildings. The parishes are responsible for their maintenance and upgrade. In order to finance such maintenance, the churches lease out their limited unused parking spaces during the week. They receive a modest income from the leasing of these parking spaces and that money is invested in upgrading the churches. I have written to the Treasurer about this matter.

One of the churches to which I refer is Christ Church in Lavender Bay. Members of the parish take up regular collections to upgrade their church. Some years ago 25 car parking spaces were established in the ground, three of which are used by the church and therefore are not levied. The other 22 parking spaces have been the source of the sole fundraising effort to maintain the building. Raising the levy for these 22 spaces from \$950 to \$2,000 per annum will have a profound effect on the capacity of the parish to maintain the building, which needs considerable remediation and maintenance work totalling almost \$45,000 over the next few years.

The same applies to St Peter's Church in North Sydney and St Francis Xavier in Lavender Bay, both of which are beautiful sandstone buildings. Anybody who has anything to do with heritage buildings knows what a nightmare they are to maintain and upgrade. I give credit to the churches and the parishioners for coming up with a great idea to help them do the right thing and fund the upgrades. As I said, I have written to the Treasurer about this issue and I am yet to receive a reply. This is one of the reasons why this bill should be referred to an upper House committee. I want a committee to look at the appropriateness of some of the zones that are now being hit by these huge levies.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) [5.44 p.m.]: I oppose the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009. The purpose of the bill is to reduce the number of cars and level of traffic congestion in the central business district, which is something we all support. However, the bill will not achieve that goal. As the member for Wakehurst said, this is just a quick grab for cash by the Government. As a consequence, jobs will move out of the city and an impost will be put on businesses. We will probably see a loss of jobs as a result of this tax on businesses at a time when they can least afford it, when they are trying to keep people on during this economic crisis. In addition, there will be a loss of affordable parking for people who can get to work only by motor vehicle transport.

As the shadow Treasurer stated, we should be looking outside the box—for example, we should be looking for more space for bikes and putting money into that, we should be looking at providing discounts to people who carpool, and we should be providing discounts to people who have hybrid cars. If we wanted to be environmentally aware, we would look at those sorts of things. This levy is just another grab for cash as the Government tries to cover up its financial mismanagement. As has been said, the Public Transport Fund was meant to improve public transport, including funding for capital works such as multiuse interchanges for rail, ferries, buses and taxis. I will come to what the Auditor-General had to say about that.

The bill seeks to discourage the use of cars—I am not sure whether a levy on parking spaces will do that. The Government has extended the levy from the City of Sydney to North Sydney, Milsons Point and the central business districts of Bondi Junction, Parramatta, Chatswood and St Leonards. In the central business district of North Sydney the tax on business will increase from \$950 to \$2,000, and in the other areas it will

increase from \$470 to \$710. This is happening at a time when people can least afford it. There has been very little Government consultation; the Government is just ramming through another tax without going to the various industry groups. Once again, there will be job losses in the parking industry. In addition, people will no longer be able to afford to drive to work or, because the public transport system is the way it is, will arrive late to work and not hold onto their jobs.

A constituent of mine contacted me in August last year. He has a business on the Pacific Highway at St Leonards. His wants to know why no-one in the district had been made aware of these parking levies and why now, after eight years, the Office of State Revenue is pursuing everyone for payment, plus interest. My constituent is outraged that he had not been levied and that the Office of State Revenue, in this mad grab for cash that we will see more and more of, says it has not collected it but it is coming around. He has to come up with the money, and he will be charged interest on it. The Auditor-General was incredibly concerned about this in his report. He stated that there was a need to improve transparency in the way in which the parking space levy funds were allocated to infrastructure projects. That is a major concern, which I will come back to. The Auditor-General also raised a concern that I know is shared by my colleagues, especially the member for Willoughby. The Auditor-General stated in his report:

While there has been considerable interchange development during the last two to three decades, relatively few projects have been undertaken in recent years. The Ministry of Transport explained that during this time the major funding source—the *Parking Space Levy*—was committed to a small number of major infrastructure projects.

Once again, the Government is collecting a tax and failing to deliver. The Auditor-General continued:

There are no criteria for how the funds available from the *Parking Space Levy* are allocated in aggregate to interchanges, car parks, bus ways, bus layovers, transitways and the like.

He said that these should be assessed and that there was no explanation for decisions made by the department. Effectively, the Auditor-General found there was a lot of confusion around who was responsible for the development and maintenance of these interchanges and the absence of a single coordinating body with respect to their ownership. The Auditor-General found inadequate information was available to both the public and management about Sydney's interchanges, and that the planning of and securing of funds for those interchanges could be better managed.

Effectively, the Auditor-General's report, particularly in light of the sudden demand for such an increase, paints a disturbing picture of the haphazard management of the interchanges. I, along with my Coalition colleagues, oppose the bill. It has been rushed through so that the Government can fill the holes in its budget. We are not here to penalise people who are also being hit with tolls and other taxes during a very difficult time just so we can fill another black hole. The Opposition opposes the bill and will seek to amend it in the upper House.

Mr MALCOLM KERR (Cronulla) [5.50 p.m.]: I oppose the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009, which is another example of the Government doing a dash for cash. The shadow Minister for Transport outlined the Opposition's objections to the bill. The bill has not been given proper consideration or consultation before being introduced. The Opposition will take the opportunity in the other place to refer it to a committee to enable the people of New South Wales to derive at least some benefit from the Government's dash for cash. The increase is totally unjustified; the necessary work has not been undertaken to ensure that money obtained from the community and workers will be utilised properly.

The Auditor-General was critical of the lack of criteria for the funds allocated, supposedly to improve public transport, which was the original intent of the levy when introduced by the former Coalition Government. The system worked well at that time but this Government has set a dangerous precedent in increasing the levy. The House has just recently debated the current economic circumstances and the Government is contributing to those problems by increasing the cost of production in this city. As the shadow Minister stated, the Government has failed to consult industry. Having the bill referred to an upper House committee will ensure that the best-qualified people will be able to provide appropriate information to the Government.

The Minister in his agreement in principle speech said that current projects being funded by the levy include the Bundeena and Cronulla wharfs. The Minister should visit Cronulla and Bundeena wharfs, as I have done with Councillor Schreiber. He should speak also to the ferry service operator, Carl Rogan, to see whether taxpayers' money is being used in the most appropriate way. It is fortunate that work has been done to improve public safety. I urge the Minister to look at what is being done at those two wharfs. No doubt the member for

Heathcote would be concerned also because he lives at Bundeena, as do a number of his constituents. That wharf is crucially important when bushfires occur because it is a vital transport link between Cronulla and Bundeena. Of course, we are well aware of the Minister's contribution to parking at Cronulla railway station with the building of a large car park, supposedly for the benefit of railway staff. This is a most unattractive facility, which has been given the name Stalag Cronulla. It has a high, black fence, a number of security cameras as well as a security guard.

Mr Wayne Merton: Very friendly!

Mr MALCOLM KERR: Yes, the Minister is a friendly and hospitable sort of fellow. The massive fence is totally at odds with the built environment of Cronulla. In addition, there are security cameras. A number of commuters who use the Cronulla railway station would appreciate having protection for their cars but they have to park in side streets a considerable distance from the railway station. A large amount of taxpayers' money has been spent, and continues to be spent, providing security that does not benefit commuters in the area.

Mr Robert Coombs: Write that down, Grant—Mr Kerr has said that security at Bundeena wharf is of no value to the people in the area. We want that in writing!

Mr MALCOLM KERR: You want that; you want Stalag?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order.

Mr MALCOLM KERR: I suspect there was an outbreak on the Government benches at the mention of the word "security" because the Government is not secure, and Stalag Cronulla and all the security cameras and guards will not save them from the wrath of the public. This is one example where public money is being spent without proper consultation and appropriate information being provided. Once again the Opposition has to come in to bat for the people of New South Wales and highlight the shortcomings of the Government. I will be interested to hear in the Minister's reply his thoughts on what the Auditor-General's report says in regard to the parking levy. The Opposition has taken the responsible course of action in asking that the bill be referred to an upper House committee. I ask the Minister to ascertain how the money has been spent on the Cronulla and Bundeena wharfs.

Mr GRANT McBRIDE (The Entrance) [5.57 p.m.]: I support the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009. I have listened to the debate for quite some time and what I am seeing come out of it is the first outward reaction to the Bligh Government's win in Queensland. We are seeing a conga line of would-bes or want-to-bes trying to protect their future preselection. In 1992 the former Coalition Government introduced legislation that we are now amending.

Mr Rob Stokes: You don't even know what I'm going to say.

Mr GRANT McBRIDE: I was referring to both the new members and the older members. Talking about older people, I was in the gallery trying to find when the member for Cronulla was first elected to this Parliament. I struggled and struggled with the coloured photos; I had to go to the black and white photos to find him—he has been here that long! He has been here for more than a quarter of a century so it must be almost time for him to go. The result of last weekend's Queensland election has put an end to the fact that Coalition members can quietly sit on the Opposition benches, do nothing and hopefully fall across the line at the next New South Wales election. That is not going to happen. It is about time members opposite did something, because the days when they could simply wait and wait are over. The people in Queensland said, "You cannot trust the Liberal National Party to run the State." At the last New South Wales election the Coalition thought it was going to fall over the line. Again, the message in that election was, "You cannot trust the Liberals and The Nationals."

With regard to this legislation, if one goes beyond the lower North Shore and Cronulla—I am sorry, the shire—one will find that the funding has been spent effectively providing facilities for people such as those in the outer west, on the Central Coast and elsewhere, where the public transport system is not what people enjoy on the northern beaches and the lower North Shore: regular buses, a good rail service, good access to taxis, et cetera. I invite members opposite to come to the Central Coast to see what has been done with this funding to improve the quality of life for people travelling to and from Sydney. Every day more than 30,000 people leave the Central Coast for employment in Sydney. We have built the railway station car parks on the Central Coast that the former Coalition Government never built, and in many cases we have expanded them. There have been

two expansions to Woy Woy railway station car park. I invite members opposite to have a look at Woy Woy railway station car park in the morning. They will see that the station is full, the buses are full, and the car park is full. They will see a similar sight at Gosford and Wyong railway stations.

The problem is that members opposite are up for preselection. I can see the member for Wagga Wagga enjoying every moment of it. The Coalition has failed this State. This bill is about providing a benefit for commuters. A Coalition member said that somehow the bill will lead to major unemployment on the North Shore. Some of the comments made by members opposite in this debate were breathtaking. I wish Coalition members luck in their preselection battles. I think the member for Baulkham Hills is gone. The member for Cronulla is definitely gone. I like the guy, but it is time for him to go. The member for Cronulla dodged the bullet in two preselections, but I think the next time he is gone. If his party is not regenerated, it will not have a chance at the next election.

Mr WAYNE MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [6.02 p.m.]: I join my colleagues in opposing the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009. We oppose it for a number of good, solid, valid and relevant reasons. For the people I represent, in north-western Sydney—my electorate is immediately adjacent to yours, Madam Deputy-Speaker—the major local issue is transport, transport, transport. Indeed, it is probably a lesser issue in your electorate but certainly it is still of major importance there. I note that the member for The Entrance has now left the Chamber and obviously does not wish to be informed about the impact of this legislation on working families—to use an expression the Prime Minister has often used—on the Central Coast and in western Sydney.

I am not about to give a commentary on political matters. The only thing I would say is that in a seat with a 4.9 per cent margin I would not share the confidence that the member for The Entrance clearly has. I will not comment about preselection matters; that has nothing to do with this debate. I know little about preselection matters, and the member for The Entrance obviously knows little about what is happening on our side. I think his main problem is pleasing the people of The Entrance, who must be angry about the mess this Government has made generally. On a 4.9 per cent margin, I think the future of the member for The Entrance is somewhat in doubt, as nice a fellow as he might be.

This bill is an attempt by a cash-strapped Government to raise something like \$58 million by increasing the parking space levy from \$51 million to \$109 million. By any standards, this is an outrageous increase. It is an increase of something like 110 per cent in the Sydney central business district and 50 per cent in other districts, including Parramatta. The bill has shades of the horror mini-budget that the Premier gleefully imposed upon the people of New South Wales late last year. At a time when the nation is going through a period of financial adversity and everyone believes we are heading towards a recession and when jobs are being lost at a record rate in New South Wales, what does the Government do?

It introduces further disincentives to employ people: it increases taxes. It is not a government of stimulus; it is a government that undermines the economy by increasing taxes. The bill is certainly consistent with what seems to be the Government's philosophy. Indeed, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was dead right when he said that most economic regimes in the Western world are introducing stimulus packages. We have not seen the details of the New South Wales Government's stimulus package, but we have certainly seen the details of its negative package, and they include this scandalous increase in the parking space levy.

The people of north-western Sydney are the real victims of this Government's failed policies. In 1998 they were promised a heavy rail link from Epping to Castle Hill and thence to Rouse Hill. The Castle Hill link was to be completed by 2010 and the Rouse Hill link was to be completed some three to five years later. Ten years down the track and not a sod has been turned: there is absolutely nothing to show for a promise that was made 10 years earlier. To appease the people, who by this stage were extremely angry, the Government said, "Look, we won't build you the heavy rail; we'll build you something better and grander, something that is high-tech, modern technology—very much like you would find in Paris, the United Kingdom, and all those places that have an underground metro system." That sounded reasonable, and it probably calmed the people down for a few months. But it did not calm them down for long, because in seven months the Government scrapped that project too. Something like 11 years after the heavy rail was announced, there is no heavy rail link; it has been scrapped. There is no metro; after seven months it was scrapped.

What has the Government offered today? It has offered more buses, buses and buses. But I understand that not one additional bus has been placed on the M2 busway this year. The Minister will be aware that I placed on the *Notice Paper* a question asking how many additional buses will be allocated to the M2 busway by the end

of this year. I will be interested to hear the Minister's response. The people of north-western Sydney are utterly captive to the roads. They travel either by bus or by car. At the Baulkham Hills junction, just down the road from my electorate office, morning after morning people are forced to wait in queues numbering up to 100 to catch a bus to the city. It is a dreadful situation. Some people miss bus after bus, they are late for work, and in many cases their employment is placed in jeopardy.

If the Minister thinks there is any relief on the way home, I invite him to go down to Clarence Street in the afternoon and he will find even longer queues—people waiting for a bus to get back to their homes, their wives and their families in The Hills, in north-western Sydney. When they finally get a bus and they get home, some say, "What is the story with the north-west transitway?" I will tell the House. One afternoon not so long ago I went to Clarence Street, where I found two queues of about 100 people waiting for a bus. I then drove to the north-west and checked on the North-West T-way, where there were five buses—two parked in a bay and three on the road—carrying a total of 25 people. There were about five people on each bus whilst back in Clarence Street there were two queues of 100-plus people waiting. That is the mess the Government has made of transport.

The additional parking space levy will impose further costs on workers because at the end of the day someone has to pay the levy, and that is bad. There was yet another catch in the Premier's horror mini-budget: the increased toll on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and in the tunnel during peak times. It is a double whammy: first, the higher toll on the harbour bridge and in the tunnel, and now the increased parking space levy. What a legacy for the people of north-west Sydney! What an incentive for people to try to find a job and survive in these difficult times! Someone has to pay the levy. The money has to come from somewhere, and employers faced with increased costs will look closely at their staff. The reality is that jobs could well be lost—we have already seen major employers reduce their staff by scary levels, to say the least. But we can understand their predicament. The Premier speaks about jobs, jobs, jobs, but when the chips are down the Government's policies create not more jobs but fewer.

Increasing the parking space levy is an anti-job policy not only in the city but also in the electorate of Parramatta, where the levy has increased from \$470 to \$710. Parramatta is a major employment centre. Most people who live in north-west Sydney work either in the city or in Parramatta. Regardless of where they work they will lose, and this levy is another threat to their employment. In times of distress and economic difficulty we need incentives, not disincentives. Increasing taxes does not create employment. Employing people must be an attractive proposition. It has to be easy for people to get to work. The Government has delivered no additional buses, higher tolls and an increased parking space levy—the trifecta. I do not hold the Minister personally responsible, as it is government policy. If the Minister lived in my electorate and represented the people of north-west Sydney he would be as irate as me and my constituents.

The bill was drafted with a limited amount of consultation. In his report the Auditor-General commented that there are no criteria for how the funds are allocated to improve public transport. That was the reason for introducing the levy in 1992. There has been little consultation with industry and little consideration given to the unintended consequences of the bill, such as job losses and revenue shortfalls due to increased costs. This is a dangerous precedent and a foolish one, to say the least. Australia is facing an economic crisis—a situation that Australians have not faced since the 1930s—and the Government's response is to increase employment costs. People journeying from the north-west now face paying the parking space levy and increased tolls on the harbour bridge and in the tunnel. That is not good enough, and my constituents want the Government to look seriously at this issue.

In the upper House the Opposition will seek to have the bill referred to a general purpose standing committee to ascertain its real ramifications. Interested parties, such as the Parking Operators Association, the Property Council, the NRMA and the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, that oppose the levy should be allowed to eyeball Government committee members and tell them what the people in the real world think about this additional tax. It is simply a grab for cash and in times of adversity it is not the right thing to do. The additional tax is inequitable and unfair; it is prejudiced against people from the north-west who have no public transport alternatives other than buses. There are no trains and there is no railway—we have discussed the history of that situation. Each morning 100 people queue for a bus at the junction at Baulkham Hills and they wait for a similar amount of time in the afternoon. It is a costly, inconvenient and cumbersome way to travel to and from work. The Government should reconsider this tax. It will do the Government no favours and it will not assist the community.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater) [6.16 p.m.]: I speak to the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009 on behalf of the long-suffering commuters of the northern beaches, particularly Pittwater. My comments relate specifically to

the object of the bill set out in clause 3. The objects of the original bill introduced in 1992 were to discourage commuting to the Sydney central business district by private motor vehicles and, in a sense, to provide an indirect competitive advantage to businesses in other central business districts. That is consistent with good planning practice. It makes sense to try to encourage as many people as possible to work in locations around the city, not just within its core. Yet the purposes of the original Act were subverted progressively by adding a series of other central business districts to which the parking space levy was applied, thereby removing the advantage from those peripheral areas.

By imposing a levy on parking spaces to discourage the use of cars in the leviable districts, the Act was designed to earmark or hypothecate the revenue generated to encourage the use of public transport to and from the leviable areas in a series of central business districts around Sydney. In other words, the Act's object was to apply both a stick and a carrot. Ostensibly that is a laudable objective. However, the reality for residents of the northern beaches, in particular, is that it is a stick and a stick. The parking space levy is a kick in the head for long-suffering commuters on the northern beaches. It is a kick in the guts that they have to pay a levy to park their motor vehicles while the public transport alternatives from the northern beaches are being progressively downgraded.

I will give a couple of examples. Following a recent review of public transport in my electorate of Pittwater, two bus services that provided transport from Pittwater to the Chatswood central business district—the Elanora Heights to Chatswood service and the direct Mona Vale to Chatswood service—were either removed or recommended for removal and are to be replaced by indirect transport services. At the same time as the Government moves to increase this levy, it decreases public transport services in my community of Pittwater. People in my community have every right to be frustrated and angry. They have every right to think they are not getting value for money.

I recently asked the Minister for Transport about his department's plans to provide funding to install extra park-and-ride facilities for commuters on Sydney's northern beaches travelling to and from the Sydney CBD, and where these facilities were being planned. The answer is revealing. The Minister said that he had been advised that in the mini-budget the Government had promised an extra 3,000 car park spaces across the metropolitan CityRail network, including the Illawarra, the Central Coast and the Blue Mountains. Of course, the problem is that there is no CityRail network on the northern beaches. So these car spaces are leaving my community, and the community of the northern beaches entirely out in the cold. If the Minister wants the community to support this increased levy, he must demonstrate that the object of the Act will be addressed, that the revenue raised from this levy will be applied to improving public transport and that areas such as the northern beaches will benefit from improved public transport. Until he can demonstrate that to the satisfaction of my constituents, it is appropriate that I join my colleagues in opposing the bill.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde) [6.21 p.m.]: I support the call by the shadow Minister for Transport to refer the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009 to an upper House committee, as a number of serious concerns surround the bill. The levy is to be raised for the specific purposes stated in the objects of the bill. Clause 3 states:

The object of this Act is to discourage car use in leviable districts by imposing a levy on parking spaces (including parking spaces in parking stations), and by using the revenue to encourage the use of public transport (in particular, public transport to and from those districts).

The levy relates to specified districts. The people most affected by a proposed increase in the levy are commuters who drive to work and are required to park in the central business district [CBD], North Sydney, Bondi Junction, Parramatta, St Leonards and Chatswood and commuters who do not have access to reasonable public transport options. That means that the people in the north-west are primarily caught by the proposed increase in the levy. They drive to work through necessity rather than by choice, as no viable public transport alternative exists. If the people in the north-west pay the levy, then they should obtain the benefit of the funds raised by the levy, such as better public transport.

However, the Government has destroyed their public transport options. For example, the North West Metro was scrapped in last year's disastrous mini-budget and no real option is in place, despite 14 years of Labor. The Government has had 14 years—plenty of opportunity—to properly plan for public transport in the north-west. Instead, it is a disaster. The people in the north-west would be very concerned that this legislation has broadened the Government's capacity to spend their levy funds in areas that may not have contributed to the levy. That is pursuant to provisions that were not in the 1992 legislation. For example, clause 11 (3) (a) states:

- (3) There is payable out of the Public Transport Fund:
 - (a) money to finance public transport services

Clause 11 (3) (c) states:

- (c) money to finance initiatives for the communication of information to commuters, including initiatives that make use of new technologies

I am concerned that without proper transparency and accountability the levies raised will be used to pork barrel projects in seats that the Government wants to retain in two years' time. These concerns are highlighted by the 2007 Auditor-General's report, which noted there were still no criteria that funds were allocated to improve public transport. Clause 11 (3) (e) states:

- (e) money that is directed to be paid from the Fund by or under this or any other Act.

This means that the Government effectively can raise levies through the good people of the north-west and then use those levies on mismanaged projects such as the North West Metro. The North West Metro is a matter of serious concern and an example of the Government's mismanagement of public money. On 28 November 2008 I asked a question in the House about the total cost of legal fees for the North West Metro project from its inception to its cancellation in the mini-budget. On 2 January 2009 I was informed that the total cost of legal fees was \$804,000. The total cost of consultant fees for the North West Metro project was approximately \$1.2 million. That is approximately \$2 million of public money wasted due to the axing of the North West Metro project. That \$2 million of wasted public money could have been spent on hospitals, public transport or front-line services, such as police.

The degree of waste and mismanagement that the Government delivers is unbelievable. It is good at delivering glossy brochures, like its propaganda about the North West Metro. Trust me, the public is sick of it. A further concern is the lack of public consultation. In the current economic climate, the Government must ask two questions. First, will this bill, or any other, create jobs? If so, the bill should be encouraged. Second, will this bill, or any other, have a negative impact on jobs? In this case, the bill must be carefully examined and there must be proper consultation. The Government received a submission from the New South Wales Parking Operators Association dated March 2009. In relation to the impact on jobs, the submission states:

The parking industry calculates the loss of 10% to 15% of its employees, with a crippling knock-on effect to redundancy decisions for businesses in Sydney's CBD.

I will repeat that, because I do not believe the Government is listening. The Government keeps saying jobs, jobs, jobs. But this is a submission from a group that the Government is not listening to. The submission from the New South Wales Parking Operators Association states that the industry calculates a loss of 10 per cent to 15 per cent of its employees, with a crippling knock-on effect to redundancy decisions for businesses in Sydney's CBD. There has been no proper community consultation and the bill has been rushed through Parliament. As previous Opposition speakers have said, this is a grab for cash because the Government does not know how to manage its resources and finances. It knows how to spend and waste money willy-nilly on, for example, advertising for the North West Metro, which it then decides to scrap because it is not suitable for its political purpose or gain. This bill, like many other Government bills, has not been properly considered. It should be opposed until an inquiry has been undertaken into its ramifications.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Transport, and Minister for the Illawarra) [6.29 p.m.], in reply: I thank everybody who has taken part in this debate, but most particularly the Minister for Ageing and Minister for Disability Services, who introduced the bill and delivered the agreement in principle speech on my behalf when I was ill at the time. The Opposition has botched this. Members of the Opposition have been led down the garden path by the shadow Minister for Transport, who does not understand this bill. This bill does not increase the parking space levy to \$2,000. Certainly the bill says that once the legislation comes into effect as an Act the base rate will be \$2,000, but this bill does not of itself increase the levy to \$2,000. That was done by this Parliament as part of the bills and legislation in the mini-budget. The shadow Minister for Transport has put out a piece of paper which most of her colleagues have come in here and read verbatim, and it is wrong, and she knows it.

Most speakers from the Opposition did not know, until it was pointed out by members on this side of the House, that the Parking Space Levy Act, to which this bill seeks to make some housekeeping amendments and update, was introduced by a Coalition Government in 1992. The Opposition has been caught out and embarrassed on two points. The introduction of the Parking Space Levy Bill 2009, which will replace the existing Parking Space Levy Act 1992—the Coalition's Act—and the Parking Space Levy Regulation 1997, is all about providing more certainty for parking space owners. The object of the Parking Space Levy Act was to

discourage car use in business districts by imposing a levy on off-street, commercial and office parking, and to use the revenue raised to finance the development of infrastructure to encourage the use of public transport to and from those districts.

The funds provide for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure that improves access to public transport. Parking space levy funds have funded the Parramatta bus interchange; transitway interchanges; the extension of the light rail to Lilyfield; and numerous smaller interchanges, commuter car parks and ferry wharf improvements. The new bill follows a comprehensive review of the Parking Space Levy Act and regulation. The conclusion of that review was that the Act and regulation are generally meeting their objectives. However, opportunities for improvements have been identified to enhance the administrative efficiency of the legislation. In summary, the recommendations were to maintain the definition of the City of Sydney area, as at pre-May 2003; to expand the potential uses of parking space delivery revenue; to consolidate all the standard exemptions in one place in the Act; and to make minor amendments to clarify definitions in the Parking Space Levy Act.

The City of Sydney is defined by the council boundary in the existing Act. Following the amalgamation with South Sydney Council in 2003 it has been necessary to exempt the new areas from the levy on an annual basis, creating uncertainty for property owners in these areas. The new bill will define all areas by maps that will maintain the pre-2003 levy areas. It is common sense and I do not think the world will end as a consequence of that amendment. Another component of this bill is to consolidate the exemptions. As the Act has developed since it was first introduced by the Coalition in 1992, concessions and exemptions have occurred both in the Act and in the regulation, making the understanding of the Act more complex for property owners. To simplify the reading of the Act, exemptions and concessions are brought together in the regulation. Again, common-sense changes over which the world will not end.

There are also a number of minor amendments and clarifications to definitions. They are included to reflect changes in relation to parking curbs and how exemptions are applied. Firstly, the Act will allow the Chief Commissioner of the Office of State Revenue to issue guidelines on the application of concessions and exemptions and what is or is not a parking space. Other definitions allow for stacked parking, where by means of a hoist or other device owners can park more than one car in a single space; loading zones being for the normal understanding of loading and unloading and not for all-day parking; casual parking concessions being for the original intention, such as tradespersons doing temporary work rather than employees, contractors or consultants; reducing the space per car to 18 square metres when calculating the leviable spaces in a car park where no individual spaces are marked to more accurately reflect what actually occurs; and clarifying the obligation to pay if the space was owned for part of the previous financial year.

The bill also requires the Minister to review the Act five years after it receives assent to determine whether the policy objectives of the Act remain valid. That is what this bill does: it is a minor housekeeping bill around original legislation that was introduced in 1992, and now in 2009 it is entirely appropriate. As I said, the Opposition has botched this. The bill does not increase the levy; that has occurred elsewhere and in different circumstances. But the bill does provide for the funds to be spent for the purposes originally set out in the bill brought in by the Coalition—for interchanges, for commuter car parks and, potentially, to give real-time information to commuters as to the availability of services. As technologies become available there will be an upgrade to the giving of that information.

The member for Sydney has indicated that she proposes to move three amendments. The Government will support amendments one and two but amendment three does not relate particularly to public transport, it relates more to hire cars. Given that it is not related to a public transport issue I do not think it is appropriate to extend the possible use of the levy for what effectively is private motor vehicle use and hire cars. The Government is not in a position to support the third amendment. This is a simple process that has been botched by the incompetence of the Opposition.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: What about referring it to an upper House committee?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Members of the Opposition should be embarrassed. Then out of the blue they say, "Let's just refer it to an upper House committee."

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris): Order! The member for Willoughby will cease interjecting.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: She has botched it and now she is screaming like a banshee in an attempt to deflect attention from the fact that she made a mistake. I commend the bill to the House. The Government will support two of the three amendments proposed by the member for Sydney.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 45

Mr Amery	Mr Harris	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Andrews	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Mr Aquilina	Mr Hickey	Mrs Perry
Ms Beamer	Ms Hornery	Mr Piper
Mr Borger	Ms Judge	Mr Sartor
Mr Brown	Ms Keneally	Mr Shearan
Ms Burney	Mr Khoshaba	Mr Stewart
Ms Burton	Mr Lalich	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Campbell	Mr Lynch	Mr Terenzini
Mr Collier	Mr McBride	Mr Tripodi
Mr Coombs	Dr McDonald	Mr Whan
Mr Corrigan	Ms McKay	
Mr Costa	Mr McLeay	
Mr Daley	Ms Megaritty	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Gadiel	Ms Moore	Mr Ashton
Mr Gibson	Mr Morris	Mr Martin

Noes, 37

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

Pairs

Ms Firth	Mr Baird
Mr West	Mr R. C. Williams

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [6.43 p.m.]: I move my amendment No. 1:

No. 1 Page 2, clause 3, line 11. Insert ", or within," after "from".

Given the impact of the global financial crisis, Sydney's capacity to drive the national economy has never been more important. Based on industry mix and relative occupational wage levels, it is estimated that the gross

domestic product [GDP] generated in the City of Sydney local government area in 2007-08 was approximately \$74 billion, which represents more than 8 per cent, or nearly one-twelfth, of the total national Australian economy, more than 30 per cent of the Sydney metropolitan area's GDP and almost one-quarter of New South Wales' GDP. The city is also Australia's face to the world and more than two-thirds of all international business visitors come here. Consequently, it is the prime driver of the Australian economy. In the past decade the city's economy grew at a rate more than 1 per cent above the Australian average.

For Sydney to compete with other global cities it must have a sustainable, fast and efficient transport system. A system that moves people around the city can take pressure off other services that transport people in and out of the area and it can drastically reduce inner-city congestion. To ensure that transport projects such as an inner-city light rail loop can be funded by the levy, these amendments provide that the parking space levy can fund transport projects within leviable areas.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby) [6.45 p.m.]: Although I declared the Opposition's preference to have the entire bill examined by an upper House committee, we will support this amendment. As I said, we would like the bill examined holistically, but we believe this amendment is sensible.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Transport, and Minister for the Illawarra) [6.46 p.m.]: I indicated in my speech in reply that the Government would support this amendment.

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

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 10 agreed to.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [6.49 p.m.]: I move my amendment No. 2:

No. 2 Page 5, clause 11 (3) (b), line 18. Insert ", or within," after "from".

I am moving this amendment for the same reasons that I moved amendment No. 1. It relates to being able to use the levy funds within the city.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Transport, and Minister for the Illawarra) [6.50 p.m.]: The Government will support the member for Sydney's second amendment, which will amend clause 11 in a similar way to the way clause 3 was amended by her first amendment.

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

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 11 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 12 to 18 agreed to.

Schedule 1 agreed to.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [6.51 p.m.]: I move my amendment No. 3:

No. 3 Page 11, schedule 2, clause 7 (1). Insert after line 29:

- (d) the parking of motor vehicles that are used exclusively for the purposes of a car sharing scheme where members of the scheme are able to hire the vehicles for short periods.

This amendment relates to an exemption for car sharing. Carshare schemes are an important part of achieving a sustainable city. They are a growing initiative that the city supports. Residents with a drivers licence pay to join the scheme and they can book to use a car when needed. The City is promoting and supporting car sharing because it is discouraging car use. People are able to relinquish the ownership of their cars and rely on sustainable forms of transport such as public transport, cycling and walking most of the time, and on those

occasions when they might need to buy bulky goods or to go away for the weekend they can get a carshare car. This is very much a sustainable transport initiative I hope the Minister will reconsider supporting. Carshare schemes reduce car ownership and they are in line with the objects of the bill as outlined by the Minister. My amendment would ensure that car spaces dedicated exclusively to motor vehicles using carshare schemes do not incur the levy.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby) [6.52 p.m.]: As I stated when speaking to the previous amendment, our preference is for this bill to be looked at in globo by General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 of the upper House. However, given that the object of the bill, which was originally enacted in 1992, is to encourage public transport use and to reduce road congestion, we think the amendment moved by the member for Sydney is a sensible one and we on this side of the House will be supporting it.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Transport, and Minister for the Illawarra) [6.53 p.m.]: As I indicated earlier, the Government's view is that carshare vehicles are effectively hire cars and on that basis should not be considered as public transport. Therefore, the Government needs to oppose this amendment.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 39

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

Noes, 42

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

Pairs

Mr Baird	Ms Firth
Mr R. C. Williams	Mr West

Question resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Consideration in detail concluded.

Passing of the Bill

Motion by Mr David Campbell agreed to:

That this bill be now passed.

Bill passed and transmitted to the Legislative Council with a message seeking its concurrence in the bill.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris): Order! It being just after 7.00 p.m., the House will now proceed to the matter of public importance.

WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES JOBS

Matter of Public Importance

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) [7.02 p.m.]: The provision of jobs in western New South Wales is a matter of concern to us all. Over the last decade a number of issues have pertained specifically to western New South Wales, not the least of which is the drought—although I do not wish to dwell on that, except to say that western New South Wales has had its restructure. Despite the global financial crisis, we have been in this state for quite some years on every social economic indicator, be it housing, education, indigenous issues, business enterprise, transport or infrastructure. Over the past decade all our social indicators have progressively declined. That has meant severe pain and hardship for working families, business and service providers in western New South Wales. Over the last decade my colleagues and I, and our communities, have sought direction from government to stand by western New South Wales. Things have become a lot sharper. There is less money and less certainty.

Although we do not wish to talk down the economy, we know that many parts of this country are in for a very difficult time, particularly with respect to jobs. We do not need a Government that is exporting jobs and making life more difficult for business. We need to make it easier to do business in western New South Wales and to drive down the cost of doing business in our area. Following the mini-budget that was delivered by the State Labor Government in November—it was described as borderline disastrous at a time when communities required meaningful support—there has been constant criticism of the Government for targeting taxation issues. That was seen as a negative step—for example, I refer to the school bus tax and the tax on blood. Such measures do not drive jobs in western New South Wales; indeed, they force jobs out of New South Wales. It is more expensive to do business in New South Wales, particularly for towns bordering Victoria and Queensland, so the result has been a mass exodus. We have lost thousands and thousands of jobs to those States because of the Government's inaction and the high cost of doing business in New South Wales. The Government must address this issue urgently.

The Government could assist with jobs in New South Wales in the mining industry. The Endeavour mine at Cobar employed 650 people. However, in that small community of only 5,000 people 400 jobs have been lost. Currently that mine is seeking an exemption from the Government to improve its cash flow. Each mine in New South Wales has a rehabilitation fund. The Endeavour mine has asked the Government to provide \$12 million from its rehabilitation fund and in lieu it has put up \$17 million worth of real estate in Cobar. This will enable the mine to have sufficient cash flow to sustain the remaining jobs. Last week I had the pleasure of joining the Deputy Premier at the opening of the Forest Discovery Centre at Baradine. As part of the Government's decision to lock up 200,000 hectares in the Brigalow-Nandewar South Bioregion, timber mills were closed in Bingara, Baradine, Gwabegar and Narrabri, and there are ongoing closures at Gulargambone, Walcha, Nundle and places around Tamworth. As a result, hundreds and hundreds of jobs have been displaced through a political decision, not a jobs-driven decision.

On Friday I attended a rally at Condobolin, which has the only remaining research station in eastern Australia that targets cereal cropping in dry and hot climates. At that station 20 jobs remain and the community

believes that food security now is a far greater risk than global warming. Indeed, our communities are at risk. The communities of western New South Wales and some urban areas are becoming endangered. They have been forgotten. Political decisions to shut down industries and decisions to close properties such as Toorale or the proposed eight research stations are bordering on scandalous. To suggest that the Government is serious about job creation is pure spin, which is why it is not getting the coverage in the media it deserves. Today the Minister for Transport was spruiking about the provision of nine new vehicles and the creation of 17 bus driver positions. That will be good for Wollongong.

However, I refer to the cutting back of air services that provide critical medical services to western New South Wales not subsidised by the Government. At the same time the Government supports V8 supercars and the mardi gras. Over the weekend it announced a purported \$1 billion refurbishment for the Sydney Opera House. There are basic things that are not being addressed in the State. We need to reconfigure the priorities for this Government. If the Government cannot do it, I can assure the House the community will do it. We need a focus on jobs—and not just in isolated areas but also in urban areas. We need a concentrated effort to sustain jobs in western New South Wales. That is why we have raised this issue as a matter of public importance.

Mr GERARD MARTIN (Bathurst) [7.09 p.m.]: The Rees Government is investing in the economy to support jobs and ease the pain on families in western New South Wales. Since July 2007 to date, the New South Wales Government has helped to attract 18 projects to western New South Wales. This represents a total company investment of \$37 million and 350 new jobs created. For example, last year the New South Wales Government assisted a Queensland company to relocate its Superbee honey factory to Forbes—a \$2.4 million investment that created 10 jobs in Forbes. The company chose Forbes because it is closer to many of the company's suppliers and its major domestic markets. The member for Barwon spoke about the cost of doing business in New South Wales. Members opposite are quick to talk about payroll tax, but they are hypocritical on this issue. They forget that when the Coalition left office payroll tax in New South Wales was at 8 per cent. It is now 25 per cent lower than that under this Government.

The Government also provided a total of \$105,000 last year to support the development of Parkes as a transport and logistics hub in the Central West. This includes \$80,000 towards a project to address skills and labour shortages in the industry. This week we are holding a series of Managing Through Turbulent Times seminars in western New South Wales to help small-size and medium-size businesses respond to the current tough economic climate. The first seminar was held on Monday in my electorate of Bathurst, with others being held in Orange, Parkes and Mudgee, and more to follow in other parts of the State. Last year the New South Wales Government provided \$37,500 to Forbes Shire Council for economic development activities aimed at encouraging investment and business growth. The council is also implementing the SolarUp project, encouraging businesses to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and lowering energy consumption.

In addition, the Government has supported the employment of an economic development officer at Lithgow City Council, in my home town of Lithgow, as well as recent workshops with local businesses. This amounts to a commitment of more than \$100,000 to Lithgow City Council. Next year the New South Wales Government's Community Economic Development Conference will take place in Broken Hill. It will bring together representatives from State and local government, as well as community and business groups, to explore sustainable economic growth in regional areas. Assistance for business investment and community projects in western New South Wales will be further enhanced through the Rees Government's \$85 million Building the Country Package, a package aimed squarely at boosting jobs west of the Great Divide, and driving investment and business activity in local towns. The project is now out for expressions of interest.

I know that in my electorate there are a number of very worthy projects that will do just that: create jobs. One of the projects will build on heritage infrastructure, and will fill many gaps in training people in lost arts such as coach building and many of the metalwork occupations. The Building the Country Package is targeted at creating jobs. Another component of the package is securing telecommunications for isolated communities. Together with our broadband capacity, that will allow the smaller and boutique businesses to become much more competitive. Together with our broadband committee we are looking at areas where we can do that, and getting together with communities to build the facilities where the major companies such as Telstra will not do it. Indeed, last Friday our committee met with senior people from Telstra to discuss their involvement and use their expertise.

The message coming from members opposite is that we are not interested in jobs in western New South Wales. I have outlined just a few things that show that that is not the case. The Government is being responsive

to circumstances. We now know that we are going into somewhat uncharted waters with the unprecedented financial situation we find ourselves in around the world. This time 12 months ago not too many people would have predicted that. But the Rees Government is committed to working with the Rudd Government, particularly in relation to the various stimulus packages. The packages will make an impact throughout the western region, particularly with regard to school infrastructure improvements, which will create construction jobs. Over a couple of years \$3.5 billion will be invested, and a fair proportion of that will go to areas west of the Great Divide and in western New South Wales.

By way of other projects we are helping communities to refinance and upgrade their community halls, which are very important in these small communities as being a focal part of the community. All these things add up to making these smaller, isolated communities better places in which to live. We know that for a couple of generations now there has been a drift to the coast and to the large urban areas. That has always been a challenge for country areas. In terms of decentralisation it is very difficult to get major companies to move away from where the workforce is and where the major infrastructure is.

But through the Building the Country Package, the Federal Government stimulus package and our State Government \$56 million capital investment infrastructure program over the next four years, which was brought down in last year's budget, the Government is taking concrete steps to ensure that the communities that need support will receive support, as we have continued to support them through the drought. I think we have spent close to half a million dollars on drought assistance for mainly people in the western region and regional areas of the State. The Government is committed to helping the economy in the western region of New South Wales, particularly through creating jobs.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [7.16 p.m.]: August 2008 saw the loss of 440 jobs from Perylia Mining Company in Broken Hill after the collapse of base metal prices. This really did not cause a flutter anywhere in the Government, although I drew it to the attention of the Government and the Premier. Along with those 440 jobs, about 36 apprentices who were midstream in their training were excised from their positions and were unable to complete their training. That is an absolute shame, given that the Government constantly talks about a skills shortage in this State and about the need to support skills training. It would have been a perfect opportunity at that time for the Government to find a way to allow the apprentices to finish their trade. Anna Bligh was elected Premier of Queensland last weekend. When we look at what Anna Bligh did in her State of Queensland, we seek that she had a task force to address these situations. In contrast, in Broken Hill the New South Wales Government responded with resume writing.

I believe the other thing that could have saved the jobs is the fast-tracking of wind farms. The Government has spoken at length about support for green energy and particularly about its support for wind farms in western New South Wales. There could have been an opportunity to fast-track the wind farms and thereby soak up some of those lost positions. My present concerns are for the redgum forestry industry in southern Riverina. Given the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council report favouring the lock-up of the Victorian forests, I am very concerned about the forestry jobs in southern Riverina, particularly at Deniliquin and Barham. If the National Parks Association or the other green elements get their way, those jobs will be lost. There is no reality in believing these jobs can be replaced with jobs in tourism. It never happens. Yanga Station, in Balranald, was locked up some years ago.

If I took a survey of the locals in Balranald to find out how they feel about Yanga Station and what it has done for tourism in that town, I think they would say it has not done a great deal. The real jobs are gone, and unfortunately that is the hurt that this Government really does not understand. My next focus is to protect those jobs in forestry. We have already seen significant bushfires in Victoria created by locking up forests. There is a clear indication that if the Greens element that affects this Government gets its way we will see our forests locked up and the potential for a fire to burn for months, unable to be put out. We will lose jobs in the meantime.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) [7.19 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Bathurst for his contribution to the debate. I acknowledge the work the Government has done in drought support. I also acknowledge the Government's work in trying to resolve the issues affecting air services in western New South Wales. But one key element is missing: urgency, urgency and urgency! We have talked about how Kevin Rudd's stimulus package will affect jobs in western New South Wales, but there is a general lack of confidence or belief that the State Government is able to deliver on infrastructure, infrastructure and infrastructure. For years an inland railway has been proposed for western New South Wales and we have a proponent who has had the Queensland Government sign off on stage one for years, but there is still no commitment from the New South Wales Government.

Are there any large infrastructure projects proposed, at no cost to the State Government? Yes, there are. Is the Government doing anything about them? No, nothing meaningful. Does it mean a loss of jobs and a loss of opportunities for western New South Wales? Yes, it does. The Opposition wants the Government to consider that. The Government is either lazy or arrogant, or it chooses not to support the decentralised issues that we currently face. There are plenty of opportunities in western New South Wales, but we need a group to back us. Innovation in western New South Wales is plentiful and, as the member for Murray-Darling said, it has often been said that it will be green energy brought in from the west that will deliver green energy to the highly urbanised areas on a large scale. However, these projects are not being supported in any meaningful way.

New South Wales is currently targeted as the water buyback State, and that is largely happening in western New South Wales. No water is being bought back out of the Murray-Darling Basin from Victoria. No water is being bought back out of the Murray-Darling Basin from Queensland. They are holding off because we are the weakest link. I have just spent a few days with the member for Murray-Darling in southern New South Wales. I know that some of our communities are very exposed and that will mean a loss of jobs. Is anything meaningful happening with respect to gas pipelines—whether they come from Queensland or out of western New South Wales—to top up the State electricity supply? No. Are there proposals? Yes, there are. If it is infrastructure, infrastructure and infrastructure that we are on about, get on with it. Let us develop a sense of urgency. As the member for Murray-Darling said, tourism is not the panacea. There are plenty of job creation opportunities—we just need to get on with it.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to sessional orders, at 7.22 p.m. until
Wednesday 25 March 2009 at 10.00 a.m.**
