

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 14 May 2009

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS (CARE AND PROTECTION) AMENDMENT BILL 2009

CRIMINAL ORGANISATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009

HOME BUILDING AMENDMENT (INSURANCE) BILL 2009

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

MOTOR ACCIDENTS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009

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

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

CRIMINAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009

Bill introduced.

Agreement in principle set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments.

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.

Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 13 May 2009

No. 1 Page 3, schedule 1 [2]. Insert after line 33:

- (b) the completion of a course provided by the TAFE Commission that is approved by the Minister as the equivalent of Year 10 of secondary education in this State, or

No. 2 Page 4. Insert after line 30:

[5] **Section 23 (3) (a1)**

Insert after section 23 (3) (a):

- (a1) the child has written permission from the principal of a government school or registered non-government school, and from the director of a TAFE establishment, to enrol in a course referred to in section 21B (5) (b) and is so enrolled, or

No. 3 Page 6, schedule 1 [10], lines 8–10. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

- (1) The amendments made by the Education Amendment Act 2009 do not apply to a child who attained the age of 15 years before 1 January 2010, unless:
 - (a) the child completed Year 10 of secondary education (as referred to in section 21B) during the 2009 school year, or
 - (b) the child was enrolled at a government or registered non-government school at the end of the 2009 school year or was registered for home schooling at the end of 2009.
- (2) The regulations may make provision for the purpose of determining whether a child was enrolled at a school at the end of the 2009 school year.

Mr JOHN AQUILINA (Riverstone—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.10 a.m.], on behalf of Mr Nathan Rees: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendments.

I thank the many members of both this and the other place who have spoken in this debate for their contributions. As the House is aware, this legislation aims to ensure that New South Wales students maintain a competitive advantage in today's economy. As has already been outlined, the current school leaving age of 15 was set in 1943 when only a small number of young people stayed at school beyond the equivalent of year 10. That was when they achieved the matriculation certificate. Now only a minority do not stay on to complete year 12 and there are few entry-level positions that do not require a Higher School Certificate or its equivalent. Successfully completing year 12 or its equivalent should no longer be optional. There are two clear reasons why this is the case and why this legislation is of vital importance. Firstly, continued education is very much in the interests of young people and, secondly, it is of great benefit to the New South Wales and Australian economies.

In relation to young individuals, the evidence is stark and uncompromising. The Australian Bureau of Statistics research shows that year 12 leavers who go on to further study have an unemployment rate of only 2.7 per cent, while year 10 or below leavers have an unemployment rate of 7.8 per cent. An early leaver has more than double the risk of unemployment. Just as relevant is research regarding some income levels. A 2005 study estimated that each year of education increases an individual's income by 10 per cent. The evidence is just as clear-cut with regard to the economy. Higher educational attainments lead to a higher domestic product. Applied Economics has estimated that if the number of early school leavers is halved by 2050, it will result in a \$1.5 billion to \$1.7 billion gain to the New South Wales economy. The OECD has said that additional years of education would raise the level of productivity by between 3 per cent and 6 per cent.

In preparing for these changes, the New South Wales Government has consulted with parents, young people, and those who work with and promote the interests of young people, and industry. The community expressed clear and virtually unanimous support for these changes in the legislation, which I will now outline. From 2010 each student in New South Wales will complete year 10 as a minimum and continue to be engaged in some form of education, training or employment until they are 17 years old. This legislation has been designed specifically to give young people maximum flexibility in how they stay engaged in education for longer. The legislation defines the minimum school leaving age as the age at which a student completes year 10 of secondary education or the age of 17 years, whichever occurs first. The system will have the flexibility to allow for special circumstances affecting particular students and the Minister of the day will have the power to approve the completion of education in these circumstances.

The legislation also introduces a participation requirement so that every young person must participate in some form of education or training, or be in employment from the time they complete year 10 until they reach 17 years of age. For the majority of students this will simply mean that they stay at school. For others the participation phase may include a vocational course or an apprenticeship or traineeship. An amendment was passed in the other place that provides an additional option for a small cohort of young people for whom school, even at the age of 14 and 15, is not the best place to complete their education. The Government did not oppose that amendment. In fact, the Government acknowledges that for some young people this will require us to work with them to develop solutions that best meet their specific needs.

Blacktown Youth College is such a place operating within the city of Blacktown close to my electorate. It does an outstanding job for many people who normally would have left school at a young age but who now are being provided with gainful education on a modified curriculum level approved by the Board of Studies. I commend the teachers and administration of the Blacktown Youth College for its particular work. I am proud

to be patron of that college as it recognises the specific and special needs of young people aged 14 and 15 years—sometimes often younger—who in the past would have opted out of the school system at a very early age, probably becoming chronic truants never to be seen again as far as education was concerned. However, now these young people are being taught extensively about living skills, and literacy and numeracy needs through the modified curriculum under the outstanding dedication of the teachers.

Members will be interested to note that at the recent Council of Australian Governments meeting in Hobart the Prime Minister and all Premiers and Chief Ministers considered options to improve school retention and youth transition into the labour market. The meeting sought to find the best way to ensure that all Australian children are as well prepared as possible by our education systems for their futures. I am proud to report that at the end of that meeting all States and Territories adopted the same school leaving age policy as that developed in New South Wales—the same policy we are now debating.

I take this opportunity to commend the Rudd Government particularly for its successes in spearheading a number of nationwide educational performances and in bringing about educational uniformity across the States and Territories. Ten years ago, even five years ago, this would have been unheard of, but now we are seeing this degree of consistency in so many fields, including the drive to bring about common curriculums and testing processes across States and Territories. Yesterday the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] tests commenced in our primary schools. Consistency now will be achieved regarding school leaving ages. That is a big tick for the Rudd Government and the various State and territorial governments for the manner in which this uniformity is being achieved.

All Australian students will benefit from the policy the Rees Government developed in New South Wales working with students, parents, teachers and business. It is another example of the leadership of New South Wales in national education policy debates. Again I acknowledge that as part of achieving this national uniformity New South Wales in many ways is providing the benchmark and is leading the way. In line with the momentum created by the decision of the Council of Australian Governments, another amendment was passed in the other place to bring forward the implementation of the policy. While the requirement to complete year 10 remains due to commence next year, the subsequent participation phase also will now commence next year—brought forward from 2011. This policy will be backed up with support and resources to make sure every young person makes the right choices.

The Premier has spoken of a commitment in the order of \$98 million per year to ensure that we can build additional facilities and employ additional staff—teachers and counsellors—to make this change possible. While the focus of the school leaving age budget is on providing support to teachers, support staff and classrooms, the equally essential support is also properly resourced by a large number of complementary education initiatives that simultaneously have been put in place by the Rees Government. This bill comes at a time when the Government has introduced a wide range of initiatives to engage our senior students. Vocational options within schools for senior school students have been expanded. Last year more than 20,000 year 12 students—one-third of the total cohort—studied one or more vocational education training [VET] courses for their Higher School Certificate [HSC]. The introduction of vocational education training courses and the Higher School Certificate is an initiative of previous Labor governments and played a crucial part in the introduction of the new Higher School Certificate.

New South Wales students are enrolled in over 54,000 vocational education and training courses in schools. We have introduced school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, opened 13 trade schools with another 12 to open within this term of Government, and we have announced 6,000 new government apprenticeships and cadetships over the next four years. This Government's Learn or Earn package provides any person up to the age of 18 with a guaranteed place at TAFE New South Wales. No-one can force young people to get the best out of their schooling, but governments have an obligation to make sure that opportunities exist for all. Education and training always will be the smartest investment any individual can make in themselves and in their future. This legislation is a significant addition to both the future of individual young people in New South Wales and to the State's prosperity. I commend the bill and the amendments to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendments agreed to.

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

CRIMINAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009**Agreement in Principle**

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.26 a.m.], on behalf of Mr David Campbell: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The bill makes a number of miscellaneous amendments to legislation relating to crimes, criminal procedure and other matters to improve the administration of the justice system in New South Wales. I now turn to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1.1 amends the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000. This amendment specifies that a registrable person must make an initial report of their relevant information to the Commissioner of Police within seven days of being sentenced for a registrable offence. This must be done whether or not the person has previously been required to report. The amendment addresses an anomaly whereby offenders who had never before been sentenced in relation to a registrable offence had seven days within which to report to the Commissioner of Police, whereas repeat offenders whose reporting period in relation to a registrable offence had expired were given 28 days within which to report.

Schedule 1.2 amends the Confiscation of Proceeds of Crime Act 1989 in relation to the cultivation of prohibited plants. Section 23A of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 governs offences of enhanced cultivation of prohibited plants in the presence of children where more than a small quantity of the prohibited plant is involved. This amendment provides that an offence under this section is a drug trafficking offence for the purposes of the Confiscation of Proceeds of Crime Act 1989. Schedule 1.3 amends the Crimes Act 1900 to include the additional circumstance of aggravation of breaking and entering, in respect of the offences of sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 10 and sexual intercourse with a child aged between 10 and 16. I do not need to remind the members of the House of the recent shocking case that took place in Grafton in which an offender broke into the victim's grandmother's house and sexually assaulted a four-year-old girl. The community expects harsh penalties for people who commit these kinds of heinous crimes and the amendment meets these expectations. In future offenders will be subject to severe penalties, including life imprisonment, where the victim is under the age of 10 years.

Schedule 1.4 amends the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to create two offences: one offence of attempting to stalk or intimidate another person with the intention of causing the other person to fear physical or mental harm and a second offence of attempting to contravene a prohibition or restriction in an apprehended violence order. Any person who attempts either of these two offences will be liable to the same penalty as if the person had committed the offence itself. These amendments will provide greater protection to victims of domestic violence by criminalising the conduct of these persons who have attempted to commit these serious offences. The penalty attached sends a strong message to potential offenders that if you attempt to commit an offence, you will be liable to the same penalty as if you committed the offence.

Item [1] of schedule 1.5 removes an incorrect reference to a child under 10 from item 9B of the table to division 1A of part 4 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. This item provides for a standard non-parole period in relation to the offence of aggravated indecent assault under section 61M (2) of the Crimes Act 1900. That subsection was recently amended by the Crimes Amendment (Sexual Offences) Act 2008 so that the subsection now applies to all children under 16 years rather than just children under 10 years of age.

Items [2] to [5] of schedule 1.5 also amend the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. These items increase the membership of the New South Wales Sentencing Council from 13 to 15 members. The two additional members are to be appointed by the Attorney General. One of the new members is to have expertise or experience in criminal law or sentencing and the other is to have academic or research expertise or experience of relevance to the functions of the Sentencing Council. These additions will complement the current membership of the Sentencing Council, which also consists of members with experience or expertise in law enforcement, Aboriginal justice matters, corrective services, juvenile justice, and criminal law and sentencing. In addition, there are four representatives from the general community on the council, two of whom have experience or expertise in matters associated with victims of crime.

Schedule 1.6 amends the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to provide that the Ombudsman's report on the impact of penalty notices on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities under section 344A of that Act is to be provided to the Attorney General and the Minister for Police by 31 August 2009 rather than 31 May 2009. Schedule 1.7 amends the Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901. Item [2] removes the two-month limit for

the commencement of criminal proceedings under that Act. Section 179 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 will apply in respect of any such proceedings, requiring them to be commenced within six months after the offence is alleged to have been committed. This is the same time limit for the commencement of proceedings that currently applies to other similar offences contained in the Summary Offences Act 1988, such as offensive conduct, offensive language and unauthorised entry of a vehicle or boat. Item [3] amends the Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 to provide for particulars to be furnished to a defendant who is charged with an offence under that Act.

Schedule 1.8, item [1] amends the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to update a cross-reference to a renumbered provision. Item [2] amends this same Act as a result of the repeal of the Liquor Act 1982 and its replacement by the Liquor Act 2007. Item [5] amends section 198 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002. This section provides police officers with the power to give directions relating to the dispersal of groups of intoxicated persons in public places. Currently, for the purposes of this section an intoxicated person is a person who appears to be seriously affected by alcohol or any drug. With the amendment, this definition will be replaced by the definition found in the Liquor Act 2007, but will refer to intoxication caused by both drugs and alcohol.

Under this new definition, a person is intoxicated if the person's speech, balance, coordination or behaviour is noticeably affected and it is reasonable in the circumstances to believe that the affected speech, balance, coordination or behaviour is the result of the consumption of alcohol or any drug. This will enable police to utilise their move-on powers when they believe on reasonable grounds that the person's behaviour as a result of the intoxication is likely to cause injury to any other person or persons, damage to property, or otherwise gives rise to a risk to public safety. This is an important reform. It gives police an early intervention power that will enable them to defuse potentially dangerous situations before they escalate into more serious incidents.

I will illustrate how this reform will contribute to practical policing with an example provided by police themselves. One can easily envisage the all too common scene: a group of football fans have returned from a lunchtime match after their team has lost and are hanging around a shopping centre. They have clearly been drinking and their conduct is boisterous and noisy. Police are monitoring the situation and are alive to the fact that their mood has the potential to turn nasty, and that if this occurs shoppers and property are at risk. Notwithstanding the volatility of the situation, as persons within the group are still perfectly mobile and moderately coherent, police may not feel that the circumstances meet the current test, which is seriously affected by alcohol, and are therefore not able to disperse them.

However, with this reform police would have the power to disperse the group or move them away from the shopping centre and the public on the basis that their speech, balance, coordination or behaviour is noticeably affected, and that they believe on reasonable grounds that their behaviour is likely to cause injury to another person or persons, damage to property or otherwise give rise to a risk to public safety. A uniform definition between the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 and the Liquor Act 2007 will greatly assist police involved in alcohol enforcement operations. Schedule 1.9 makes a consequential amendment to section 37 (b) of the Mental Health (Forensic Provisions) Act 1990 as a result of amendments to that Act by the Mental Health Act 2007 concerning the Mental Health Review Tribunal's role in ordering the release of persons detained following a not guilty finding on the basis of mental illness. This bill is another example of the Government's continuing efforts to ensure that adequate laws are in place to help keep the community safe. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Greg Smith and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

CRIMINAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping) [10.36 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Criminal Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. The Opposition does not oppose the bill, which amends various Acts. However, we make the point that, as the Leader of the Opposition said in the upper House, the nature of some of the changes—particularly two of the more important amendments—justifies having separate bills and separate

debates. The stated purpose of the bill is to make miscellaneous amendments to legislation relating to crimes, criminal procedure and other matters. The most significant of the amendments proposed is to section 66A of the Crimes Act 1900 to include a maximum penalty of imprisonment for life where a person has sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 10 in circumstances of aggravation—namely, where the alleged offender breaks into any dwelling house or other building with the intention of committing the offence or any other serious indictable offence.

Section 66A (3) provides a number of other circumstances of aggravation that attract life imprisonment. They include that at the time of or immediately before or after the commission of the offence the alleged offender intentionally or recklessly inflicts actual bodily harm on the alleged victim or any other person who was present or nearby. Other circumstances are that the alleged offender is in the company of another person or persons, and the alleged victim has a serious disability or cognitive impairment. There are other circumstances, so this is not such groundbreaking legislation, as may have been suggested or hinted at in the early media coverage given to the amendments. Nevertheless, the bill deals with a serious offence. We were all horrified when we heard that a judge had handed down a two-year suspended sentence in the case of a four-year-old child who was raped after a man broke into her home.

A serious indictable offence is defined in section 4 of the Crimes Acts 1900 as an indictable offence that is punishable by imprisonment for life or for a term of five years or more. Presently section 111 of the Crimes Act provides that when a person enters any dwelling house with intent to commit a serious indictable offence, they shall be liable to imprisonment for 10 years. Section 112 of the Crimes Act provides a penalty of 14 years for breaking into any house and committing a serious indictable offence, and section 113 provides a penalty of 10 years for the offence of breaking into any house with the intent to commit a serious indictable offence, but the sentence is increased to 14 years for an aggravated offence and to 20 years for a specially aggravated offence. The circumstances of aggravation and special aggravation are set out in the Crimes Act.

The second major amendment is the move-on amendment, if I may refer to it that way, relating to section 198 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, which is colloquially referred to as the LEPR Act. That Act will be amended to provide police officers with power to give a direction to move on to groups of three or more intoxicated persons in a public place. The maximum period for which the group is unable to return is up to six hours. The new subsection applies only if, first, a person's speech, balance, coordination or behaviour is noticeably affected, and it is reasonable in the circumstances to believe that the affected speech, balance, coordination or behaviour is the result of the consumption of alcohol or any drug; and, secondly, the direction is reasonable, and the police officer believes on reasonable grounds that the person's behaviour as a result of the intoxication is likely to cause injury to persons or damage to property, or is otherwise a risk to public safety. I will deal with that in more detail later.

The bill provides for amendment of other Acts. It will amend the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000 to specify seven days rather than 28 days, or 14 days if the person is not in New South Wales, as the period within which an initial report of the person's relevant personal information must be made to the Commissioner of Police. That would apply in a case in which a person has been convicted of a specific offence that is covered by the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000, such as an offence of the sexual assault or indecent assault of a child.

The Confiscation of Proceeds of Crime Act 1989 will be amended to provide that an offence under section 23A of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 in respect of the enhanced indoor cultivation of prohibited plants in the presence of children, which involves more than a small quantity of prohibited plants within the meaning of that Act, is a drug trafficking offence for the purposes of the Confiscation of Proceeds of Crime Act 1989. The bill also amends the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to make it an offence for a person to attempt to commit an offence under section 13 (1) in respect of stalking or intimidation with intent to cause fear of physical or mental harm, or section 14 (1) of that Act in respect of the offence of contravening an apprehended violence order. The amending provision relating to the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 in schedule 1.5, item [1] will remove an incorrect reference to a child under 10 years of age from item 9B of the table of non-parole periods so that the subsection now applies to persons under 16 years rather than to persons under 10 years of age.

Membership of the New South Wales Sentencing Council is increased from 13 to 15 members. The two additional members will be appointed by the Attorney General. One of the new members is to have expertise or experience in criminal law or sentencing, and the other is to have academic or research expertise, or experience of relevance to the functions of the Sentencing Council. The Sentencing Council plays an important part in

reviewing appropriate sentencing practices. The Ombudsman's report under section 344A, which relates to the impact of penalty notices on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, is to be provided to the Attorney General and the Minister for Police by 31 August 2009 rather than 31 May 2009. The Inclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 will be amended to provide that any civil action against any person shall be commenced within two months. Section 179 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 will apply in respect of certain criminal proceedings, rather than serious indictable offences—but I will check that—and will require them to be commenced within six months after the offence is alleged to have been committed. Consequential amendments will be made to the Mental Health Legislation Amendment (Forensic Provisions) Act 2008.

I turn now to the amendment of section 66A of the Crimes Act 1900 that hopefully will deter predators who might otherwise break and enter any dwelling house with the intention of committing the offence of serious sexual assault or any other serious indictable offence. It is a bit difficult to envisage how an increase in the penalty of 25 years, which should already be a strong deterrent, to a maximum rather than mandatory penalty of life imprisonment will make much difference. Nevertheless, the Coalition supports any toughening of laws that will protect children. The move-on legislation may give police more perceived power to disperse rowdy crowds. Protections are built into the legislation to ensure that a direction must be reasonable, that the belief of the police officer regarding a person's intoxication is based on reasonable grounds and that their behaviour is likely to cause injury to a person or damage to property, or is a risk to public safety.

It is arguable that the proposed amendment of section 66A is just another example of the Government introducing piecemeal legislation. As I have stated previously, in my view the proper approach for this Government to adopt would be to provide the Court of Criminal Appeal with power to impose a sentence that is appropriate to the crime. As stated in a media release, increasing a maximum sentence from 25 years to life imprisonment is not the complete answer to the proper administration of justice in this State. We do not just need more laws to protect children under 10 years of age from burglars who molest them; we need judges to impose appropriate sentences for these abominable crimes. We need to give the courts the power to apply the existing legislation.

Instead of giving the Court of Criminal Appeal the power to re-sentence rapists to a term that the trial judge should have imposed in the first instance, this tired Government has brought in yet another bill. Increasing maximum sentences is worthless if judges and magistrates do not use them. In a recent case against Ronald King involving the rape of a four-year-old girl, the Court of Criminal Appeal, despite increasing the sentence to a total of seven years imprisonment, sent a clear message to the Rees Government that it could not increase the sentence further because it was a Crown appeal. I believe the doctrine of double jeopardy has outlived its purpose. If the Court of Criminal Appeal had the appropriate power to impose a sentence at the top of the range rather than a sentence at the bottom of the range—which is where courts have stated in the past they have to go in most cases—then justice would be done, and would be seen to be done.

It is suggested that section 66A of the Crimes Act 1900 applies only when the Crown can prove an intention to commit a serious sexual crime against a child under 10, or any other serious indictable offence. It seems to me anomalous that if a man breaks into a house with the intention of collecting his own property, comes across a child and rapes the child, he should be liable to a lesser penalty than if he intended to steal something. There may be potential for a predator to argue that when he broke into and entered the house he did not intend to commit any serious offence and had a right to take his own property. That does not exonerate him from breaking into the house, which is a separate offence, but he may have a legitimate defence if he took his own property.

With respect to the move-on power provided under the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, the Attorney General stated in the agreement in principle speech that this will give police the power to disperse a group of boisterous, noisy football fans hanging around a shopping centre, for example. But police have the power only to move people on. Areas such as Chatswood, Blacktown and Parramatta have various shopping centres that are often near hotels and bars, where people could move to and create trouble again. Do police have to keep following these groups around? Police have the power only to give a move-on direction to an intoxicated person who is in a group of three or more intoxicated persons. If the group causing trouble comprises only two intoxicated persons and the others are clear-eyed teetotallers, they cannot be moved under this power. The police have a hard time, and I do not want to make their job any harder.

Certain areas of the city are very dangerous, especially at night and on weekends. Ordinary citizens attending a party or having dinner at the movie theatre end of George or Pitt streets near Liverpool Street take their lives into their own hands, as do the police. We hear of many young people being badly injured in that

area, so any measures to disperse groups of intoxicated persons should be applauded. I note that the definition of "intoxication", which was criticised by some members of the upper House, is consistent with the definition that applies to publicans under the responsible service of alcohol provisions. It is sensible to have consistency, even though the definition may not be as tough as the previous one that led to intoxicated persons being detained in custody. Police do not have sufficient resources to deal with all drunks and troublemakers, so the power to move people on is reasonable. How it will work in practice remains to be seen. Naturally, the Government likes the media attention.

Mr John Williams: It is all spin.

Mr GREG SMITH: It is spin.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members will direct their comments through the Chair.

Mr GREG SMITH: The Government uses spin to make it look as though it is doing something. The Government should put more trained police into problem areas. The Law Society of New South Wales, the Bar Association, the Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid were consulted about the bill. However, because of the late notice—the bill was introduced last Thursday afternoon in the other place—no submissions have been received. I ask the Government to stop the practice of introducing important social legislation with minimal notice. Organisations such as the Law Society, the Bar Association, the Director of Public Prosecutions and Legal Aid are important, and the Opposition values their input and their submissions on law and order in this State. On many occasions the Government gives the Opposition little notice of legislation, and those groups receive no notice at all. Unfortunately, we have come to expect such behaviour from this tired and incompetent Rees Government. It is inexcusable for the Government to treat those professional associations with contempt, and the practice must stop.

In summary, the Opposition is committed to putting the people of New South Wales first. We stand for the strong and fair administration of justice in this State. We call upon the Government to put more police on the streets in troubled areas and to do more to discourage alcohol abuse in schools. We call on the Government to limit alcohol advertising and to urge the Commonwealth to limit or ban such advertising. The Opposition does not oppose the bill.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [10.55 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution on the Criminal Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. I note that the bill makes miscellaneous amendments to crimes, criminal procedures and other matters. I refer in particular to the new police power to move on people who are intoxicated because that greatly affects my community. The Government makes no apology for empowering police to stop drunken groups from becoming violent and ruining nights out for everyone. Residents in my electorate are pleading for this type of action. In the early part of the evening people drink and congregate, but later in the night they become destructive. In Toukley, shop windows are broken regularly, garbage bins are set on fire, and fences and letterboxes are attacked. These may not be major incidents but they are serious to the individuals concerned.

People see such crimes occur firsthand. If police had the opportunity to move groups on earlier, those incidents may not occur. The Government is changing the law to ensure that police can intervene earlier, before people become seriously intoxicated, to move groups on and avoid dangerous situations involving public drunkenness. It is absurd to make police wait until people are falling over or yelling drunken abuse before they can take action and ask them to move on. By that stage the damage has been done. In Sydney, after sporting fixtures large groups often congregate around railway stations and elsewhere and police officers have to stand by until the damage starts to occur. It is then clearly too late.

Police will be able to exercise their power when people are noticeably intoxicated—that is, when officers observe that speech, balance, coordination or behaviour is affected. As the member for Epping stated correctly, the power mirrors the laws relating to publicans in terms of the responsible service of alcohol. It is sensible that the laws are consistent, and it is important the community understands that. Additional safeguards are in place so that police cannot exercise their power unless they believe, on reasonable grounds, that the behaviour is likely to cause injury to any other person or damage to property, or to constitute a risk to public safety. That gives police the discretion to monitor a situation and intercede if necessary. The new laws simply bring police powers into line with the definition of "intoxication" in the Liquor Act. The legislation has been streamlined and clarified for members of the public, police and the liquor industry.

It is disturbing that some public discussion of the changes to the liquor legislation has suggested incorrectly that the Government is criminalising slurring in public or other behaviours that could be related to drunkenness. The media occasionally call on the Government and police to do certain things but when the Government reacts it is criticised for its actions. The modern media try to create stories. Once upon a time the media reported stories; now they like to provide social commentary and play many other roles. A lot of people in the community are getting a little sick and tired of that. They would rather have the media report the news and journalists not go around making up stories in order to sell newspapers. I will probably not get a good run in my local newspaper after saying that, but it needs to be said because people are getting sick and tired of that type of behaviour. To sell advertising the media come up with any story. It does not matter whether the story is based entirely on fact; if there is a skerrick of truth the media will use it, and members of the public do not like that. That ends my sermon for the day.

The reforms also will not impose fines on people for being intoxicated. A fine will be imposed only if a person refuses to obey a direction from police. That is fair enough; I do not think anyone would disagree with that. Sometimes people have a little too much to drink, but if the police ask them to move on they should not be able to refuse to do so. People are always saying that there is no longer any respect for the police. Certainly we must ensure that there is respect and support for the police because they do a good job in difficult circumstances. Generally in society today everybody wants to put responsibility for solving all the problems onto the police. In some communities people should look after their young people a little better. I am not singling out a particular community because it applies across the board in my community. If parents knew what their young people were doing at night, if young people could justify why they were out at two or three o'clock in the morning, then some of the current problems would not exist. It is easy to blame the police but some people should have a good, hard look at themselves.

Not one member of this House would agree that it is inappropriate to punish a person who refuses to obey a lawful direction from a police officer. These powers are necessary for police to intervene at an early stage to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour. The community is asking for this sort of action. People are sick and tired of idiots causing destruction in the community. They are unable to control their alcohol consumption and everyone else suffers for it. I support the bill, particularly the provisions dealing with intoxicated persons.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence) [11.02 a.m.]: I support the Criminal Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. I have very strong feelings about the part that amends section 66A of the Crimes Act 1900 relating to aggravated sexual assault against a minor under 10. I support the rest of the legislation. I believe that police need extra powers to move people on, but we also need extra police numbers to exercise those powers. The police have been given all these extra powers—I support the bikie gang legislation we pushed through yesterday—but we need more police to ensure that we make the legislation work. It seems to have taken a fairly serious incident to shake this Government into realising that more needs to be done to protect our children. In November last year a 24-year-old man from Maclean broke into a house at Gulmarrad. There was no intent at the time he broke into the house—this is where the legislation breaks down: there must be intent—and he went into a bedroom, took the pants off a four-year-old child who was asleep and sexually assaulted her. The offence was serious.

Mr Barry Collier: Has this been dealt with in the courts?

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Yes. The man then walked out of the bedroom—the little girl was left shaking, crying and sobbing—and got a drink out of the fridge. He then tried to break into the car belonging to the girl's grandmother—the girl was staying with her grandmother at the time. The man then took off. He was arrested and there was a DNA match. His solicitor basically told him to plead guilty or he would get a longer sentence. So the man pleaded guilty. Judge Chris Geraghty, since retired—that is a blessing for all of New South Wales—said that although it was a heinous crime it was at the lower end of the scale. I will not read from the report. Although this was a disgusting, heinous crime against a four-year-old child, the judge said it was at the lower end of the scale and gave the man a two-year suspended sentence.

The man spent 14 months in jail. He was also on remand for other break and enter charges. He had a string of convictions as long as your arm for break and enter, assault, theft—you name it. And the judge let him go! A report stated that the offender was affected by alcohol and had problems, but he never considered the girl. Indeed, it further stated that there was no evidence of any long-lasting effects on the girl: the sexual assault was at the lower end of the scale, and the girl was not badly damaged. I think the report states that no major harm was done to the girl's private parts. However, when the girl was taken to hospital an examination showed that she had been damaged. The girl also has long-term psychological damage. Her sister has to get into bed with her each night to stop her from shaking, just so she can go to sleep. She even has nightmares to this day. She keeps asking her parents, "Will that man come again? Is he in jail?"

Sadly, the man was released on a two-year suspended sentence. It took a month for the media to pick up the story, and it is great that the media picked it up. Then the Opposition picked up on it. The Attorney General, to his credit, acted quickly once the case was brought to his attention, and the Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP] appealed against the sentence. Although the DPP appealed, there was limited power to impose a sentence in the top range. The longest sentence the court could impose on the offender was seven years, but at least he is behind bars. The sad thing is that legislation provides for maximum sentences of 25 years or life. However, while there is no minimum sentence for offences at the bottom end of the scale, a misguided judge, who is out of touch with the community and its expectations, will let an offender walk free.

In cases of aggravated sexual assault against children under 10, under section 66A of the Crimes Act, the mandatory minimum sentence should be 10 years in jail. We are not talking about someone littering and then going to jail or a mandatory sentence across the board; we are talking about protecting children by introducing guidelines for judges. The majority of judges do a good job. However, when a person can walk the streets after having done heinous things to a little girl the law should provide some protection by ensuring that there is a minimum sentence available to judges. Then if a judge wants to give an offender life, 25 years, 15 years or whatever, they can.

But there should be a mandatory minimum sentence to ensure that young people are protected. Nearly every week we hear about the attempted abduction of young children across New South Wales and in Sydney in particular. We also hear about little kids who are abducted and dragged into toilets and molested. If these grubs, these parasites, these paedophiles, these predators knew that they would go to jail for a minimum of 10 years if caught I guarantee a lot of them would desist. I support the Criminal Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 in principle. I support its move-on powers and the confiscation of proceeds of crime from criminals. While the amendment to section 66A of the Crimes Act has sent out a message to criminals, it does not give our young the protection they deserve.

Mr FRANK SARTOR (Rockdale) [11.10 a.m.]: I take this opportunity in the debate on the Criminal Legislation Amendment Bill to address criticisms raised in an opinion piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that suggest that the Government's changes to the alcohol legislation is "a back door means for incarcerating drunk Aboriginal people". The Government completely rejects that assertion. The changes to alcohol laws do not criminalise slurring in public, nor are the laws activated when people are deemed drunk, as the article states. Rather, the trigger for police to use their move-on powers is an assessment that as a result of the group's intoxication their behaviour is likely to cause injury to any other person or persons, or is likely to cause damage to property or otherwise gives rise to a risk to public safety.

The reform gives police an early intervention power that will enable them to defuse potentially dangerous situations before they escalate into more serious incidents. The Government should be commended for so doing. The reforms will assist police in alcohol enforcement operations and are an important measure to curb alcohol-fuelled offending behaviour. I will also address the comments made by the Opposition that the new laws are a stunt. The sexual assault of children is one of the most abhorrent crimes, and the Government makes no apology for bringing the full force of the law to bear against perpetrators of that crime. If an offender commits the offence of sexual intercourse with a child under 10 in the course of committing a break and enter that will be considered an aggravating circumstance, raising the maximum sentence from 25 years to life.

Last week the member for Epping claimed on radio 2SM that this important reform was a "stunt". That statement is a slap in the face to the victims of child sex predators. The member for Epping should ask the victims of child sexual assault whether they think these laws should be dismissed as insignificant. Howard Brown for the Victims of Crime Assistance League and Hetty Johnson from Bravehearts have both conveyed their support for the reforms and congratulated the Government on introducing them. These laws were introduced to criminalise the sort of crime committed by Ronald Dean King, who broke into a house in Grafton and sexually assaulted a four-year-old girl. The Government moved quickly on the matter at the time. On 24 April 2009 the member for Clarence praised the Government on the ABC and said:

I appreciate Minister Hatzistergos stepping in as quick as he did once it was brought to his attention.

Today in the House he again complimented the Attorney on his action. However, the member for Clarence made an error when he said the appeal court in the Ronald Dean King matter was constrained to give a maximum sentence of seven years for child sexual assault. In fact, the maximum sentence is currently 25 years. The member for Clarence also made an incorrect statement on another point about the relevant mens rea involved in the break and enter. In fact the aggravating circumstance is that the offender who commits the offence of aggravated sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 10 during a break and enter intended to commit the sexual assault or any other serious indictable offence.

I turn my attention back to the member for Epping, who does not seem to support the tough laws that target violent paedophiles. We know, for example, that in January this year under a banner of "Truce on hardline sentencing" the member for Epping in a tell-all article said he wanted to focus less on jail time. Does that mean that under the member for Epping sex offenders will escape the tough measures that this Government has imposed? The Leader of the Opposition needs to take stock and pull the member for Epping into line and clarify what is the Opposition's real stance on child sexual assault. This is an important suite of amendments to tighten our criminal laws. The amendment relating to child sexual assault ought to be unanimously welcomed in this House. I am concerned that the Opposition is quibbling about what seems to be a clear-cut community view and what should be a unanimous view of this House. It should back the strengthening of these laws and do so expeditiously. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [11.15 a.m.]: The Criminal Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 contains a large number of amendments to legislation. I refer in particular to section 66A of the Crimes Act, which is amended to include a maximum penalty of life imprisonment when a person has sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 10 in circumstances of aggravation. This is a serious offence and I took offence when the member for Rockdale implied that the Opposition was not strong on child abuse and paedophilia. I assure the member for Rockdale that the opposite is the case. We take it extraordinarily seriously.

I almost took it as a personal affront when he referred to a number of Opposition members who used this matter for spin. This is a very serious matter. I support the member for Clarence, who described the offence committed in Grafton as a horrendous and hideous crime that no one would want to happen to a child. We need to do more to protect children. We need to send out a clear message to perpetrators of those crimes that they will be dealt with harshly. I concur with the opinion of the member for Clarence that maximum penalties are seldom handed down by the judiciary even when the public and the community expect and demand that such penalties be imposed.

I refer also to the amendment to section 198 of the Law enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 giving police officers the power to give a direction to move on to groups of three or more intoxicated persons in a public place. Unfortunately, in the Tweed—in Kingscliff and Pottsville—a series of events occurred on Australia Day 2009. The police did an excellent job and charged four offenders in relation to the events in Pottsville involving a lot of young people who had consumed significant amounts of alcohol. The Kingscliff riot can be seen on YouTube, as can the Cronulla riots, which were a dreadful disgrace.

While this legislation is a move in the right direction, it does have some holes in it. In my previous working life for approximately 20 years I was a licensee at various licensed clubs, including the Revesby Workers Club and the Tweed Heads Bowls Club. I have a lot of experience dealing with drunken people. I understand the direction in which this legislation is headed, but at times it is hard to determine whether each member of a group is intoxicated or only one or two of them are. Amongst the drunk people at Kingscliff there were sober people.

The bill should go further and provide police with the power to move on all people, because it is a reflection on the community that drunken people are on the streets. The bill inserts a new section 198 in the Liquor Act 2007 to define "intoxication" as having affected "speech, balance, co-ordination or behaviour" that is "the result of the consumption of alcohol or any drug". At times that would be hard to determine. Police in my area, as in the Lismore area, are under strength. Recently 320 officers graduated from the Police Academy: 80 per cent went to Sydney and 20 per cent went to regional areas. When will those who make the decisions realise that regional areas, and particularly the Tweed, where a lot of tourists visit, need more police? The Australia Day event this year, with many drunken people on the streets, was an exact duplicate of the year before. But the local police superintendent, who does a fine job in the Tweed area, had no more staff.

The Tweed has 980 authorised strength, but 24 are on long-term sick leave. The bill does give police extra powers, which is a move in the right direction, but that has to be backed up with sufficient police numbers. I have said repeatedly that it is no use introducing legislation to give police more power without giving them the necessary resources. Queensland police powers are far more stringent in that regard. Once again, we have a cross-border issue. Queensland police will often move drunken people across the border into New South Wales, because of the differentiation in the laws. Once again, we are taking an export product from Queensland.

I have asked many times for greater cooperation between New South Wales police and Queensland police. The Government has made a move in Albury in a similar situation but, unfortunately, the superintendent in charge of the relevant program has been moved back to Sydney, and I have heard no more about it. I have

raised this issue on a number of occasions. The bill amends the Confiscation of Proceeds of Crimes Act 1989 to provide that an offence under section 23A of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 involving indoor cultivation of prohibited plants in the presence of children is an offence for the purposes of the Confiscation of Proceeds of Crime Act 1989. Unfortunately, recent figures have indicated that the quantities of illegal drugs per head of population that have been confiscated in the Tweed are the third highest in the State, just behind those of Kings Cross.

The Tweed has become a large drug-manufacturing portal for south-east Queensland. I am particularly concerned that that occurs in the presence of children. As the bill makes a number of moves in the right direction, I do not oppose it. However, I strongly believe that it has not gone far enough. For laws to be effective we need to adequately resource the police. Once again, I am 100 per cent for the Tweed.

Mr PAUL GIBSON (Blacktown) [11.23 a.m.]: It is a pleasure to support the Criminal Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. The object of the bill is to make miscellaneous amendments to legislation relating to crimes, criminal procedure and other matters. As members have spoken on the provisions relating to children—and there is no doubt that children are our future—and I support everything said about that, I will address the other provisions contained in the bill. The amendments are very much needed and very much welcomed. The introduction of this bill was anticipated by the media, and it has met the test. The bill makes changes to police move-on powers in relation to intoxicated groups. Legislation provides police with two kinds of move-on powers. General move-on powers were provided when the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act was assented to in 2002. Section 197 of the Act sets out the circumstances in which police can direct people in a public place to move along or disperse. It involves situations, for example, in which people are obstructing people or traffic, harassing or intimidating other people, or are engaged in buying or selling drugs. That power is used thousands of times a year without incident. Very few people refuse to follow the direction.

The 2003 Alcohol Summit recommended that a specific power be given to police to disperse intoxicated groups. This was restated as an election commitment in 2007 and was introduced shortly after the Government was returned. Section 198 was the new provision that gave police the power to disperse groups of three or more intoxicated people in public places whose behaviour caused police to believe, on reasonable grounds, that injury to persons or damage to property was likely. "Intoxicated" is defined as "appears to be seriously affected by alcohol or any drug". In theory that definition seemed appropriate, but in practice it sets the benchmark too high. Police were not always sure that the level of intoxication of a group, even if they were behaving badly, met the level of "seriously affected". It also was inconsistent with the definition of "intoxicated" in the Liquor Act 2007, which police also have a role in enforcing.

The problem was not that people were refusing to obey a direction; it was that in some cases police were unsure that the direction could be given lawfully. To the credit of the police, rather than risk using the powers unlawfully, they brought the problem to the Government and asked for it to be fixed—to make the definition of "intoxication" in the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 the same as that in the Liquor Act 2007. That is exactly what this bill does. Police may now use move-on powers in relation to people who are "noticeably affected" by drink or drugs. It is important to note that a direction can be given only if it is reasonable in the circumstances for the purpose of preventing injury or damage, or eliminating the risk to public safety.

Furthermore, a direction to not return to a public place has a maximum duration of six hours, which is consistent with the power in the Liquor Act 2007 to disperse ejected or rejected patrons from licensed premises and require them to not remain in, or return to, the vicinity of the premises. It is important to re-emphasise that the power will not authorise the giving of directions to groups of people simply because they are intoxicated, or appear to be so—and the power does not criminalise the act of being drunk in public. Its sole focus is to disperse intoxicated groups only if there is a belief on reasonable grounds that their behaviour or presence in the public place is considered likely to cause injury to other people, damage to property, or otherwise give rise to a risk to public safety. It is a sensible and measured law enforcement power. For a long time that law needed to be defined in the way the bill has defined it. We often hear a lot in the media about intoxicated people, binge drinking and associated matters. The bill gives police the power to deal with that on a more rational basis than previously. This week I received a letter from a publican, which stated:

Ignoring the fact that there are 14,327 licensed premises in New South Wales and only 2074 Pubs ... 65% of all assaults occur away from Licensed Premises, and that two-thirds of Liquor purchased is consumed away from Licensed premises ...

In other words, nearly 70 per cent of all alcohol consumed by society today is not consumed in hotels, clubs or restaurants; it is consumed in homes. I do not know what we can do in this regard as lawmakers. That is where

the problem raises its ugly head. This publican made a very good point. Last year 320,000 persons went through the doors of his hotel and he served approximately 78,000 meals. However, because 26 incidents were reported he found his hotel in the top 50 most violent hotels and he has received a great deal of publicity as a result. He told me that not one of the reported assaults went to court and that they represented .00008 of 1 per cent of the people who went through his hotel.

This amendment is a good amendment, there is no doubt about that, but at some stage we have to put responsibility back onto people. I have often advocated that it should be an offence to be drunk and I think that would fix most of the problems we are talking about today. The changes to the definition of an "intoxicated person" in section 198 of the Act will allow police to use their power to disperse groups of people who are "noticeably affected" by alcohol or drugs and are likely to damage property or threaten public safety, rather than being "seriously affected" by alcohol. The test is now the same in relation to this section of the Act as it is in section 5 of the Liquor Act 2007. Police have advised that the changes to the definition will be of assistance in alcohol enforcement operations, which may include offences under the Liquor Act 2007 as well as the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002.

I also want to discuss briefly the changes to the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000. Currently a person who has previously been required to report under the Act but whose reporting period has expired, and who is subsequently sentenced in relation to a registrable offence, has 28 days in which they can make their initial report to police. However, a person who becomes a registrable person for the first time has only seven days in which to make their initial report. This amendment corrects this anomaly and ensures that all persons sentenced for a registrable offence, whether they have been previously required to report or not, must now report to police within seven days of being sentenced. That is a very sensible amendment.

Finally, I refer to the amendment to the Confiscation of Proceeds of Crime Act 1989. This Act is being amended to expand the definition of "drug trafficking offence" to include offences under the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985, which involve the enhanced cultivation of prohibited plants in the presence of children where more than a small quantity of the prohibited plant is involved. This amendment will ensure that people who commit these offences, showing no regard for the dangers to which children are exposed, can also be subject to applications by the State to deprive them of the proceeds and benefits derived from their crimes. I support the amendments.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [11.33 a.m.]: I will speak briefly on the Criminal Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. First I will address some comments made by a future Premier of New South Wales, the member for Rockdale, who is learning very quickly to take things out of context. He stood up and slammed the good name of the member for Epping. The member for Epping seems to be a great threat to this Government because he is happy to go out and tell people the truth and point out to the Government where it is failing. The member for Rockdale did a perfect job; he ticked all the boxes for a future Premier. He was quite happy to misquote the member for Epping because he recognised the member for Epping is a threat to this Government because he constantly reminds the Government of its shortcomings, particularly in relation to law and order. We heard the comments of the member for Epping in relation to sentencing and a case in which a maximum sentence was available but unfortunately the judicial system did not opt for that sentence. The point he was trying to make was about the frustration suffered by people who want to see the law enforced and the fact that the community wants to see the fair application of justice for some of these crimes.

The area I am particularly interested in is the move-on provisions in the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002. A couple of months ago the Community Safety Precinct Committee in the Deniliquin Area Command raised the matter of changes to the smoking laws in hotels, which has led to hotel patrons congregating on the footpath to smoke. It is creating a major issue for police because obviously they cannot get those people to move on. The hotel patrons are spilling onto the footpath and intimidating passers-by. There is some degree of intoxication and there is also the opportunity for disputes to start with passing pedestrians or within the group of smokers. David Simmons, the area commander in Deniliquin, is frustrated because his officers are not allowed to move these people on, but that is compounded by the fact that most of his officers are doing prisoner escort duty and are not available to carry out the type of policing that is required to ensure that the streets are safe for the residents of Deniliquin. That needs to be looked at because it is a growing problem. I think most members of this House would have seen patrons of hotels standing outside those venues smoking cigarettes and it is only a matter of time before this causes a major issue.

Mr MALCOLM KERR (Cronulla) [11.36 a.m.]: The member for Murray-Darling mentioned the atrocious contribution made by the member for Rockdale and his attack on the member for Epping. I want to

respond to his attack on another great servant of the people, the member for Clarence, who spoke about the Court of Appeal decision in *Queen v King* and said it was open to the Court of Appeal to impose the maximum sentence in relation to that prisoner. That is not the way the law is operating. I have to say that the member for Rockdale is not a first offender in relation to misrepresentation.

Mr Daryl Maguire: He is a habitual offender.

Mr MALCOLM KERR: He is a serial offender, as the member for Wagga Wagga said, and there is no character to take into consideration in mitigation of those series of offences. Let us look at the judgement of the Court of Appeal, in which it said:

However, notwithstanding the matters raised in the affidavit, and with real sympathy for the position of the respondent due to the manifestly inadequate sentence imposed upon him that neither he nor his legal representative encouraged or expected, a sentence of some severity must be imposed. The term of imprisonment that ought to have been passed upon the respondent by the Judge after a 25 per cent discount should have been in the vicinity of 9 years. As there were no special circumstances warranting a reduction in the minimum period of custody, the non-parole period should have been 6 years and 9 months. Such a sentence would have shown due regard to the standard non-parole period notwithstanding that it was a sentence imposed after a plea.

However, taking into account the disappointment of the respondent, a degree of extra-curial punishment and the fact that this is a Crown appeal—

this goes to the heart of the misrepresentation of the member for Rockdale—

the Court will impose a sentence of significantly less severity than should have been imposed by the Judge. The sentence will be backdated to the date of the respondent's arrest notwithstanding that he spent a short time at liberty as a result of the sentence imposed upon him. He will receive the benefit of a finding of special circumstances because this is a Crown appeal and in a last effort to help him to turn his life around.

A number of precedents relate to the sentences that are available to the Court of Appeal when it determines these Crown appeals. The Court of Appeal discussed those precedents in *R v Wall* 202 New South Wales Court of Criminal Appeal at page 41.

Mr Greg Smith: It is 2002.

Mr MALCOLM KERR: I am grateful for the assistance from the member for Epping, as will be the member for Rockdale and his speechwriter when they revisit this matter. I expect a degree of contrition when the member for Rockdale speaks. The judgement of the Court of Appeal states:

The Crown contends that not only was the sentence imposed inadequate on its face, but also that the sentencing judge made a number of errors of principle in determining that it was appropriate to proceed under s 19B of the Crimes Act 1914. Before considering these submissions it is important to note the principles which apply in relation to the determination of a Crown appeal against sentence.

I pause to enable members to gather their thoughts, as important words will now spring from my lips reflecting the decision of the Court of Appeal. The judgement of the Court of Appeal continues:

- (a) The normal restriction upon appellate review of the exercise of a discretion, as set out in *House v The King* (1936) 55 CLR—

there is no need for the member for Miranda to remind me of the page number as I believe it was at page 499—

applies to Crown appeals against sentence: *Dinsdale v The Queen* (2000) 202 CLR 321; with the result that this Court cannot merely substitute its opinion, as to the appropriate sentence, for that of the sentencing judge: *Lonsdale v The Queen* (1999) 195 CLR 665 at 671; rather, it may interfere only where error either latent or patent is shown; *R. v Tait* (1979) 46 FLR 386 at 388; and *Wong and Leung v The Queen* (2001) 76 ALJR 79 at para 58 and 109.

Mr Barry Collier: You should be leading in debate for the Opposition!

Mr MALCOLM KERR: The member for Miranda always becomes excited when I start quoting case law, but there is more to come. The judgement continues:

- (b) Appeals by the Crown should generally be rare; *Malvaso v The Queen* (1989) 168 CLR 227 at 234, and unless there is a clear error of principle identified it would be exceptional for the Court to interfere: *R v Baker* [2000] NSWCCA 85.
- (c) A Crown appeal against sentence is concerned with establishing matters of principle "for the governance and guidance of courts having the duty of sentencing convicted persons": per Barwick CJ in *Griffiths v The Queen* (1977) 137 CLR

293 but this power extends to doing what is necessary to avoid manifest inadequacy or inconsistency in sentencing, that is, where the sentence is definitely outside the appropriate range for the case in hand: *Everett v The Queen* (1994) 181 CLR 295 at 299; *Dinsdale v The Queen* (2000) 202 CLR 32, at paras 61 and 62, and *Wong & Leung v The Queen* at para 109.

- (d) The Court has a lively discretion to refuse to intervene even if error has been shown, and in deciding whether to exercise that discretion—

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

COWRA POLICING

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [11.45 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the introduction of 24-hour policing in Cowra has been strongly sought by the community of Cowra;
- (2) expresses its concern that the policing needs of Cowra have been ignored by the Government; and
- (3) calls on the Government to immediately introduce 24-hour policing in Cowra.

It is 12 months to the day since I gave notice of this motion. Initially, I gave notice of it on 9 May 2007 but, because of the rules relating to notices of motions, it lapsed. I then gave notice of it again. Winston Churchill once said, "Wise words stand the test of time." This motion is as relevant today as it was in 2007 just after I welcomed Cowra into the electorate of Burrinjuck following the redistribution. At the outset I offer Inspector Anthony McLean, officer in charge of Cowra police station, and all his fellow police officers my sincerest congratulations on and gratitude for the work that they do in protecting life and property in Cowra.

The latest figures from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] show that over the past year they have been instrumental in driving down crime rates in the Cowra local government area in 27 categories. Those 27 offences include: possession and/or use of cannabis, other sexual offences and stealing from dwelling. Over the past 12 months crime rates have also risen in 28 categories. Disturbingly, these categories embrace a significant amount of violent crime and property crime, including domestic violence related to assaults, non-domestic violence assaults and, worst of all, assaulting police. The BOCSAR data shows that Cowra is within the 20 top worst areas in New South Wales for break and enter of dwellings and other properties, and also for theft from motor vehicles.

Cowra has risen in ranking for malicious damage to property—from thirtieth in 2007 to twenty-first in 2008. Property theft is also up. Cowra retains its rating as the tenth worst local government area for break and enter of dwellings and it has the dubious honour of jumping from twenty-ninth to fifth worst local government area for break and enter of non-dwellings. I often field complaints from constituents as I walk on the streets or conduct constituent interviews in Cowra. Equally, staff in my office frequently field many calls about the level of policing and the impact of crime on Cowra residents. One common theme from long-term residents is that violent crime and property theft have risen following the closure of the Department of Housing estate—the Gordon Estate in Dubbo—which was notorious for its crime levels, as I am sure all members are well aware.

Cowra residents reported to me a common perception that former residents of that estate, which had to be closed because of violent crime, have been re-housed in Cowra by the Department of Housing. Subsequently, there has been a rise in crime. I represented that in my letters to the Minister for Police and the Minister for Housing but neither has been willing to address this concern, preferring the bureaucratic brush-off in their replies. Nevertheless, there is escalating community concern in the Cowra shire about the ever-increasing level of violence being perpetrated on the community. In October 2008 I said in this House that the headlines from the Cowra *Guardian* reflected every week the horror of crime and the havoc that it is wreaking across the town and the shire.

The Cowra *Guardian* headline on 17 April was "Beating street drinking", followed on 20 April with the headline "Crime up 200%" and then on 27 April the headline in part was "... figures justify more police". Senior police officers have been quoted in the local media trying to explain that staffing methodology hamstringing them in the distribution of police resources. This methodology was forced on them by the failure of the State Labor Government to give the New South Wales Police Force the budgetary resources it needs. Police face a fundamental problem: the attitude of the New South Wales Minister for Police and the State Labor Government.

Senior police have to work within the budget allocated to them by the Government and within the resources given to them by the Government, but the Minister for Police and the Minister for Housing have written to me trotting out the exact same words:

... the allocation of police personnel to Local Area Commands is generally a matter for the police executive in consultation with the Local Area Commander.

That is nothing more than a cop-out. When a new police station is opened the State Labor Government is the first to crow in this place and in the media saying, "Look what we have achieved." When a large drug bust occurs it says, "Look how the Labor Government is fighting crime". But when residents of Cowra ask for 24-hour policing, suddenly it is the responsibility of senior police management. The Government cannot have it both ways. Police Minister Kelly visited the Cowra police station in October last year. I saw this as a positive sign, but he should have listened to local police officers and gone out into the local community. The Minister's own words were that discussion at the police station about police numbers was frank and vigorous. Obviously, this is code to say that he did not like the message he was given by local police—that is, that Cowra needs more of them. Minister Kelly should have dropped into the Lachlan Hotel and spoken to its proprietor, Geraldine Gore, who called a public meeting in October last year to protest the lack of police numbers and policing in Cowra. She said:

We just do not have enough officers, I am sick and tired of it. We experience it here at the Hotel, we know round the town.

I know that the Police are under resourced and we just want to bring it to the public attention, to politicians and the government.

I have spoken with successive mayors about policing levels on numerous occasions. Every time I visit Cowra I know the policing issue will be raised with me repeatedly. The local community has a huge concern about the ever-escalating crime rate in the Cowra district. Thousands of people signed a petition I generated two years ago in response to community concern. I presented that petition to this place. The Government has not responded to encourage the community to feel safe. We simply get the same standard cop-out from the Minister for Police, "It's not my responsibility."

On Monday 29 September 2008 the Cowra *Guardian* carried the headline "Police officer arrested on pornography charges". Other editions carried headlines such as "Break and enter offender to face court," "Random attack terrifies family" and "\$200 fine for possession of illegal substances". The newspaper makes numerous references to murder cases, home invasions, armed robbery, an attempted break-in at a local sports club, family murders and business break-ins. On Sunday 19 October 2008 the office of the Riverside markets was broken into overnight and cash and property was taken, and Maisie's Café also was broken into. I received a letter from a well-respected local pharmacist who wrote:

Dear Katrina

I have become concerned about what seems to be a crime wave occurring in Cowra ...

I have noticed the paper has been recording various break-ins and offences happening in the area and they seem to be dramatically increasing, but little seems to be done. I have also been shocked to read about hold ups occurring with bloody syringes and home invasions while the owners are at home ...

I rang the local police station, which is less than a block away, and was transferred to Orange because there was nobody answering in Cowra—

this is such a common complaint—

Over the past 12 months the North Cowra Veterinary Surgery which my husband owns was broken into, with the thieves causing considerable damage for \$70 worth of one and two dollar coins. Although in this case fingerprints were taken and police did attend the scene, they made it clear that although they had a good idea of the perpetrator, they did not have the resources to catch him. The best advice was to claim it on insurance and have it fixed as soon as possible

When I got to work late this morning at Lowther's Centrepoint Pharmacy, the number of people who had similar experiences in the last two weeks surprised me.

A common concern Cowra residents raise with me is that the police station often is unattended and when people ring their calls are transferred to Orange. Cowra residents want 24-hour policing; they want a local police officer on the other end of the phone when they ring. One Cowra resident faces charges because apparently he responded to a robbery attempt with violence. When residents feel compelled to take the law into their own hands it is clear that the Minister for Police has failed in his duty. Cowra and Parkes have similar population levels and face similar policing challenges. Parkes has 24-hour policing.

Cowra has high rates of crime per 100,000 population for the following offences: non-domestic violence-related assaults; indecent assault, act of indecency; other sexual offences; robbery without a weapon; robbery with a weapon not a firearm; other offences against the person; break and enter dwelling; break and enter non-dwelling; steal from dwelling; fraud; possession and/or use of cannabis; dealing, trafficking in cannabis, ecstasy and other drugs; cultivating cannabis; trespass; offensive language; liquor offences; pornography offences; and breaching apprehended violence orders.

The list is not comprehensive but for many other serious offences the Cowra crime rates are lower than in Parkes, but only slightly. Last year Parkes had 16 cases of assault police, Cowra had 10; Parkes had 14 cases of sexual assault, Cowra had 11; and Parkes had 173 offences of stealing from a motor vehicle, while Cowra had 143. Questions have been asked in the media whether Cowra is entitled to an inspector as an officer in charge. I have rung other regions and can inform the House that Yass—which is smaller than Cowra and has half the rates of all types of assault and one-third the rate of property crimes as that in Cowra—has an inspector as officer in charge of its local area command. So too do Cooma, Narrabri, Tumut, Gunnedah and Young, if my memory serves me correctly.

Cowra must keep its inspector, it must be given more police officers and it must be upgraded to 24-hour-a-day policing. Any other outcome from the Minister for Police is unacceptable. I contested the last State election with a commitment that under a Coalition government Cowra will have 24-hour policing. My determination to achieve this has not wavered, but it should happen much earlier than 2011. Clearly, the State Labor Government stands condemned for its failure in its prime function to protect the lives and property of the citizens of Cowra. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE (Drummoynes—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.55 a.m.]: The Government notes the concerns outlined in the motion moved by the member for Burrinjuck. Before I address the specifics of policing in Cowra I point out that clearly the member for Burrinjuck needs a refresher course about police numbers in this State. Police numbers in New South Wales have grown tremendously under this Government.

Mr Thomas George: No, the motion is about Cowra.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE: I am getting there. The New South Wales Police Force is the fourth largest police force in the western world. Its current authorised strength is 15,306. This is in stark contrast to the authorised strength of 12,907 when the Coalition was last in government.

ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarritty): Order! The member for Burrinjuck was heard in silence. Members will extend the same courtesy to the member for Drummoynes.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE: That represents a massive increase of 2,399 officers, or 18.6 per cent.

Mr Thomas George: You're joking!

Mr Ray Williams: Where are they?

Mr Thomas George: They're in Drummoynes!

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE: Let us put those figures into some perspective.

Mr Ray Williams: On sick leave.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE: Have you finished?

ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarritty): Order! The member for Drummoynes has the call.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE: Have you finished, gentlemen? This increase in police numbers outstrips the State's population growth over the same period. Since we are talking about Cowra let us look at rural and regional areas. As at March this year more than 5,000 police officers—in fact, 5,193—are based outside the metropolitan area. I note that the member for Lismore and the member for Hawkesbury were talking about the Drummoynes electorate. That represents one-third of the State's total police strength allocated to help make rural communities safer. Opposition members hate these results. They hate having record police numbers and also hate it when crime continues to decrease in their communities. This brings me to Cowra specifically.

I am advised that Cowra police station operates between 16 and 20 hours a day. I note that the member for Burrinjuck says Cowra does not have 24-hour policing. I remind the member that 24-hour policing means that our police actually are in the community, not stuck behind a desk meaning that a police car is grounded so that duty officer is at the station. We do have police in the community and that police station is open. I am advised further that Cowra police station has operated at this level for quite some time—a fact the member for Burrinjuck seems to dismiss. I understand that local police continue to work on a number of strategies that have been put in place to address crime within the area.

An alcohol-free zone is being implemented within the Cowra central business district, which I am sure will assist a number of business, especially the pubs. Work also is being done to address the incidence of break and enter offences in the area with the running of public awareness campaigns and the establishment of a Neighbourhood Watch Committee. I am advised also that both overt and covert patrols are being undertaken in high-risk areas and at high-risk times to address motor vehicle theft. On the issue of local police numbers I am advised that the Canobolas Local Area Command has an authorised police strength of 102 officers. As at 31 March this year there were in fact 115 police officers allocated to that area command—that is 13 more than the authorised strength.

I am further advised that currently there are 12 police officers operating out of the Cowra sector. I understand that the vacant general duties position has been filled, and that the officer will commence duty on 17 May 2009. I welcome that appointment. I am also advised that the Cowra first response unit has been supplemented with staff from Orange. I should also state that the deployment of resources and the operating hours of the Cowra police station are, and should be, at the discretion of the local area commander. Of course, should the station not be open at a particular time, the local community has a number of options. For instance, citizens can report a crime in a number of ways: if a person attends the station, there is a publicly accessible Eagle phone that connects a member of the public directly to the Police Force's dispatch system at Orange. This provides the quickest way of getting in touch with local police or officers who are on patrol, which is where they need to be.

Mr Thomas George: That is 100 kilometres away.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE: That is a telephone call away.

ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarritty): Order! The member for Drummoyne has the call.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE: A telephone call is made to local police officers who are in the community, patrolling our streets, which is the way it should be. To state the obvious, police communications are always available, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That is something the Opposition refuses to acknowledge today in the House. If, for example, a crime is in progress and a police response is required urgently, it can be coordinated from Orange simply through a telephone call. Of course, the public can call the Police Assistance Line in non-urgent cases. Crime Stoppers is also available for members of the public to provide police with information on criminal activity. In an emergency, everyone should know that calling triple-0 is the best approach. While I appreciate the concern of the member for Burrinjuck for the Cowra community, it seems that police are working with the local community to address community concerns. Local police have advised that the Cowra community values its officers and works well with local police. That is extremely important in our local communities. I commend both the Cowra community and local officers for getting on with the very important job of making their community safe.

Mr RUSSELL TURNER (Orange) [12.02 p.m.]: With due respect to all the wise words spoken by the member for Drummoyne, as someone who has represented Cowra, represents the people, and speaks to the people, I know that the situation is different from what has been stated. The problems have been ongoing for a number of years. On 2 July 2004 I wrote to the then Minister for Police, the Hon. John Watkins. The date of that letter indicates the long period over which concerns have been expressed. I am sure that very similar concerns were being expressed when former member Mr Ian Armstrong represented Cowra in this place. My letter to the then Minister states:

Dear Minister,

I wish to draw to your attention a situation that exists at the Cowra Police Station.

The Government, sometime ago, promised an upgrade to the cells at the Cowra Police Station.

Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any mention of any money being allocated for this upgrade, within the recently released State Budget Papers.

I acknowledge that eventually the cells at Cowra were upgraded, and that upgrade was very welcome. My letter goes on to state:

I am also concerned that the Government does not appear to be allocating additional police numbers to the Cowra Station to enable it to become a 24-hour station.

Cowra, as a community of ... [over 8,000] citizens, urgently needs to have a 24-hour police station, especially on Thursday, Friday and Saturday when the most criminal activities occur.

On 23 December 2004 I finally received a response from the then Minister, not only to that letter but to another letter I had written in June 2004. The then Minister stated:

With respect to general policing issues in Cowra, Superintendent Geoffrey McKechnie, Canobolas Local Area Commander, informs me that although Cowra Police Station does not operate on a 24-hour basis, rostering arrangements are altered to meet community needs and when intelligence information dictates.

It seems to me that the same person wrote both that letter and the speech made a little earlier today by the member for Drummoyne. In reality, when someone telephones triple-0 or the Eagle phone and the call is transferred to Orange police station, a junior officer on duty, perhaps late at night, makes the decision to call out a police officer in Cowra who may be on duty or on the roster. I am sure the situation now is the same as it was in 2004 when I made representations to the then Minister.

Far too often a junior probationary constable makes the wrong decision. If an experienced officer who was aware of previous activities in Cowra were called in, perhaps arrests would be made. Far too often a probationary constable makes the decision not to call in an experienced officer, with the result that police usually attend to the matter the following day. The current arrangements do not work, and they are not satisfactory as far as citizens who have suffered the consequences of antisocial behaviour are concerned. On 23 February 2005 I wrote to another former Minister for Police, the Hon. Carl Scully, stating:

As the State Member of Parliament, representing the constituents of Cowra and district, I wish to present to you 1200 signatures representing the views of residents and businesses in Cowra, who are extremely concerned at the lack of a 24 hour Police presence in the town ...

Much of the criminal activity is generated by an excessive consumption of alcohol and with an application in, by a hotel, to extend trading hours, this can only exacerbate the existing problems.

The residents are totally frustrated at not having a 24-hour Police Station and that often when they ring, they are patched through to a duty officer in Orange ...

I referred to that earlier. My call for a 24-hour police station was reinforced by an article in the *Cowra Guardian* in June 2004, which states:

Cowra resident Stephen Snow believes Cowra is in need of a 24-hour police station.

Mr Snow's concern comes after there was no response to his phone call to police regarding the vandalism on Laughlan Street in the early hours of Thursday, May 27.

The report highlights that the present remedy of the Eagle phone and being patched through to Orange when the Cowra police station is not manned does not work. As I mentioned earlier, in a particular instance the police officer involved decided that the call was not important and did not allocate an officer to Cowra. For all the reasons I have stated, I support the motion moved by the member for Burrinjuck in relation to the provision of 24-hour policing in Cowra.

Mr NINOS KHOSHABA (Smithfield) [12.07 p.m.]: The authorised strength of the Canobolas Local Area Command, which includes the major towns of Orange and Cowra, has increased by 30.8 per cent under this Government. As mentioned earlier by the Parliamentary Secretary, as at 31 March, the authorised strength was 102, with an actual strength of 115 officers, which represents 13 additional police officers. Of the 13 new probationary constables appointed to the Canobolas Local Area Command since January 2007, four probationary constables were allocated to the command from the January 2007 class at the Goulburn Police Academy, three officers were allocated in May 2007, one in August 2007, one in December 2007, two in May 2008, one in December 2008, and only this month another probationary constable was allocated and will commence duty sometime this month.

In relation to Cowra specifically, I have been advised that the station operates between 16 and 20 hours a day, depending on need. The Cowra Local Area Commander, Superintendent Szalajko, advises that the Cowra

police station operates from 8.00 a.m. to midnight Sunday to Wednesday, from 8.00 a.m. to 2.00 a.m. on Thursday, and from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights. An after-hours response is provided by a lock-up keeper who is stationed at Cowra. The authorised strength of the Cowra police station is 14 officers, but the actual strength is 12 officers. I am advised that a vacant general duties position has been filled and that a police officer will commence duties on 17 May 2009.

Mr John Williams: We are indebted to the boys in blue.

Mr NINOS KHOSHABA: That is right. I am also advised that the Cowra first response unit has been supplemented with staff from Orange. As my colleague the member for Drummoyne explained, local police are working on a number of strategies that have been implemented to address crime within the area. One of those strategies is Operation Jindalla, which is focused on reducing the incidence of alcohol-related assaults. A number of high-visibility policing operations are also underway, and police are conducting numerous walk-throughs and inspections of licensed premises. An alcohol-free zone is being implemented within the Cowra central business district. Across the State, police numbers are at record levels. At the end of March 2009, the authorised strength of the Police Force was 15,306.

Mr Thomas George: How many?

Mr NINOS KHOSHABA: I said 15,306. The Government is committed to increasing this strength by an additional 650 officers during its current term of office. I am aware that the member for Burrinjuck has previously raised the issue of 24-hour policing in Cowra. The deployment of resources and the operating hours of the Cowra police station are, and should always be, at the discretion of the local area commander. In February this year the police Minister attended the official opening of the new police station at Orange. The new station represents a \$9.4 million investment in local policing facilities and sets new standards in the provision of police accommodation for the Canobolas Local Area Command.

The two-storey complex provides modern, purpose-built accommodation for police officers and administrative staff. The infrastructure within the building provides state-of-the-art technological support functions to operational police. Importantly, the new station allows policing units in Orange to be accommodated in one place instead of being housed in a number of separate locations, as occurred previously. The facts are clear. The Government has a role to play in providing the New South Wales Police Force with police officers and the powers and resources those officers need to do the job. We are doing just that.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) [12.12 p.m.]: I thank the member for Burrinjuck for raising the incredibly important issue of 24-hour policing. Again, Government members look down their noses at country people who are simply asking for their fair share of resources, to the point that no country representative has spoken on behalf of the Government on this issue. Having the member for Drummoyne and the member for Smithfield respond to a country issue is another example of how the Rees Labor Government is failing country people. We do not need a government that is continually toxic to country people and that continually looks down its nose at country people when they are simply asking for their fair share.

Recently The Nationals conducted an extensive survey asking country people what they want. The first thing they want is to live in a safe and secure community, and the second thing they want is their fair share. And the list goes on. Government members were spruiking the 15,000 police in New South Wales, and the great job that many of them do. We are not talking down police in communities, regardless of whether they are represented by Labor or the Coalition. An extensive report by the Auditor-General last year on a number of local area commands found that one-third of police officers are not on full duties at any one time. They are not on the front line; they are on either sick leave or reduced duties. One well-known country area command with 24-hour policing at peak times on Friday and Saturday nights supposedly had two cars doing the rounds. However, because of a lack of resources, the officers doing the rounds would drive around the streets and then return to the station, where they would switch cars, giving the illusion that two cars were on patrol in a key area.

Once again the Government is short-changing country people. Rural communities are underfunded, under-resourced, overmanaged, overtaxed and overgoverned by this Government. All credit to the commander of the local area command that services the Cowra region. He should not have to scrimp and save simply because the Government will not resource that area in a meaningful way and in a manner that reflects the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research figures. The member for Burrinjuck highlighted the demographic shifts in rural New South Wales. I am not sure whether the Labor Party understands that. Crime has spiked in many communities, and unfortunately Cowra is experiencing that spike. It is unacceptable that Cowra is in the list of top five towns in terms of break-ins, motor vehicle theft, malicious damage and property crimes.

One of the best ways of preventing crime is to have police on the ground. We need more officers on the ground. The Government needs to ensure that places like Cowra have the resources to implement 24-hour policing regularly. Communities should not feel guilty about petitioning local members for more resources, whether it be in policing, education or health. The Government is not listening on this issue. It is not just one member who has raised this issue. The member for Burrinjuck is the third member representing the Cowra area who has brought this issue to the Government's attention. Many thousands of people have signed the petition, and they need to be heard.

We do not want policing in country areas devolved to the Eagle phone, which is often the case. People are sick of it; they want to make contact with the police. It is not excessive to have 24-hour policing in critical areas; it is a basic right and a basic need. Well done to all the new probationary officers who are coming online. Let us look at how the system was reported by the Auditor-General. Police numbers are down by one-third at any one time, many officers have two jobs and local area commanders are frustrated by their inability to engage in flexible rostering. So the poor chap from Cowra is robbing Peter to pay Paul. We have the poorest retention rate of police in the country because the Government is not listening to country communities.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL (Dubbo) [12.17 p.m.]: Earlier the member for Burrinjuck asserted that one reason crime rates in Cowra have risen is that Dubbo used to have high crime rates and many of the residents of Dubbo have moved to Cowra. We have been hearing this since May 2005, and I am tired of The Nationals using that excuse for crime breaking out in their areas.

ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity): Order! The member for Barwon has made his contribution. He will remain silent.

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: Canowindra in my electorate is covered by the Cabonne command. The member for Orange has always been at the meetings I have attended. I have not seen the member for Burrinjuck at any meetings, where I could have heard her concerns. However, the member for Orange has relayed some of her concerns about the lack of police numbers. I have raised the issue of Cowra—although it is not in my electorate—with the Western Region Police Commander, Assistant Commissioner Steven Bradshaw, who has given me reasons that Cowra cannot have 24-hour policing. In saying that, I support the concerns expressed by the member for Burrinjuck because I believe in 24-hour police stations and that Cowra should have 24-hour policing.

The reference to Dubbo is unjust and mischievous. People were not forcibly removed from Dubbo. If any Dubbo residents moved to Cowra they did so of their own free will. This is not a policing issue. Crime in a local area is not only a policing issue, as I found out back in May 2005 when the local area commander approached me. We then held whole-of-government meetings. A whole-of-government approach is needed on this issue. But not only that; we need to look also at housing, education—the whole gamut. We have done that and we meet regularly on that basis. As a result, we have seen a dramatic drop in crime rates in Dubbo. Dubbo still has domestic violence and other issues but its crime rates have reduced drastically—so much so that police officers now want to work in the local area command, rather than move out of Dubbo.

All we need is regular meetings. Prevention is better than cure. To address the recent issues at Peak Hill, funding has been allocated for tennis courts, street furniture and a variety of programs that bring the community together. We are seeing results. I do not want to see more people locked up; I want to see people on the streets but behaving as responsible residents. This is not just a police issue, and police are not the issue. The Attorney General throwing money at programs is not the issue either. It is important to look at why people are misbehaving, and address that issue. I support the concerns expressed by the member for Burrinjuck about policing. When there is a high crime rate in an area it is necessary to have an extra police presence on the streets. At the same time, it is necessary to introduce programs to reduce the crime rate. That is the way forward. Although I support the member's motion, I have a problem with the continuing onslaught by The Nationals against Dubbo. They are blaming high crime rates in their local areas on the Gordon Estate in Dubbo, and it is just not on. The member for Burrinjuck knows that that is not true.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [12.22 p.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Drummoyne, Orange, Smithfield, Barwon and Dubbo for their contributions to the debate. This motion is about the need for new police infrastructure and 24-hour policing at Cowra. The member for Drummoyne read a statement that had clearly been prepared by the Minister's department. As I said in my introductory comments, the Minister for Police is at the centre of the problem. He cannot talk in general terms about rural policing because the problem is very localised: it concerns Cowra. Cowra is 100 kilometres from

Orange. When Cowra police station is closed, calls go through on the Eagle phone to Orange, which is an hour's drive away. The member for Drummoyne tried to spin the Government's way out of trouble. As the member for Barwon pointed out, the Government chose a member who represents an inner-city electorate to put its case on the need for 24-hour policing in rural Cowra. Cowra is a growing community that needs a 24-hour police station, as the member for Orange said.

The member for Orange explained how he wrote to the Hon. John Watkins and the Hon. Carl Scully in 2004 and 2005, when they were police Ministers, about the use of the Eagle phone and about calls going through to a junior duty officer in Orange. The member restated his constituents' concerns before the electoral redistribution, when he represented Cowra in this place. He referred to the length of time it took for somebody to investigate a crime. By the time an officer drives from Orange to Cowra, fingerprints can no longer be lifted and it is too late to arrest anyone. The member for Orange said that he lodged a petition with 1,200 signatures. I have lodged many such petitions. When will this Government wake up to itself and acknowledge that Cowra needs a new police station and 24-hour policing? It is beyond debate in this place. We need it, and we need it now. The member for Smithfield quoted the bureaucracy and boasted about the facilities in Orange. It is great that Orange has a two-storey police station but, as we have said, Orange is 100 kilometres from Cowra—which is a long way. Cowra is a growing, thriving community with increasing problems in many of the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research categories that I cited earlier.

[Interruption]

This motion is about Cowra, not another town. Cowra is a thriving, growing, busy rural centre. I have clearly established the case for 24-hour policing in the town. The member for Barwon said that country communities deserve their fair share. Rural communities must not only feel safe but be safe. That is very important. City police can move easily between area commands within 10 or 20 minutes by using public transport or police vehicles. Local area commands in rural areas are sizeable—and I understand they are about to get even bigger. The member for Barwon also commented that local area commanders—in our case it is Superintendent Szalajko—are often left to spin the Government's line to the local newspaper, and are unpopular for that reason. That is unfair. A commander should be able to say, "Okay, we can have 24-hour policing because the Government is going to provide the resources to enable us to do that." But commanders cannot say that because the Government will not act.

The Government fails to recognise that there is a real and defined need in Cowra—which is a growing, thriving town—for 24-hour policing. The member for Dubbo raised concerns about community perceptions in Cowra about the relocation of residents from the Gordon Estate. That is a very real concern in Cowra, and I have received many letters on that issue from worried constituents. On each occasion I have forwarded those letters to the relevant Minister but I have never received a proper reply. Cowra needs 24-hour policing, and the associated infrastructure. We need it right now, not in 2011 and not in 2015. I call on the Government to support this motion because of Cowra's dire and desperate need.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 39

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

Noes, 49

Mr Amery	Ms Gadiel	Ms Megarrity
Ms Andrews	Mr Gibson	Mr Morris
Mr Aquilina	Mr Greene	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Beamer	Mr Harris	Mr Pearce
Mr Borger	Ms Hay	Mrs Perry
Mr Brown	Mr Hickey	Mr Sartor
Ms Burney	Ms Horner	Mr Shearan
Ms Burton	Ms Judge	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>
Ms Firth	Mr McLeay	Mr Ashton
Mr Furolo	Ms McMahon	Mr Martin

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

DISABILITY AND RESPITE SERVICES

Ms JODI MCKAY (Newcastle—Minister for Tourism, Minister for the Hunter, Minister for Science and Medical Research, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)) [12.33 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes one in 10 people in New South Wales is a carer, providing care for people with a disability or frail older people;
- (2) notes that the Premier and Minister recently endorsed the State Government's plan for disability services, "Stronger Together", which is delivering long term help and practical support to people with a disability and their families; and
- (3) congratulates the State Government for its approach to respite care, with more respite places available than ever before and more case managers to ensure families are provided with the help they need, when they need it.

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

Ms JODI MCKAY: In New South Wales 750,000 people provide care to family members, friends and others in the community—more than one in ten members of the community. It is important that the House note that the Government is committed to helping people with a disability, as well as their carers and their families. That is why the Government introduced Stronger Together—a 10-year plan to revolutionise the delivery of disability services. That plan is supported with \$1.3 billion in funding over the first five years. Stronger Together focuses on three key areas. The first is strengthening families so that children with a disability can grow up with a family in the community. It is important that we strengthen families where possible to support their children with a disability. The second key area is promoting community inclusion, through a plan called Count Me In, so that adults with a disability have more opportunities to participate in paid employment or in the community. The third key area in the Stronger Together plan is to improve the disability services system's capacity and accountability.

Major initiatives have been launched in all of the three areas, with most of the first two years of service growth already operational and more to be rolled out this financial year. Service capacity has increased, particularly in therapy and respite, the two areas that the community feels strongly about. There have been improvements in areas such as early intervention and access to services for rural and isolated communities. It is important to note that that momentum is continuing. The New South Wales Government is working closely with other agencies to improve coordination and effectiveness through Better Together, a whole-of-government plan which will help government services work better for people with a disability and their families. A summary of the expanded and new services put in place demonstrates the impact that Stronger Together is having, and 125 new case managers have been recruited to guide and support families through the mainstream and specialist service systems.

It is important that we have a one-on-one approach so that families that are navigating their way through the systems receive the needed support when they need it. New funding to the non-government sector and expansion of Government community support teams has resulted in an increase in the availability of therapy services, including the creation of 1,000 extra therapy places for children and adults with a disability. There have also been a number of actions to improve professional structures and practices to make it easier for people to access the services they need. More than 2,800 new respite places have been created, including 1,160 places in the 2008-09 financial year. It is those respite services that are so important in lightening the load for parents on a day-to-day basis. Every member of this House would have had discussions with people in their electorate who go to them to talk about the importance of respite care for families who have a child with a disability. It is critical that the Government supports those families when they need it most.

In 2008-09 funding continued under a \$48 million joint State and Australian Government agreement to provide new respite initiatives for ageing parent carers. Under that package non-government organisations this year will provide 903 flexible respite packages, 125 flexible day program options, and support coordination to ageing parent carers at an annual cost of \$20 million. The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care has developed options to expand the range of respite models. It is important that we continue to look at best practice and what innovations can be implemented to make it easier for parents and families. New models of respite include innovative forms of support for particular target groups, while others are put together to suit the needs of families.

In addition to respite, we have introduced other supports to assist parents and carers in their vital role. We know that an estimated 3,308 families have taken advantage of the Family Assistance Fund in the first two years of Stronger Together. That fund provides small amounts of discretionary funding to purchase items that make life a little easier. More than \$3 million has been allocated to the Family Assistance Fund each year to purchase household appliances and other equipment—the small costs and burdens that families face when caring for a child with a disability.

New information, resources and support networks have been rolled out. It is about making sure that we can increase their availability and the access that families have to these important networks and resources. Stronger Together has invested almost \$2 million in five projects to promote parent, sibling and peer support networks for families because we realise the importance of these networks. Three of those projects include a focus on children with autism, one focuses on Aboriginal families, and one is for families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

I will digress briefly and speak about the importance of supporting families of children with autism. Recently I had the great privilege of launching a DVD in Newcastle that showcases the lives of five families who have a child with autism. The DVD was put together by the students of the Hunter Campus of TAFE in partnership with Newcastle Temporary Care. One of the wonderful things that arose from the production of this DVD was that the students who participated in filming each of the families took a great deal away from the experience and the privilege of knowing them. The students went into the homes of those families and captured their day-to-day lives to show what it is like to have a child who has autism.

I also want to pay tribute to those who work in Newcastle Temporary Care. It was one of the first respite services of its type in New South Wales. It began in 1978 with the aim of giving parents a break from their full-time caring role without having to institutionalise their child with a disability. It is a non-profit, community-based respite service for children with a disability and their families. It provides respite care for children aged up to 19 with a moderate to severe physical, intellectual or sensory disability. Newcastle Temporary Care operates seven projects in the Hunter region and provides respite care to approximately 380 children living in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie local government areas.

It aims to provide and maintain quality of life for people with a disability and their carers through a range of respite care programs, targeting those programs to the families who most need them. This is all about enhancing the life of a person with a disability as well as enhancing the lives of other members of the family unit. Respite is provided in the homes of its clients and of volunteers and, of course, in the respite houses that we provide in the community. There are also group situations. I bring to the attention of the House the wonderful work that Newcastle Temporary Care does in the Hunter region.

Stronger Together has also increased the number of day program places available to adults with a disability by almost 800 over its first five years, including 235 in the 2007-08 year. Stronger Together represents real progress in improving the quality of life for people with a disability. It helps them, their families and the

carers to participate in work, education and community life to the fullest extent possible. I again thank those families, advocates, service providers, carers and peak groups, and especially the many courageous Australians with a disability, for helping this Government in its ongoing efforts to improve disability services in this State.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega) [12.43 p.m.]: I recognise the member for Newcastle for moving a motion on disability services and I largely support and endorse what she has said today. Having said that, I will seek to amend paragraph (3) of the motion because we on this side of the House have ongoing concerns about the state of respite and supported accommodation services. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraph (3) with a view to inserting instead:

- (3) condemns the State Government for a lack of investment into supported accommodation therefore affecting the number of available respite places in New South Wales.

We have supported, and continue to support, the Stronger Together program. The architect of this program was largely Brendan O'Reilly, who recently resigned as the Director General of the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. The package was a start in dealing with many of the difficulties that the disability sector is facing. I also acknowledge the member for Newcastle for giving recognition to carers in the motion. Carers in particular do a mighty job, as all members in this House will know. It is terrific that the motion recognises their role. I urge the member for Newcastle and the Government to give close consideration to the submission of Carers NSW on the 2009-10 State budget. It sets out 22 recommendations to the State Government and it is important that those recommendations be given full consideration by Cabinet. It cites the need to strengthen the capacity for specific carer groups. It wants greater recognition of carers through the enactment of a carers recognition Act. It also wants to see the enhancement of social inclusion of carers and it has identified a number of issues relating to service delivery and support to carers. I urge the Government to give full consideration to those issues.

Notice of this motion was given on 14 May 2008. Each year the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare produces an annual report into the state of disability services around the nation. I was concerned to see in the October report some very stark comparisons between the performance and number of services provided in New South Wales and those in other States. For instance, in Victoria twice as many people with a disability are receiving accommodation support and three times as many are receiving respite care than is the case in New South Wales. Despite our population being almost 1.7 million more than Victoria's, the Victorian Government assisted 13,962 people with a disability to receive accommodation support compared with 7,532 in New South Wales. What makes these figures even more disturbing is that last year the department received 1,771 applications for supported accommodation and only 64 placements were made available. That is part of the reason I am seeking to amend paragraph (3) of the motion.

The lack of investment in supported accommodation by the State Government is causing enormous strain across the system, in particular for respite services. More than 1,700 people missed out, and they were just the people who applied. There is another group of people in New South Wales who do not bother applying. The level of unmet need in New South Wales is very difficult for the Government to come to terms with. Accurate data collection is also causing significant problems for the Government in matching spending on resources to the level of unmet need that exists in the community. The national report also made some comparisons of respite services. In Victoria 14,199 people with a disability were assisted with respite compared with 5,665 who were assisted in New South Wales. Almost three times the number of people are being assisted with respite support in Victoria compared with New South Wales. It must be remembered that our population is 1.7 million greater.

This crisis cannot be addressed overnight. Stronger Together is the tip of the iceberg; it does not address the overall problem. I wish to make another important point. The Liberals-Nationals have started to roll out some policy initiatives. In the past few weeks I released a discussion paper entitled, "Personalising Service Delivery." The New South Wales Liberals-Nationals are committed to the philosophy of providing increased choice and control to individual service users whilst recognising client needs and the capacity of service users to manage the mix of available services. We want a system that increases choice, voice and control for people with disabilities and their carers.

The discussion paper, which is available on the Liberal-Nationals website, sets out a plan to provide greater choice to people with disabilities by offering them individualised funding packages. The plan will be to offer choice between the current case management model and that of a more personalised service approach in which funding packages enable individuals to direct the services that they wish to have and when. The paper

I released is about foundation principles, and purposely so. We need to elevate this issue in the political sphere because it is being spoken about in the disability sector. We do not subscribe to the one-size-fits-all approach that is being supported by the current Government.

We recognise that the trend towards increasing service personalisation has emerged as one approach to improving responsive front-line service delivery. We want to engage the sector by providing people with a choice. People can remain in the current case management system but, alternatively, we want to be able to provide them with individualised funding. Any transition to such a system would be guided by six clear and mutually reinforcing principles for reform and systemic change. The first of these is non-government organisation viability and sustainability. We want to look closely at capacity building in the non-government sector, which provides services to people with disabilities. That will remain a top priority in our transition to government.

It is critical to address any gaps or duplication in service provision that currently exists. It is important to address workforce development, infrastructure and service gaps. We want to create opportunities and support the empowerment of individuals and families to enable them to get the most out of a personalised service model. We want to ensure that the model is outcomes led and evidence based, that is, that accurate data and information are collected about the likely take-up of individualised funding packages prior to their wider implementation. Quality of life outcomes for people with a disability should remain paramount. We want to ensure comprehensive and transparent stakeholder engagement.

We also want to ensure that a consultative process between service users, providers, peak sector bodies and government is undertaken to develop the guiding principles for the new scheme. It is important for stakeholders to be involved in the model development process. We will focus, in particular, on the regions. We want to ensure a regional emphasis that enables funding to sustain ongoing services in the regions, in particular, in rural and remote areas where there are current service gaps. Finally, we want to ensure that there is clear political leadership and direction. Reasonable and clear expectations about the pace of change must be provided to assist service providers and users to achieve a seamless transition to any new arrangement.

Information about the scheme and the options available to service users will need to be well presented, timely and accurate. That is what our plan aims to achieve. That is one component of many that I will be seeking to address over the next two years. I thank the member for Newcastle for moving this important motion. We have put forward our ideas. I am keen to hear what the Minister has to say, given that it is his intention to participate in this debate. As I said earlier, the Coalition strongly endorses the first two paragraphs of the motion but I have moved an amendment to the final paragraph.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool—Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [12.53 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Newcastle and reject the amendment moved by the member for Bega. I congratulate the member for Newcastle on putting this motion on the agenda, which is particularly appropriate because on Monday I opened new respite facilities at north St Marys. About 750,000 people in this State provide a significant amount of practical and emotional care and assistance to family members, friends, neighbours or other community members, often in addition to juggling education or employment.

There is no doubt that the role of carers is incredibly important. At one level caring is a normal part of life: people expect both to provide and receive care in their lifetimes. But we must acknowledge that carers also need some assistance, which is why we fund a number of services designed to assist carers in their role. Particular groups of carers whose needs are not met by mainstream services also have access to services that are available. The point about respite is that it gives persons requiring care a break, but it also gives their families or carers time out from one another and it gives them a chance to keep on doing what they want to do, that is, to keep caring for these people. In 2007-08, 624 new respite places became available through a mixture of new centre-based and flexible respite places, leisure programs and after school and vacation programs.

As well as directly providing respite services, the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care funds over \$72 million each year for non-government organisations to deliver disability respite services in the community. The department has also introduced a no-fees policy for all planned respite stays at centres operated by the department. That will provide relief to carers in financial hardship and introduce consistency across the department's respite centres. The Home and Community Care Program [HACC] also provides vital support to carers, including the provision of respite care. In 2008-09, \$131.8 million of the budget of the Home and Community Care program was allocated to respite services and other services, which give carers a break from

their caring role. To ensure the continued provision of vital respite services to families, the department released a discussion paper to assist in the reform and expansion of disability respite services. That paper—"New Directions for Disability Respite Services in NSW"—will guide the way in which future disability respite services are delivered, how people access those services, the types of services provided, the settings in which they are delivered, and the development of new respite services across the sector.

I refer to the amendment that has been moved and shall indicate why I reject it. I must say that it is a bit rich: on the one hand the amendment from the member for Bega attacks the Government for its lack of investment, but on the other hand he eloquently supports Stronger Together. He cannot have it both ways. Either he supports Stronger Together or he does not. The member for Bega made it very clear that he does, but he went on and did something that was quite contrary to that—he attacked the level of investment that goes with it. In addition, the member for Bega was critical of this Government for its provision of supported accommodation, which is a bit rich, granted the member for Bega said that the Government should be getting out of providing supported accommodation. I refer to the interesting policy that the member for Bega talked about when he spoke earlier in debate on this motion. The member for Bega attacked the Government for not funding supported accommodation, but the one thing that is blindingly lacking in his policy document is any commitment to funding.

There is not the slightest shred of evidence in his document that the Coalition will continue any level of funding at all, let alone maintain the current level of funding. Anyone examining his document would find that 95 per cent of what the member for Bega has in his policy document is a rewrite of Stronger Together. The other 5 per cent relates to the member cutting out case managers, saving money, and punishing people with disabilities by making cost savings. That is what his document is doing, which is extraordinary. Most of what is in his policy document is simply taken out of Stronger Together. He supports Stronger Together but he then says that this Government should be condemned for its lack of funding in this area. The policy document of the member for Bega catches him out. The substantive policy he talks about is precisely the same as Stronger Together, which is not surprising because he spends all his time supporting it and saying great things about it. However, there is no commitment to extra funding. The only significant change is getting rid of case managers, which is about the member for Bega trying to find cost savings in the disability services sector.

Mr Andrew Constance: Why are you running a pilot?

Mr PAUL LYNCH: The member for Bega said that this Government is running a pilot program, which is what he wants to do. I am glad he concedes that the point I am making is correct. His policy is referring to what this Government is already doing. Anyone reading our document would find that it is identical in substance to the document of the member for Bega. He changed the words but he does not have the funding commitment; he does not have the money. [*Time expired.*]

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [12.58 p.m.]: Anybody listening to or, indeed, reading that speech of the Minister would note the enormous inconsistency in his comments. I will say nothing further about that speech. Figures released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare based on service provider feedback and information obtained by the New South Wales Liberals-Nationals during the budget estimates process in the second half of last year demonstrate that the State's disability system was in crisis—and it remains in crisis. This New South Wales Labor Government is a national embarrassment and should apologise for the deficiencies in service provision to the most vulnerable in our community. It should rectify shortfalls and address unmet needs. Instead, Government members arrogantly move motions congratulating themselves. We should be congratulating and acknowledging carers, whose dedication and self-sacrifice is so admirable.

As the shadow Minister for Disability Services pointed out, in Victoria twice as many people with a disability receive accommodation support and three times as many receive respite care than those in New South Wales. The shadow Minister referred to other relevant figures in his contribution to this debate, but I will not repeat them. As we saw with the recent Federal budget allocations, the New South Wales Labor Government has been shown up by the Victorian Government and the Western Australian Liberal State Government. We should make the situation better by providing personalised service delivery, which the New South Wales Coalition in government will implement if New South Wales Labor will not. The Minister for Disability Services referred to a pilot program, and he may be dipping his toe in the water, but the Coalition makes the commitment to provide that service. In the preamble to his discussion paper on personalising service delivery the shadow Minister for Disability Services said that the New South Wales Liberals-Nationals are committed to the philosophy of providing increased choice and control to individual service users whilst recognising client needs and the capacity of service users to manage the mix of available services.

Often those on the other side challenge us to provide an alternative approach. The shadow Minister's excellent discussion paper outlines a philosophical approach that will work for the sector, which requires better attention and better government support. Various service providers in the sector support that philosophical approach. In the past fortnight I have spoken to the President of the Motor Neurone Disease Association of New South Wales, the President of the Association for Children with a Disability, and the Director of Autism Behavioural Intervention NSW. Those associations support the broad philosophical approach behind the shadow Minister's discussion paper. Obviously, the sector supports the Coalition's approach. The New South Wales Coalition, and particularly the shadow Minister, is listening to a range of stakeholders and working with them inclusively, based on mutual trust and respect, to develop a better system for New South Wales.

We do not subscribe to Labor's one-size-fits-all approach. We support increasing service personalisation, which will help to improve a responsive front-line service delivery. Our approach in government will emphasise quality of life outcomes for people with disabilities—that is paramount. As the shadow Minister pointed out, the discussion paper outlines six mutually reinforcing foundation principles for reform and systemic change. Those principles of non-government organisation viability and sustainability, building opportunities, an outcome-led, evidence-based approach, comprehensive and transparent stakeholder engagement, regional emphasis, and clear political leadership and direction are paramount to achieve successful service delivery. The potential to transform and enrich the lives of people with disabilities is enormous and must be realised.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [1.03 p.m.]: It gives me pleasure to contribute to the debate on the motion moved by the member for Newcastle. I acknowledge the commitment of the Minister for Disability Services in his contribution to this debate. It demonstrates his high commitment to this portfolio to provide real information for the people to judge and to make sure the Opposition does not get away with distorting the facts and figures. All members of the House are aware of the great work of carers in providing respite to families of people with disabilities. As someone who worked in the education sector, I met many people who volunteered as carers. Caring for people with disabilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week is a huge commitment. It is important that those families are given the opportunity to spend quality time with other relatives or siblings. The Government's commitment in this area is important.

The Stronger Together plan is one way to revolutionise delivery of disability services. The Government, through its 10-year plan, demonstrates commitment to make sure that those who are disadvantaged and who need extra assistance in our community receive that help. More than 750,000 people in New South Wales provide care to family members, friends and others in the community. Many people volunteer to assist in providing a quality of life also for family members of those who are disabled or frail and aged. This motion is important in congratulating those people on their important work. These debates sometimes have much toing and froing and some political argy-bargy, but every person in this place recognises the importance of carers: Without them the system would not work.

Certainly, we all agree that there are always opportunities to strengthen the system. That is why the pilot to which the Minister referred is so important. The Government is looking at new ways to deliver services, and that is commendable. One important thing the Government has done is to commit \$1.3 billion for the first five years to fund initiatives. We have put money on the table. It is easy to think of ideas, but if the dollars are not behind those ideas they are just words on paper. This \$1.3 billion commitment is the most important part because it is real money delivering real services. One organisation in my area at San Remo called Camp Breakaway offers camps for families, siblings and seniors. Families can go to Camp Breakaway as a group and take part in activities. A new camp provides siblings with the opportunity to get away and undertake activities provided by a range of volunteers.

Camp Breakaway raises its own money to provide this fantastic service. I have been happy to take part in a number of functions to raise the money required to support this facility. Recently, while visiting a family from the Newcastle electorate, I was struck by the importance of this organisation. They said it was the first time they had been able to get away together on a family holiday and take part in activities like canoeing, bushwalking, attending a disco, and a range of other activities. The camp provides care for children with disabilities in the family so that the parents can spend quality time together. This impressive organisation does fantastic work in the community. It exemplifies the work of all carers. The Central Coast community supports Camp Breakaway through volunteers and money. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [1.08 p.m.]: I support the amendment. This debate gives me the opportunity to pre-empt a meeting I will have with a constituent next Wednesday in Deniliquin. I am pleased that the Minister is in the Chamber: I am certain that he will find a solution to the problem I will outline.

Mr Paul Lynch: I just opened a new respite centre in your electorate three weeks ago.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: But I am sure the Minister will find a solution to this problem. As part of the background to this problem, I refer to a great organisation in Deniliquin that currently provides disability services. Yallambee Deniliquin Limited was established approximately 25 years ago by concerned parents of children with disabilities as a non-government community-run organisation. The organisation established a special school in Napier Street, Deniliquin, which was officially opened in November 1974. From the late 1970s the focus of Yallambee altered to include adult training at its Napier Street building, and the then Department of Education took over responsibility for the provision of education to children with disabilities.

Yallambee Deniliquin Limited became an entity in 1993 following a handover from the Challenge Foundation. A group home commenced in 1986 and provides accommodation for four persons, in addition to one respite placement. The one respite placement is at the centre of the concern that has been expressed. From the late 1970s up to the present, Yallambee Deniliquin Limited has offered a range of structured employment, accommodation, pre-vocational training, independent living and training, and recreation options for people with disabilities. Yallambee remains a non-government organisation that provides a range of services to persons with disabilities in the Deniliquin district of New South Wales, including townships such as Finley, Tocumwal, Berrigan and Barham.

The issue I raise concerns a constituent, Mrs Betty Danckert, who has been advised by Yallambee that from 1 June 2009 respite accommodation will no longer be offered at the group home in Deniliquin because the provision of respite care disrupts the permanent residents of the home. While I support Yallambee's decision in this instance because it is quite clear that the decision has not been made lightly, the non-availability of respite care creates a problem for Mrs Betty Danckert and her daughter, Kerrie, who has enjoyed respite care provided by the group home for 17 years.

Mrs Danckert will have to drive from Deniliquin to Griffith, which will take 2½ hours. Aside from that, Mrs Danckert's fear is that her daughter will have to be cared for in new surroundings. We are all well aware that some disabled people find it very difficult to adjust to a new environment. Mrs Danckert faces two challenges: she will have to drive a considerable distance for 2½ hours each way from Deniliquin to Griffith, which is a fairly onerous task for Mrs Danckert, who is an older lady, and she will be taking her daughter to a new and unfamiliar environment. Mrs Danckert getting her daughter to Griffith is one thing, but getting her daughter to adjust to a new respite care environment, and getting her to want to stay there, is quite another. They are big challenges.

I am sure the issue will affect more people than Mrs Betty Danckert, and I am equally sure that my electorate office will be visited by many others who will be affected by the non-availability of respite care in Deniliquin. While Mrs Danckert is the first constituent to whom I have spoken in relation to this issue, I am certain there will be others. A solution must be found. This is a problem that the people of Deniliquin really do not need. Some people are utilising services that are provided in Victoria, and there seems to be a perception that in that context Griffith does not seem to be very far away. But it is a different story for Betty Danckert who, in a state of stress and concern, has to drive her daughter, Kerrie, to the Griffith facility, not knowing the frame of mind her daughter will be in while she is in respite care.

Ms JODI MCKAY (Newcastle—Minister for Tourism, Minister for the Hunter, Minister for Science and Medical Research, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)) [1.14 p.m.], in reply: I thank members who participated in this debate—importantly, the Minister in charge of disability, ageing and home care, and the member for Wyong. I also thank the shadow Minister and member for Bega, the member for Davidson and the member for Murray-Darling. I certainly appreciate what in some measure is bipartisan support from Opposition members, but it is important to note that the motion was moved in a genuine effort to recognise carers and their support for people with a disability as well as their families, and the importance of respite places.

The Government has increased respite places by 2,800, so it is incumbent upon me to reject the amendment that has been moved by the member for Bega. In speaking to the rejection of the amendment, I point out that this Government has not adopted a one-size-fits-all approach. The motion is very much about acknowledging that family units may differ. The member for Wyong referred to the example of a family that was able to enjoy a family day out. The Government acknowledges that family units are different and they have differing needs. That is why, under the direction of the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Stronger Together is about exploring innovative models of care and making sure that in going forward the Government works with families, acknowledging that they have particular needs.

I reject the suggestion made by the member for Bega relating to the Government's commitment to regions. I am a regional Minister and I can certainly attest to the Government's commitment, which is evident in regional and rural areas. It is important to note that the Government is focused on regional and rural areas. The motion is about acknowledging that families in regional areas deserve the same level of care as do families in a metropolitan area. In response to the issues raised by the member for Murray-Darling, I point out that respite care facilities in his electorate have doubled—as the member would know because the Minister visited his electorate recently to open a new respite centre. The respite care facilities in Broken Hill have doubled.

Mr John Williams: Absolutely, and they are gratefully accepted.

Ms JODI MCKAY: I appreciate that the member for Murray-Darling gratefully accepts. In response to the issue raised by the member for Murray-Darling regarding the Deniliquin family, the Minister is in the Chamber. I encourage the member to speak to the Minister about that particular issue in his electorate. Like every other member of Parliament, the member for Murray-Darling has the opportunity to speak directly with the Minister, and the Minister certainly has heard the issue that the member for Murray-Darling has raised. I know that the Minister would be very keen to talk to the member about that issue.

The member for Bega referred to plans relating to disability services that the Opposition has put forward, but during debate the Minister revealed that Opposition policy is about cutting case managers to save costs and ensuring that cost-cutting is prioritised ahead of providing the appropriate care for children with a disability. In moving forward with this debate, it is really important that the House notes that that is the Opposition's plan, whereas the New South Wales Labor Government is making real progress with its commitment to helping people with a disability and their carers. We are committed to providing the necessary support for people who dedicate their lives to helping their loved ones—the families, friends and carers of people with a disability.

As the House knows, the Government is in the third year of a 10-year plan. Already we have seen increases in service capacity, particularly in therapy and respite. We have also seen a significant improvement in areas such as early intervention and access to services for rural and isolated communities. We are also making it easier for carers to access the support services they need so that they are able to continue with their amazing support. Stronger Together strengthens families. It promotes community inclusion and it improves the services that really matter. This plan is supported by funding of \$1.3 billion over a five-year period. Having said that, I thank members for their participation in this important debate. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 51

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

Noes, 38

Mr Aplin	Mr Hartcher	Mr Roberts
Mr Baird	Ms Hodgkinson	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baumann	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Smith
Ms Berejiklian	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 R. C. Williams
Mr Fraser	Mr Piccoli	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Goward	Mr Provest	Mr George
Mrs Hancock	Mr Richardson	Mr Maguire

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

GOCUP ROAD UPGRADE

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [1.27 p.m.]: I move:

That this House calls on the Government to declare Gocup Road, Tumut, a State road in its entirety and fund it accordingly.

The announcements in the Federal budget sadly disappointed communities in the Tumut, Gundagai, Tumbarumba and Hume shires, which expected an announcement for funding for Gocup Road. The local Federal member has called for the road to be declared a State road, and I support that call. An article in the *Tumut and Adelong Times* of Tuesday 6 May 2008 quoted the local Federal member for Eden-Monaro, Mr Kelly, and stated:

He said the first step towards securing State and Federal funding was to reclassify the important link as a State Road.

Presently it is a regional road, and as such comes under the direct funding responsibility of Tumut Shire Council.

Mr Kelly said he had spoken to the relevant State and Federal Ministers, with a view towards bringing them together with the timber industry and Tumut Shire Council to discuss the road.

"There needs to be input and subsequently contributions from each of the stakeholders", Mr Kelly said.

The timber softwoods industry working group said that it is prepared to make a commitment to this road. Tumut Shire Council and Gundagai Shire Council have worked tirelessly to bring about a funding conclusion for this road. Sadly, with the Federal budget on Tuesday night, they have been let down. I support what the Federal member is trying to do by declaring this road a State road. I call on members to support the call and this important motion. Governments of all persuasions have invested heavily in the timber industry in the Tumut, Tumbarumba and Greater Hume shires. Indeed, the forecast for the freight in those shires will increase dramatically.

Peter Crowe said the Softwoods Working Group's forecast of \$4.4 million tonnes of forest products a year on the road network by 2006 had proved to be correct. He said, "It is inevitable that six million tonnes a year of forest products will be exceeded by 2010." With Visy stage two almost completed and about to come on line in October, the Gocup Road will be near breaking point. I have already referred to accidents on this road in this House. We need action from this Government to support the call of its Federal colleague, Dr Mike Kelly, to declare the Gocup Road a State road. No matter is more important for those communities. I know that the member for Burrinjuck and the member for Albury, councils and industry groups are united in that call.

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

[*The Assistant-Speaker (Mr Grant McBride) left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.*]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: Order! It is my pleasure to welcome to the gallery His Excellency Mr Pierre Helg, Deputy State Secretary for Bilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland, accompanied by His Excellency Mr Daniel Woker, Ambassador of Switzerland, and Mr Jurg Casserini, Consul-General of Switzerland, guests of the Leader of the House and member for Riverstone.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that when he finally met with the Prime Minister in the Hunter today—despite the Federal budget's failure to provide a single dollar to build a centimetre of road or rail in Sydney—he congratulated the Prime Minister on his Sydney budget snub?

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

Mr NATHAN REES: I also made the point this morning that in addition to the billions of dollars given to New South Wales in the Federal budget on Tuesday evening, in months gone past the Federal Government did not wait for the full impact of the global recession to hit Australia before it acted. Instead, it put some \$4.5 billion into New South Wales for school funding. Last week I stood at Randwick Public School with the local member and the Minister for Education and Training as we announced the allocation of \$642 million for New South Wales schools in the first tranche—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Which trains and which roads are they going to use to get there? Not a single dollar for that.

Mr NATHAN REES: Very possibly on one of the 385 new bus services we have introduced in the last two years, as we increased bus patronage. Oh, Sugar Ray Williams is on his feet. Tremendous!

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Hawkesbury to make his point of order, I ask the House to come to order.

Mr Ray Williams: Point of order: The Premier might advise us how we are going to—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hawkesbury will resume his seat. I call the member for Hawkesbury to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: No magic in that at all, Mandrake. It may well have been, to answer that—

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

Mr NATHAN REES: In response to the interjection of the Leader of the Opposition, it may well have been on one of those 385 new bus services that the Government introduced, as we increased patronage on Sydney buses by 3 per cent in the most recent reporting period. The amount of \$4.5 billion has been put into our schools in advance of the Federal budget. Last week alone \$642 million—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr NATHAN REES: This is uncomfortable, Barry, I know. And do you know why it is uncomfortable? It is because many of these projects are in your electorate. And when you had the opportunity to back Federal Government investment in your own electorate, you did what? You knocked it back!

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr NATHAN REES: In an act of absolutely breathtaking hypocrisy, the Opposition opposed the \$42 billion stimulus package.

[Interruption]

Oh, you are a windbag, Barry.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: I made the mistake of taking you seriously. You are a windbag.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr NATHAN REES: Withdrawn, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will resume his seat. Government members will come to order.

Mr Greg Smith: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, relevance. We are not getting the question answered. Also if this House is to have standards, it has to have them applied to both sides of the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Epping will resume his seat. I will listen further to the Premier. The question was broad ranging.

Mr NATHAN REES: It was a broad-ranging question, a very astute observation. Before the Federal budget was delivered this week, we announced that \$642 million to—

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

Mr NATHAN REES: This is an ample demonstration of the Leader of the Opposition's utter ineptitude in dealing with the consequences of the global recession. He would simply sit on his hands and wait before a budget was delivered. He simply would not act.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: The hypocrisy is breathtaking. Last week we announced \$642 million going into 410 projects across New South Wales.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: How many rail carriages for Sydney?

Mr NATHAN REES: I will come to that shortly. Across New South Wales, there will be 410 school projects at a cost of \$642 million, underpinning 9,000 jobs and 820 apprenticeships—and that is just the first stage. The Leader of the Opposition opposed that at every turn, and that is on the record. The hypocrisy is breathtaking. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to send back the money that has been allocated to West Pymble Public School and its library upgrade. I challenge him to send back the money allocated to his electorate, including the \$2 million for West Pymble Public School's new hall and covered outdoor learning area. Otherwise, there is one inescapable conclusion: he opposed the money for those projects—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for North Shore to order. I call the member for Penrith to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: The Leader of the Opposition and his cronies opposed that funding in this place.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: That is not true.

Mr NATHAN REES: It is true, and you are protesting because it hurts. He knows that is the case. Over the next six years, arising from Tuesday night's Commonwealth budget, New South Wales will receive \$2.2 billion, including nearly \$1.5 billion for the Hunter Expressway, with a \$200 million contribution there, and \$618 million for the Kempsey bypass.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: We will also receive \$150 million to improve landside access at Port Botany and \$300 million for the Moorebank Intermodal Terminal, which was announced in the Commonwealth's Nation Building program, which is about 30 per cent of the national transport spend.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: We are supporting our own \$56 billion in infrastructure spending over the next four years. These are facts. The \$42-billion stimulus package that was previously announced by the Commonwealth Government was opposed by the Leader of the Opposition. He will be happy to swan around his electorate and perhaps even sit under the covered outdoor learning area, or perhaps attend speech days in the school halls that the Federal Government and the State Government—Labor governments—have combined to deliver in this State. The hypocrisy is breathtaking.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT STIMULUS PACKAGE

Mr GRANT McBRIDE: My question is addressed to the Premier. What is the latest information on the Government's delivery of the Commonwealth Government's stimulus package?

Mr NATHAN REES: That is a very good question from the member for The Entrance, and I thank him for his longstanding interest in this matter.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: I was up a tad earlier than usual this morning. A few hours ago I had the honour of joining Prime Minister Rudd, Treasurer Swan—

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

Mr NATHAN REES: —the Federal Minister for Infrastructure, and the Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon—

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

Mr NATHAN REES: —and my State colleagues the member for Cessnock, the member for Maitland and the Minister for Roads, to mark the go-ahead for the \$1.65 billion Hunter Expressway, the single biggest road project that the Commonwealth Government funded in Tuesday night's budget. It is one of only two projects to receive more than a billion dollars in this round of stimulus funding. All told, the Commonwealth Government is injecting \$11.6 billion into rail and road infrastructure projects in New South Wales, around a third of the national total of \$36 billion—a proportion almost exactly in line with our share of population, some seven million of the nation's 21 million.

Over the next four years the New South Wales Government will invest \$56 billion in infrastructure, supporting 150,000 jobs each year. That is the highest of all the States in Australia. By the end of June this year the New South Wales Labor Government will have invested more than \$116 billion in hospitals, schools, roads and rail since we came to office in 1995. Like all the projects announced by the Commonwealth Government, the Hunter Expressway is a partnership in funding, with New South Wales contributing \$200 million to the project, and a partnership in delivery, with the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority charged with carrying the job through to completion. For all the criticism, let us not forget that New South Wales is the State that delivered the best-ever Olympics, Australia's biggest postwar undertaking—

Mr Chris Hartcher: And the highest unemployment.

Mr NATHAN REES: And the biggest drop last week.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: I am not interested in talking New South Wales down, unlike the member for Terrigal.

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

Mr Barry O'Farrell: You are running it down!

Mr NATHAN REES: And some are not doing much running at all! That was Australia's biggest postwar undertaking, on time and on budget. It, too, was a partnership between the Federal Government, the State Government and the private sector—largely between the private sector and the New South Wales Government. This is the Government that slashed the red tape to get the Visy mill at Tumut, to get Fox Studios at Moore Park and to get Cadia-Ridgeway goldmine off the ground. It is the Government that delivered the Eastern Distributor, the M5 East and the M7, the Charlestown bypass and the Sea Cliff Bridge-Kiama bypass with a speed and efficiency unrivalled by any other State, as indeed we are doing now with the rollout of the Federal Government's stimulus package into schools and housing.

We are ahead of every other State. We passed legislation early in the piece to make sure that those projects would be coming out of the ground by the June deadline. That is what we committed to when we met with the Prime Minister on 5 February this year. We said, "We will move heaven and earth to make sure these projects come out of the ground quickly to protect employment and jobs in New South Wales." That is our record of delivering. This is a Government that delivers multi-billion dollar capital programs year in, year out. Most recently, we opened the \$2.3 billion Epping to Chatswood rail line. That will carry some 10,000 people a day once fully operational and integrated with the rest of the network. There are new schools and TAFE facilities, new roads, water pipes, powerlines, hospitals, jails and police stations. That is \$70 billion worth of infrastructure over the last decade and a record \$14 billion this year alone. More infrastructure records will be broken in the years ahead.

So that there is no mistake about our intent, I remind the House that in February I appointed Bob Leece as the Infrastructure Coordinator-General and put him in charge of the New South Wales national building and jobs plan taskforce to ensure every cent of Federal stimulus money is spent quickly, carefully and decisively. That is why the Hunter Expressway is ready to go. The money was announced on Tuesday, planning approval has already been granted and the project is ready to roll. No red tape, no delays, ready to get on with it. This is a road of consequence, not just for the region but for the whole State. Much of the New South Wales economy is driven out of the coalfields of Newcastle and the Hunter region and it is a direct, very significant contributor to the Australian economy. This road will unlock commerce and will bring relief to truck drivers and motorists alike, cutting some half an hour off the most usual travelling time.

It highlights the fact that improving mobility, whether on our roads or our rail network, is a priority for the New South Wales Government. That is why this Government, in partnership with the Commonwealth Government, is breaking the congestion logjam everywhere we can—in the Hunter, on the Pacific Highway, on the Central Coast highway, and in western Sydney with road upgrades like Camden Valley Way. We are widening the Great Western Highway across the Blue Mountains. That work has been underway for many years now—two lanes each way—and we are almost there. We are widening the Great Western Highway across the Great Divide. That is why we are buying 450 new buses and building a \$175-million inner-west busway and ploughing \$235 million into strategic bus corridors in and around greater metropolitan Sydney. It is why we are building the Enfield Intermodal to shift 300,000 containers from road to rail and get 300 truck movements each day off the roads around Port Botany.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: It is why more than 600 new generation rail carriages worth \$3.6 billion will soon be bringing greater comfort and reliability to Sydney rail commuters to return the confidence they have shown by lifting rail patronage over the past year by some 5 per cent—an excellent result. I am advised that in April there were a number of days on which on-time running in the peak periods was 100 per cent. That is absolutely outstanding work from the good folk at State Rail.

We are working to relieve congestion at every turn despite what the armchair critics opposite might claim; those who never stop talking Sydney and New South Wales down and pretend to have an idea about how to run a State. They whinge, whine and complain. We are delivering a suite of road, freight and transport projects that will improve mobility, get freight off our roads and bring relief to motorists and commuters alike. Not only that, we are building those projects on the back of a 14-year record of investment. We are using that experience to energise our partnership with the Commonwealth Government so the projects can go from shovel ready to ribbon cutting—the Leader of the Opposition might even get a guernsey at some of those—without disruption and without delay.

[*Interruption*]

Well, you've got more front than Woolworths, so you will probably turn up anyway. As the Hunter Expressway proves, New South Wales is geared up and ready to go. We will fight for every project and we will fight to support jobs. Why? Builders on this side of the House; wreckers on the other side of the House.

FEDERAL HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr ANDREW STONER: My question is directed to the Premier. How could the Premier congratulate the Prime Minister on the Federal budget when New South Wales received only \$410 million in health infrastructure funding compared with \$452 million for Western Australia, \$470 million for Queensland and \$688 million for Victoria?

Mr NATHAN REES: If the Leader of The Nationals is serious about a comparison with Victoria then perhaps he will also offer the Federal Government another \$1.2 billion in GST. The cut to Victorian GST revenues was some \$6 billion.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr NATHAN REES: This week's Federal budget marks an important milestone in our partnership with the Commonwealth Government. It marks the end of a decade of Commonwealth underfunding of our public hospitals.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: The Australian Government's budget provides more than \$411 million in additional capital funding to build and upgrade health and medical research facilities in New South Wales.

[*Interruption*]

You never picked up the phone when John Howard was Prime Minister and gouged \$14 billion in GST revenues out of New South Wales over an eight-year period. You never picked up the phone. I was close to a couple of negotiations—

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

Mr NATHAN REES: I was close to a couple of the Federal-State negotiations over health care agreements. Do members know what Tony Abbott would do? He would say, "This is the offer and for every day you delay a yes we are going to dock you 2 per cent." That was the Coalition's approach to federalism—in short, nothing other than political bullying of the people of New South Wales. Instead, we are now working in partnership with the Federal Government in a way that was unthinkable only a few short years ago.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: The Hunter Expressway was promised by Liberal governments, and guess what?

[*Interruption*]

That is right. Guess who is turning the first sod?

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

Mr NATHAN REES: The Federal Labor Government, in only its second budget, crafted in the most difficult financial circumstances in living memory, is delivering on the Coalition's initial promise. Labor governments are delivering on the Hunter Expressway.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Spenders—savers.

Mr NATHAN REES: Does the Leader of the Opposition really want to go down that path? This man could not find a photocopier—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease continually interjecting. The Premier has the call.

Mr NATHAN REES: This man, when asked about what sort of deficit he would run, said, "How long is a piece of string?" That is the sort of fiscal rectitude that the people of New South Wales have on offer from the Leader of the Opposition. No wonder he was moved from the shadow front bench after that effort! Remember when the former Leader of the Opposition, the member for Vacluse, rolled the current Leader of the Opposition, the member for Ku-ring-gai, to go and explain the costings in advance of the last election? Remember that? He said, "Here you are, mate. Here is the world's greatest hospital pass." The Leader of the Opposition gave us that tired old excuse, "I could not work the photocopier." It is too good! Champagne Opposition!

The former Federal Government bullied every jurisdiction in Australia when it came to negotiating money for healthcare agreements but we now have cooperative federalism under Kevin Rudd, my Government and Labor governments around Australia. It is tremendous to have a Commonwealth Government that is now willing to assist in the funding of further vital health and medical research and clinical training facilities. On Tuesday night it provided funding for two significant hospital projects.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: Those projects are at Nepean and at Narrabri. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to give back the money for Narrabri. He will not do it; I thought as much. We will continue to stay at the forefront of medical research and training, building on our existing intellectual capital in New South Wales. The Federal budget has provided almost \$100 million in infrastructure investment for research facilities, including the clinical school and research centre in Blacktown, the Ingham Research Centre at Liverpool, the Hunter Medical Research Institute in Newcastle—the list goes on—a planned clinical school in Kingswood, the Garvan St Vincents Cancer Centre and the Lifehouse Sydney Cancer Centre at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. In addition, New South Wales will also tender for a share of the more than \$530 million that is available for up to 10 regional councils.

In the lead-up to our budget we will be considering how the funding that has been made available for these projects will impact on our health infrastructure program—again, a record infrastructure spend of in excess of \$600 million this year. As members would be aware, measures announced in the Federal budget this week included changes to the private health insurance rebate and to the Medicare levy surcharge. Subject to income, the Medicare levy surcharge will increase and, also subject to income, the rebate will decrease. The net result should be relative stability in private health insurance coverage, and it appears as though the impact on our public hospitals will not be substantial. Of course, the Federal budget contains a suite of other measures, including more funding for training doctors, growing the nursing workforce, in particular, an expansion of the nurse practitioner model, reforms to maternity services, new funding arrangements for pathology—

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

Mr NATHAN REES: Other measures include new funding arrangements for pathology and imaging services, investment in prevention, investment in indigenous health, and grants for communities, including Bombala, Dubbo, Forbes, Gilgandra, Gunnedah, Ralston, Scone, Taree and Urbenville to assist in attracting and retaining doctors, and changes to funding.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: All these measures will assist the hardworking families of New South Wales. Many of these initiatives will go towards the fulfilment of agreements—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation on both sides of the House.

Mr NATHAN REES: Many of these initiatives will go towards the fulfilment of agreements made under last year's historic Health Care Agreement, and represent a committed partnership between New South Wales and the Commonwealth to improve health and hospital outcomes.

CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES

Mr PAUL PEARCE: My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister update the House on what actions the Government is taking to help households across New South Wales to tackle climate change?

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I am sure it would not be lost on the member for Coogee—as it would not be lost on other members—that another important milestone in Australia's fight against climate change was the introduction this morning in the Federal Parliament of the bills for the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. I digress from the direct detail of the member's question; nonetheless it is important to indicate that the New South Wales Government can take some pride in the role that it played to ensure that we have a national approach to addressing climate change.

The New South Wales Government, more than any other State or Territory government, led the way in advocating for the importance of a national approach to addressing carbon pollution. When we are in an environment where every State and Territory government and the Federal Government are embracing a national approach to addressing climate change, it is easy to forget the importance of this State Government's advocacy, and the lost years of the Howard Government in regard to climate change. Today is an important day. I state quite rightly that the New South Wales Government not only advocated for national action; it also advocated for practical action in New South Wales.

This Government matched its rhetoric and its words with action in this State. New South Wales was the first jurisdiction in Australia to set mandatory emissions reduction targets, and it was one of the first jurisdictions internationally to establish an emissions trading scheme. Members should not forget our landmark Climate Change Fund, which provides practical support to families, businesses and communities right across New South Wales to take practical action to address climate change. Government members take the issue of climate change seriously. In the dark, lean years of the Howard Government—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Lane Cove to order. I call the Minister for Roads to order.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: In the dark, lean years of the Howard Government we pursued our advocacy with diligence, but the Howard Government did not make any attempt to take this issue seriously and Opposition members did not put pressure on their Coalition colleagues to do so. We backed that up with clear action at the State level to assist the community to take practical action to address climate change. I can now advise the House that New South Wales householders have taken up more than 70,000 household rebates to green their homes since the rebate program began in July 2007 under our landmark Climate Change Fund.

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: As I said, 70,000 households that have invested their own money have benefited from the Government's proactive and comprehensive approach to climate change. These 70,000 rebates have achieved real outcomes and saved more than 1.5 billion litres of water—the equivalent of 41 million showers. In the area of greenhouse gas emissions, 61,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide have been saved, which is the same as taking 13,700 cars off the road. The 70,000 recipients together have claimed more than \$33.4 million in rebates. Household rebates are available for rainwater tanks, for switching from an electric to a solar, gas or heat-pump hot water system, for ceiling insulation until 30 June, and for washing machines with a 4½ star rating.

New South Wales homes generate an average of nine tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions a year. More than half of that is generated from hot water heating and cooling. If we can assist families and households to put in place more efficient hot water systems and less energy-intensive cooling systems, we will make a significant dent in our fight against climate change. In New South Wales electric hot water systems account for about 37 per cent of electricity use in most homes. On average, every electric hot water system replaced with a more climate-friendly version would save 2.5 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions a year, which is about one-quarter of most households' annual emissions. This is not just about addressing climate change; it is about reducing the cost of living to households. Of course, household rebates are supporting green jobs.

Householders living across the State from Tenterfield to North Sydney and everywhere else have taken action to save energy and claim the rebate. In fact, it is interesting to note that residents outside Sydney have been the most active. Wollongong, Wyong and Gosford continue to have the highest overall take-up of residential rebates, followed by Sutherland, Lake Macquarie and the Tweed. It is important also to note that the State's highest performer on a per capita basis once again was Bellingen on the New South Wales North Coast. The Leader of The Nationals, the member for Oxley, that well-known climate activist, will be proud of the achievements of his electorate's constituents. Perhaps he can take a leaf out of their book. One reason for the surge in uptake of household rebates has been the recent boost to the Commonwealth climate-friendly hot water rebate. By accessing rebates from both the New South Wales and Commonwealth programs New South Wales residents are eligible for up to \$2,800 for a hot water rebate and up to \$2,000 for rainwater tank rebates.

The New South Wales Government and the Rudd Government are working together to tackle climate change. We are pleased that the Federal budget offers further opportunities for the State Government-Federal Government partnership to continue to tackle climate change. The Federal budget contains major important spending initiatives in energy efficiency—things like the Homeowner Insulation Program, the Low Emission Assistance Plan and some \$514 million for solar hot water rebates. Combined with the National Energy Efficiency Strategy we finally are seeing a coordinated comprehensive Australia-wide approach on climate change and energy efficiency. Those on the other side of the House might be somewhat slow to act in this area; they were slow to lobby their Federal colleagues when they were in office and they have been slow to develop a policy—they have no comprehensive policy on climate change.

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: They have been slow to demonstrate leadership on this important issue, but their constituents are not slow to take up the benefits being offered by this Government with regard to the Climate Change Fund. Their constituents recognise the benefit and value of what the New South Wales Government is doing. For example, in the electorate of the shadow Minister, the member for Castle Hill, some 1,485 rebates have been allocated. That means 1,485 constituents in his electorate recognise the benefit of what this Government is doing. In the electorate of the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Ku-ring-gai, some 1,280 rebates have been issued.

That means 1,280 constituents in the Ku-ring-gai electorate have recognised the value of what this Government is doing. The constituents of the member for Manly are a little behind the eight ball as only 352 rebates have been issued in his electorate. I do not know if we can draw any conclusion from that, but it clearly shows that Opposition members need to get behind their constituents and take the climate change issue seriously. They need also to recognise that this is one of the most significant issues confronting our country and the world. We need to see some serious policy development on this issue from Opposition members, as we should on so many other issues.

RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: My question is directed to the Premier. How could the Premier congratulate the Prime Minister on the Federal budget when Sydney got just \$91 million for a rail study, while Melbourne got \$3.2 billion, Adelaide got \$585 million and Perth received \$236 million to build rail projects for their cities?

Mr NATHAN REES: The fact of the matter is that we are building the West Metro.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: In due course the people of New South Wales will want to know what the member for Willoughby is doing for this project.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members from both sides will cease interjecting.

Mr NATHAN REES: The position the member for Willoughby occupies at present is one that does not acknowledge the need for additional rail transport capacity for western Sydney. That is the position she occupies at present. The Opposition has scrapped the CBD Metro. We have already committed \$5 billion.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: The reality is that the member for Willoughby needs a map, a cut lunch and a hurricane lamp to find her way to western Sydney.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hawkesbury will come to order. I call the member for Lismore to order. I call the member for South Coast to order. I call the member for Coffs Harbour to order for the second time.

Mr NATHAN REES: I alert the House to the very kind offer from the member for Wollondilly. He has offered a map of western Sydney to the member for Willoughby.

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

Mr NATHAN REES: This Government has committed \$5 billion for the CBD Metro. Nothing has come from the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Manly will come to order.

Mr NATHAN REES: The Federal Government allocated \$91 million as its endorsement of this project to fund the next phase of the West Metro project. Over the course of the next 12 months that will enable detailed alignment and engineering work, in-depth station design, the preparation of tender documentation, geotechnical drilling, community consultation and, of course, integrated transport planning connecting the West Metro, heavy rail and bus networks. That is what we are doing for public transport. Ultimately, we will deliver additional rail capacity for the people of western Sydney, a matter on which the Opposition is utterly silent.

REGIONAL TOURISM JOBS AND INVESTMENT

Mr GERARD MARTIN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Tourism. What action is the Government taking to support jobs and investment in regional tourism?

Ms JODI MCKAY: Recently I had the pleasure of joining the member for Bathurst at the Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa—

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

Ms JODI MCKAY: —to inspect some site work. This is a high-end accommodation development.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. The Minister has the call. The House will come to order.

Ms JODI MCKAY: I thank Opposition members for their enthusiasm about this development because we also are enthusiastic.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will come to order. The Minister will direct her remarks through the Chair.

Ms JODI MCKAY: This \$115 million development, which will be completed by the end of the year, shows confidence in the tourism industry. The project will create about 100 hospitality and tourism jobs. Will the Opposition be equally enthusiastic about that? No? We are enthusiastic about the jobs this development will create in the Lithgow area. I had the opportunity to visit the Wallerawang railway station. This project is at the other end of regional tourism, but this development encapsulates the very best about regional tourism.

The SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Murrumbidgee on two calls to order.

Ms JODI MCKAY: We are talking about the redevelopment of a railway station with the community and government working together to establish a cultural and arts facility to bring tourists to the Lithgow area. I thank the member for Bathurst for showing me around the region. New South Wales is the number one tourism destination in Australia. Domestic holiday spending has increased by some 12 per cent to \$6.2 billion. I would hope that the Opposition would at least be interested.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. If members continue to interject they will be placed on three calls to order. The Minister has the call. I call the member for Murrumbidgee to order for the third time. He is on his final warning.

Ms JODI MCKAY: The member for Murrumbidgee is not interested in tourism, even though his wife is firmly involved in tourism in his electorate and would be highly disappointed to find that he is interrupting a speech on regional tourism. Regional domestic holiday spending increased by 12 per cent last year in New South Wales to \$6.2 billion. However, we face significant challenges ahead. The number of international visitors has decreased, so as a government we need to work in partnership with industry and do all we can by going forward to ensure that New South Wales maintains the lion's share of tourism and international visitors.

Tourism generates approximately \$27 billion for the State's economy and supports 158,000 jobs, half of which are in regional New South Wales, and 158,000 jobs represent 5 per cent of the total number of jobs in

New South Wales. That is why the Government is investing approximately \$40 million over the next three years in a tourism strategy for New South Wales. This tourism strategy is about driving growth in regional economies, ensuring that we support thousands of jobs, and encouraging visitor expenditure. It is also about working closely with industry every step of the way. I draw to the attention of the House a comment made by the shadow Minister for Tourism on 11 February. He said that the New South Wales Government needs to approach businesses to strike up partnerships before the opportunity to help the industry is lost.

If Opposition members had any idea of the Government's tourism strategy, they would understand that it is about partnerships with industry and working hand in hand with industry to ensure that we maintain the strength of the tourism industry going forward. The Government expects that its \$40 million contribution to tourism will generate approximately \$20 million in expenditure from industry. We are particularly focusing on regional and domestic tourism. We know that regional tourism contributes approximately \$8.3 billion to the bottom line of the State's economy.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: The member for Bathurst has stumped you.

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

Ms JODI MCKAY: I would have thought the Opposition, particularly The Nationals, would want to know about the Government's actions in rural and regional areas when it comes to tourism. The Government is supporting regional tourism with an additional \$10.5 million over 3½ years. That important investment has been welcomed by the industry because it will support 13 regional tourism organisations. That will enable the Government to capitalise on and strengthen local tourism. We are talking about the mum and dad operators who work in hotels, eateries and souvenir shops. Tourism is an important industry that the Government is committed to supporting. In June the Government will embark upon a new \$200,000 campaign to promote business tourism and the use of conference space in regional New South Wales. That priority was identified by a jobs summit on tourism.

Last year more than 230,000 business delegates visited regional New South Wales for conferences, exhibitions, conventions and trade fairs, providing a \$44 million boost to regional New South Wales economies. The Government's approach will build on that success, thereby enticing more businesses to do business in New South Wales. I have seen firsthand the wonderful work that is being done in regional areas such as Tamworth, Newcastle, the Hunter Valley, Port Macquarie and the Blue Mountains when it comes to attracting business events and investing in local areas. These areas recognise the potential for hosting business events as a great boost for regional economies. As I said, regional tourism is all about supporting local jobs and investment. The Government's tourism strategy recognises the importance of tourism to the State's economy. The Government is committed to providing as much support as is possible. It is a shame that we do not see the same level of support for tourism from the Opposition, despite the Opposition spokesperson stating on radio recently:

Tourism is the hope of the future. It's the best chance we've got of stimulating the economy and getting ourselves on the road back out of this recession.

The New South Wales Government knows the value of the tourism industry. That is why the Government has a tourism strategy that is supported by its \$40 million investment. The Government knows that tourism represents a great opportunity to stimulate the economy. If members opposite were serious about tourism, they would be putting the Opposition's plan for tourism to the tourism operators. They would be putting forward how they plan to support this multibillion-dollar industry going forward. The Opposition has not lifted a finger to show that they give a damn about tourism operators in New South Wales. They have failed miserably to come up with any policies to support jobs in this most important sector.

PORT MACQUARIE-HASTINGS COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Mr PETER BESSELING: My question is addressed to the Minister for Local Government. Will the Minister update the House on progress towards local government elections for the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council?

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: I thank the member for his question and appreciate the reasons for his asking the question. I understand the issue. The decision to place the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council into administration was not taken lightly. Local councils are broadly autonomous bodies and they are answerable to their communities at elections. The power to dismiss a council is used only in circumstances in which a council is clearly failing to undertake its responsibilities to its community and when all other avenues have been exhausted.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I call the member for Cessnock to order for the second time. The Minister has the call.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: It was a very difficult decision to make, but it was done for the most genuine reasons. In Port Macquarie particularly, it was done because the council failed to undertake its responsibilities to its community. I am able to state definitely that all other avenues were exhausted in an attempt to avoid placing the council under administration.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for South Coast will cease interjecting. The member for Wagga Wagga will cease interjecting.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: However, in the case of Port Macquarie, the case to dismiss the council was clearly made. The decision to dismiss the council was made following a long and expensive process dating back to 2005. That process was undertaken following concerns being raised in relation to the council's handling of the Port Macquarie-Hastings Conference and Entertainment Centre, which many members would know as the Glasshouse. A public inquiry into the administration of the council was held in 2007. If people bothered to follow the progress of the public inquiry and read the conclusion stated in its section 740 report, they would know that the conclusions reached by the inquiry were that the council had never been in control of the cost of the Glasshouse project, and that the council had failed to involve its community in the planning and funding for the centre. The inquiry recommended that all civic offices of the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council be declared vacant and that an independent administrator be appointed for a full council term. The Port Macquarie-Hastings Council is under administration because this Government knows that the residents and ratepayers of Port Macquarie deserve responsible financial management from the council.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: That is why the present and former administrators have worked hard to ensure that the effect on the community of the past failures of the council are minimised. They have done what good administrators do in tough times—they have focused on core services and have examined internal efficiencies. Both administrators have told the communities and the residents the true cost of the Glasshouse, which is something unfortunately the former council failed to do. The current administrator reported at the April council meeting that the "estimated total cost of the Glasshouse has increased to \$50.2 million".

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on both sides of the House will cease interjecting.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: The council that was dismissed thought the centre could be built for \$26.7 million.

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

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: The impact of this increase in costs has been a major contributor in pushing the council's budget into deficit. That is why the administrator, in conjunction with the community, is making decisions to help it through this difficult period. As the local member knows, the people of Port Macquarie need a solid hand to help them out of the financial quagmire in which the former council has left them. While members opposite blindly call for elections in Port Macquarie, the cost blow-out of this project steels my resolve to keep the council in administration to help the community recover from the disastrous decisions made by the previous council. I can confirm to the member for Port Macquarie that the timetable for fresh elections remains September 2012.

AUTUMN RACING CARNIVAL

Ms NOREEN HAY: My question is addressed to the Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister for Sport and Recreation. Will the Minister update the House on the success of the Easter racing carnival?

Mr KEVIN GREENE: The Autumn Racing Carnival in New South Wales was a great success. I congratulate all involved in the organisation of the carnival: Racing New South Wales, the Australian Jockey Club [AJC], the Sydney Turf Club [STC], Tabcorp, Inglis and Events New South Wales. The racing industry in New South Wales provides an economic stimulus of approximately \$1.7 billion and employment for 50,000 across the industry, particularly on the three main dates of the racing carnival. I recognise that the Autumn Racing Carnival continues for the whole of April, and I will come back to that in a moment. The three

blockbuster days were an enormous success and employed, through the Sydney Turf Club and the Australian Jockey Club, approximately 3,000 individuals. Although these are tough economic times, at the Inglis horse sales this year 369 yearlings were purchased at a cost of approximately \$89 million. The Inglis sales are a big part of what Racing New South Wales and Events New South Wales are trying to build as part of a strong month of racing in Sydney.

The carnival commenced with the Sydney Turf Club events at Rosehill and, most notably, the world's richest race for two-year-olds: the well-regarded Golden Slipper. The first Golden Slipper was run in the late 1950s and the original winner was Todman—the member for Lismore agrees with me. This year the Golden Slipper was won by Phelan Ready, a successful two-year-old that also won the Magic Millions. Events then progressed to Derby Day at Randwick, when Roman Emperor, trained by that living legend of the racing industry, Bart Cummings, was successful.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 128. The Minister is making a ministerial statement. We can switch on Sky TV if we want to hear the results of various horse races. Seriously, is this the best the Government can do?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will resume his seat. The question was in order. The Minister has the call.

Mr KEVIN GREENE: Mr Speaker, as you are aware, recently I visited the Armidale racetrack, which is one of the oldest racetracks in New South Wales. The racing industry in Armidale is significant. While on the subject of Bart Cummings, I must mention that Vision and Power won the Doncaster and the magnificent effort of Takeover Target, which is regarded internationally as one of the great sprinters. Those of us who saw Takeover Target win the Lexus TJ Smith stakes would recognise the importance of such victories to local communities, and indeed to the racing community. Takeover Target will be racing in Asia soon. Members who are involved in regional and rural communities recognise that during the Autumn Racing Carnival there were events such as the Albury Cup, the Wagga Gold Cup, the Gosford Guineas—

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

Mr KEVIN GREENE: —and the Hawkesbury Darley Crown. The member for Murrumbidgee might not think so, but racing in New South Wales is a vital industry because it brings jobs and economic stimulus to communities. Even the greyhound industry provides stimulus of something like \$468 to our economy and the harness racing industry provides \$680 million. The member for Murrumbidgee might not think that is important but the Government recognises the importance of the racing industry not only to communities but also to the economy. Those of us who had the pleasure of being at Menangle racetrack on 26 April to see Captain Joy win the New South Wales Derby—

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

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 128. Someone had to say this. We have police being bashed and people dying in hospitals, and that is all the Government can come up with!

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lane Cove will resume his seat. I am sure the Minister is about to conclude his answer.

Mr KEVIN GREENE: On that day Bill Whittaker presented the Bill Whittaker Carousel Final cup to Trusty Courage. Sadly, Bill passed away last week. He was well known for his contributions as a journalist, racing writer and racing historian. Sadly, his funeral was held today. I take this opportunity to recognise his contribution to the racing industry. I place on record our sympathies to his wife, Alice, and his children, Maree, David and Mark and their families. The racing industry is important to many people. It is also important to the economy of New South Wales. I congratulate all involved on the work they do.

MINISTERIAL SPENDING

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Premier has shown so little respect for taxpayers in New South Wales by allowing factional heavyweight Joe Tripodi to spend \$100,000 on the junket of a lifetime, allowing union heavy John Robertson to spend \$500,000 on refurbishing his office, and heaping praise on a Labor budget that completely ignored infrastructure in New South Wales, when will he start putting the interests of New South Wales people before those of the Australian Labor Party?

Mr John Aquilina: Point of order: My point of order is in two parts. The first is the length of the question. I am conscious of the ruling you gave yesterday. Also, you have given many rulings on the way members should be addressed. The derogatory terms used by the member for Murrumbidgee belittle him and belittle the Parliament.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will restate his question in order. The question is clearly argumentative. There have been too many such questions to date.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Given that the Premier has allowed factional heavyweight the member for Fairfield to spend \$300,000 on the junket of a lifetime, allowed union heavyweight John Robertson, MLC, to spend \$500,000 on refurbishing his office and heaped praise on a Labor budget that completely ignores the infrastructure needs of New South Wales, when will he put the interests of New South Wales people ahead of those of the Australian Labor Party?

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I remind members that we are still in question time. Questions can be asked in order and achieve the same objective.

Mr John Aquilina: Point of order: My point of order is again in relation to your ruling. Nothing in the question has changed other than the terminology used by the member for Murrumbidgee in relation to the Minister for Finance. The derogatory terms that he used in the earlier question about which I took a point of order, which you upheld, were still there. I ask you to rule the member's question out of order or direct him to ask another question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I rule the question out of order.

EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEER CADETS

Mr PAUL McLEAY: My question is addressed to the Minister for Emergency Services. What action is the Government taking to recognise outstanding emergency services volunteer cadets?

Mr STEVE WHAN: I thank the member for Heathcote for his commitment as a volunteer in the Rural Fire Service. Recruiting new members to maintain our volunteer services in the future is a challenging task in view of our economic pressures and ageing population. One of the ways that the Rees Government is preparing for the future is to offer young people the chance to participate as volunteers through its cadet programs in the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service. I am sure all members join me in acknowledging and welcoming to the public gallery cadets from the Rural Fire Service. Cadets from the State Emergency Service were in the gallery earlier today.

The 20 terrific people who have been here today are part of the great programs introduced by the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service under a Labor Government. The cadets are an important part of our emergency services platform—in stark contrast to the Opposition that has no policy in this area, as in so many other areas. During the term of this Labor Government, \$7.6 billion has been spent on emergency services, ensuring that they have excellent safety equipment to use. That follows years of neglect by former Coalition governments. This Government is proud of its strong record in this area but, more importantly, it is proud of the efforts of our services volunteers. The Government takes great pleasure in having some of its cadet volunteers present today. They come from schools including St Paul's at Penrith, Bankstown Grammar and Pennant Hills High School. The cadets have learnt some terrific skills through their training that they will be able to use later in life. The Government hopes they will play a great role in our volunteer services in the years to come.

I have pleasure in announcing that the Government is introducing a new award for cadets—a Cadet of the Year award—in both the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service in recognition of the valuable role they play. The award winners will represent the many other young people who also do a wonderful job. They will help the Government to promote the cadet programs and they will be ambassadors for the service. By participating in these programs, young people are able to enhance their life skills and develop a strong volunteer ethos, for which the Government is grateful. I thank all volunteers for their work.

PREMIER: SUPPORT

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: My question is directed to the Premier. Now that the Premier has lost the confidence of not only the Prime Minister but the Labor State President, his personal chief of staff and, after this week's budget failure, the people of New South Wales, is his leadership terminal? Would New South Wales be better off if he just went?

The SPEAKER: Order! All members who have been called to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order. I will not hesitate to eject members from the Chamber.

Mr Chris Hartcher: He's got a prepared answer!

Mr NATHAN REES: I will address the interjection first. I have reams of material based on the member's initial question, which was ruled out of order—they have absolutely nothing to do with this question. I am delighted to talk about confidence. I want to know how confident the member for Cronulla is. I want to know how confident the Leader of The Nationals is that the member for Murrumbidgee is not after his job.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: If this is question time—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will resume his seat. Government members will come to order. If the member for Murrumbidgee asks question like this he will get answers like this.

Mr NATHAN REES: How confident are those opposite with a lot of talent who sit up the other end of the bench that they will make it to this end of the bench? I want to know their level of confidence. On a serious note, I want to know with confidence that the hard Right—the extremist elements in the Coalition—is not getting closer and closer to the Leader of the Opposition. That is the level of confidence I want to know about. That is the level of confidence the people of New South Wales want to know about, as David Clarke and the other right-wing extremists inch closer to the Leader of the Opposition, day by day. He knows that is the case; he is entirely in their thrall, entirely captive to the extremist elements of the Coalition. He is desperate for that to remain under wraps, hidden from the people of New South Wales. As the hard Right elements in the New South Wales Coalition Opposition come after the member for Cronulla, as the hard Right elements keep the talent at bay and as the hard Right elements make sure—

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I have waited for about five minutes for the Premier to attempt to answer the question, which is about his premiership and not the Coalition.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of The Nationals may want to look at the question again.

Mr NATHAN REES: I would like to know the level of confidence of the member for Coffs Harbour that Melinda Pavey is not coming after his seat. There is one person on the Opposition benches who is grinning, and that is the former Leader of the Opposition. He knows the score. The Opposition's talented frontbenchers who sit down that end need to make it up this end. What a cosy nest of vipers they are down in the Southern Highlands. There is Alby Schultz—

Mr George Souris: No. Hang on, not Alby.

Mr NATHAN REES: Not Alby. There is an issue of confidence, and it is about Barry O'Farrell's leadership. The member for Manly is on the march. He has got the website from Armani, and he is on the march. And, Barry, it is not long before he comes after you—not long at all. I hear it everywhere I go.

The SPEAKER: Order! Such exchanges do nothing for the public's confidence in this place.

Question time concluded.

DUNGOWAN COWBOYS RUGBY LEAGUE TEAM ROAD ACCIDENT

Ministerial Statement

Mr KEVIN GREENE (Oatley—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [3.28 p.m.]: I sadly report that on Tuesday evening a number of players from the Dungowan Cowboys Rugby League team who were heading home after training were involved in a tragic accident when a grain truck overturned on a bend. The players had left the ground in convoy and two of their vehicles were involved in this tragic accident, which resulted in the death of one player, Steve Mamae, and seriously injured his eight-year-old stepson. He was rushed to Westmead Children's Hospital, where he remains in a very serious condition. Another player, Tony Murray, was severely injured and is in the intensive care unit of Tamworth Hospital.

The Dungowan Cowboys represent a very close-knit small community some 20 kilometres from Tamworth. The Dungowan Cowboys re-formed in 2001, having folded in 1953. They have brought their community together through the game of rugby league. In fact, last year they were premiers in the group 4, division 2 competition. This is a very difficult time for the Dungowan community. It is tragic to lose a life. The one thing that will undoubtedly continue to draw this community together is its strength and its support for individuals. I recognise the major contribution of the member for Tamworth in the formation of the Dungowan Cowboys in 2001. The club came together to give strength to a very small community. It needs that strength today as it has suffered a great loss. I am sure that all members of the House join me in sharing the regret at that tragic loss of life. All members wish those who were injured a speedy and full recovery. Most importantly, we place on record our support for the Dungowan community at this difficult time.

Mr PETER DRAPER (Tamworth) [3.30 p.m.]: I thank the Minister for Sport and Recreation for his very kind words on behalf of the House at this very difficult time for my community. I live in the Dungowan Valley with my wife, Sharon, and my children. We have been members of that community for 11 years. In 2000, I was at the Dungowan Hotel with Kevin Smith, the publican, when a young man came up to us. He was Paul Tongue, the brother of Canberra Raiders captain Alan Tongue. He asked, "What's the chance of getting some support from you guys if we form a rugby union side?" We pointed out to him that we could not form a union side because we would need three teams. We asked him whether he would consider playing league—and that is how the Dungowan Cowboys were formed. It involved a lot of difficult work, including applying to the group, seeking permission from council to develop a playing ground, constructing a changing shed, building a scoreboard, and paying insurances. That is a lot of barriers for a community with only 180 people on the electoral roll. But we did it!

That year the fairytale almost came true. We hosted a grand final attended by 5,000 people. Kootingal were too good on the day, but, gee, they made us proud. Last year we had 129 kids playing for Dungowan. On Tuesday night when the grain truck overturned, the world changed—and it did not change for the better. My deepest sympathies go to Steve Mamae's wife, Allison, and their kids; to Tony Murray and his family; and to the truck driver who was also injured in the accident. Dungowan is a very brave and courageous community, and we are all pulling together. I place on record my deepest sympathy. It will be a tough week to come.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) [3.32 p.m.], by leave: Coalition members' thoughts are with the family of Steve Mamae, the member for Tamworth and all those in the Dungowan community. The commitment of the member for Tamworth to Dungowan was on show 12 months ago, Mr Speaker, when you allowed members of the House to display their club colours at grand final time. Not many people would have recognised that the member for Tamworth wore the Dungowan Cowboys rugby league jumper into the Chamber. As a former Tamworth resident who played a number of games in my youth in the area's second division and as a former group 4 rugby league player, I know that the Dungowan community will be suffering enormously. Our thoughts are with them. I agree with the comment by the member for Tamworth that Dungowan is a very tight-knit community, and it did a very good job pulling together in 2000 to establish a rugby league competition. The Dungowan Hotel is the centre of activity in the valley. Losing key members of the community must be very difficult for everyone. On behalf of the Coalition, I extend our sympathies to the family and to the local community.

The SPEAKER: I speak on behalf of the House. The House joins in offering our deepest sympathies not only to the family, friends and colleagues of Steve Mamae, who passed away, but also to the Dungowan Cowboys and all the players' families and friends.

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

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Report

Mr Robert Coombs, as Chair, tabled the following reports:

- (1) Report No. 3/54 entitled "Review of the 2007-2008 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People", dated May 2009.
- (2) Report No. 4/54 entitled "Review of Child Death Review Team Reports: 2007 Annual Report and Trends in Child Deaths in New South Wales 1996-2005", dated May 2009.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Robert Coombs.

COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**Report**

Mrs Judy Hopwood, on behalf of the Chair, tabled report No. 4/54 entitled "Review of the 2007-2008 Annual Report of the Health Care Complaints Commission", dated May 2009.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mrs Judy Hopwood.

PETITIONS**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 Tourism Developments

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

Corowa Hospital Nursing Home Beds

Petition requesting the retention of nursing home beds at Corowa Hospital, received from **Mr Greg Aplin**.

Healthier Choice Program

Petition opposing the Healthier Choice Program being implemented at the Belmont District Hospital kiosk, received from **Mr Robert Coombs**.

Hornsby Palliative Care Beds

Petition requesting funding for palliative care beds in the Hornsby area, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Schofields Railway Station

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

Hawkesbury River Railway Station Access

Petition requesting improved access to Hawkesbury River railway station, 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**.

Hanwood Agricultural Research Station

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

Swansea Police Station Retention

Petition requesting the retention of the Swansea Police Station, received from **Mr Robert Coombs**.

Brooklyn Police Station

Petition opposing the closure of Brooklyn Police Station and requesting an increase in the number of officers to man the station, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Iron Cove Bridge Project

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

Galston Sewerage

Petition requesting that Galston households be connected to reticulated sewerage, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Business Lapsed**

General Business Interrupted Mover's Agreement in Principle Speech No. 1 will lapse tomorrow pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).

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

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.37 p.m.]: After food and clothing, there is no more important need for humans than shelter. As a society and community we are judged by how we look after those in greatest need. The nation-building economic stimulus plan is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to provide essential new housing and to better integrate social housing in places close to shops, jobs and opportunities. Currently, there is investment of \$3 billion from both levels of government working together, and this will deliver an extra 9,000 homes. That is why my motion deserves priority. It has been nearly 100 days since the stimulus plan was announced, and the time frame for the stimulus plan is extremely tight. Stage one of the stimulus plan involves 120 projects across the State. It will deliver more than 850 new homes, and needs to be ready by July 2010.

The second stage, which is worth \$1.7 billion, will require 75 per cent of homes to be completed by December 2010. That is why my motion deserves priority. With the State's existing program and the Commonwealth money, we expect to house more than 17,000 disadvantaged people in New South Wales over the next two to three years. This program will create about 37,000 jobs and apprenticeships in New South Wales, all at a time of rising unemployment. That is why these issues deserve priority today. State and Federal maintenance investment in the past three months has seen over 4,000 jobs secured, and nearly 12,000 properties

have had maintenance and upgrading work undertaken. This is an unprecedented long-term investment in our future for disadvantaged people, for jobs and for our economy in the face of global recession. That is why this motion deserves priority.

Federal Budget

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [3.39 p.m.]: Nothing that this Parliament does on the motion of the member for Macquarie Fields will get in the way of the Federal Government's social housing stimulus proceeding in New South Wales. Not a single thing this Parliament will do will affect that Federal Government program that is addressing needs, in particular the needs created by Labor's neglect of the homeless in New South Wales over the past 14 years. What we can do today, and what we should do today, is stand up for families across the State.

Today is a historic day and I have proposed a motion to reflect that. We have had 29 Premiers since 1901 and in the history of Federal-State relationships the theme has not been "Make love, not war"; the relationship between Premiers and Prime Ministers has been to make war, not love. That was until today. This morning at 8.30 the Premier of New South Wales met with his Prime Minister for the first time since the Federal budget. The Federal budget penalised New South Wales for the incompetence, inexperience and stupidity of those opposite. It is a Federal budget that, as the member for Willoughby demonstrated, did not deliver a single dollar for a new centimetre of roadway or rail in this city despite the pressing need and the problems that families, commuters and motorists put up with every day. It is a Federal budget that sees us marked down on health infrastructure compared with other States because of the incompetence of those opposite.

What did the Premier do today when he had his first opportunity to stand beside Kevin Rudd in this State since he became Prime Minister? There was no other photo opportunity in Sydney or in New South Wales. The way Kevin Rudd has behaved towards Nathan Rees you would think that the Mexican flu started in Toongabbie. The fact is that when presented with an opportunity today Nathan Rees, instead of standing up for families across the State and arguing for a fairer deal, stood meekly beside the Prime Minister and congratulated him on New South Wales being shafted. Instead of standing up for residents across Sydney against Rudd's budget dud, the Premier congratulated Kevin Rudd and Wayne Swan—resigned, resiled, retreating and meek. Whilst I know my *Bible* and the meek might inherit the earth, the fact is that Sydney commuters and motorists know after today's meeting that they can expect no inheritance that will solve the problems on our roads or our railways.

I ask members to think about this: If Tuesday's budget had been delivered by a Liberals-Nationals Government what would the reaction of those opposite be? All those members representing western Sydney would rise in their places one after the other, moving urgency motion after urgency motion to condemn the Federal Government for failing to look after constituents in western Sydney. There was \$3.2 billion for a metro in Melbourne but only \$91 million for a study for a western metro in Sydney. The most overcrowded rail line in Sydney services their seats, but do we hear a bleat, a holler or a complaint from those opposite about their being duded? No. In fact the Premier, the member for Toongabbie, in the heart of the west, when presented with the opportunity today said meekly to the Prime Minister, "Congratulations, mate."

This bloke is a dud. This bloke is a joke. Clearly, the Premier enjoys pain but not all of us are masochists. The people who sit in their cars on our congested roads every day are furious. The people who try to get on crowded trains are furious. The people who expected \$7 billion for the Pacific Highway have been rewarded with a fraction of that. They expected better. The one thing they expect from people in this place is that we stand up and fight on their behalf. That is why my motion should be supported, because nothing in the motion of the member for Macquarie Fields will affect the Federal Government's social housing program. We can do today what members of Parliament ought to do—stand up and say that the Premier's actions are unacceptable. We can stand up for all our constituencies, Labor, Liberal, Nationals and Independent. We need better funding to make up for 14 years of neglect. We cannot put up with the meekness of those opposite. A week or so ago someone wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and said it should stop depicting Nathan Rees as a garbage collector because at least garbage collectors do something useful. We cannot put up with the garbage opposite for much longer. [*Time expired.*]

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
Mr Campbell	Ms Keneally	Mr Stewart
Mr Collier	Mr Khoshaba	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Coombs	Mr Koperberg	Mr Terenzini
Mr Corrigan	Mr Lalich	Mr Tripodi
Mr Costa	Mr Lynch	Mr West
Mr Daley	Mr McBride	Mr Whan
Ms D'Amore	Dr McDonald	
Ms Firth	Ms McKay	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Mr McLeay	Mr Ashton
Ms Gadiel	Ms McMahon	Mr Martin

Noes, 40

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

Pair

Ms Burton

Mr Hazzard

Question resolved in the affirmative.**FEDERAL STIMULUS PACKAGE AND HOUSING****Motion Accorded Priority****Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.53 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the New South Wales Government for its delivery of stage one of the Rudd Government's housing stimulus package;
- (2) notes that construction has already begun on 34 sites across New South Wales and maintenance works have been completed on more than 11,700 homes securing more than 4,400 jobs; and
- (3) calls on the New South Wales Opposition to put politics aside and declare its support for the Rudd housing stimulus package to support construction, jobs and the economy.

The Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to secure jobs and investment in New South Wales. It will provide essential new housing and it will also better integrate so-called salt and

pepper social housing in places that are close to shops, jobs and opportunities. The Federal Government is investing \$2 billion as part of its Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan. This will build around 6,000 social housing homes in New South Wales. On top of that, the New South Wales Government is investing \$1 billion to deliver an additional 3,000 homes. Compare that with the disinvestment in social housing of the Howard years. The last line of Dante's *Inferno* is, "It was from there that we emerged, to see—once more—the stars." That certainly applies to social housing.

It has been almost 100 days since the Federal Government announced the stimulus plan. New South Wales has hit the ground running. In the last three months alone we have secured over 2,100 jobs in the housing industry. But this is not just about jobs for builders and tradies; it is also about associated industries such as building manufacturers and suppliers—the people who keep the Australian economy ticking over. The time frame for the stimulus plan is extremely tight. Last month the Federal Government announced that it had approved stage one of the stimulus plan. Stage one consists of 120 projects across the State, and these will deliver more than 850 new social housing homes. These homes need to be ready by July 2010. Stage two involves a Federal Government approved tender for new construction, including on-the-spot purchases of home and land packages. The second stage, worth \$1.7 billion, will require 75 per cent of homes to be completed by December 2010.

Some existing properties will be demolished to make way for brand new homes. This will see many older, out-of-date properties replaced by new and modern homes that will improve local streets and suburbs. We regret that some residents will need to be relocated but we will do everything we can to make the transition as smooth as possible. The Government will cover all reasonable removal costs. It will pay for the reconnection of electricity, gas, phone and the Internet, and it will pay for three months mail redirection. It will also waive rent for the first two weeks to help residents settle into their new homes. I cannot stress enough what I am about to say: We will not be building any more concentrated public housing estates in New South Wales. The argument in favour of the de-concentration of social housing has been made all over the world. We will be building and buying limited amounts of social housing in private housing areas to create balanced and harmonious communities.

With our existing program in New South Wales and the new Commonwealth money, we expect to house more than 17,000 disadvantaged people over the next two to three years. As I said earlier, as a society we are judged and we will be judged on how we look after those in the greatest need. Our program, combined with the Commonwealth investment, will generate around 70,000 jobs and apprenticeships in New South Wales—all at a time of rising unemployment. As Mr Rudd said last week when he visited my electorate, "This is about ensuring that young people develop new skills and therefore are able to add to the global economic recovery when it occurs." It is not the first time that Mr Rudd has been to my electorate. I have seen a lot more of him than I saw of Mr Howard during his time of disinvestment. Another important part of the stimulus plan is the new investment in social housing maintenance.

The Federal Government's \$130.4 million investment complements our own funding and the record \$200 million that the Premier brought forward late last year for maintenance to further stimulate the economy. This massive ramp-up of maintenance means that we will get through three-quarters of all maintenance over the next two years. I see it every day when I drive around my electorate. As one of my constituents said to me last time I was there, "Mac Fields is looking pretty schmick these days." Because we undertake regular property inspections we have been able immediately to start work on properties and accelerate work that has been planned for future years.

State and Federal Government maintenance investment in the past three months has secured 4,148 jobs and undertaken maintenance and upgrading works on 11,735 properties. An extra 1,714 contractors currently are working on stimulus-related maintenance work. This is expected to increase as work continues across the State. We have moved quickly and decisively to support jobs: real results across the State can already be seen. This is great news for many companies who were considering laying off staff; now they are putting on extra staff to meet the new demand. This is a difficult time for many families, but it is the time to represent an unprecedented long-term investment in our future for our people. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury) [4.00 p.m.]: I move:

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

this House:

(1) notes that construction has already begun on 34 new housing sites across New South Wales; and

- (2) condemns the New South Wales Government for failing to provide a suitable bus timetable for new housing developments in Sydney's north-west, which casts doubt on its ability to provide any public transport outcomes for future housing development in New South Wales.

I speak to the amendment and against the principal motion. New South Wales has had the worst housing approvals rate of any State in this country for the past 10 years. This disgraceful housing approvals rate has pushed Sydney house prices through the roof, thereby depriving many young families of the opportunity to buy a home in Sydney or on its outskirts. The Opposition continually raised this issue in this House over the past two years and prior to the last State election. The Government has done absolutely nothing to rectify the problem. It was left to the Federal Government to throw money at the New South Wales housing crisis. Now the New South Wales Government pats itself on the back for its appalling action regarding housing approvals. This Government has done nothing for new housing approvals.

The Government has ramped up taxes and levies to the point where land no longer can be developed at an affordable price. Developers are holding back land that they would love to put into the market because the taxes are so high and the profit margins are so slim. The upshot is that, with increased land taxes and losing money through not marketing their land due to high development costs, developers are being hit with a double whammy. In addition, there is the Government's dismal display in providing public transport for new housing estates. The absolute worst example of that was evidenced early this week with the new bus timetable for region four, which covers areas of western Sydney, particularly north-western Sydney. Thousands of daily commuters from the new housing areas surrounding Dural, Castle Hill, Rouse Hill, Beaumont Hills and Kellyville were affected by a failed public transport timetable developed by the Ministry of Transport and the Government.

Mr David Harris: Point of order: I waited as long as possible before raising a point of order. So far the member has talked about housing development and transport. The motion was about social housing. Further, the amendment of the member for Hawkesbury is close to being out of order because it is totally unrelated to the topic of the original motion; it refers to public transport.

Mr Wayne Merton: To the point of order: The member for Hawkesbury is speaking to the amendment that he moved, which was accepted, as I understand. No-one opposed it.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! The amendment moved by the member for Hawkesbury should have been handed to the Clerks when he moved it.

Mr Ray Williams: I waved it at the Clerk.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! Waving an amendment at the Clerk is not the same as handing it to the Clerk.

Mr Ray Williams: It is hard to speak and deliver mail at the same time.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! The Clerk will accept the amendment if it is in order. The member for Wyong has raised a good point of order.

Mr Victor Dominello: Point of order—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! Is the member for Ryde speaking to the same point of order?

Mr Victor Dominello: No, a different point of order. I refer to Standing Order 74 (2), "The Speaker may intervene to prevent a quarrel between members." I believe there is some quarrelling going on.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Hawkesbury has moved an amendment to the motion. He did not hand it to the Clerk when he moved it. He also did not sign his amendment, as is required under the standing orders. I ask the member to sign his amendment. He may then continue to speak to his amendment.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: The new timetable has failed the new housing developments in north-western Sydney. People such as Pauline Frewen haven been affected for this dismal performance. Pauline has a disabled daughter and moved to David Road, Castle Hill, 10 years ago into a housing development with a bus service. That bus service no longer exists because the Government removed it, as it did with 20 other bus services on the

620, 642 and 632 runs serving those new housing developments. The Government failed to deliver a timetable for the bus service to adequately meet the public transport needs of the people in the new housing developments. That is a disgrace.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.07 p.m.]: The New South Wales Government is moving fast to deliver on the Commonwealth Government's \$2 billion investment in social housing and its own ramped up \$1 billion investment. We lead the field in our submissions to the Commonwealth, delivering on maintenance and starting construction. This Government is getting on with the job of securing jobs for workers in these uncertain times. Construction has already started on 34 sites within stage one of the stimulus plan, which will deliver 196 new homes for those families most in need. The 34 sites are located throughout the western suburbs, south-west Sydney, the Hunter, Central Coast, mid North Coast, Northern Tablelands and Queanbeyan. These sites are just the tip of the iceberg. Around this State 9,000 homes will be provided in areas of need and in locations close to shops, jobs and transport.

The Commonwealth has given this Government some ambitious time frames to meet. To speed up this process the Government announced today that Housing New South Wales will buy 1,000 properties over the next few months to provide for some of our most vulnerable families. This buying program tops off the rehousing options available to Housing New South Wales to provide homes for residents who need to relocate. The newly constructed and newly purchased properties will be an extraordinary boost to the amount of social housing in this State. However, this is not the only way we are securing jobs; we are also delivering a boost through the State and Federal governments social housing maintenance program. The New South Wales Government is investing \$340 million in maintenance over the next two years. That amount will be in addition to the Commonwealth Government's investment of \$130 million towards meeting the cost of maintenance.

State and Federal government investment in just the last three months has resulted in 4,148 jobs being secured, 11,735 properties having maintenance and upgrading works carried out, 24,080 litres of paint being utilized, 2,100 linear metres of fencing being installed, 29,302 square metres of carpet being laid—which is enough carpet to cover the Sydney Cricket Ground 1½ times—as well as 226 new kitchens and 250 new bathrooms being installed. That scale of maintenance adds up to jobs, jobs, jobs in New South Wales. The figures prove that we have moved quickly and decisively to support jobs. We are already seeing real results across the State.

Mr WAYNE MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [4.10 p.m.]: I confess to being a little confused by the motion moved by member for Macquarie Fields, whom I admire, because it congratulates the Government on its delivery of stage one of the Rudd Government's housing stimulus package and refers to 34 sites across New South Wales, 11,700 homes and more than 4,400 jobs being secured. I do not have firsthand information to confirm whether that is the situation, so I was thoroughly confused by the first release issued by the Minister for Housing on 5 May 2009 stating that more than 2,100 jobs had been secured in New South Wales in the last three months as a direct result of the Federal Government's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan.

I do not know what happened to the member for Macquarie Fields. Perhaps he multiplied the number of jobs secured by two, or perhaps something else went wrong. The point I make is that whereas the Minister for Housing referred to 2,100 jobs having been secured, the member for Macquarie Fields referred to 4,400. I gave the member for Macquarie Fields the benefit of the doubt and considered the possibility that the Minister for Housing's figure did not include associated trades. I noticed that the Minister's press release referred not only to builders and tradespeople but also to associated industries, such as building manufacturers and suppliers who assist in keeping the Australian economy ticking over. The press release stated:

Mr Borger said 418 of the jobs were secured as part of stage one construction and 1714 from maintenance work ...

The reality is that there seems to be a distinct difference between the Minister's statement on 5 May when he said that 2,100 jobs had been secured and the statement made by the member for Macquarie Fields during this debate that 4,400 jobs had been secured. I do not know what the truth of the matter is. Perhaps the member for Macquarie Fields will be able to explain it to me. The other matter to which I wish to refer is an interesting press release issued by the Federal Minister for Housing. It refers to the Rudd Government's economic stimulus plan, community housing, nation building and a jobs plan, and it refers to housing in different States.

For example, the Federal Minister for Housing states that in New South Wales there are 31,146 dwellings involved in repair and maintenance projects or proposals that will be funded by the Commonwealth, but that 7,845 dwellings would have been lost if the economic stimulus package had not been

produced by the Federal Government. In other words, the Rees Government has been bailed out by its Federal counterpart, and but for the Federal Government the New South Wales Government would have lost 7,845 dwellings. Moreover, the Federal Government has been partly bailed out by the former Howard Government, which paid back \$100 billion in debt it inherited from the Keating Government. I also make the point, though the member for Londonderry may object, that the Howard Government provided Labor with money in the bank, giving it an excellent start at dealing with the global financial crisis. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ALLAN SHEARAN (Londonderry) [4.13 p.m.]: The Opposition's performance during this debate is its typical display of its carping criticism, but the reality is that it has nothing to offer. The Opposition has no plans to deal with global recession and has no plan to show how it would support jobs in New South Wales. Opposition members are embarrassed, and that is why they have spent approximately 30 minutes attempting to justify their position. What they do not wish to draw attention to is that their only plan is to take the advice of Max the Axe. All members would recall that Max Moore-Wilton slashed 24,000 jobs when the Liberals were last in government.

The Opposition's approach provides a very clear contrast to the approach adopted by the Government. The Government immediately set to work to take full advantage of the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan. We are well on track to deliver a part of the stimulus plan and already we are seeing real results. Many people in different areas of New South Wales already are benefiting from this investment. We have secured the jobs of thousands of tradies and contractors across the State, which means that they will be able to afford to keep buying groceries in the local shops, visiting local hairdressers and occasionally treating themselves to dinner at local restaurants. That is the multiplier effect of the Government's investment, which reportedly produces a sevenfold economic benefit. At a time when we face a global recession and there are job cuts nationwide, that is a tangible example that our massive investment in the construction industry is paying off. It is a true measure of how committed a Labor Government is to a fair go in hard times.

It is simply astonishing that the New South Wales Opposition refuses to support this much-needed economic relief package. It proves that the Opposition values petty politics over jobs and investment in New South Wales—and let us not forget that it has proved this over and over again, even during this debate. The plain truth is that, if it had its way, there would be no extra jobs in New South Wales and no extra homes for families who are doing it tough. It is a well-known fact that the shadow Treasurer said that the stimulus package "... will have a negative impact on every family in this country". I take this opportunity to confirm the type of impact that the economic stimulus package is having.

In the last three months more than 2,100 jobs have been secured in New South Wales as a direct result of the Federal Government's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan for social housing. Let us be very clear that that relates to 2,100 people in New South Wales who would not have had a job if members opposite had their way. The 2,100 jobs that have been secured in the last three months for people who are doing it tough in New South Wales will increase to tens of thousands in the next two to three years as the work increases and will result in 9,000 new homes for 17,000 disadvantaged Australians. It is about time the Opposition stopped playing political games and started to support the creation of real jobs and real investment in New South Wales. The question the Opposition has to answer is this: Does the Opposition support thousands of jobs in New South Wales?

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.16 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Baulkham Hills, the Minister for Finance and the member for Wyong for their contributions to the debate. However, I note that the member for Hawkesbury focused on the amendment instead of discussing social housing. I understand why he is unable to bring himself to speak about social housing and why it must be very painful for him to talk about social justice. He is a decent human being but, for him, life is all about reaching goals rather than caring for those who are in greatest need. If ever there was a time to talk about supporting those in greatest need, it is now. We are facing the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression.

I note that the Federal Opposition did not vote for the economic stimulus package and missed the chance to improve the lives of many Australians. Instead of creating opportunities for our workers and our people, the Opposition presents as an alternative government that would provide a mixture of Max the Axe and Mandrake—a frightening prospect for our people. Thousands of New South Wales people are still employed because of the Rudd Government's stimulus package that is being rolled out by the New South Wales Government.

The motion is about fairness and opportunity—opportunities for jobs, opportunities for housing, and opportunities for young people to have a future and acquire important skills that will be relevant to industry during this most difficult economic period. Help has been provided by the Federal Government because it cares about those who are in greatest need. As I stated in my introduction, Mr Rudd spent hours in conversation with people in the suburb of Casula in the Macquarie Fields electorate and discussed the difficulties being faced by people in this most uncertain economic period. It gave people a feeling of hope and the feeling that he will be with us during the hard times. Frankly, it was inspiring. During the 13 years of the Howard Government, I never saw John Howard in south-western Sydney. I thank members for their contributions to the debate. I commend the motion to the House. I ask members to support opportunities for young people and those in greatest need.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 51

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

Noes, 36

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

Pair

Ms Burton

Mr O'Farrell

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

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

TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (COUNTRYLINK PENSIONER BOOKING FEE ABOLITION) BILL 2009

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 7 May 2009.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [4.28 p.m.]: I thank the shadow Minister for introducing the Transport Administration Amendment (CountryLink Pensioner Booking Fee Abolition) Bill. It is not the first time that a bill of a similar nature has been put before Parliament. The last bill was delayed and the Government did not respond to it in the way we wanted. This bill will abolish booking fees on pensioner travel vouchers and passes used on CountryLink services. CountryLink services are important to rural and regional New South Wales. Many disadvantaged communities rely on CountryLink services. Indeed, pensioners and people on disability allowances tend to favour CountryLink because of its accessibility. Importantly, because of the nature of travel, it means that people's luggage can be transferred and CountryLink staff are helpful to people travelling with a disability or the aged. However, the imposition of this tax has resulted in a demonstrable decrease in the amount of patronage that CountryLink is enjoying.

The intention of this legislation is fair. The Government will oppose it, but I urge members of Country Labor to support it. Users of the CountryLink services have been forced to pay \$10 or 15 per cent of the full-time adult fare, whichever is the highest, to book CountryLink services with this so-called free travel voucher. Former Minister John Watkins justified the introduction of this fee to cover administrative costs. How many times have we heard that? The costs deducted from refunds to cover administrative costs in relation to the Isolated Patients Transport and Accommodation Assistance Scheme [IPTAAS] is approximately \$40 per claim. That is yet another example of giving in one hand and taking from the other. Some people have to travel hundreds of kilometres in the country. Fuel costs are expensive. However, they have to pay an administration fee to lodge a claim under the IPTAAS, which often results in a return of only a few cents per kilometre.

I said I could demonstrate that the number of people using the services of CountryLink has declined. In the first eight months of the tax, the Labor Government raised \$2.6 million. The introduction of the pensioner booking tax increased the fare box revenue from 8 per cent from 2005-06 to 2006-07. However, due to declining patronage income from the pensioner booking tax decreased from 2006-07 to 2007-08. The amount collected is substantial, given it is coming off the back of pensioners doing it tough during these tough economic times. In 2006-07 the pensioner booking tax collected \$3.584 million. In 2007-08 it decreased slightly to \$3.5 million. The conclusion is that about 53,000 fewer vouchers were used from March to October 2006 than were used in March to October 2005. It is clear that rural communities are feeling the impact of this tax, together with other taxes and charges they are forced to pay, and the continuing drought that is sucking the life from some small communities that are struggling to survive.

That is why from time to time I refer to the issue of providing and enhancing CountryLink services to allow people from disadvantaged communities right across New South Wales to access very important transport that meets their personal needs that other services do not. CountryLink services also work on hub and spoke and allow people from, say, Tumut, to go to Canberra, Sydney or Wagga Wagga to use CountryLink services or transfer to other available modes of transport, including Regional Express airlines, known as Rex, and Qantas. Rex is based in Wagga Wagga and provides some 150 jobs. Rex provides a wonderful service that allows interlinkages with transport services. The biggest problem faced by CountryLink, apart from mismanagement by the Minister, is the state of roads on which commuters have to travel to get to services.

This morning in this House I moved a motion that called on the Government to declare the Gocup Road, Tumut, a State road and for it to be funded accordingly. Commuters on the CountryLink service from Tumbarumba and Tumut use the Gocup Road. Good roads should be provided by the Government for public transport services. On Friday 1 February 2008 the Federal member for Eden-Monaro, Dr Mike Kelly, said he was in the process of setting up a meeting between the New South Wales Minister for Roads, Eric Roozendaal, and the Federal Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Anthony Albanese, with Tumut council to discuss funding for Gocup Road. Dr Kelly said that while he did not totally dismiss the prospect of some funding for the road coming through the Federal Government this year, he

maintained that the State Government must play a role in any upgrade. He said declaring the road a State road was a proposal that must be examined. I support his sentiments that a number of things need to be worked through.

My motion called for Gocup Road to become a State road because the areas that CountryLink services—Tumut, Batlow, Adelong, Tumbarumba—are dynamic and have received an enormous amount of investment from both Federal and State governments and private enterprise, that is, Visy Industries, to which the Premier earlier referred. Visy commenced stage one, which cost approximately \$400 million and was opened in 2002. Stage two will cost approximately \$600 million and will come online in October 2009. The logging task that will be on those roads, together with CountryLink buses, will increase. The Softwoods Working Group forecast that \$4.4 million tonnes of forest products a year would be on the road network by 2006 has proved to be correct. Its chairman, Peter Crowe, said:

It is inevitable that six million tonnes a year of forest products will be exceeded by 2010.

The NSW Government dual objective of increasing the size of the plantation estate and processing facilities is a spectacular success.

That great credit from Peter Crowe to the success of the investment has meant that trucks and vehicles put more pressure on the road which impacts public transport systems. The main road available from Tumbarumba, Batlow and Tumut down to Gundagai or into Sydney and Canberra is the Gocup Road. Federal members Kay Hull and Mike Kelly support the initiative to declare Gocup Road a State road, which will attract State funding. On Tuesday 6 May 2008 an article in the *Tumut and Adelong Times* stated:

He said the first step towards securing State and Federal funding was to reclassify the important link as a State Road.

Presently, it is a regional road, and as such comes under the direct funding responsibility of Tumut Shire Council.

Mr Kelly said he had spoken to the relevant State and Federal Ministers with a view towards bringing them together with the timber industry and Tumut Shire Council to discuss the road.

"There needs to be input and subsequently contributions from each of the stakeholders," Mr Kelly said.

"But that isn't going to happen until it is declared a State Road, and therefore is eligible for State funds.

"We need to sit down and work out a plan for the future of the road, instead of just announcing a dollar figure.

"Once we do get everyone together I'm confident we will come up with a process that will bring the road up to scratch."

Dr Andrew McDonald: What has this got to do with trains?

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: I acknowledge the interjection. It is about providing a safe environment for CountryLink buses to travel on. It is about ensuring that pensioners and people with disabilities, itinerant workers, people who cannot afford to motor or people who have lost their licence because of the regulations of the Roads and Traffic Authority are guaranteed a road upgraded to a decent standard on which the bus can travel. It will accommodate the needs of a growing industry and an increase in traffic. I hope the member for Macquarie Fields has listened to my demonstration that the task will increase. We are both members of the Staysafe committee, which is presently conducting an inquiry into the heavy vehicles industry.

Taxi services, private motorists and CountryLink impact on our roads. CountryLink has one of the biggest bus fleets in New South Wales and travels on many millions of kilometres of our roads. The public use CountryLink and have to pay the unfair tax, particularly pensioners. I cannot recall how many hundreds of letters and petitions I have received, but I know that the public is irate about this tax. It is only right for this matter to be raised by the shadow Minister in this House. On 7 February 2009, Dr Kelly said that the costs had blown out. It was estimated originally that the road would be upgraded at a cost of \$22 million. As a result of Mr Kelly's discussions and roundtables, the local newspaper reported:

Costing for the proposed upgrade of the Gocup Road has blown out to \$82 million.

The long-awaited estimate from the RTA to upgrade the road has finally been released, and it comes in at significantly more than the \$23 million or so put forward by an engineer's report commissioned by Tumut and Gundagai some years ago.

Federal Member for Eden-Monaro Mike Kelly released the figure this week ...

Dr Kelly said ... he had raised the issue of Gocup Road with Federal Transport Minister Anthony Albanese and his Adviser in a meeting last week, where Dr Kelly expressed how important upgrading Gocup is for the safety of drivers who use that road.

As I have said, CountryLink buses use the road, as well as the travelling public. The article continued:

"I am determined to get action on the Gocup Road, especially with activity at Visy ramping up," Dr Kelly said.

"I have pushed the Softwoods Working Group, the RTA and the NSW Minister for Roads to ensure Gocup Road is upgraded.

Sadly, in the Federal budget announced on Tuesday no money was allocated to the road. We wait with bated breath for the State budget to find out whether it will allocate the required funding. The road needs to be upgraded. The article continued:

Dr Kelly said he plans to bring State Minister for Roads Michael Daley and the Federal Minister for Local Government and Infrastructure Anthony Albanese to Tumut to show them the issues in a bid to secure Gocup's declaration as a state road and to get federal assistance.

That was on 7 February 2009. But it did not happen. The Federal budget has come and gone, and despite murmurings from the local councils—who were assured that funding was in the pipeline and that we would all have egg on our faces come 14 May, following the delivery of the Federal budget—there is no funding. Therefore, CountryLink passengers will continue to be put at risk on Gocup Road. Pensioners' lives will be put at risk because they must pay a tax to use a service that is supposed to be free. All members of the House will understand the importance of declaring the road a State road; no-one can deny that. We all agree with Dr Kelly. The question is: Why has that not happened? Who made the funding application?

I would like to know who submitted the Gocup Road funding application, who received it and on what date it was submitted. Did it comply with the funding criteria, which administrators were advised, and did the Federal member know about it? I am sure the Federal member is as disappointed as the community that he and I represent that that funding is not forthcoming. Originally, the upgrade was estimated to cost \$23 million, and now it will cost about \$88 million. We have heard only promises; nothing has happened. Indeed, the State Government needs to support the Federal member and declare the road a State road. That will at least ensure that CountryLink passengers can travel it safely.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega) [4.43 p.m.]: It is a privilege to follow the contribution of the member for Wagga Wagga in this debate. His contribution was entirely in order. As the State member for Bega and the shadow Minister for Ageing, I advise the House that the Transport Administration Amendment (CountryLink Pensioner Booking Fee Abolition) Bill 2009 is supported by a number of pensioner and seniors organisations, including the Australian Council on the Ageing, the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association, and National Seniors Australia. They and other community-based and social service organisations have expressed serious concerns about this iniquitous tax and its impact on senior citizens in New South Wales.

The bill was introduced by the shadow Minister for Transport in October 2007. If the Government does not support it the Coalition will continue to fight hard to deliver equity to pensioners who utilise CountryLink booking services. The current booking fee is unfair, particularly for many seniors in country areas who rely on CountryLink services to travel to medical appointments. In my electorate, people use the bus service to travel from Eden through Bega to Cooma and on to the Jolimont Centre in Canberra. They use that service because it hooks them up with a train service and, more importantly, with medical services in Canberra.

Then Minister John Watkins indicated that the pensioner booking fee was introduced to cover administrative costs. But it has led to a drop in patronage as pensioners no longer use rail services. The pensioner booking tax increased fare box revenue by 8 per cent from 2005-06 to 2006-07. The key point is that declining patronage leads to decreased tax collections. I am not talking about a small amount of money; approximately \$3.5 million is taken out of the pockets of pensioners, particularly those in country areas, who utilise CountryLink services. Ultimately, this is an unfair tax that targets those who are disadvantaged most by the lack of government services.

The fee highlights the Government's lack of focus on issues involving those over the age of 65. There is still no holistic demographic plan in New South Wales. Time and time again, former Treasurer Michael Costa told everyone that the ageing community has a real impact on the State budget. He pointed out that the State budget would be in deficit by \$14 billion within 20 years if a strategy was not put in place to deal with demographic ageing. Part of the problem is the way in which New South Wales seniors utilise government services. In this instance, CountryLink is penalising seniors most unfairly through the booking tax.

Time and time again, seniors are treated badly by government agencies. Recently there was a debacle involving the licensing system and older drivers, and a raft of agencies continue to refuse to reconsider the way

in which services are delivered to the over-65s. It is time the State Government took up the policies of the Liberals and The Nationals to ensure that we have a holistic plan for demographic ageing in New South Wales. Without such a plan, this type of discrimination will continue. This is a discriminatory tax, and we will continue to see similar discrimination across all agencies in their treatment of our elderly citizens. Until the Government adopts such a plan, significant budget blow-outs will continue into the future, particularly in the areas of health and transport.

The Minister for Ageing was questioned on two separate occasions during budget estimates and on both occasions it was revealed that no discussions had taken place between the Minister and the Minister for Transport over the concerns of seniors in relation to the CountryLink pensioner booking tax. That is unacceptable. If any Minister in this House should be taking up the cause in Government it is Minister Paul Lynch. Again he has failed to represent the views of the people for whose care he is responsible. I hope he will see fit to come to the Chamber and, as Minister for Ageing, put a strong case supporting the abolition of the CountryLink pensioner booking tax.

It is discrimination of the worst kind, particularly as pensioners have just this week seen an indication of support from the Commonwealth by way of a pension increase. The Commonwealth is increasing pensions but the State Government is taking money away from pensioners through its own taxation system. It is simply outrageous. This State Government should be doing more to support pensioners. What better way to do so than support the Opposition in this House and abolish this cruel and discriminatory tax, which is affecting patronage but more importantly affecting vital services that seniors want to use?

As I said, CountryLink services are vital because they enable people to travel to medical services in major regional centres. They also allow people to visit loved ones in far-flung places. They also provide a degree of comfort for seniors. It is good for seniors to have access to toilet facilities on trains, and they can sit back and relax without having to worry about the perils of country roads and the like. It is incredibly unfair to tax them in this way. That is why organisations such as the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association have made it very clear that they oppose this discriminatory tax. I just hope the Government will see fit to abolish the booking fee in next month's budget and do the seniors of New South Wales a favour.

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn) [4.51 p.m.]: I support this amendment to the Transport Administration Act 1998 as a member representing a country electorate where travel and public transport are highly prized. As the member for Bega has observed, at a time when we are encouraging people to take their cars off the roads, for a whole range of reasons—and particularly aged people whose driving ability might be compromised as they get older; it is certainly compromised when they apply to renew their licence in their later years—it seems an absolute contradiction to tax something that was introduced to recognise and benefit seniors and give them their just desserts.

This same amendment was introduced by the member for Willoughby in 2007 but I understand the legislation lapsed on at least three occasions. One has to ask why the Government continues to allow this bill to lapse. Why does it not want to confront the issue one way or another and recognise the arguments involved? It is a striking example of Labor's fixation with taxing the people of New South Wales at every opportunity. Perhaps it is trying to discourage the elderly from using CountryLink services so that more services can be closed. People in my electorate constantly feel their rail services are under threat. The staff I talk to are always asking me what is going on. When CountryLink patronage decreases—and of course this fee is a great mechanism for reducing the number of people on an age pension who travel by rail—you start to develop a case, if the Government is so inclined, for cutting the number of services. It is a pity that during this debate the Government has not had the courage to explain why it does not support our amendment to abolish this ridiculous tax on a so-called "free" voucher.

We are talking about pensioners who have paid tax all their lives and who are entitled to two free return trips per year on CountryLink trains. On 3 March 2006, pensioners using CountryLink services were forced to pay \$10 or 15 per cent of the full price, whichever was the highest, when using free travel vouchers to book CountryLink services. I would like the Government to tell us what the administrative cost of imposing a booking fee is and whether it is cost effective. If it is not cost effective and it can be demonstrated that the cost of collecting the CountryLink booking tax is unprofitable or near to being cost neutral, one has to ask whether there is another reason for the Government imposing a tax on the people who are most likely to travel—other than people like me who use CountryLink to commute.

For people living on pensions of \$569.80 for singles and \$475.90 per person in a couple, this booking tax is a significant impost. It is very petty for a government that deals with billions of dollars, but it is a huge

issue for pensioners. The increase in revenue from the tax is associated with a decline in the number of CountryLink passengers. For example, in the past four years CountryLink patronage has declined from 1.74 million passenger journeys to 1.55 million passenger journeys. The Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator published a transport reliability report in 2006-07 stating that the pensioner booking tax was responsible for a decline in patronage. One can understand that people cannot use their free vouchers when they have to pay the booking tax out of their modest incomes. Many pensioners are struggling with the rising cost of living and find the tax an impossible burden.

They look forward to travelling for the day or the weekend. They like to see their children and to visit the metropolitan area, and they are very grateful to receive these free vouchers each year. CountryLink trains, in my area at least, are also often used by tourists and day trippers. The decline in patronage is reflected also in a decline in the economic viability of some of our tourist facilities. That again makes a mockery of the Government's claim that it wishes to invest more in tourism. There is a very easy way to encourage tourism in New South Wales: through the provision of free travel twice a year for pensioners. Why make it almost impossible for them to afford to travel because of their incredibly stretched circumstances and the difficulty they have finding the booking fee?

When I travel on CountryLink trains to and from Sydney I see pensioners who use CountryLink trains frequently. I believe if we removed the booking fee we would see a rebound in numbers, to the benefit of us all. It would benefit the tourist industry and the welfare and wellbeing of pensioners and their quality of life. It would remove cars from the roads—if that is their alternative transport option—and make CountryLink a stronger and more viable service. I am very disappointed that Labor members who represent electorates around mine have not seen fit to support the Transport Administration Amendment (CountryLink Pensioner Booking Fee Abolition) Bill 2009.

CountryLink services have continually been neglected by this Labor Government. Trains are often late. According to the CountryLink website, trains met the State Government's on-time running target in only 14 out of 52 weeks. That means trains ran late 74 per cent of the time in 2008 and in 2009 it is worse, with trains running late 100 per cent of the time. CountryLink has failed to meet the on-time running target every week, which is an appalling record. At the same time, CountryLink fares continue to rise. Again, that is in stark contrast to the Government's proclaimed desire to see people living out of Sydney to take pressure off the city, off roads and off carbon emissions, and also off older drivers who often drive into the city unwillingly and anxiously.

For those venturing to Goulburn today, for example, a CountryLink ticket would cost them \$40.35. The CityRail option is available to them but many people are alarmed by the graffiti and by the lack of security on CityRail trains, in particular, on a long three-hour trip. Older people are not willing to take the risk on a CityRail train when they have the difficulty of dragging luggage from one train to another at Campbelltown to connect with the other half of the service. I state confidently, because older people in my electorate have told me, that they often miss the train because of the difficulty in moving their luggage. For them the only option is CountryLink. This Government is promoting the use of public transport in name but not in deed. This Government is not encouraging people to travel by using those services. It is about time that such a petty tax—I would argue that it is cost neutral rather than beneficial—were removed and we went back to the honest way of providing a rail service, in particular, for the elderly and those who cannot move easily by any other means around this great and glorious State.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina) [5.00 p.m.]: I support the Transport Administration Amendment (CountryLink Pensioner Booking Fee Abolition) Bill 2009, which was introduced by the member for Willoughby and shadow Minister for Transport. The Government imposed a booking fee on our pensioner population that creates hardship, provides a disincentive for people to use the service and, frankly, is penny-pinching in the extreme. This group of people, who are not well off, do not deserve that sort of treatment. Many pensioners reside in my electorate of Ballina or on the North Coast. This Government has imposed \$3.5 million worth of fees on pensioners in this State who have worked hard all their lives, supported the tax system and supported this country in many ways.

Australia is the great country that it is because of the efforts of people who are in that pensioner class today. It is unfair to impose a \$10 pensioner booking fee on them. Since the introduction of this booking fee I have received many representations over the years from people who are concerned about its impact on their ability to travel. In many cases pensioners needed to travel on the XPT to Sydney for medical treatment—that is,

when we had an XPT between Murwillumbah and Casino and then on to Sydney. It adds insult to injury when someone who has very little money and who has to travel to Sydney for major medical treatment suffers the indignity of the imposition of an additional \$10 booking fee.

Back in 2003 this heartless Government took away our train from Casino to Murwillumbah; pensioners who relied on that train no longer have that service. They have to travel by bus from the north of Murwillumbah right through to Lismore to catch the Brisbane to Sydney XPT, either at Casino or Grafton. This Government not only is charging struggling pensioners an additional booking fee; it has taken away the train service altogether. Many pensioners have said to me that they are upset about the abolition of the train service and they have also said that the bus service is not really satisfactory.

I assure the Government that the anger in the community about the abolition of the Casino to Murwillumbah rail link has not abated one iota. People still want that train service. Pensioners might not want exactly the same service—some people still want to be able to connect to the XPT to go to Sydney—but others want a train service that provides commuter services and tourism services north and south of Byron Bay in particular. Eventually, the train service from Casino through to Murwillumbah and into south-east Queensland should be linked with the Queensland system. Members would be aware that the Queensland Government is pretty proactive about rail services in south-east Queensland, and over the next few years it will extend its rail line down to Coolangatta.

We need an integrated transport arrangement to link northern New South Wales with southern Queensland. We have very little public transport in northern New South Wales and the Government took away the train services that we had. To add insult to injury, for many years the Government has imposed a \$10 pensioner booking fee, creating hardship for pensioners, who frankly do not deserve it. The Government's justification for the imposition of this fee is that it costs more to run CountryLink than it does to run CityRail. Pensioners in the city have pretty generous arrangements in that they are able to move around all over the place on trains, ferries and buses for very little money.

I remind members of the Parry report that was commissioned a few years ago. One of the most interesting findings in the Parry report was that the cost recovery for CountryLink was 32¢ in the dollar and the cost recovery for CityRail was 28¢ in the dollar. In other words, for every dollar that taxpayers invest in CityRail they recover 28¢, and for every dollar that they invest in CountryLink they get 32¢. The cost recovery for CountryLink is higher than it is for CityRail. In my view, to use the economic argument as some sort of justification for imposing an additional booking fee on people who use CountryLink, is fallacious and without justification. I agree with the statement made earlier by other members that this is an unfair tax on pensioners.

The object of this bill is to abolish the booking fees on the use of pensioner travel vouchers and passes on CountryLink rail services. Schedule 1 item [1] makes it clear that an order fixing charges for services of RailCorp cannot impose a CountryLink pensioner booking fee. Schedule 1 item [2] provides that RailCorp must not charge any pensioner booking fee for travel on a railway service provided by CountryLink. The new section provides that any order provided by RailCorp is of no effect to the extent that it imposes a pensioner booking fee. In my view, the Government should take on board this fair and straightforward legislation. I look forward to an opportunity to divide on the agreement in principle. If this Government opposes the legislation it will be shown to be the mean-spirited and heartless Government that we have grown to expect.

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [5.07 p.m.]: The Transport Administration Amendment (CountryLink Pensioner Booking Fee Abolition) Bill 2009 is another piece of Liberals-Nationals policy in New South Wales. It is a good policy because it reverses the dreadful policy of the New South Wales Labor Government, which effectively results in the pockets of pensioners in country areas being picked by a revenue-hungry Government. CountryLink services are extremely important to country people and especially to pensioners.

In my electorate of Oxley, which is situated on the beautiful mid North Coast, I represent communities that are between 3½ and six hours away from Sydney by road—and that is just one way. A return journey is seven to 12 hours for the people and the communities that I represent from the Manning Valley to Dorrigo. Obviously it is too far by road for elderly people to travel on those many occasions when they want to visit the city, be it for medical treatment, family visits, or events and functions. Many of those events and functions are available only in the city. For example, the Seniors Concert, which is hosted by the Premier, is held only in

Sydney. New Year's Eve celebrations, for which all taxpayers pay, are held only in Sydney. The Festival of Sydney, which is a terrific festival, also is not available to people in country and coastal communities. Many of my constituents want to visit the city for a variety of reasons.

Not only is the distance a disincentive for my constituents to travel by road; the Pacific Highway, which still is not completely upgraded, is a dangerous road. I drive along it frequently. It is regularly choked with trucks and is in a crumbling, potholed condition. One cannot but notice the many crosses along the side of the road. This is a very scary road for elderly people to travel along. Even if they were to travel by road, when they get to the city they encounter numerous toll roads. They end up paying additional charges because they do not have an e-tag or do not know how to use the computer to purchase an e-pass or other casual form of toll pass. Travelling by road to Sydney is a daunting experience for the elderly. On the other hand, they are familiar with the train and they like it. The train brings them right into the city.

My elderly constituents often do not choose the alternative method of air transport because my electorate has no airports and the nearest two are at Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour. The Taree airport is under threat of closure because of the state of the runway. The Greater Taree City Council cannot get Federal funding to upgrade the runway to a safe condition. Kempsey airport closed some years ago. Although the airport remains open, no flights arrive or depart. The Nambucca and Bellingen regions have no airports. Even for those who avail themselves of the air service from Port Macquarie or Coffs Harbour, it becomes an expensive exercise when taking into account the cost of cabs from the airport to the city or the airport train service, which is a steep price for some pensioners who are on limited incomes.

I have had many conversations with people about the CountryLink services. I have met with large groups on stations at Wingham, Kew, Wauchope, Kempsey, Macksville, Nambucca Heads and Urunga. The communities surrounding those railway stations rely on this valuable public transport service, which, for many, is their only form of public transport—something taken for granted by those in the city who can choose from many forms of public transport. Sadly, our CountryLink services, which for decades have been valued by country and coastal people, have been run down by a Sydney-centric Labor Government that is happy to spend \$5 billion of taxpayers money on a boutique Metro service to Rozelle, but is pinching pennies from CountryLink and pensioners' pockets. How has the CountryLink service been run down? Staff numbers have been cut from the stations I have mentioned. Macksville and Nambucca Heads now have only part-time staff, Urunga and Kew have no station staff at all and staff numbers have been cut at Kempsey and Wauchope.

Fewer free seats are available for pensioners on a CountryLink service. When pensioners try to book seats they are told frequently there are no free seats available on the train they want to get them to their destination at the time they require. Many CountryLink services have had a reduction in the number of carriages from six to four and this has contributed to fewer available seats. The rolling stock is ageing. I am told that in many cases the rail motors are more than 20 years old and the carriages have become run-down over that time. If it were not for the Australian Rail Track Corporation the state of the North Coast rail line would have decayed and many speed restrictions would have been placed on it. Prior to the Australian Rail Track Corporation deal some bridges on the North Coast rail line, including near Wauchope, were in such a state of disrepair that light could be seen through the sleepers because of dry rot. They were affected by termites and the spikes were falling out. The service has been run down by this Government because it has not provided the necessary resources for maintenance or staffing.

The final straw for the people I represent, particularly pensioners in North Coast communities, is the introduction of the booking fee. Pensioners are told they still have free travel. It is not free because it has a \$10 booking fee attached. While the Federal Government is increasing pensions our State Government is dipping its hands into pensioners' pockets by imposing this outrageous fee. Often we hear the strident calls from the New South Wales Labor Party, "Where is your policy?" The State Liberal-Nationals Coalition has presented plenty of policy and abolishing the CountryLink booking fee is just one. Pensioners in country areas deserve a fair go. This penny-pinching booking fee should be abolished. The Liberal-Nationals would welcome this policy being adopted by the New South Wales Labor Party as it has done with other policies of ours, like ethanol-blended fuel, rebates for rainwater tanks in country areas and the proposed feed-in electricity tariff scheme. We are happy for the Government to pinch this policy. All Government members need to do is join us in voting for this bill and supporting pensioners in country and coastal New South Wales.

Mr JOHN TURNER (Myall Lakes) [5.16 p.m.]: I congratulate the shadow Minister for Transport on being proactive in introducing the Transport Administration Amendment (CountryLink Pensioner Booking Fee

Abolition) Bill 2009. Seniors in my electorate have expressed concern since the Government introduced this unfair booking fee. The fee is calculated at \$10 or 15 per cent of the full adult fare, whichever is the highest. It is an outrageous slug on the community's most vulnerable residents. We should be encouraging our ageing population to be as active as possible. Slugging them with this booking fee when they use CountryLink trains and buses effectively confines some pensioners to their homes. Labor's booking fee has slashed the number of pensioners who use CountryLink. Only a few years ago 20 per cent fewer people were using the CountryLink service. This booking fee is just a grab for pensioners' money by a cash-strapped government. The Government takes this kind of approach frequently as it falls behind the eight ball in the economic management of this State.

As the Leader of The Nationals said, the Coalition will scrap this booking fee. This will encourage more elderly people to be active and travel by trains or buses. In turn this will help revive regional train services in those communities. The matter was of such importance in my area that when Neville Peatfield and Ben Kooy of Taree stood for only a couple of days in Taree they were able to collect 2,250 signatures on a petition calling for the abolition of the fee. I congratulate them on doing that but, unfortunately, I have had to tell them that the appeals fell on the Government's deaf ears and the fee will continue to be charged. Quite frankly, the Government cannot see the wood for the trees when it comes to the impact this booking fee has on our elderly citizens. John Newell, President of the Combined Pensioners and the Superannuants Association, wrote to the then Minister for Transport stating:

We again protest the primitive booking fees (alternative Tax) still being charged to pensioners on Country Link services on their "free" tickets.

Increasingly we are convinced that labour governments do not care about older persons and are only interested in the rich.

The booking fee tax has risen along with fare rises.

We again implore you to do the right thing and remove the Country Link booking fees.

I concur with each line of that letter from Mr Newell, particularly his view that Labor governments "do not care about older persons" in our community. The *Manning River Times* also reported on the issue in its 24-25 August 2007 edition under a headline "Rail ticket rise outrage". The article states:

The planned 4.8 per cent CountryLink fare increase is 'appalling' news for pensioners, because it means their ticket booking fee will rise by the same amount, says John Newell, president of the local branch of the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association ...

"Only pensioners have to pay a booking fee – it is a form of discrimination," Mr Newell says ...

This is an issue affecting everyone, not just pensioners, he says.

"Queensland has new tilt trains, Victoria and Western Australia have new trains – New South Wales is supposed to be the premier state but we have the worst trains in Australia."

Clearly, the booking fee is an impost and a direct tax on older people by a government that claims to look after older people and to have a community conscience. The Government does not have a community conscience; it is slugging the most vulnerable people in our community with a fee that could quite easily be axed, and should be axed.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby) [5.20 p.m.], in reply: I take this opportunity to thank all members who contributed to debate on this very important issue. I have listened closely to remarks made by members opposite and it concerns me that none of their arguments stacked up. Many members opposite, whom I will not name, have stopped me in the corridor to tell me that they really support this bill. It is time for them to show their support and vote with the Opposition in favour of the bill. The bill was introduced in the best interests of hardworking pensioners in country and regional areas, as well as those in metropolitan areas, who are suffering a great deal of angst because they rely on vouchers to visit family and friends and to attend important appointments. In addition to all those who contributed to the debate, I thank the many community organisations that have supported the Opposition in our bid and that the Opposition has supported because we believe this to be a very important issue. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 37

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

Noes, 46

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

Pair

Mr O'Farrell

Ms Burton

Question resolved in the negative.**Motion negatived.****Bill not agreed to in principle.****PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS****Question—That private members' statements be noted—proposed.****MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence) [5.30 p.m.]: Tonight I raise the issue of the state of mental health services in New South Wales. What has prompted my speech is the increasing number of people who have come in to see me with the same concerns about inadequate long-term support and care services available to help treat and rehabilitate people who have a mental illness. I understand that the Richmond report in 1983 recommended that mental institutions be closed down and, instead, funding provided by the New South Wales Government towards a system of community-based networks, backed by specialist hospital and accommodation services. I do not believe that successive governments ever supported this recommendation, with mental health patients being dumped on the streets, many of whom ended up in jail or in our hospitals, causing huge problems for nursing staff and police, and taking up hospital beds and jail cells.

I am aware that an estimated 10 per cent of the community has a propensity to develop a mental illness, with the triggers being extreme trauma, and marijuana or alcohol abuse. In all the cases I have seen come through my door one or more of these triggers has been prevalent. These triggers appear to be more common in our modern society than they were in the past. Because of the few mental health workers available, there is little or no early intervention network. Until someone commits a crime or attempts self-harm, they do not come to the attention of the authorities. Those suffering extreme symptoms of mental disease, such as suicidal depression or hallucinations, are treated in mental hospitals, but only for a very short period; then they are put back on the streets if they have no family or friends willing to keep an eye on them. It is inevitably a revolving door.

I am also concerned about the amount of time our already overworked police spend on dealing with mental health patients. When they relapse, cause trouble or breach a court order, the police are called to transport them to a mental hospital for further treatment, taking up valuable police resources. Serious consideration must be given to establishing supported accommodation services in which mental health patients can be discharged into an environment where health workers and psychiatrists can help rehabilitate them, stabilise their medication and, hopefully, get them back into the workforce. I have been told that while health workers follow up with patients, it is haphazard, with many mental health patients simply disappearing. As many mental health patients are very intelligent, they get to know the system and delight in putting it over their case managers. While I acknowledge that there would be a cost in implementing such a proposal, the present system is already expensive, particularly if one takes into account pre-treatment and the cost of other services, that is, police, hospitals, jails, the welfare system, and so on. I received a letter from a constituent whose son has a severe mental health problem, which states:

My son ... was diagnosed at the age of 17 with paranoid schizophrenia. He is now almost 39. During this time he has had approximately 20 admissions to Lismore's Richmond clinic for treatment and 2 admissions in Queensland. As with so many mentally ill persons his condition has been very difficult to manage and we have called for police assistance on many occasions.

Recently he went to Queensland. He had a community treatment order but it did not apply over the border in Queensland. He stayed in Queensland for some time. When he came back the order had expired, and it was difficult to get another community treatment order for him. When he came back he was aggressive and attacked his mother and her husband, who ended up in hospital. He is now in the psychiatric unit at Long Bay jail waiting for an assessment. The letter further states:

We feel this situation could and should have been avoided by having a uniform mental health system Australia wide. The fact that a person has only to cross a State border to avoid medication is ludicrous and potentially dangerous.

And it was potentially dangerous in this case. I understand that the former Howard Government was prepared to support such a program financially. I truly believe it is time that both the State and Federal governments consider setting up a national direction for the treatment and care of people with a mental illness. There should also be a national register so that when patients cross the border their condition goes with them, authorities are aware of the problems they face and mental health care is available.

SHELLHARBOUR ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Ms LYLEA McMAHON (Shellharbour—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.35 p.m.]: As with many Australians, I attended several commemorative services on Anzac Day this year in my electorate and stood proudly whilst we remembered sombrely the great sacrifice of human life on that day. It is as a result of the deeds and sacrifice of hundreds of young men and women in Gallipoli that 25 April will forever be a date that is engraved into the heart of a very proud and grateful nation. It is a day when communities across the country gather together and pause to remember the sacrifices made by all the men and women who fought in our great country's name. Anzac Day commemorates the landing of Australian and New Zealand soldiers at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. So we honour those who answered the call to defend our nation through the ages, in conflicts that have threatened our safety.

This day of remembrance is a time for reflection and an opportunity to show pride in our nation. It is also a time that boldly exposes the sanctity and frailty of human life. The first service I attended was an early morning dawn service at Caroline Chisholm Park, Addison Street, Shellharbour Village, organised by the Warilla RSL Sub-Branch. This service was very well attended, with more than 100 people braving the early morning chill to pay their respects to the fallen diggers. Mr Keith Clemmett, the Secretary of Warilla RSL Sub-Branch welcomed people to the service. Kim Kearney, the Vice-President, read the prayer of remembrance and Don Briggs followed with "A Prayer for Anzac Day". The service progressed with the wreath-laying ceremony, and Mary Clarke, the Sub-Branch Honorary Secretary, offered "A Prayer for Those who Served".

Allan Hurrell, the Sub-Branch Honorary Treasurer, gave the Commemoration of the Fallen. At the conclusion of the service the flag party stood, along with those of us gathered, as the Last Post sounded and the great Australian Ode of Remembrance was recited.

To this day we continue to pray for their safe and speedy return. We also continue to pray for their loved ones who wait anxiously on our home shores for them to resume their place in the safety and security of the family circle. At the immediate conclusion of the service at Caroline Chisholm Park in Shellharbour Village I attended the City of Shellharbour's ninety-fourth commemoration of Anzac Day service at the Shellharbour City Memorial. This too was very well attended. Like bygone years, it is evident that the Anzac Day dawn services and morning marches continue to grow, which is a wonderful yet fitting tribute to those men and women who have served Australia in all theatres of war. Order of Australia Medal recipient and Secretary of Albion Park RSL Sub-Branch, Mr Harry Spicer, gave the official welcome to the assembled crowd and asked us to mourn with pride, but to remember with equal pride those who served and are still alive.

Mr Keith Clemmett, President of Warilla RSL Sub-Branch, offered a prayer of remembrance, whilst a Royal Australian Naval cadet recited A Prayer for Anzac Day. Our local cadets proved a strong and passionate presence at this service, with the local army cadets also contributing with A Prayer for Those Who Served during the wreath laying ceremony. Special thanks were offered to all those in attendance and all those who contributed to the service's formal proceedings, including: Warilla RSL Sub-Branch, Albion Park RSL Sub-Branch, the Salvation Army band, TS Albatross, the 26th Army Cadet Unit, the 338 Squadron Australian Air Force Cadets, and the 314 Squadron Australian Air Force Cadets.

Following that service I also attended an Anzac Day service at Warilla Bowls and Recreation Club, where the master of ceremonies was Mr Steve Feeney. Father Brian Jones recited a prayer. We also had the laying of wreaths by the bowlers of Warilla Bowling Club, members of the Warilla Pensioners Club, the Shellharbour City Catholic Church, and all the local high schools. Also present were Mr Dave Jesson, the administrator from Shellharbour council, the captains from Warilla High School, first Shellharbour Scouts, first Warilla scouts and the Shellharbour marching girls.

The Anzac's strength, service and sacrifice is something we strive to never forget, regardless of the generation to which we belong. We must continue to foster the sacredness of this occasion for future generations, and use it as an educational tool for young Australians to ensure that the Anzac spirit is kept alive through their pride, interest and attendance at future services and marches across the land. After all, the Anzac legend—the pride, the courage and mateship—is to this day, carried into so many aspects of the Australian way of life. Lest we forget.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.40 p.m.]: I thank the member for Shellharbour for drawing the attention of the House to Anzac Day services in her electorate. I congratulate and pay my respects to members of the Warilla RSL Sub-branch and the Albion Park RSL Sub-branch on their work and conduct because I know that a lot of effort goes into organising Anzac Day services of remembrance. I have noticed in my electorate of Miranda and throughout the shire—I am sure the member for Cronulla will agree with me—the growing number of children who attend the services; it is wonderful to see. Children address the assembled crowd and even recite poetry entered in a competition run by the local RSL.

Importantly, as the member for Shellharbour said, the Anzac Day dawn service, and services throughout the day, do not just honour those who have served, those who have fought and died, but also those who are continuing to serve in overseas theatres of war, including Afghanistan, Iraq and East Timor. Late last year at Sydney airport I had the wonderful privilege of welcoming home 101 soldiers who served in East Timor under the command of Brigadier Caligiri. I was privileged to welcome those men who put their lives on the line to serve our country. I thank the member for Shellharbour for drawing our attention to Anzac Day services that remember the fallen, those who served and those who are still serving within her electorate.

HOUSING DENSITY

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [5.42 p.m.]: One of the hallmarks of this State Government is to take people out of the decision-making process, the latest example of which affects the Hornsby local government area. Residents of Waitara, Normanhurst and Thornleigh are understandably shocked and concerned about Hornsby council's draft housing strategy. The people in the affected areas received a CD-ROM in March that advised them of proposals to up-zone, and those who live in areas around the up-zonings were advised by letter. The State Government is requiring councils such as Hornsby

to develop these plans in response to Sydney's population growth, in part because during its full 14 years in office it has failed to adequately handle growth on Sydney's outskirts and because it has failed to develop regional growth strategies to relieve some of the population pressure in Sydney.

As a result, Labor's policy wants to meet 60 to 70 per cent of Sydney's future population growth by up-zoning or rezoning for high and medium densities in existing suburbs. I have a number of concerns about the proposals in the Hornsby housing strategy that affect 25 precincts, some 10 suburbs, and includes Waitara, Normanhurst, Thornleigh and Hornsby within my electorate. First, I share residents' concerns about the impact of these proposals upon our community, especially in relation to the densities, building heights and likely traffic consequences that they will bring. Second, I am seriously concerned about the lack of community consultation in this process and the fact that the first that residents heard about it was when they were advised of the draft proposal by council. Third, I am concerned about the increasing demands being made upon the local government area.

Under the Metropolitan Strategy, Hornsby local government area is expected to take 11,000 additional dwellings by 2031. To date, 4,500 dwellings have been provided under the 1998 strategy required of Hornsby council by the State Government; 2,600 are proposed in this draft strategy that is currently causing concern across the Hornsby community; and that leaves another 3,900 dwellings to be found. The next iteration of this demand by the State Government will lead to an increase of some 30 per cent on the existing proposals. Behind all this is the fact that under State Labor for 14 years there has been no real planning. Labor sees planning as increasing densities and putting more people into existing areas, without ever acknowledging either the need, or providing the funding, for services and infrastructure required to make those populations work.

One rationale for this strategy is to "put these densities close to transport nodes and commercial centres". As anyone who uses trains across this city knows, our rail system has no spare capacity. Anyone who uses either the North Shore line or the northern line knows that in peak hours it is difficult to get a seat on those trains. For that reason, I believe that the Government continues to ignore the existing problems in suburbs such as Waitara, Normanhurst, Thornleigh and Hornsby and through these proposals will worsen those problems. It is not putting any money on the table to ensure that additional services are provided that would make these areas work should those populations be required.

Next Tuesday night the member for Hornsby will convene a meeting, supported by myself, at the Asquith Leagues Club, Waitara, to enable residents to express their concerns and views upon these proposals. I understand that the meeting will also be attended by council's Executive Manager, Planning, Scott Phillips. I know that information will be available outside the meeting room so that people can see the exact shape and nature of these proposals. I advise the House that these proposals range from townhouse developments all the way through to eight-storey and 10-storey developments. I am talking about a massive upscaling about which to date the community has had no say. I do not think I have seen such a strong and vigorous response from a community throughout the 14 years I have been in this Parliament.

I reiterate that the Liberal Party is determined to put an end to Labor's top-down, one-size-fits-all planning approach. It is determined to put people back at the centre of government in New South Wales. It is determined to restore to local communities responsibility for local planning controls to ensure that they, through their councils, are able to put in place proposals that meet not only their needs but those of the city in the future. It makes no sense to me to destroy the very residential amenity and character that has attracted people to suburbs like this for more than a century by having proposals such as this, particularly when they are not matched with resources, to ensure those communities will function.

GARY MARTIN KUNG-FU CENTRE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms ALISON MEGARRITY (Menai) [5.47 p.m.]: The Gary Martin Kung-fu Centre, Australia's largest single martial arts training school, has reached an impressive 30-year milestone. Guided by Gary Martin, an authentic Grand Master, the school's reputation is such that even visiting Masters from China believe that the students possess a rarely seen level of power and skill. Located in Moorebank, the school has produced seven Masters, which is the highest number in any school outside of China. Gary Martin's intense focus on the quality growth of only one school, unlike other schools with many different locations, is arguably one of the reasons his school has developed world-class standards. It has membership in both the Australian National Kung-fu Federation and the Martial Arts Industry Association. The school has featured in hundreds of magazine and newspaper articles. Gary Martin recently appeared for a remarkable third time on the cover of the highly regarded *Blitz* martial arts magazine.

Gary teaches three forms of kung fu: Tai Chi Chuan, Pa Qua and the famous 12 animal art called Hsing-I. All three are rare fighting arts with lineage from China. Each art has its strength in a different area, but when combined create a powerful fighting form that covers all aspects of a real, all-out attack. There are also drills for strength, speed and conditioning. Students are trained extensively in ch'i development, acupuncture, herbal medicine, self-hypnosis, Taoist philosophy, the arts' history, lineage and also kung-fu weaponry. Membership is limited to males and females over 16 years. Beginners are welcome, as are experienced grades from other martial arts looking for what the centre's website describes as "a more stimulating training environment".

Gary's classes are not for the faint-hearted. His core belief is that the art he teaches has two distinct goals. Firstly, it must be relevant as a real fighting art in the street and, secondly, it must provide a practical and logical system of self-development. In fulfilling the first goal, students are trained and prepared to deal with real attacks from people who do not play by any rules, unlike highly controlled martial arts competitions. Many of the techniques Gary teaches are illegal in such competitions. However, that does not mean there is an open-slayer approach to kung-fu training. The centre's unblemished safety record is a testament to the strict professional standards and its members' skill and control. Classes are organised according to experience and trained by a qualified instructor, overseen by Gary nightly. As Gary says:

None of our members want to go to work with bruises and black eyes. Our classes follow correct modern day athlete training procedures that include proper warm-up/cool-down procedures and conditioning sciences that greatly enhance performance & reduce injury risk.

Each work-out finishes with a talk by Gary on subjects such as diet, street-wise skills and succeeding in life, fulfilling his second goal. He trains his students to be positively focused on not just winning fights, but winning in life as well. Gary contends that the foundation of a successful and happy life is attitude, and that how you think affects your quality of life:

The word 'success' is one our members hear a lot at training. Every person who joins our School is encouraged to set personal targets and taught the mental strategies to achieve them. Thinking positive and not letting the negative events and negative people that enter our lives bring us down, is just as important as the correct way to punch, kick or elbow.

Gary's martial arts career spans almost his entire life, having begun his training as a four-year-old under his grandfather's instruction. Even as a teenager, Gary's social life centred around kung-fu and he trained every spare minute. One could say he lived, breathed and slept his art. He started teaching in 1979 and achieved Master level in 1981 and Grand Master level in 2006. He has an undefeated fight record. Students say that Gary's demonstrations are always explosive, but senior members particularly comment on the spiritual and internal aspects of his mastery. Despite being the Grand Master, Gary is very accessible to the centre's hundreds of practising members to discuss training or help them with any personal problems. In turn, Gary says that the energy and commitment of his students inspire him to give 100 per cent of himself every night.

The thirtieth anniversary night of celebration on 20 March was a fitting tribute to the dedication shown by Gary, fully supported by his wife, Julie, and to the growth of this centre of excellence. The evening, attended by more than the expected 600 guests, including magazine editors, sports stars and Kung-fu dignitaries from China, was an overwhelming success. I am sure every member of this House will join me in offering sincere congratulations to the Gary Martin Kung-fu Centre on three decades of achievement.

ROSEVILLE SHEPHERD CENTRE

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [5.52 p.m.]: Most of us come into the world with all of our faculties, but a measure of a society's maturity and compassion is the help it gives to those in the community who are disadvantaged through no fault of their own. However, with a media preoccupied over issues such as the financial crisis, terrorists and the Mexican flu, and a never-ending stream of messages competing for attention in a busy world, it is sometimes appropriate to wear a loud shirt in order to be heard. I recently visited the Shepherd Centre at Roseville in my electorate of Davidson. I particularly appreciated the role of Mr John Bowie and the other staff who showed me around and helped me understand the Shepherd Centre's mission. The Shepherd Centre has six centres in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory and its mission is to help babies and young children who have limited or no sense of hearing. Hearing is an important sense that needs to be combined with all the other senses to develop a balanced life.

Children have enough to learn to take their place in society without deafness slowing their learning and, in turn, contributing to social and physical isolation. The vision of the Shepherd Centre is to enable children

who are fully or partially deaf to develop spoken language so that they properly participate in the hearing world and thereby reach their full potential. It is very important to have hearing problems corrected early before the added adolescent challenges of sexual development, peer group pressure and academic achievements. Common causes of deafness in children include genetic conditions, infection during pregnancy, meningitis, head injury and ear fluids. All are matters beyond the control of the child and his or her parents. The damage is quite different from the damage many adults do to their hearing in this mechanical and electronic age of machines and loud music.

In speaking with local parents of disadvantaged children at the Roseville Shepherd Centre, it was clear that when a new baby enters a family a hearing deficiency is generally not immediately apparent to the parents. It is often traumatic in the months after birth when parents begin to realise that their audio communication with their baby is not normal. The sooner they are aware of the Shepherd Centre and what it can do for them, the better. Learning and knowledge of how to tackle a problem is a skill we all need right throughout life. The Shepherd Centre's approach is broad-based. It includes the assessment of babies and children with hearing difficulties, pre-school activities to bring the child up to speed with learning processes, audio-verbal therapy, and the fitting of hearing devices. The centre organises support for parents and runs training courses for professionals in the audio-verbal approach to children's learning. The correction of physical disabilities in our children minimises the risk of later behavioural or mental conditions in adolescence. It is a win-win outcome for us all.

Tomorrow is Loud Shirt Day, an initiative of the national alliance Deaf Kids Talking. People are encouraged to dress in a loud shirt to support a worthy cause. This campaign is about raising awareness of childhood deafness and raising money for the Shepherd Centre's valuable work. I commend the vision and organisation of Dr Bruce Shepherd and his late wife, Annette, who 30 years ago were the driving force behind the establishment of the wonderful Shepherd Centre that helps provide more of a life balance for so many young children and their families.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.57 p.m.]: I thank the member for Davidson for bringing to the attention of the House the wonderful work of the Shepherd Centre—he tells us there are six centres throughout New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory—and, in particular, the one in his electorate, the Roseville Shepherd Centre. As the member for Davidson said, the ability to hear and hear correctly all that is going on around them is very important to the social and physical development of children. The problem of deafness can be a great barrier to children's intellectual, emotional and social development. The member for Davidson spoke of the causes of deafness in young children and he reminded us of the wonderful work of Doctor Bruce Shepherd and his late wife.

I thank the member for Davidson for informing the House that tomorrow is Loud Shirt Day. I draw to the attention of the House—although I am sure everyone has noticed, particularly the people in the public gallery—the way the member for Davidson is dressed: in a loud shirt and a spotted tie that looks as if he has dipped it into a box of Smarties. The member for East Hills wears a loud shirt every day. Hopefully, tomorrow he will wear an extra loud shirt. Once again, I thank the member for Davidson for bringing to the attention of the House the wonderful work of the Shepherd Centre.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr FRANK TERENCE (Maitland) [5.59 p.m.]: This week is National Volunteer week—from 11 to 17 May. I take this opportunity to thank the hundreds of people who volunteer their time, compassion and talents for the benefit of the Maitland community. Volunteers contribute around \$5 billion to the New South Wales economy and they donate hundreds of millions of volunteer hours to the community. I have said many times that I believe that volunteers are the invisible glue that holds a community together, and this is what makes the community of Maitland very strong. We are blessed in Maitland to have so many volunteers who do so much work in so many ways to help people in our community, whether elderly citizens, the disabled, children or other people in need.

In my role as member for Maitland it has been my great honour to meet with many of the good men, women and young people who volunteer for the many organisations within our community and who provide a valuable service with kindness, respect and dedication. There are volunteers who take food to the poor or elderly, who care for the dying or disabled, who sit with the ill and hold the heartbroken—the tireless members of charity organisations who provide help in whatever way they can, from barbecues to forums. Every weekend

individuals and families at every sports field officiate, coach or help out in the canteen. Other volunteers take hurt and distressed wildlife and other animals into their homes or help in animal shelters, giving love, attention and kind words. Then there are those who volunteer to run towards life's disasters from which we all flee.

We are all familiar with the volunteer and rural firefighters, the State Emergency Services and lifesavers and we constantly speak highly of them in this House. They give up other commitments, they set aside family duties and sometimes work obligations, to give their time to help others, without reward or accolade. It is very important that that be acknowledged in this House. I express my heartfelt thanks to all those volunteers for giving of themselves and for the hours they spend in the service of their community. I thank them for giving up their time with their families to save someone else's family. They are, without doubt, the epitome of the Australian ethos and on behalf of the people of Maitland I thank them.

Tomorrow in my electorate of Maitland I will meet with the Minister for Volunteering, the Hon. Graham West, at a forum to host a number of volunteers. The forum will address particular issues of volunteers who work with young children, their obligations, their guidelines and procedures, and we will hear from them what will make it easier for them to fulfil their important role. The Minister for Volunteering has launched a process in which people can nominate volunteers whom they believe should receive recognition. In all electorates across Australia volunteers are highly valued by their communities. However, it is important to take every opportunity to recognise the special efforts of people who give up their time and go above and beyond the call of duty as community-minded citizens.

I very much look forward to presenting the volunteers with awards and to publicly acknowledge them for their great sacrifice. There is no doubt that if volunteers did not give up their family and other commitments, our communities would be far poorer, and that could have a devastating consequence. That is why I am happy that New South Wales has a Minister dedicated to that role. I am studying the roles of volunteers in an endeavour to help them with their issues. I will listen to what they have to say and, in particular, will ensure that we do what we can to attract younger volunteers. Members would appreciate that young people think differently from the older generation, who have different needs and take up volunteering for different reasons. We need to tap into that and ensure, if people wish to serve their community, that governments, local members, mayors and community leaders support them fully and listen to and accommodate their needs and support their willingness to serve their community. I acknowledge those hard-working members of the community.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.04 p.m.]: I thank the member for Maitland for bringing to the attention of the House the work of volunteers in his electorate. As he said, whether it be in a sporting venue, dealing with wildlife, dealing with the disabled, working with the State Emergency Service or the Rural Fire Service, or participating as a lifesaver, volunteers play a very important role throughout his electorate as they do in all electorates. I am sure all members join with me in thanking the member for Maitland for bringing this matter to our attention. We all thank and congratulate all volunteers throughout the State on the work that they do. One of the great privileges we have as members of Parliament is to work and interact with volunteers.

It is those volunteers we deal with who give us a glimpse of how our communities fit together, how they work. Those volunteers really do make things work. Governments cannot do everything, but the volunteers provide us with the picture, the snapshot, of how our community fits together. I note that a forum for volunteers is to be held in the Maitland electorate tomorrow. I wish the member and his electorate every success with that forum. I note that the Minister for Volunteering has established a volunteer recognition program and I encourage all members to put forward the names of volunteers from their electorate and the work they do. I am sure that members opposite as well as members on this side of the House would have absolutely no problem in identifying volunteers who do such a fabulous job for their community. I congratulate them all and I thank them all during this Volunteer Week.

ORANGE PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr RUSSELL TURNER (Orange) [6.06 p.m.]: I raise concerns about the increasing number of phone calls and letters that I have received from residents of Orange who will be or may be affected by the plans of Housing New South Wales to build public housing in areas where they do not currently exist. The State Government is under a lot of pressure from the Federal Government to spend the money it has been allocated, or it will lose it. However, I believe that the State Government should have consulted more fully with the community, especially those who will be affected by its proposal. I have raised concerns with the current Minister for Housing, the Hon. David Borger, about the empty blocks of land in Orange, as a result of houses

that have been burnt down and not replaced. Yet, I am not aware of any plan to put the new houses on those blocks. The Government seems to be concentrating on demolishing either existing departmental housing or other private houses before constructing developments on that land. One letter I received from two residents stated:

Dear Mr Turner,

I am writing to you regarding the impending development by the Department of Housing in Sale St. My husband and I bought our house in Sale Street in 2001 and now have twin two year olds. We have thoroughly enjoyed living here. The street is quiet and we love being doted on by all our retired neighbours. My husband is away a lot for work and I have always felt safe and secure.

The news that the houses straight across the street from us were to be demolished came as quite a shock and to find that our dear 80-year-old friend Aggie was to be relocated was a devastating blow to all of us. Trying to find out answers I rang Mr Ian Middleton who works in the Orange office for the Department of Housing. I found Mr Middleton to be most helpful and sympathetic, however he did confirm the decision had been made and construction would start in the near future. We were also informed further units would be built within the next 12 months through to the next street.

Based on this information we have decided to try to sell our house.

Our biggest issue is with the legislation that says we are only entitled to 21 days notice and gives the Department of Housing the authority to approve its own developments. Prime news reported that the Department of Housing was bypassing Orange City Council because of time constraints. We do not believe this to be true. We believe council was bypassed because they do not want to have to conform to the approval process. Our rights as residents are being completely ignored. Even though we live in a small street that accommodates single storey houses, they have the right to put up double storey units, which will affect sun going into people's yards and will increase traffic dramatically. We have never complained about the houses across the road so obviously we do not have issue with this type of housing.

Another letter to me stated:

My husband, Barry, and I are writing to you in regard to the 6 Housing Commission Houses, in Sale Street and Jubilee Avenue that are going to be demolished and supposedly replaced with units. Why haven't we, as private residents of this area been informed or received any information about this?

What sort of units are they? Are they single storey or double storey units, like the ones off Wentworth Lane near Elephant Park? If they are the latter, we as private residents do not want them overlooking or overshadowing our premises.

Another concern of ours is the demolition of these residences as they are all well over 50 years old or more and built of fibro and are full of Asbestos. Are we all safe from contracting Asbestos poisoning, animals included? Are we all going to get a written guarantee from you or the Housing Commission that none of us will get asbestos poisoning?

Also if our houses are devalued are the Housing Commission going to reimburse the difference? We and a lot of other privately owned homes in this area are getting our houses valued this week, and we will demand the difference.

We believe we have every right to know the outcome of this situation involving these units, as we will be adjoining them. We would like a prompt reply on the above-mentioned letter to dispel the rumours and doubts that we are hearing from all over the neighbourhood.

Those letters are typical of the concerns that I am receiving. The Government is hypocritical; it has rules, regulations and legislation which dictate to councils where and when they should, or must, consult with ratepayers, and who should do it. Where is that consultation process evident in the Government's complete lack of regard for New South Wales Housing tenants and private homeowners?

SOCCER REFEREE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.11 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the 2009 Australian Italian Referee Exchange Program. This program brings together Italian and Australian soccer referees to facilitate the exchange of skills and to foster stronger ties between the two countries. Apart from football and refereeing the exchange program provides a continuation in experiencing different cultures, sharing administration ideas and giving an insight into new techniques to benefit overall the game we love so much. In the past there have been two exchange programs, in 2004 and 2006.

On Saturday 2 May we saw the 2009 Australian Italian Referee Exchange Program kick off between the two countries. In keeping with tradition, the program officiated the first match between Sydney's biggest Italian origin based clubs, Club Marconi and Sydney Tigers—known formally as A.P.I.A—at Marconi stadium. Hailing from the region of Umbria, the Italian delegation consisted of four referees and six executives from FIGC and AIA. Assistant treasurer of the Australian Soccer Referees Foundation and well-known whistleblower, Mr Sandro Perticarini, has also been instrumental in assisting the Italian delegates around Sydney.

As part of referee development the Australian Italian Referee Exchange Association [AIFREA] has made this year's program possible with the collaboration of Football New South Wales and the New South Wales State League Football Referees Incorporated, and with the support of their sponsors, Mr Alex Pinsuti, Senior Manager from Hyundai Motor Company Australia, who donated a car, Hallmark Unipro and Balmain Commercial. I also note the generous sponsorship of local businesses Canada Bay Club at Five Dock and Viscontini's Restaurant at Homebush Bay.

The reciprocal exchange program will see four Australian referees from the New South Wales State League Referees Incorporated selected on their performance in their profession in Italy in about September this year. The delegation consisted of the following referees and executives: Referees Roberto Mattei; Leonardo Biccheri; Raffaele Agro; and Diego Di Bagio; and Luigi Repace, President of the National Regional Amateur League, Italian Referees Association Representative and Federal Counsellor to FIGC Rome; Nino Cosentino, Vice President National Amateur League; Giovanni Bonato, President of the Youth National Regional Amateur League; Giuseppe Palmerini, Vice President of Umbria Regional Committee; Gianpiero Micciani, Provincial President National Amateur League Team; and Virgilio Ubaldi, Provincial President National Amateur League Perugia.

I thank ASRF-New South Wales President Roberto Colombo, Vice Secretary Sandro Perticarini and Soccer New South Wales Director, George Jackson for helping to organise the event and for their commitment to the program. These representatives have been instrumental not only in facilitating the program but also in its success and keeping the dream alive for many of our youth who play soccer, who I am sure will continue the legacy of this exchange program for many years to come.

I extend a special thank you to the Soccer Warehouse for its assistance with the exchange program. The second phase of this year's exchange program will see the Australian referee delegation going to Italy in late August this year. It was with great pleasure that I met with the Italian delegation. I hope in the future that the Australian Italian Referee Exchange Program will include women referees and I very much look forward to that day.

Soccer is one the fastest growing sports in New South Wales, and in my electorate I have a number of junior soccer clubs such as the Inter Lions, Concord Junior Soccer and Abbotsford Junior Soccer. I am pleased that the State Government is supporting the peak soccer bodies Football New South Wales and Northern New South Wales Football and is providing much-needed funding to support soccer in New South Wales. Both peak soccer bodies have received funding of up to \$60,000 per annum from the State Government through the Sports Development Program.

The New South Wales Government established the Johnny Warren Football Foundation, which currently provides talent development programs to junior players aged 13 and 14. The Government provided a one-off grant of \$1.5 million to the foundation. In addition, in 2008-09 the Government provided \$1.5 million to the 10 autonomous regional academies of sport, and two of those academies have a football program. More than \$1 million in sporting grants has gone to some of our local soccer groups. Well done to all the stakeholders who have been involved in promoting Soccer in New South Wales, and my best wishes to our Australian referees who will be going to Italy later this year on the exchange program.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.15 p.m.]: I thank the member for Drummoyne for bringing the Australian Italian Referee Exchange Program to the attention of the House. As she said, the exchange of different cultures is important. Soccer is the world game and it can only benefit from such a program. It benefits in many ways and not only through the development of the expertise of referees. It is also enhanced as a result of the increase of player confidence in the referees. Programs like this help to develop the confidence of the soccer crowd. I acknowledge the support of the sponsors of this exchange program. Private sector involvement in these programs is a great benefit. I understand that four Australian referees will be going to Italy and that will benefit us back here in Australia.

I was a soccer player, although I never reached the pinnacle of playing for my country. However, I was a member of the New South Wales team that beat the Federal parliamentarians not long ago, as was the member for Smithfield. As I said, the game can only improve as the expertise of referees improves. I support the member in acknowledging the need for more women soccer referees. The fastest growing sport in the Sutherland shire is women's soccer. Our major problem is fields to accommodate the games. The development of referees, particularly women referees, is very important. I acknowledge the support of the State Government in its promotion and development of soccer throughout the State. That augurs well for the belief that one day we will see a World Cup played in Australia.

BAULKHAM HILLS BUS SERVICES

Mr WAYNE MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [6.17 p.m.]: Changes to bus timetables and routes within my electorate have caused a great deal of concern to a number of my constituents. Many people are now faced with doubling their journey times and the cost of their bus fares. This means that more people are choosing to resort to using their cars on roads that are already clogged with traffic. Residents of Woodberry retirement village were just some of the people who contacted my office upon discovering the implementation of these changes. Mrs Patricia Keenan said that she first became aware that these changes were to be implemented when she received a leaflet in her letterbox on Mother's Day, Sunday 10 May, which indicated that the changes were to occur the very next day. Other residents contacted my office complaining that they had received no notification at all, only to discover the changes upon reaching their usual bus stops.

I received correspondence from the Ministry of Transport on 15 April 2008 that there was to be a review of the region four bus network, which includes my electorate. Residents were given until 9 May to comment on the proposals. Several resident groups and individuals indicated that few people in the affected region received the information about the bus review. Following my representations to the Minister for Transport, the time for submissions was extended to 23 May. At that time, there was much concern from Winston hills residents about the proposals in relation to the 606 bus service to Castle Hill. There are many elderly residents in the Winston Hills area who have relied on the 606 bus service for many years. The 606 bus now terminates at the intersection of Langdon Road and Caroline Chisholm Drive, with passengers required to alight and wait 30 minutes to catch the T60 bus to continue on their journey to Castle Hill.

In other words, they must stop at Castle Mall and wait for 30 minutes to get a bus to Castle Hill. Travelling back from Castle Hill, passengers can wait for nearly an hour for a connection between the 606 and T60 services and from 9.00 p.m. there is no connecting 606 service for Winston Hills residents. That is too bad if they want to have dinner and see a movie at Castle Towers. The 604 route has three services from Woodberry village to Castle Hill, at 9.52 a.m., 10.52 a.m. and 11.52 a.m., returning at 12.59 p.m., 1.59 p.m. and 3.02 p.m., with no services at all operating on Saturdays and Sundays. This definitely does not compensate for the loss of the direct 606 service to Castle Hill.

It is not only the elderly who are affected. Mrs Clare Toohey's son, James, is a year 8 student at Oakhill College in Castle Hill. The Toohey's live in Winston Hills. In the afternoons, James is required to take two buses home, the second bus being the 606. James has now gone from arriving home at 4.00 p.m. to arriving home at 4.40 p.m. He now has a 20-minute walk from a bus stop as opposed to a two-minute walk. Mrs Toohey makes the point that the size and weight of James' school bag is a big concern now that he has so much further to walk. Mrs Toohey said she cannot understand how one day there is a bus route and then it is just cancelled with no notification given through a bus driver, at the bus stop or at his school. Mrs Toohey has advised that there are many other students similarly affected due to the rerouting of the 606 service.

Mrs Kerrie Kavanagh has one child who works in Castle Hill and another who attends school in Castle Hill. She said that her family are now being forced back into their cars as the changes to the 606 service mean that not only has their travel time been doubled but they are also required to pay twice the bus fare. The same point is made by Allan Windle, who travels to North Parramatta on the 606 service. His travel time has doubled, as has his fare. A cynic might come to the conclusion that the changes to these bus services are an effort to push people onto the north-west transitway services. I am constantly contacted by outraged motorists who are stuck in traffic on Old Windsor Road sitting beside a bus transitway that appears to be empty—and when a bus does come along it too is nearly empty. Other people affected by changes to the bus routes include the residents of a complex of 40 villas situated in Chapel Lane, Baulkham Hills. These residents, many of who are elderly, purchased their homes because they were situated on a bus route. These people could now become housebound as they simply cannot walk up and down a huge hill to reach a bus stop.

And what about the poor students at Baulkham Hills High School? Teachers supervise approximately 1,000 students getting onto 20 buses in the afternoon and it does not help when three of the buses display the wrong bus numbers. School finishes at 3.06 p.m., yet the last bus to collect students last Friday arrived at 4.12 p.m.—more than an hour late. There have also been problems at Parramatta station in the morning when 12-year-old and 13-year-old girls have been left at the station before a bus arrives to take them to school, where they arrive more than 35 minutes late. Another area of concern is the lack of city buses during the day from Bella Vista, with the last service departing at 7.03 a.m.

I have made the point many times that people in the north-west have been let down badly by the Labor Government in relation to public transport. The axing of the rail link means that the only public transport

available to residents is buses. And where are the additional 113 buses that were promised for the M2 city express service? That promise was made in November last year and I questioned the Minister about it, only to receive the inadequate answer that 10 new buses had been delivered in 2009 and 103 others will be progressively on the road over 2009-10. In the meantime, city commuters are packed in like sardines, standing on buses that travel at speed on the M2. The Labor Government failed to place an order for the extra buses following the axing of the north-west rail link, and our public transport woes continue. I call upon the Minister for Transport to reinstate the 606 bus service to its previous route, ensure that students are not disadvantaged by an inadequate bus service, urgently install additional buses on the M2 city express service and introduce bus services from Bella Vista to the city outside commuter peak hours.

PRAIRIEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL RUGBY UNION TEAM

Mr NINOS KHOSHABA (Smithfield) [6.22 p.m.]: I would like to inform the House of the recent achievements of the Prairiewood High School rugby union team. The Prairiewood High School rugby union team recently gained selection for, and participated in, the Sanix World Rugby Youth Invitational Tournament held in Japan. Selection for the tournament was a great achievement, especially in light of the rugby program only starting at the school in 1999. Regardless of selection, actually getting to Japan was an obstacle comparable to conquering Mount Everest. Faced with this task, the team raised more than \$147,000. This figure is truly inspirational and is testament to the team's dedication and commitment to represent Australia. Special mention must be made of the fundraising activities conducted by the team, which included raffles, a school disco, a golf day fundraiser—including a dinner at Cabramatta Golf Club—and a Tattersalls luncheon.

Apart from the fundraising activities conducted by the team, certain sponsors should be recognised for their generous support. These sponsors include: AMD, Australian Rugby Union, New South Wales Rugby Union, Coca Cola Australia Foundation, Mr Phillip Street and Mr James Street, Guy Reynolds from Macquarie Bank, Kooga, Bing Lee Penrith, Linda and Co. Designer Jewellers, and Cabravale Diggers Club. I thank those sponsors for supporting a great cause. Such support greatly assisted these students to seize a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The team recently returned to Australia from the tournament, and I am glad to report to the House that the team reached its main goal of winning their pool. Overall, the team finished eighth out of 20 teams. Given the short history of the rugby union program at the school, this is a great achievement. Bernie Carberry from the Australian Schools Rugby Union attended the competition and echoed similar views. I have been informed that John Tanuvasa, the team captain, Nela Vusoniceva and David Sisifa deserve special recognition as the standout players in the team.

I must place on record that this program would not have been possible without the support of principal Mr John Pickering, coach Jarred Hoges, assistant coach Wesley Guthrie, manager Robert Benetel, parents, players and students, and those very generous sponsors. The team comprised the following players: Jonathan Masiasomua, Quyen Ngoc Luong, Kavaefiafi Lavulo, Taniela Vusoniceva, Jarrod Markovina, Raymond Schuster, Tyrone Toohey, David Sisifa, Peter Bui, Kane Clark, Siosaia Tanginoa, Barnabas Tavu'I-Leota, Tupu John Tanuvasa, Jesse Rybicki, Terry Hall, Slavisa Stojicic, Sopheap Morn, Raju Mauulu, Fred Mauala, Paul Smith, Marvin Taalili, Aydan Gardner, Jesse Graham, Ramsin Orahim, Joshua Arevalo, and Michael Avery. Before departing for Japan I had the opportunity to pass on the following message to the students:

Rugby is about teamwork. In order to overcome the obstacles you will face in the field, each and every one of you need to form together as one solid unit. You have a chance to accomplish something very few people have achieved. Look after your teammates and take the challenge on without fear. You have nothing to lose, but everything to gain. But most of all, remember to have fun.

The students have done exactly that. They went to Japan, played well and had a lot of fun. The tournament gave them memories they will cherish for a lifetime—which is what the tournament is about. They were great ambassadors for Australia, the electorate of Smithfield and their families by enhancing Australia's international reputation. I am sure the school's rugby program will go from strength to strength, especially with the culture and coaching staff at the school.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.27 p.m.]: I thank the member for Smithfield for drawing to the attention of the House the Prairiewood High School rugby union team's selection for a tournament in Japan. Particularly outstanding is the fact that the team raised \$147,000 to undertake the trip. I congratulate the team, the school community, the principal, the sporting staff, coaches and families, and of course the sponsors who were listed by the member for Smithfield.

The member obviously takes a great interest in his school and the community. This is a fabulous achievement by the school and its community. I think they only began fielding rugby union teams in the very

late 1990s. The team went to Japan, won their pool and came eighth out of 20 teams. They achieved their goal and it is one of which they, their school community, parents and their local member can be very proud. It is clear that rugby union has a good, solid future when one sees commitment such as that shown by the students of Prairiewood High. I thank the member for his fabulous speech supporting the students of Prairiewood High, and I again congratulate them.

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (Castle Hill) [6.29 p.m.]: The last time an inquiry was held into motorcycle safety in this State was in 1986. Since then there have been massive changes, not just to the design and engine capacity of motorcycles but also to the demographics of riders. In 1986 motorcycle sales were in the doldrums: bikes were used primarily as a cheap form of transport. Not only have bike sales exploded over the past 23 years but also the average age of motorcyclists has risen, with thousands of returnees and new riders aged over 40 getting their licences for the first time, primarily to ride at the weekend—although two wheels are also making a comeback for commuting. Statistics show that older riders are far less likely to be involved in an accident involving death or injury than younger riders. However, this is changing, consistent with the increasing number of older riders on the road. Those aged over 40 now account for more than half of the motorcyclists on the road. At the end of the 1980s just 23 per cent of motorcyclists killed on our roads were aged over 30. In 2007 that figure had more than trebled.

While the total number of motorcycle rider and passenger fatalities has fallen by more than 60 per cent since 1986, the figure is still higher than it was 18 years ago—in complete contrast to the figures for cars—while the injury toll has been trending upwards since 1992. In September 2005 Staysafe reported on two seminars on motorcycle safety. According to papers presented at those seminars, in 2001 motorcycle fatalities in Australia were almost double the median for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development nations. Between 2001 and 2005 the national motorcyclist fatality rate rose by 27 per cent, and a motorcyclist involved in an accident is 30 times more likely to be killed than the occupant of a car involved in an accident.

These statistics and sales trends make a compelling case for holding an inquiry into motorcycle safety. But, as members would know, I have a personal reason for asking the Staysafe committee to carry out such an inquiry. On 28 March I was involved in a motorcycle accident on Wisemans Ferry Road, Maroota. This was an accident that came out of nowhere—the last time I came off a motorcycle was in 1972. It had no cause other than the fact that the bike had recently been serviced and the front brake lever had very little travel. Combined with gravel, or a stick or a bump on the road, it caused my front wheel to lock up and in far less time than it takes to retell the story, I hit the ground, breaking nine ribs, puncturing my left lung, shattering my collarbone and gouging a hole in my left knee.

I thank the police officers on the scene, Constables Paul Tingay and David Hinds from Windsor police station, for their assistance; Belinda Chapman and her colleagues from the Maroota Rural Fire Service, who stayed with me by the roadside until the ambulance came; the ambulance officers; and the doctors and nurses at Nepean Hospital whose skill and professionalism saved my life. Dr Alan Garner was in charge of the emergency department that day. He and his team acted like the well-oiled machine they are, diagnosing and treating my injuries. X-ray machines wheeled in overhead picked up five broken ribs and the shattered collarbone and a CT scanner identified four more fractured ribs. The following morning one of the registrars—whose name I unfortunately do not remember—operated on my knee. Then I was transferred to the wards where pneumothoracic specialist Dr Peter Flynn and the nursing staff took over my treatment.

The greatest threat I faced was pneumonia, but the staff did a wonderful job of keeping the antibiotics and painkillers up and I was discharged five days later. However, my collarbone was shattered and the following week I had it pieced back together by Dr Des Bokor in the Mater hospital at Crows Nest, with physician Dr Ian Love solving some breathing difficulties I had been experiencing for several days. I thank all of these people for the outstanding job they did. No amount of meetings and hospital tours could substitute for the understanding gained from a firsthand experience such as this—although I would not recommend to anyone this way of obtaining knowledge!

My injuries were very severe but they could have been worse. That day I was wearing a leather jacket with body armour, calf-length boots, Kevlar reinforced gloves, jeans and a full-face helmet. My gloves were torn but my hands were largely unscathed, apart from severe bruising of my right hand. My jacket was worn through at both elbows, and I suffered deep grazing on my arms as a consequence. Being a fairly loose fit, I believe it slewed round on my body, rendering the body armour less effective than it should have been. The

jeans—I normally wear leather pants—were totally inadequate, hence the hole in my knee. My feet were unscathed. But the most important item of clothing I had on that day was my full-face helmet. It was scratched and scraped all across the visor and chin guard. If I had been wearing an open-face helmet my face would have suffered the same fate as my knee.

The importance of wearing appropriate protective clothing that fits properly when riding a motorcycle cannot be overemphasised. I do not believe—despite arguments to the contrary—that open-face helmets provide sufficient protection for the face. I recently saw a motorcyclist riding in shorts and sneakers on a 12-degree night. Why do we allow this to happen? Motorcycle safety is not just about saving lives; it is about reducing the incidence of serious injury. Motorcyclists have no progressive crumple zones, no seat belts, no airbags to protect them—just the clothing they have on. As Mark Thompson, the Honda Riders Club of Australia Ride Coordinator, says: You dress for the crash, not for the ride. We should be setting appropriate standards for motorcycle protective clothing in this country; we cannot simply adopt the standards the European Union has set.

Australia's climate is vastly different, and on a 40-degree summer day it is not realistic to expect motorcyclists to be wearing full leathers. However, shorts, thongs and cutaway open-face helmets could and should be banned tomorrow—in fact, I believe that all open-face helmets should be banned for road use. I have written to the Chairman of the Staysafe committee, the member for Camden, regarding an inquiry into motorcycle safety and he has indicated his support for it. I hope it will begin later this year. There is no doubt such an inquiry will save lives.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.34 p.m.]: I thank the member for Castle Hill for drawing the attention of the House to the need for motorcycle safety. Having lost my brother, Allan Michael Collier, in 1978 on a motorcycle, I could not agree more with the member about the need for motorcycle safety and the need for an inquiry into it. I support his request to the Staysafe committee. I welcome the member for Castle Hill back to the House and wish him a full recovery. I am sure all members join me in welcoming him back. He has informed the House of the involvement of everybody—the police, the ambulance officers and the fabulous doctors—many of whom, unfortunately and all too often, we take for granted. The fact that the member for Castle Hill is walking into the House tonight in one piece—is still alive, in fact—is testament to the skill of all those people and their dedication and commitment to the health and wellbeing of all in the community.

I was particularly disturbed when I read the member's comments in the newspaper of what could have happened if he did not have a full-face helmet. He would have lost his face and, presumably, lost his life. I could not agree with him more about that. I see people driving around without proper helmets. It may be wrong to wear a full-face helmet into a bank, but if riders come off their bikes they are likely to hit their heads or faces and lose their lives without such protection. Given my family circumstances of losing a brother at the early age of 23, and the effect that had on my family, I know the dangers that motorcycles pose. I commend the member for Castle Hill for his courage and the way he has spoken tonight, and I trust the Staysafe committee will conduct a good and detailed study into motorcycle safety.

With concurrence the House continued to sit to permit the taking of a further three private members' statements.

STROKE TREATMENT

Ms JODI MCKAY (Newcastle—Minister for Tourism, Minister for the Hunter, Minister for Science and Medical Research, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)) [6.36 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House cutting-edge research work in Newcastle that is saving lives in the Hunter region. Recently I launched an Australian-first research trial at the John Hunter Hospital. The trial aims to deliver brain-saving stroke treatment to rural communities. Strokes affect 53,000 people in Australia each year. It is the number one cause of long-term adult disability in Australia and the second-biggest cause of death worldwide. It is estimated that the direct and indirect cost of caring for a person who has experienced disability from stroke is approximately half a million dollars over the course of their life after stroke, based on the average of 10 years for the time a stroke patient will survive after the stroke.

Stroke treatments must be administered within three hours of a stroke to be effective. It is crucial that people recognise the signs of stroke—facial weakness, arm weakness and speech difficulties—and immediately seek help by calling triple-0 and informing the telephone operator of the stroke. Time is the enemy in treating

stroke and the pre-hospital acute stroke triage, or PAST as it is known, is the best weapon to beat it. The PAST protocol overcomes the time barrier and allows for many more patients to be treated than would have been possible without the protocol. The PAST protocol is essentially a tool kit that includes three elements. The first involves the in-the-field stroke assessment scale. Ambulance officers look at the symptoms of the patient and identify where they fit on the scale and therefore identify whether a patient may benefit from clot-busting treatment. The second is the communication protocol.

The in-the-field ambulance officer communicates the status of the patient to the ambulance control base, which then communicates this to the neurologist. The neurologist then provides advice back. This works by an SMS alert system. Based on the advice of the neurologist, the process then enters stage three, which is concerned with the mode of transport. This is a complex matrix relating to the stage of stroke the patient is in. Eligible patients are transported directly by ambulance or helicopter to John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle, where they will be met by the acute stroke team and immediately undergo brain imaging and treatment. Until recently the protocol has been operating only in capital cities or regional centres across Australia such as Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. The Newcastle and Lake Macquarie treatment rate is among the world's highest.

Thanks to Associate Professor Chris Levi, a member of the Hunter Medical Research Institute Stroke Research Group and Director of Acute Stroke Services for Hunter New England Health, this revolutionary stroke treatment is now giving stroke patients in the Upper Hunter, Great Lakes and Lower Manning areas access to world-class clot-busting stroke treatment as soon as possible. Dr Levi chairs the Australasian Stroke Unit Network and is Medical Director of the National Stroke Foundation. Dr Levi is supported by Dr Mark Parsons, a senior clinical academic, and an international leader in acute stroke imaging. Previously, patients would travel by ambulance to the nearest hospital before they were assessed. When it comes to stroke, this extra time before diagnosis and treatment is the difference between a full recovery and a severe disability. At the launch of this new protocol to help regional areas in the Hunter I met a woman from my electorate, Belinda Cantor.

Belinda is an ambulance officer who administers the protocol and who only recently was a patient treated with the protocol. Belinda would not have been standing beside me at the launch in her ambulance uniform if ambulance officers had not been equipped with the protocol. We now know that there are an estimated 160 stroke patients in the upper Hunter, the Great Lakes and the lower Manning region each year. That means that 160 people can benefit from this rural trial. This is the first time that the protocol has been practised in a rural setting and, if successful, it could be rolled out nationally to benefit thousands of stroke patients, improving equity of access to vital health care services and saving millions of dollars in health care costs each year. Since the trial began a month ago, feedback from the Ambulance Service and patient relatives has been positive.

The protocol has been implemented twice with successful outcomes. In one case, a patient was transported from Tuncurry using a transport combination of road and helicopter and that patient was given the clot-busting treatment. The second case from Singleton travelled via road ambulance and was also successfully given the clot-busting treatment. Newcastle and the Hunter region, through the Hunter Medical Research Institute, are at the forefront of medical research. I thank and commend Dr Levi, Dr Parsons, their teams, local ambulance officers and the Hunter Medical Research Institute. This is one of the best examples of research translating into real outcomes that can significantly change people's lives.

CENTENNIAL PARK AND MOORE PARK TRUST PARKLANDS

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [6.41 p.m.]: Centennial Parklands—which include Centennial Park, Moore Park, the sporting stadia and the Entertainment Quarter—were part of Governor Macquarie's 400-hectare Sydney Common bequest in 1811, which set aside public land for the benefit of the people of Sydney in a most visionary way. The parklands are a major inner city open space resource for local residents and, of course, for people living in the greater metropolitan area. People in the local area live predominantly in medium- to high-density homes, without backyards and with little or no private open space. Major development is earmarked for the region, including Green Square, which alone will bring an additional 30,000 people into the area.

Unfortunately, successive governments have betrayed Governor Macquarie's bequest with continuous encroachment and much of the land is used as sports and entertainment venues, leased or permanently alienated. Progressive cuts to the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust have reduced government funding to a miserable

8 per cent of its annual budget, forcing this important public resource to be 92 per cent self-funded. This is not a sustainable balance for what is meant to be a non-commercial recreational resource and the effects impact on park landscape and usage. Major commercial events have become a big part of parkland operations to help fund parkland management. These events alienate the parklands from passive recreation and create significant noise and traffic impacts.

Antisocial behaviour by patrons creates additional impacts for local residents and is a frequent cause of park vandalism. Residents say that park alienation from fencing prior to and following events can last for up to a month. I receive numerous complaints from residents following music festivals and I have had a significant increase in letters, emails and calls following the February Good Vibrations music concert. Residents reported excessive noise levels during the concert with music audible over radios and televisions, soundproofing, and closed doors and windows. Coaches picking up patrons at the end of the event exacerbated the noise impact by idling engines running for over an hour. Residents said that large numbers of intoxicated patrons walked through local streets leaving rubbish on the pavement and in houses.

Rain on the day damaged the grasslands, reducing large areas to a muddy quagmire, and repairs were delayed by the next scheduled concert. Major commercial events should be held in Homebush, where there are appropriate facilities and transport. Sporting stadia operations already cause frequent noise and traffic congestion impacts as well as parkland alienation for event car parking, despite the 1993 Moore Park plan of management commitment to phase out on-grass parking after the transfer of the Royal Easter Show to Homebush, which occurred in 1997. While \$4.5 million was set aside to assist with alternatives to on-grass parking to compensate for the loss of Moore Park land to the Eastern Distributor, urgently needed solutions such as light rail or an underground car park on stadia land have not been achieved.

Car parking on the parklands encourages car use and is a misuse of scarce recreational land, but it is used to raise revenue for parkland management. The core responsibilities of the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust is to manage our parklands in the public interest, as Governor Macquarie envisaged, providing for the open space and recreational needs of the region's expanding residential communities now and into the future. Basic to this is maintaining rather than diminishing open space and taking every opportunity to extend parklands by reversing past alienations. The trust's work and the land it manages should not be compromised by revenue-raising activities that diminish park values. Inner Sydney has very low levels of open space. The City's 2006 open space and recreational study found that the local government area has 2.36 hectares of open space per 1,000 residents. San Francisco has 3.1 hectares and the city of Melbourne has 7.38 hectares.

The City has made open space a priority and we have been expanding our public open space with new and upgraded parks. Recent achievements include Redfern Park and Redfern Oval, Paddington Reservoir gardens, and the new harbourside park on the former Water Police site in Pyrmont. After countless battles against parkland alienation, including the loss of parkland to the Eastern Distributor, the sale of the showground site for commercial, retail and entertainment purposes, and the proposal for a McDonald's fast food outlet in Moore Park, recently the community was alarmed to hear that the Sydney Cricket and Sports Ground Trust had been talking to the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust about the transfer of land in Moore Park East.

I share widespread community opposition to this proposal. Centennial Parklands are important to the densely populated local communities. I call on the Government to provide a more equitable balance of government funding to the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust to ensure that parklands are adequately managed without the need to resort to commercialisation and alienation of important public land.

LAKE MACQUARIE ELECTORATE COUNSELLING SERVICES

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [6.46 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House of a proposal by Mrs Pamela Cathcart of Centred at the Point Counselling Services at Speers Point, in the Lake Macquarie electorate. Ms Cathcart conducted a two-year study of our community in the three vital areas of health, education and housing. The program will result in Centred at the Point Counselling Services partnering with Hands on Health Australia Inc. to connect these vital services into a package to engage disadvantaged and marginalised people in assisting in their own lives.

Hands on Health is an incredible organisation with august patrons including Governor-General Quentin Bryce, former Governor-General Peter Hollingworth and Evonne Goolagong Cawley. Ms Cathcart described to me her plans for a six-week counselling strategy to mentor people through their individual challenges and to improve their health, education and housing. This would involve connecting with government departments and

other welfare providers. Health, education and housing, in particular, can present real challenges to those on a low income. The Hands on Health strategy proactively addresses the facets of these three major issues. Even basic health care is a challenge if finances are stretched, and there are added complications in addressing more complex health needs or procedures in the public health system.

Many public health services have lengthy waiting lists and this creates difficulties for people in crisis, people in immediate need, or people who are anxious about their circumstances. Hands on Health is designed to relieve the stress by providing counselling advice and appropriate referrals when it is most beneficial. Lengthy waiting lists for housing through the New South Wales Department of Housing and other provider organisations are another source of anxiety, as are the strict financial criteria for eligibility. Hands on Health would provide a strategy to assist in overcoming the hurdles in accessing housing—hurdles such as the procedures and relevant mandatory information required such as medical assessments, income and Centrelink statements.

Access to education also has some prerequisites and associated expenses that often seem unachievable for some. Counselling on education opportunities would help disadvantaged and marginalised people to consider their options for education and for setting achievable goals to improve their opportunities. Again, this involves linking existing funded services to fill in the gaps while waiting for access to appropriate educational courses. Hands on Health would use a mentoring approach to make the most of training and employment opportunities. It would also help clients deal with government requirements for mandatory participation and the entrenched pattern of failure that can result without adequate support.

The strategy for improving outcomes on health, education and housing takes into account the ability and self-esteem of participants and the nurturing of these qualities. The essence of the proposal is the development of a six-week program, with input from the client, tailored to their particular needs. These outcomes are already possible for many, but the intention here is to provide a holistic system of counselling and mentoring for those who need it. The six-week period is relevant for planning, enrolment in education and housing or health services waiting time. However, delays of this magnitude mean that an individual may lose the momentum and preparedness for taking action. Risks are involved in having to wait or, even worse, having to jump in without appropriate guidance. Exposure to such change without a life-structured approach can lead to failure. This is what Hands on Health hopes to prevent.

A review is undertaken three weeks into the program because at this stage a susceptible individual may succumb to fear of the future and be at the point of breaking his or her commitment. Addressing these issues early may provide an improved likelihood of overcoming a client's feelings of being doomed to failure. The Hands on Health program is not intended to deliver a suite of new services; it will provide a six-week program to suitable clients that will maximise success by making productive use of services already available. A key principle is to link with existing services in a structured way that includes the support and guidance necessary to achieve success rather than slide into failure.

In brief, Hands on Health could provide significant help to people in critical need. It could be dealing with the complexity of health needs or relieving anxiety about keeping a roof over the children's heads. Conversely, it could be as simple as providing massage for a sore back. Most importantly, Hands on Health is about inspiring people and providing opportunities for them to overcome their circumstances and provide better lives for themselves and their families. Having discussed Hands on Health at length with Ms Cathcart, I believe it has great potential and the involvement of dedicated volunteers means it would be a cost-effective and useful investment in maximising the delivery of existing services.

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

Private members' statements noted.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to sessional orders, at 5.51 p.m. until
Friday 15 May 2009 at 10.00 a.m.**
