

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 20 October 2009

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

**The Speaker** read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of Motions

**General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.**

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

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### SUPERMARKET ACTIVITIES AND SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr PAUL GIBSON** (Blacktown) [1.04 p.m.]: New South Wales is, and always has been, the powerhouse of the Australian economy. Our economy is driven by business, particularly small business, and today more than ever small business is under threat. Level playing fields no longer exist in this country. The butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker may be a thing of the past. The supermarket chains of Woolworths and Coles are spreading across the small businesses of this nation like a cancer. They control 80 per cent of the Australian supermarket sector and employ 43 per cent of the employees of that sector. Independents control 20 per cent of the Australian supermarket sector and employ 57 per cent of the employees of that sector. This increase in major chain supermarkets will result in lower levels of employment compared with an increase in independent supermarkets. The small businesses of my electorate are terribly concerned.

According to a recent PricewaterhouseCoopers report the 80 per cent control of the Australian grocery market by Woolworths and Coles is up 30 per cent from 1975. Coles employs 113,000 people, serves 15.8 million customers every week, and has 2,258 outlets in Australia. Woolworths employs 190,000 people, serves more than 13 million customers every week, and has 780 stores. Coles and Woolworths control more poker machines than anyone else in the nation. During the past four years Woolworths and Coles have quietly expanded their share of the liquor retailing market from 36 per cent to 54 per cent. Small bottle shop owners and restaurant owners now buy discount liquor in bulk from Dan Murphy's, which is owned by Coles, because they can get it more cheaply than buying direct from suppliers or wholesalers. Today Coles controls 775 liquor stores, 625 Coles Express sites and 95 hotels. At the end of the 2009 financial year Woolworths controlled 1,154 liquor outlets.

Woolworths and Coles control the grocery market by dropping their prices so low that small business cannot compete. Once small business cannot compete the price is increased, which is when Woolworths and Coles come in for the kill. Woolworths and Coles have moved into petrol sales. Woolworths controls 522 petrol stations Australia-wide and has recorded petrol sales worth \$5.6 billion. Any time there is a price rise you can bet your life that Woolworths and Coles are the first to raise their prices. Woolworths has also unveiled plans for its assault on the nation's \$24 billion hardware sector, including a tie-up with the world's second-biggest player, the American group Lowe's, and the opening of large stores to compete with Bunnings. Its aim is to secure more than 150 store sites by 2014-2015.

Federal and State governments must look at this trend. In America no matter what business you are in only a small percentage of the market can be owned. It is an absolute scandal that Woolworths and Coles control 80 per cent of the grocery market of this nation. Maitland is a good example of where these supermarket chains have moved in. Today High Street Maitland probably has 20 or 30 empty shops. It is the same story in every country town in New South Wales. Coles and Woolworths are not the bee's knees to country towns. Coles and Woolworths are the death knell of country towns and the suburbs around the cities. They put ordinary people out of business. They are the death for country towns and some suburbs. They provide a short-term gain for a long-term loss. The days of this Government having a proud record of being a business-orientated State vastly dominated by small business have just about gone.

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.09 p.m.]: I thank the member for Blacktown for being a champion of small businesses in his local area. All members know that small businesses make up 97 per cent of all businesses in New South Wales, and employ more than 1.3 million locals. One-third of all small businesses in our State are run by women; women are taking over an increasing share. The member quite rightly highlighted the small business sector in regional areas and country towns, something that both State and Federal governments should look at more carefully to ensure that bigger companies do not take a larger share of the market. Sydney Markets are in my electorate and its representatives have expressed concern about the pressure that bigger grocery chains put on our farmers to lower the cost of fruit and vegetables. I thank the member for bringing these most important issues to the Chamber.

### **DRAGONS INDOOR CRICKET TEAM**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove) [1.10 p.m.]: I have great pleasure in congratulating the Dragons indoor cricket team, which is based in Gladesville, on playing 500 matches. Greg Smith—not the outstanding member for Epping, but another Greg Smith—founded the Dragons in 1998. He named the team after his beloved St George Illawarra Dragons. The Dragons played their first match on 10 December 1998 at Gladesville Indoor Sports Centre under the captaincy of Greg Smith. During the following 11 years the Dragons have played 500 matches as a team, winning 243 games and losing 249. It tied six games and played two games in which there was no result. In that time the Dragons have played 29 seasons, which have yielded four premierships, six runners-up awards, five minor premierships and two wooden spoons.

Over the years the Dragons have grown to become a large family and a real part of the Gladesville Indoor Sports Centre community: 103 players having played in the Dragons strip. The Barnett brothers, Steve and Tim—the most capped Dragons players—highlight the family nature of the club. The Dragons have a proud tradition of awarding the annual Henry Chan medal to the player judged best and fairest by his peers. The medal carries similar prestige to the Australian Football League's Brownlow medal for the Dragons and is named after one of the club greats, Henry Chan, who played in the club's first match against the Honeywell Heat. Henry infamously dropped a catch off the last delivery to see the Dragons go down 148 to 150 in their first ever match. During the course of the following year Henry played 34 matches and finished with a batting average of 15.74. He captained his last match for the team on 11 October 1999, which resulted in an emphatic Dragons victory. Henry's love for the game and sheer enthusiasm is symbolic of the Dragon's spirit and accordingly the players compete for the Henry Chan medal each year.

Henry Chan medallists include Tim Barnett with four, Andrew Phelan with two, Martin Eddy, Rob Locke, Sam Fairlie-Cuninghame and reigning Henry Chan medallist Jaymes Boland-Rudder. We look forward to seeing Jaymes again take the Henry Chan medal next year. A number of other awards are given out at the Henry Chan medal presentation evening each year, including best batsman, which went to Chris Boyd; best bowler, which went to Daniel McDougall; and the Gavin Fitness Rookie of the Year Award, which went to Andrew Tetley. Other notable winners of the Rookie of the Year award include Sam Fairlie-Cuninghame in 2002-03, Brad Burden in 2005-06, and the current captain of the Dragons, Mike Hagley in 2006-07. The club was proud to secure a new sponsor this year as well, with Nike coming on board and donating a new playing strip to the Dragons.

The Dragons have inducted a number of players into its Hall of Fame, including the club's founder, Greg Smith; the leading all-time run scorer, Tim Barnett with 7,637 runs; the player with the most Dragons appearances, 390, and the longest-serving captain, with 229 matches, Stephen Barnett. This year club greats Daniel McDougall and Cameron Hamilton were inducted in recognition of their longstanding batting partnership. They have batted together 103 times and scored in excess of 3,400 runs for the club. Unfortunately, their great partnership came to an end when Cameron Hamilton retired from the Dragons following a form slump, which culminated when he was trying to show off for the television cameras: He was consequently clean bowled. It was tragic!

This year the Dragons are travelling well under the captaincy of Mike Hagley. Currently they are sitting at the top of the division 1 table and tonight are playing the Aussie Boomers in what is widely fancied as a precursor to this year's final. The club is expecting a number of players to reach individual milestones this year with Brad Burden and Mike Hagley both expected to go past 100 matches for the Dragons, and Sam Fairlie-Cuninghame expected to reach 200 games for the club. If anyone is interested in joining this great community sporting team and carrying on the Dragons tradition they can log on to [www.dragonsicc.com](http://www.dragonsicc.com). I commend the Dragons Indoor Cricket Club to the House. I wish them many more years of great success.

### CENTRAL COAST SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL

**Mr GRANT McBRIDE** (The Entrance) [1.15 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the daily tribulations that Central Coast students face when trying to get the best education whilst following their dreams, especially those who have unique sporting abilities, that particular elite group that would benefit from the additional training they get from attending specialised schooling and sports activities. The Central Coast is one of Australia's main contributors to major sporting organisations. It has produced many world and Olympic champions and continually supplies sports men and women to professional and amateur sporting clubs both here and overseas. Sporting ability is evident at an early age. We should encourage budding sports people. Healthy bodies and healthy minds are part of the Australian objective.

Central Coast students who want to excel in their chosen sport and pursue an education at the same time do not have the same opportunities as students from other parts of the State—I include country New South Wales. The Central Coast has the worst conditions in the public high school system in the State for our sporting elite to train. Specialised sports schools, like Hunter Sports High School, cater for the cream-of-the-crop potential sports stars. However, for students in my electorate the trials and tribulations of getting to these faraway institutions diminish the expertise these schools provide. It is good that talented students can attend these far away secondary schools that cater for special sporting abilities. But at what price? This is a typical saga for one of our young students.

Mrs Tanya Franklin encouraged her son Jordan's sporting dreams and enrolled him in a specialised sports school. They live in The Entrance electorate. To follow his dream he has to attend school at Hunter Sports High School at Gateshead. Jordan leaves home at 6.25 a.m. His mother drives him to the Gosford train station where he catches the 6.39 a.m. train to Broadmeadow. He then hops on a bus to Gateshead, arriving at school at 8.50 a.m., a travelling time of two hours and 25 minutes. In the afternoon he catches a Newcastle bus at 3.15 p.m. that arrives at Cardiff station at 3.37 p.m. where he catches the 3.44 p.m. train that arrives at Gosford at 4.48 p.m. He then returns to his house. The end of the day is another tiring journey. Each school day is a long day for this young man. This is not a new situation.

In February 2006 parents whose children travelled by bus to Hunter Sports High School from my electorate contacted me. They had similar problems. The Red Bus company that operates from The Entrance and Busways that services the northern end of the Central Coast arranged its timetables so that students from the eastern side of the region could connect with the regular service to Charlestown past Gateshead and Hunter Sports High School. The negotiations for that change to the timetable took about nine months because of contracts with the bus companies that do not recognise the needs of young people commuting to the north. However, this does not lessen the aggravation that parents and students have to put up with to attain their goals in sport and education.

We live in a beautiful area, surrounded by lakes, beaches, mountains and rugged terrain. However, logistically it is difficult from a public transport perspective. The Central Coast is dissected by several waterways. In the south we have the Brisbane Waters that splits the Gosford local government area. In Wyong Shire we have the Tuggerah Lakes system and in the northern end of the region we have Lake Macquarie. It is difficult to travel by public transport in this area, which highlights the problems associated with getting to Hunter Sports High School in Gateshead. I am constantly negotiating with the Department of Transport to assist these students to find the most appropriate and safest route to school.

The only practical solution is the establishment of a sports high school on the Central Coast, which would do away with the unnecessary time wasted travelling. These talented young students have been disadvantaged for long enough. They have paid a heavy price for being special. When they become stars we will bathe in their glory. Let us help them make the journey to achieving their goals by shortening their journey now. It is not difficult or costly to provide a sports high school. Even if it were, we should do it. Let us press on and invest in the sporting prowess of our youth by establishing a Central Coast sports high school.

John Monie, a well-recognised National Rugby League international and local coach, grew up on the Central Coast. He said the one thing that young people with sporting prowess on the Central Coast miss out on is good coaching. It is not available on the Central Coast. Our young people have to leave the Central Coast if they want specialist coaching. Young people in Sydney, the Illawarra, country New South Wales and the Hunter do not have to leave their areas. The Central Coast should have a sports high school.

### GREATER SOUTHERN AREA HEALTH SERVICE

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [1.20 p.m.]: As a member of Parliament I have a responsibility to maintain the highest level of morale amongst the communities I represent. Unfortunately,

changes proposed by the Greater Southern Area Health Service are causing great challenges. It is difficult for me to find a way for the communities of Deniliquin, Finley, Barham and Tocumwal to understand the changes that have been suggested by the Greater Southern Area Health Service to nursing profiles in their hospitals. For sometime I have requested representatives of the Greater Southern Area Health Service to hold forums and explain the situation to the public. I am not qualified to conduct such forums, to listen to health complaints and to give answers.

I have approached the New South Wales Nurses Association, which is a key element in the process and understands the industrial situation in hospitals. Unfortunately, to date I have received no support from them. In fact, with recent statements in the Sydney media, they sound more like spokespeople for the Government rather than representatives of the nurses. A couple of forums have been conducted in the Greater Southern Area Health Service region. A forum was held at White Cliffs. Nursing hours at the local hospital will be changed and a local clinic will be closed for a couple of days a week. Some of the community issues were able to be resolved at the forum. In fact, the cluster manager accepted some excellent suggestions that came out of the forum. I believe some of those changes will be put in place and will result in a decrease in the suggested level of closure of the clinic.

My approaches to the Greater Southern Area Health Service have been stonewalled. When I tried to ring the chief executive officer of the service I was directed to the secretary. Every time I tried to speak to the secretary I was transferred to an answering machine. The organisation is stonewalling the communities to which it provides health services. It is not prepared to communicate with the community about the changes. If the service can support changes to nurses' profiles in hospitals, it has an obligation to meet with concerned residents and clear up the matter. The Government will say that health advisory boards are the solution, but health advisory boards in most of these communities feel like whipping dogs. Although they are seen to be the vehicle for consultation, they are the last to find out anything.

Only one applicant responded to advertisements for positions on the Hay Health Advisory Board. The community's interest in participating in the health service in Hay is burnt out, which is a great disappointment. Local people have great skills; some have a history of participation in health advisory boards and they have seen the process in action. Health advisory boards are unable to solve the difficulties. I call on the Minister for Health to examine the conduct of area health services, particularly the Greater Southern Area Health Service. They have a responsibility to communicate with the public. There is no shame in holding a public forum. I believe it is the simplest way to communicate change. I accept that money must be saved. I will support sound arguments as to why changes must be made and their impact on clinical care. If the Greater Southern Area Health Service is to introduce change, it should hold public forums and communicate the changes to the communities.

### **CABRAMATTA MOON FESTIVAL**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [1.25 p.m.]: On Sunday 27 September 2009 I had the pleasure of opening the 2009 Cabramatta Moon Festival. Together with the Lunar New Year festival, the Moon Festival is the most important festival for the thousands of people of a South-East Asian cultural background who live in my electorate of Cabramatta. Traditionally, the Moon Festival is celebrated when the moon shines brightest in the night sky—at the equinox. The Moon Festival is an important celebration for families because it is a time when parents show their good fortune in having children. It is a good fortune that none of us should take for granted. I was happy to see many families from many different cultures celebrating our city's favourite festival. The many cultures in the area are what make Cabramatta so special.

Some 133 different cultural groups call our city home. Some of them have been here for a long time; others are from new and emerging communities. We believe in building trust, sharing values and common interests, and cooperation between all our cultural groups. The Cabramatta Moon Festival is built on these ideals. That is why I am happy and grateful that so many people enjoy the cultural harmony that we have achieved in Cabramatta. The thousands of happy, friendly faces I saw around me on the day of the festival is proof that cultural diversity is thriving in Cabramatta and that we all have much in common, regardless of where we were born or grew up.

Some very special guests attended this year's Cabramatta Moon Festival. We welcomed councillors from Griffith in New South Wales's Riverina, which is Fairfield city's newest sister city. Fellow members of Parliament attended, such as the Hon. Paul Lynch, the member for Liverpool, and Jason Clare, the Federal member for Blaxland. Other special guests included Aunty Norma Shelley who is the local Aboriginal Elder and welcomed us to country; Peter Overton, from Channel Nine network news; councillors and staff from Fairfield

City Council; and Mr Tri Vo, President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, New South Wales Chapter. It did not stop there. There were rides, dancers, singers, children's shows and lion dancing, and the crowd favourites of prawn peeling and moon cake eating competitions. One of the highlights of the festival is the children's lantern parade. The spectacular fireworks concluded the festival at 8.00 p.m.

There was something for everyone, whatever their tastes. Cabramatta is famous for its food. Plenty of stalls and restaurants were open around Cabramatta showcasing the wonderful cuisines of South-East Asia. For those who had never tried moon cake, there was plenty to go around. I thank the sponsors who helped make the 2009 Cabramatta Moon Festival possible. Although Fairfield City Council organised the Moon Festival with the help of the local community, many volunteers looked after the thousands who attended, including members of St John Ambulance and the State Emergency Service, and more than 120 community members who put their hands up to help out with the festival.

I thank all involved for their hard work. Without their passion and commitment the event that day would not have been possible. I especially thank the many performers who provided more than eight hours of non-stop entertainment for those who attended. I was very honoured to be part of these celebrations as the State member for Cabramatta. The Moon Festival is one of the world's most ancient traditions, going back thousands of years. It was an absolute pleasure to open the ceremony. I look forward to opening many more in Cabramatta in the years to come.

### **BUS SERVICE 606**

**Mr WAYNE MERTON** (Baulkham Hills) [1.30 p.m.]: Since the changes to the 606 bus service, I have made representations to the Minister for Transport on behalf of many constituents. The responses that I have received from the Minister tended to waffle on about changes to other bus routes in the area. However, it is pertinent to note that in some of the responses the Minister stated:

It is recognised that the local terrain may inhibit certain members of the community from accessing bus services. In some instances, local and community transport providers may be able to provide assistance.

I assure the Minister that The Hills district is aptly named. As people get on in years, they find it extremely difficult to walk up and down hills to access public transport. The changes to the 606 bus route have made it even more difficult for them. In the ministerial responses it was suggested that contact be made with the Western Sydney Community Forum by telephoning 9637 2432. My constituents who telephoned that number discovered that it has a recorded message indicating that that number is not connected. When my office contacted the Western Sydney Community Forum it was confirmed that the number referred to in the ministerial responses is incorrect. Furthermore, the Western Sydney Community Forum does not directly supply transport assistance.

The Western Sydney Community Forum represents a large number of community organisations that have been advocating for better bus services in western Sydney—an admirable and needy cause. The forum's research paper entitled "Connecting with Buses" states that improvements to bus services are needed to reduce transport disadvantage in western Sydney. The paper further states:

An inability to access transport either because of cost, availability of services, or poor physical accessibility leads to isolation. It is important that planning for buses is driven by community needs rather than Treasury's desire to keep costs down ...

It is a fundamental role of Government to reduce social exclusion.

The changes to the 606 bus service have affected many elderly and infirm people who reside in Winston Hills and Baulkham Hills. On 15 April last year I received correspondence from the Ministry of Transport advising that there was to be a review of the Region 4 Bus Network. At that time many residents put forward submissions in an effort to retain the then current 606 bus route. Those people were appalled when the changes were made to the service on 11 May this year. They all complained that they had not received even an acknowledgment that their submissions had been either viewed or rejected. They believed that the decision had already been made to alter the service and that the call for submissions was simply a public relations exercise.

Winston Hills is part of the Parramatta City Council area. The coordinator of Holroyd-Parramatta Community Wheels has informed my office that there has been an extremely large increase in requests for transport assistance from the elderly in the Parramatta City Council area—so many, in fact, that the organisation simply cannot meet the need. Residents of The Hills Shire Council area are also affected by changes to the 606 bus route. Residents in the Parramatta and The Hills local government areas have difficulties, including

Mr and Mrs Dawson; Mr Rod Edwards and his mother, Lesley Edwards, of Homer Street, Winston Hills; and Bob Wagstaff of Tennyson Street, Winston Hills. They are just a few of the many people who have problems with the bus service. The Transport Coordinator from The Hills Community Care has informed my office that there has been an increase in requests for transport, which it is struggling to meet. Upon receiving the response to my representations on her behalf, Ms Cora Lember of Winston Hills replied:

I am sure a youngster like the Honourable Minister would enjoy a brisk walk along Model Farms Road, into Junction Road, then into Caroline Chisholm Drive and on to the shops then carry frozen goods home the same way.

Ms Lember, who is 80 years of age, says that she is now forced to rely on her son to transport her to the shopping centre and to her doctor, whose surgery is located opposite the shopping centre. There are many folk in my area who, sadly, do not have the support of a son like Ms Lember. Shane and Dymphna Feneley, of Disraeli Road, Winston Hills, share those concerns. Those people are now isolated because their bus service has been removed by the stroke of a pen. As members of this House well know, I have been strongly advocating for improved commuter bus services from The Hills area to the city. Such improved services are essential. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that we must also meet the transport needs of the elderly and the infirm in our communities.

I have been horrified to discover that many elderly residents believe that the State Government has done away with the 606 service because not enough income was derived from it. If that is the case, it is an appalling indictment of the Government. I ask the Minister for Transport to urgently review this situation and return the 606 bus service to its original route and to provide a reasonable, but essential, service to the people affected by those changes.

#### CITY OF SYDNEY 2009 SPRING CYCLE

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.34 p.m.]: As all members of Parliament know, bicycling is extremely good for your health. Studies in Holland have shown that 30 minutes of bicycling per day adds years to your life. That is why on Sunday 27 September 2009—a big day in western Sydney with the Cabramatta Moon Festival—I was pleased to join about 250 other riders at Ash Road Sporting Complex at Prestons, in my electorate, to join the Liverpool leg of the 2009 Spring Cycle. I have spoken previously of the Spring Cycle. I am very pleased that Bicycle New South Wales has chosen to start two legs of the ride in Western Sydney—one at Liverpool and one at Blacktown, with both converging to meet the North Sydney leg at Olympic Park. This year 10,841 riders rode, up from 8,500 in 2008. About 900 came from the western legs, a number I know will increase when others learn that we get the tailwinds!

I was accompanied by Jenny Burn, the Chair of the Board of Bicycle New South Wales, and her partner, Phillip Goldstein. Jenny and the board of Bicycle New South Wales have taken up the challenge of improving the health of western Sydney by advocating to increase bicycle use in western Sydney. Jenny's personal commitment was shown by choosing to go to Liverpool to start the day. The new headquarters of Bicycle New South Wales at Olympic Park were recently opened by the Hon. Kristina Keneally. I mention also the vision, advocacy and leadership of Alex Unwin, the Chief Executive Officer of Bicycle New South Wales, who is an inspiration to everyone in the cycling community with his persistence, calm and good sense.

The riders at Liverpool on the day came from all walks of life, with a wide range of experience. Many health workers were present. For example, Geesha McGuire, one of our local midwives, whom I have spoken about before in this place, rode with her son. Professor Bruce Hall, who looks dazzling in lycra, rode with his wife, Dr Suzanne Hodgkinson. Dr Shaun Richards, one of Sydney's leading dermatologists, also rode from Liverpool. He was wise enough to know a tailwind when he saw one! Many of the leaders of our local bicycle user group, LiveBUG, are health workers. They also must have known that the day was going to be windy and that the western Sydney legs had the tailwind.

I pay special tribute to the volunteers, especially those from the Oncology Children's Foundation. They were wonderful, encouraging, friendly and great fun. Without the volunteers there could be no spring cycle. This year a new route from Liverpool diverts from the M7 bike track into the western Sydney parklands. The track passed through the Fairfield City Farm, through Fairfield and then on to the magnificent new track around Prospect Reservoir. There was also a very welcome coffee break at Central Gardens, Merrylands. The great advantage for all who participated in the ride was the opportunity to explore the magnificent new bicycle infrastructure that is being built in western Sydney. Most of the 50 kilometres that we rode on the day were completely off-road.

I encourage all members of Parliament to get behind the push to have more and improved bicycle facilities in their electorate. The M7 bicycle path and the Prospect Reservoir route, both of which will provide health benefits to western Sydney residents for generations, are perfect illustrations of forward thinking and vision. Former Minister for Roads Carl Scully deserves special mention for those achievements. I acknowledge also other members of Parliament who cycle, especially the Hon. Kristina Keneally, the Hon. Verity Firth, the member for Kiama, Matt Brown, who rode the Spring Cycle with his son, Julie Owens, Tony Abbott and the member for Sydney, Clover Moore, all of whom are known for their commitment to cycling.

I very much look forward to being a part of the Staysafe committee as it examines bicycle safety in a future inquiry. Perceived danger is still a powerful disincentive for many people who wish to return to cycling. I understand that the latest version of the State Bike Plan is to come to Cabinet, the next stage being an update to the Bike Plan 2010, which financed much of the work in western Sydney. The Spring Cycle is an established part of our city's annual calendar. I pay tribute to the sponsors, the Roads and Traffic Authority, the City of Sydney, the Oncology Children's Foundation, Westlink M7 and Sydney Olympic Park. It was a great way to start Bike Week. I commend Bicycle New South Wales and the 10,841 cyclists who rode in the 2009 Spring Cycle.

### NORTH COAST WATER DAMAGE INSURANCE CLAIMS

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour) [1.39 p.m.]: This afternoon I speak on behalf of Mr Rex Hicks, a constituent of Coffs Harbour, and others who are in a similar situation to Mr Hicks. Mr Hicks lives in Korff Street, Coffs Harbour, and unfortunately his home was inundated with stormwater in March this year. Mr Hicks suffered a stroke some time past and is a disability pensioner, but he is a highly intelligent man who generally finds life pretty tough. He has photographic evidence of his home being inundated with stormwater from the town centre, yet his insurer, CGU Insurance, is maintaining that the water that went through his house was a combination of both stormwater and floodwater coming from Coffs Creek, which runs behind his property.

It is common sense that if your house is inundated with stormwater, floodwater or a mix of both, your home and contents are ruined. Originally, Mr Hicks' insurance claim was accepted and he was given a bed and some very meagre furniture for his home. But he has got to the stage where he is not going to insure with CGU Insurance again because CGU Insurance has now officially denied the claim and the claim has been presented to the insurance ombudsman. Mr Hicks has endeavoured to get new insurance but has been unable to because his property is still damaged—both building and contents. His house is not ruined, it is repairable, but the contents were ruined and have been thrown out. Because of the actions of CGU Insurance he cannot get his house insured because he must admit that it has been damaged.

This man is a true Aussie battler who has done it pretty hard in past times, but this flood has basically ruined him. He is a stoic character and, as I said, there are others like him within the Coffs Harbour electorate. But his case has touched my heart because he is unable to get the insurers to listen to him. He has now been told by the insurance ombudsman that it could take up to four months for his appeal to be heard. This storm happened in March and it is peculiar that the NRMA, which is the parent company of CGU Insurance, accepted liability and stated that it was a storm. CGU Insurance, a subsidiary of NRMA, does not have the same attitude and classes the event as a flood, which is not covered by insurance under their policy.

This situation is an absolute and utter disgrace. It is totally unacceptable to put these people in this position. On top of that—and this is a criticism of government, whether it is Mr Rudd's Government or a Coalition Government—the Government has failed to give people such as Mr Hicks the \$1,000 per person sustenance that was offered to all other flood-affected areas between January and June this year after we had three floods in the Coffs Harbour electorate over that period. I appeal today to CGU Insurance to look at the photographs presented by Mr Hicks and his neighbours and to accept the fact that the first rush of water that went through his house—which caused the damage in the first place—was stormwater. It is conceded that water came up from Coffs Creek later on, but one could argue that, due to environmental legislation and lack of attention by the council over the years, Coffs Creek is becoming clogged and therefore water levels rise in these heavy rain and storm events and properties get inundated as a result.

Those issues need to be addressed, as I believe they will be in Mr Ken Moroney's report following his inquiry into what happens after events like this. But currently CGU Insurance has denied quite a large number of claims in the Coffs Harbour electorate. It needs to come to the party, assess Mr Hicks' claim and accept the evidence that is on the table, because I am sure that in four months time the insurance ombudsman will accept the photographs that have been proffered by Mr Hicks and will insist that CGU Insurance pay the claim. This situation is not good enough and Mr Hicks and other people in my electorate deserve far better.

### PORT STEPHENS SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens) [1.44 p.m.]: Today I speak about a great event in my electorate, the 2009 Port Stephens Small Business Awards, which were held last month. This year I, along with other community members, had the honour of being a judge for the awards. It was a time consuming yet incredibly interesting and worthwhile task. More than 13,000 customers voted for their favourite business. As a judge I was given a list of selected nominees whom I had to visit to assess in categories such as customer service and knowledge of product and services, as well as overall performance. It was a great experience, and I was very impressed with the friendly nature of all the staff in the businesses I visited. It certainly demonstrates what makes Port Stephens such a fabulous place in which to live, work and play.

The awards event topped off the experience. It was a fabulously organised ceremony and a really enjoyable evening at the Soldiers Point Bowling Club. I congratulate the *Port Stephens Examiner* for organising and hosting yet another wonderfully successful Small Business of the Year Awards. Very special thanks go to NBN TV and local radio sporting commentator and Hunter icon Mike Rabbitt for again generously giving his time to act as master of ceremonies. I hope the House will indulge me in recording the winners of the Port Stephens Small Business Awards for 2009. The Best Accommodation in Port Stephens award went to Winning Holidays at Nelson Bay. Best Automotive Service/Retail went to Tony King Auto Repairs at Karuah. Best Bakery/Cake Store was awarded to Kelly's Famous Bakehouse at Medowie. Essential Beauty at Salamander Bay won Best Beauty Therapist.

The Anchorage Marina at Corlette took out the Best Boating and Marine award. The Best Butcher award went to Medowie Meats at Medowie. Best Builder (Homes) was awarded to Greg Paton Master Builder of Medowie. The Best Cafe/ Bistro award went to Michel's Patisserie at Raymond Terrace. Nelson Bay Bowling Club was awarded Best Club. Raymond Terrace's Studio 2324 was named the Best Dance Studio. The Oyster Shack at Tanilba Bay received the Best Fast Food/Takeaway award. Best Financial Institution went to Greater Building Society at Nelson Bay. Best Florist/Nursery went to Bay Bouquets at Raymond Terrace. Bay Living at Nelson Bay was awarded Best Furniture/Home Décor. Best Gift Store went to Liquidators at Tanilba Bay. Best Independent Fresh Food was awarded to Medowie Fruit Bowl at Medowie.

Raymond Terrace's La-Patite was named Best Hairdresser. Thriftylink Hardware at Salamander Bay was named Best Hardware. Shoal Bay's Country Club Hotel was awarded Best Hotel/Bottleshop. Terrace Jewellery at Raymond Terrace was named Best Jeweller. Page One at Raymond Terrace was awarded Best Ladies Fashion and Footwear. Best Mens Fashion and Footwear went to Pure Surf Industries at Raymond Terrace. Best Pets and Vets went to Raymond Terrace Veterinary Clinic at Raymond Terrace. Best Pharmacy was awarded to Amcal at Salamander Bay. Port Stephens Denture Clinic at Nelson Bay was named Best Professional Services. Best Real Estate went to Harcourts Port Stephens at Nelson Bay. Best Restaurant—International/Ethnic went to Marco's at Shoal Bay. Best Restaurant—Modern Australian went to Blue Water Grill at Nelson Bay. Salamander Bay's TAB was awarded Best Specialised Business. The Australian Shark and Ray Park at Bobs Farm was named Best Tourist Attraction. The Best Trades and Services award went to Raymond Terrace Retravisation at Heatherbrae.

Unfortunately, there can be only one overall winner. The gong for the 2009 Port Stephens Business of the Year went to Raymond Terrace Veterinary Clinic at Raymond Terrace. Vet Jeff Titmarsh, a former Port Stephens councillor, is a brilliant and hardworking vet and a great member of our community. He certainly deserved the award. I note with pride that several businesses in my hometown of Medowie won awards, including Best Butcher, Best Independent Fresh Food and Best Baker. I congratulate butcher Ben, grocer Anthony, bakers David and Fiona, and the Best Home Builder, who is my old workmate Greg Paton. I congratulate all those who were nominated for awards on a job well done.

### MID NORTH COAST PARLIAMENTARY SHOWCASE

**Mr PETER BESSELING** (Port Macquarie) [1.48 p.m.]: It gives me no greater pleasure than to extol in this place once more the virtues of the beautiful mid North Coast, and particularly the electorate of Port Macquarie. Last night, while I was in Port Macquarie opening the Australian Water Associations Twelfth Engineers-Operators Regional Conference, this House was welcoming the very best food that our area has to offer through the mid North Coast parliamentary showcase. The showcase incorporates a sample of some of our area's delicacies and includes local food, beer, coffee and wine that will be the foundation of a specifically designed parliamentary menu on offer for the remainder of this week.

I urge every member of this Chamber and of the other place to consider eating in at least once during this week's sitting. I further challenge them to find better tasting produce anywhere else in Australia! This showcase not only is the best that the mid North Coast has to offer but also is a celebration of the achievements of people with a great passion for their craft. It is testament to their dedication to quality and it represents all that is great about our wonderful State of New South Wales.

The Parliamentary Showcase is part of a growing and long-overdue fascination with quality produce and dining, particularly in the Port Macquarie region. Having personally been involved with marketing research of the best restaurants within the Port Macquarie area in 1997, I can say that we have moved a long way from the restaurant in the local RSL club being the venue of choice to the situation today of having a number of fine dining establishments that challenge one another to produce more exotic and flavoursome creations. I am very proud to say that most of this has been achieved in concert with local producers and their ability to make quality products available.

Producers of note include the delicious Armstrong Oysters from Camden Haven, as the member for Tamworth will attest, Barbushco bush tucker of Lorne, the Other Chef produce from Lake Cathie, World Par-Tea, Peak Coffee, Cassegrain Wines and the Little Brewing Company from Port Macquarie. These are but a sample of mid North Coast businesses that will have their products combined into gastronomic delights this week by Parliament's head chef, Scott Clark. The Parliamentary Showcase is also one of many opportunities for the people of New South Wales to sample the delights of the mid North Coast with many events that either have taken place or are planned for the Hastings region as part of both the Tastings of the Hastings and the Journey of Flavours promotions.

Last Sunday, locals and visitors alike enjoyed the treats of the area in a specially selected menu at one of the best locations along Australia's coastline, atop North Brother Mountain overlooking the beautiful Camden Haven, with a three-course meal presented by local award-winning chefs at the Slice of Haven North Brother Brunch. Other events planned for the area include the week-long Holiday Coast Credit Union Tastings of the Hastings at Port Macquarie racecourse, bush tucker month at Sea Acres Rainforest, jazz in the vineyards at Bago Vineyards and "six degrees of degustation", a charity dinner created by six chefs that included six wines and a six-course celebration of regional cuisine, at Rydges in Port Macquarie.

Additional to these celebrations are other opportunities within the Port Macquarie electorate to sample truly delicious produce, including the famous all natural Moorland orange juice, the lovely Ricardos tomatoes, Lorne Valley macadamias and the organic beef and free range eggs of Doraville, where you can not only purchase their produce, but have your violin repaired at the same time by the violin doctor. As noted by the Minister for Regional Development, the Hon. Phil Costa:

Many of the categories we are importing—fruit and vegetables, seafood, coffee, cereals, dairy and meat products—can and should be sourced locally, from regions like the Mid North Coast. The quality is peerless.

I recommend that all members at least sample the menu this week. I congratulate all the local producers and also the restaurants in the Port Macquarie electorate for their dedication and efforts towards producing very fine foods.

### **TRIBUTE TO IRIS RUBY MACDONALD, MBE**

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL** (Dubbo) [1.53 p.m.]: I rise to pay the respects of this House to the late Iris Ruby Macdonald, MBE. Over a span of more than 92 years, Iris Macdonald led a life of great achievement and renown, but passed away quietly in Dubbo on 23 September 2009. It would be a great shame for a life so full and so dedicated to public service to pass without proper mention. Iris Crosby was born at Kadina in South Australia, where in 1941 she married Angus Duncan Macdonald, creating a steadfast partnership with a husband who fully supported Iris's many years of public community service. As the saying goes, behind every successful woman is a good man. Angus Macdonald encouraged Iris's determination to channel her energy, enthusiasm, hard work and generosity into public life.

In 1958, Iris and Angus Macdonald moved from Kadina to Henley Beach, in the western suburbs of Adelaide, to further the education of their children, Rodric, Heather and Ian. Here they continued their commitment to public service and community involvement. Iris was elected to the Henley and Grange Council in 1967, only the eighth woman to hold such an office, and was a tireless contributor to the life of the beachside suburb for many years. She became an alderman on the council in 1972. She was the first member of the South Australian Board of the Australian Local Government Women's Association, or ALGWA. ALGWA is a non-party political organisation that supports women's participation in local government. She was elected president of the South Australian board in 1970 and became national president in 1972.

In 1977 she became a Member of the British Empire for her "Service to Local Government and Community Service". Such honours are not won lightly. In 1985 she was awarded the South Australian Medal for Services to Local Government. In her role as a councillor she had been actively involved with the Housing Advisory Board, the aged care centre, the Council of the Ageing, local Australia Day celebrations, and the community hospital. She was instrumental in the establishment of the Henley and Grange Historical Society, Henley Leisure Life Club, Henley Community Library Board, the community bus, and the Henley Community Aid and Advisory Centre. The Iris Macdonald Building, which houses the Community Aid and Advisory Centre, was named in her honour.

In 1987, when Iris Macdonald retired from the Henley and Grange Council—which has now been incorporated into the City of Charles Sturt—she was declared a freeman of the city. She was the longest-serving woman in South Australian local government history. Iris also held leading roles with the Women's Service Association, Western Community Hospital, Henley Senior Citizen's Club, the Royal District Nursing Society, and the Henley and Grange Association of Church Women. She had also been active in many other organisations, including as president of the Henley Country Women's Association. Mrs Macdonald had devoted much of her time to assisting the aged. She was vice-chair of the South Australian Council on the Aging and made numerous visits to senior citizen's centres around the country to investigate the needs of the elderly.

In her later years Iris Macdonald moved to New South Wales where she settled in Dubbo in my electorate, where I first met her through her daughter, Heather, whose late husband, John, was a highly regarded anaesthetist in the Dubbo area. After a short illness at the age of 92, Iris died on 23 September, bringing to a close a long and distinguished career of public service. She is greatly missed by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and by her partner of recent years, Eric Flower, of Orana Gardens Village in Dubbo. I am certain that her former colleagues in local government in South Australia have also mourned the passing of this admirable woman who committed so much of her life to public duty. As a former member of ALGWA I acknowledge her contribution to the organisation.

I was privileged to attend the funeral of Ms Macdonald in Dubbo to commemorate a life so well lived. The notes from that service declared, "Her energy, generosity and love will live in the hearts of all those who knew her." I thank Iris's son, Ian Macdonald, for his assistance in preparing this parliamentary commemoration of Iris's achievements. I thank the House for this opportunity to acknowledge the life of Iris Ruby Macdonald, who was a shining role model for women serving in politics and public service, not just in South Australia but also throughout the rest of our great country.

#### **DALWOOD ASSESSMENT CENTRE AND PALM AVENUE SCHOOL**

**Mr PETER DRAPER** (Tamworth) [1.57 p.m.]: I have been contacted recently by many local parents who are very concerned by a decision to close the Dalwood Assessment Centre and Palm Avenue School in Seaforth at the end of term. I have been told that this decision will have a devastating effect on many local children, not to mention kids from across country New South Wales. Dalwood offers specialist literacy services to regional and remote families whose children have significant educational difficulties. The children have been unable to be helped through local education resources. Once the resources have been exhausted applications can be made to Dalwood to have children assessed, and then programs are designed to meet their specific needs. Students are referred to Dalwood from State, Catholic and independent schools, and from indigenous and non-indigenous families.

Locally there has been an extraordinary rate of success. Dalwood has allowed children to reach a level of achievement in their schoolwork previously unthinkable. Without Dalwood, children affected by learning challenges would be stuck in a cycle of repeating programs not suited to their particular learning problems, and continuing to fail. The process most families follow for children struggling in these areas is a distressing one. It is a very real and very painful experience. For many children, Dalwood and Palm Avenue has been a door to success, healthy self-esteem and confidence in literacy.

It is my understanding that the centre is currently providing services for 200-plus children per year from country New South Wales, and there are already more than 100 on next year's waiting list. Parents have every right to ask what will happen to their children in the future as the risks of allowing children to grow up functionally illiterate are very well documented. The new proposal that has been put forward is not providing the answers that parents are looking for. If the existing facility was properly funded the current waiting list could be eliminated, giving each child a better chance in life. If funding was increased, the service could accept

applications much earlier or visit the children's home schools, facilitating a thorough assessment of their circumstances and needs while reducing the need for travel to Sydney. I received an email from another local parent yesterday stating:

I have a 7 year old son who entered the Dalwood system at the beginning of this year. He was so far behind in his reading and literacy skills, his prospects for achieving a reasonable level of education seemed limited. With the programs put in place by Dalwood, in the space of 9 months, he has gone from looking at the pictures to reading for enjoyment. The spin off to his story is that his school is now using the same program to help other kids, and believe me, there are so many of them who simply can't read.

Almost all of the Dalwood staff have already been given a termination date and only a proportion of the Palm Avenue teaching staff will be moved to the new, and as yet untested, unit at Westmead. There are fears that this unit will not be set up in the same form or with the same mandate as the Dalwood and Palm Avenue facilities and that it will provide services only to children from the most remote areas. Closure without making this sort of service widely available to all country kids would be short-sighted and a waste of the combined experience, expertise and professional wisdom of existing staff.

Parents and professionals have told me how important the educational component is under the current system at Dalwood. David Paterson, senior lecturer in special education and educational psychology at the University of New England, told me that there is no doubt that powerful outcomes for students with learning difficulties and disabilities are much more likely when professionals work together. He said that the combined centre proposed for closure was one of the few places where that collaborative practice was a normal part of day-to-day operations. David said:

...interagency cooperation is regularly talked about in the field of education but less regularly practised. This usually means that advocates for the child—usually the parents—are the ones who have to make connections between various service providers. This is a very difficult undertaking, particularly for parents who do not live in the major cities.

Simply no other service, existing or proposed, meets the needs of country children in the way that the Dalwood and Palm Avenue facilities do. While there is talk of more inclusive services, no-one can provide quantifiable details of how the alternative proposal improves upon what already exists at Dalwood or details about what will become of children overlooked in non-remote areas such as in and around Tamworth and Gunnedah. I stress that parents do not mind where the service is based—they are not saying that it must be delivered from the current site at Seaforth.

However, the existing proposal is being strongly challenged by both parents and educators. The decision appears flawed, with parents expressing very serious concerns about inadequate consultation. Country parents are rightfully worried that this decision will result in further disadvantage to already vulnerable children in our education system. I have already been contacted by the Minister's staff, and they have indicated to me that they will provide answers to the questions that mums and dads in my local area are asking. I look forward to receiving that advice. However, the many consultations I have had with parents indicate that this appears to be a poor decision and one that will not advantage young people in regional New South Wales in the future.

#### **Private members' statements concluded.**

*[The Assistant-Speaker (Ms Alison Megarrity) left the chair at 2.02 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

### **ASSENT TO BILLS**

Assent to the following bills reported:

Liquor Amendment (Temporary Licence Freeze) Bill 2009  
 Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Bill 2009  
 Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Authorised Representatives) Bill 2009  
 Road Transport (General) Amendment (Consecutive Disqualification Periods) Bill 2009  
 Shop Trading Amendment Bill 2009

### **DEATH OF ANDREW "PACKY" TURNBULL**

#### **Ministerial Statement**

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro—Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Rural Affairs) [2.18 p.m.]: It is with great sadness that I inform the House of the tragic death last

week of a valued firefighter with the New South Wales Fire Brigades. On Friday evening firefighter Andrew "Packy" Turnbull collapsed and subsequently died while serving his community at a grass fire at Fingal Head on the north coast of New South Wales. Despite his colleagues' and paramedics' valiant efforts he was unable to be revived. The 35-year-old retained or on-call firefighter served with the Kingscliff brigade for just over seven years—since October 2002—and was an experienced and well-liked firefighter. Our sincere condolences go to Mr Turnbull's parents, Gwen and Cliff, his children, his family members, his colleagues, and the Kingscliff community.

New South Wales Fire Brigades lost one of its own, which deeply affected his captain and crew and all who knew him in the wider fire brigades family. Mr Turnbull was a very active member of his community. He was also a volunteer with the State Emergency Service for a decade and I am told that he was a well-known and popular member of the Cudgen Green Hornets Rugby League Club. In honour of Mr Turnbull's contribution to New South Wales, Commissioner Mullins, on behalf of the State Government, offered the family a formal New South Wales Fire Brigades funeral to demonstrate the high regard in which he and his contribution to the community are held. I am advised that a number of support services, including assistance through the New South Wales Fire Brigades chaplaincy service, have been offered to Mr Turnbull's family members to assist them in this difficult time. I again offer condolences to Mr Turnbull's family on the loss of such a valuable firefighter.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [2.20 p.m.]: On behalf of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition and the shadow Minister, Melinda Pavey, I endorse the words spoken by the Minister for Emergency Services and, as the local member, wish to offer a Tweed perspective. Emergency services personnel do a wonderful job protecting our communities and our property. Fighting bushfires is a dangerous job. Late on Friday Andrew "Packy" Turnbull died while fighting grass fires at Fingal Head. His fellow firefighters rushed to his aid and desperately tried to revive him, but they were not able to do so.

For the past seven years Packy was not just a proud officer of the Kingscliff fire brigade, he was also a popular local character. As the Minister said earlier, for a decade Packy was a volunteer with the State Emergency Service. He was also a member of the Cudgen Green Hornets and played for the under 17s through to A grade. He is sorely missed. I wish to refer to some of the comments to be found on Facebook and in our daily news. They read as follows:

I am so very sad for you all. I still can't stop crying and still can't believe we've lost our Packie. A lot of love I sent to you all from myself and my kids.  
Julie Warren

Best bloke, be missed by all. Love from all the boys and to Corey and all the family, we are here for you bro.  
Jordan Mortimer

To my great friend, your attitude to life was an inspiration to us all, you were a true gentleman and you will be forever in our hearts, you will be greatly missed.  
Geoff & Mel

These comments highlight the Kingscliff community spirit. Packy, a loved member of the community, is survived by his children Corey, Marcus, Christopher, Benjhamin, Kiara and his two stepchildren. Packy will be sadly missed, but his spirit will live on through the active volunteers in the Tweed.

**The SPEAKER:** I join with the Minister for Emergency Services and the member for Tweed in offering condolences to the Turnbull family. I ask members and officers to rise as a mark of respect.

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

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Notices of Motions**

**Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.**

**General Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Withdrawal of Business**

**General Business Notice of Motion (for Bills) No. 2 withdrawn, by leave, by Mr Greg Smith.**

## QUESTION TIME

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[*Question time commenced at 2.24 p.m.*]

### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Why, as part of his taxpayer funded post-budget advertising blitz, were Labor voters deliberately targeted to participate in research focus groups? Why is the public paying for Labor's research?

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I had a bet with myself earlier today that the Leader of the Opposition would be stupid enough to ask this question today. He walked straight into it. The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition relates to a report in today's media. The Leader of the Opposition sought documents on a public information campaign on jobs and investment from the New South Wales Government's record \$62.9 billion spend over four years, the largest infrastructure program in the State's history, supporting up to 160,000 jobs each year.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** Honesty, transparency and accountability—the Leader of the Opposition can have it in bucketloads shortly. Of that amount, \$23.6 billion, or 37.5 per cent, will go on roads, rail and public transport infrastructure, including nearly 700 train carriages and 1,300 new buses. Over the next four years we will also invest more than \$800 million for the south-west rail link and \$935 million to improve the rail system through the rail clearways program—a program that is already having a very beneficial effect, with on-time running at a decade high. More than \$15 billion will be invested in energy, \$5.4 billion on water and sewerage infrastructure, more than \$4 billion in housing and \$2.5 billion in health infrastructure. Local projects are being built in communities right across New South Wales, boosting local economies and supporting local jobs.

On 30 September, the Leader of the Opposition was provided with more than 250 pages of documents under freedom of information legislation about the advertising campaign. He had three weeks to trawl through those documents. He had every opportunity to consider the freedom of information request in its entirety. All the documents were clearly identified by date and by sequence. Despite all the facts being available to him, we now know from a newspaper report today that the Leader of the Opposition is either grossly stupid or grossly dishonest.

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** What did he do with the 250 pages? The Leader of the Opposition promoted a story to journalists and news desks—

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. Forget the 250 pages, here is the page, one page, that says we're paying for—

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** We will get to that document in a moment. He has been up hill and down dale this morning traducing me. That is fine, that is part and parcel of politics. But I will not have him mislead the people of New South Wales and not be held to account. His objective today has been to deliberately mislead the public of New South Wales. The Leader of the Opposition asserted today that an image of a construction site in an American city was used in our advertising campaign, when it never was. He put forward a deliberate lie.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** It is your document.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** We will come to the document shortly.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I know members are dying to know what image was ultimately used. However, let us go back to the very beginning: 250 documents were available to the Leader of the Opposition. Let us pull out one of those emails. First, a departmental email on 18 June confirms that the images of Minnesota appearing elsewhere in the bundle of documents that the Leader of the Opposition just held up were there as drafts.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** No.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** You are not reading the bundle, Barry, because you are lazy.

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The email reads—and he should have known it, if he did not:

Please find attached the draft idea for how the ads could look ... the first is an actual recent RTA shot. The second is a stock image for guide only ... which we will replicate with an actual Sydney Skyscape once the skies clear.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Wakehurst to order for the second time. I call the member for Kogarah to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** Nothing could be clearer. The photo used and the one to which the Leader of the Opposition refers was indicative only. It was never going to be used in a Government advertisement. A further email dated 8 July states:

On the press ads ... A number of drafts were produced as ideas but all using stock material ... None were approved.

The actual image used is the Chatswood transport interchange—nothing from Minnesota. The Chatswood transport interchange and the Falcon Street footbridge at North Sydney were the images used in the print and the vision.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Bathurst to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The Leader of the Opposition presents himself as an alternative leader. He has deliberately misled—

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Where is the research?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I am coming to that.

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** He has deliberately misled news desks across Sydney.

**Mrs Jillian Skinner:** Let us see the document.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I am forced to read the deliberate misreading. At 6.30 this morning on 2GB the Leader of the Opposition said, "How is it possible ... to misuse public funds to the tune of millions of dollars on political ads and we end up with images of Minnesota ..." That is wrong and deliberately misleading—it did not appear anywhere. At 7.00 a.m. on Vega—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on both sides will come to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** At 7.00 a.m. he said on Triple M "... trying to pass off images of Minnesota ..."—wrong and deliberately misleading; at 7.45 a.m. he said on 2BL "...trying to pass off Minnesota as the City of Sydney"—on and on he goes, deliberately misleading news desks and the people of New South Wales. I will now turn to the essential substance of the question. I will quote to deal with each of the allegations that he has been propagating—the propagation of the lie that has occurred all day today. I quote from the official advice to me from the Department of Commerce. Here is your answer, Barry, and you are

deliberating misleading both this House and the people of New South Wales: "Allegations regarding recruitment of focus group participants", the official advice to me, reads—and listen closely, Barry; it is important that you get the detail right:

The advertising agency recommended to the department that some focus group respondents be recruited based on voting history. This proposal was explicitly rejected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order, including the Minister for Transport.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I ask members to cast their minds back to the last time we sat when for two consecutive days when the Leader of the Opposition failed to ask me a question. Why? Because he had recently put out a bit of pap that masqueraded as his social policy framework. It was an embarrassment. The name of it was lifted from Scotland. He and the rest of his shadow Opposition hung their heads in shame for a week. They are doing a very good line in embarrassment. The Leader of the Opposition ought to hang his head in shame. He presents himself as a putative leader of this State. If he had any style or class he would stand up to the people of New South Wales and apologise to them this afternoon.

### JOBS CREATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**Mr BARRY COLLIER:** My question is directed to the Premier. Will he update the House on the New South Wales Government's commitment to boost jobs for young people?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I thank the member for his question and longstanding interest in this matter. The New South Wales Government has a comprehensive education and training plan for the young people of our State. It is a three-stage plan: firstly, high-quality school education for all young people until the end of year 10; secondly, compulsory education or training for all 16 and 17-year-olds unless they are working for a minimum of 25 hours per week; and, thirdly, an abundance of training opportunities for over 17s through TAFE, apprenticeships, cadetships, universities and the non-government training sector. Whether it is the national results or the might of the OECD, the evidence is in and it is not in dispute: New South Wales has the best students—the most gifted, talented and, importantly, hardworking. Our teachers are the best in Australia; they are leaders in the classroom and their skills and innovation are delivering results where they matter most.

This Government takes great pride in each of our students, each of our teachers and each of our schools. We have the world's best education system; it is the envy of every State in the nation. And let me make this clear: we intend to keep it that way. That is why we are delivering another record Education budget. Our training plan has four key elements. First, I refer to our 25 trade schools, which are currently being built or are already opened. Second, I refer to our School to Work Program, where 30,000 employers in small businesses provide work placements for the more than 55,000 students taking part in vocational education and training courses as part of their Higher School Certificate.

Third, we have school-based apprenticeships and traineeships where students can undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship while still at school. More than 50 school-based traineeships are available, which all contribute towards the Higher School Certificate. Fourth, we also have our pre-apprenticeship and pre-traineeship strategy to address acute trade skill shortages. The courses, in automotive, construction, electrical and engineering trades, provide work experience in their industry as well as credit towards a full apprenticeship. They are just a few of the options available to young people in New South Wales.

We are also proud of our historic Learn or Earn package, with some \$69 million in new resources, creating more than 12,500 training places over four years, including 5,850 TAFE places in skill shortage areas—an educational revolution in anyone's books. We also have our new public sector cadetship program. It is a great chance for Higher School Certificate graduates who do not want to go to university to get a career foothold. The program provides 500 places each year or 2,000 in total over four years. That began in February 2009 as a pilot program. In the pilot phase 80 cadets were hired in August from more than 1,000 applicants. With the pilot under our belts, we are about to move to the next phase. That process began on Saturday with advertisements for round two.

In the current round of advertising more than 250 positions are on offer across the State in a range of jobs, including office or business administration, customer service, community services, information technology and the environment. The cadetships are available across Sydney, from the northern beaches to Warragamba, and into regional New South Wales, from Bathurst, Dubbo, Grafton and Tumut. More than 25 government

agencies will provide on-the-job learning and mentoring to ensure our cadets develop the skills to succeed in public service. Applications close next month. I urge all members to encourage their young constituents to apply.

The other big educational news is, of course, the start of the Higher School Certificate exams this week. This year the Higher School Certificate will involve some 69,000 students across New South Wales, more than 750 exam halls, 5,000 supervisors and 7,500 markers—an extraordinary exercise in logistics in one of the most rigorous exams of its type anywhere in the world. It is internationally recognised as one of the best exams of its type in the world. It is used in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia. We also sell our secondary school junior curriculum and primary school curriculum to the United Arab Emirates, further proof that the New South Wales education system is the very best in the world. Those countries that want an education system ask New South Wales for our help.

Unlike other jurisdictions that have watered down their senior certificates, the Higher School Certificate remains firmly grounded in rigour, academic excellence and content knowledge. English is compulsory. And good, old-fashioned external exams remain in place. Why? Because if a credential is not rigorous, it is not worth having. That level of rigour means that the Higher School Certificate period is stressful. There is no escaping that. In fact, for most young people, the Higher School Certificate is the single biggest thing to have occurred in their lives to date. So our thoughts are with every student undertaking the Higher School Certificate, along with their parents, carers, and brothers and sisters.

Many members of this House have been through the Higher School Certificate, and we know how tough it can be. But students should be assured that in earning a New South Wales Higher School Certificate they are acquiring a credential with worldwide respect and credibility. It is their academic passport to international academia. It is something they can really be proud of, an award that will stand the test of time and as good as any other of its type in the world. As year 12 students head towards the examination halls, I also pay tribute to the professional and dedicated teachers, principals and support staff in our education system. They have played a key role in shaping the next generation. And as they say farewell to their latest cohort they can take enormous pride in a job well done. So good luck to the Class of 2009: I am sure you will do your schools, your parents and, most importantly, yourselves proud.

### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** My question is directed to the Premier. Now that it has been revealed that the Premier's chief of staff personally wrote the script for what is clearly taxpayer-funded political advertising, will the Premier admit that he has no respect for the taxpayer and his Government is ethically bankrupt?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Minister for Finance to order. The Premier has the call.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** It seems that the Leader of The Nationals wants to extend his leader's embarrassment. Let us be very clear about what has gone on here. The Leader of the Opposition's first question to me today demonstrated his dishonesty to the people of New South Wales. A reliable, dependable and loyal deputy would not have asked a second question on this topic. Let us catalogue again: the Falcon Street bridge, the Chatswood interchange, and he was wrong in his central assertion. The Leader of the Opposition has misled the fourth estate, he has misled the news desks of New South Wales and he has misled the people of New South Wales. They will get their credibility back; the Leader of the Opposition will not.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on both sides will come to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** Today was the Leader of the Opposition's Godwin Grech moment: he will stop at nothing—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order, including the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister for Planning.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The Leader of the Opposition will stop at nothing. He has deliberately perpetrated a lie to the people of New South Wales today, with no obfuscation—

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. I have allowed the Premier to speak for several minutes, but the question was specifically about his chief of staff. I have an email from Graeme Wedderburn here—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I am happy to address the question directly. I quote from the official advice:

The investing in A Better Future campaign was approved in accordance with the New South Wales Government advertising guidelines. The campaign was peer reviewed prior to submission, with the findings incorporated into the final proposal.

So the Leader of the Opposition was wrong with regard to his first question—multiple times.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order. The Leader of The Nationals will put the document away. The member for Kogarah will come to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The central elements of the Opposition's first question are utterly wrong and are utterly repudiated. The central element of its second question is also utterly wrong. The Leader of the Opposition, in the prelude to question time, called on me to have greater honesty, transparency and accountability. I repeat: If the Leader of the Opposition had any style or class, he would apologise to the people of New South Wales. This is a reflection on him. If the Leader of the Opposition were serious about being honest, he would have stood up at the first moment he knew he was wrong and he would have apologised. He did not do that, and he stands condemned for it.

### HEALTH SYSTEM REFORM

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister advise the House of the Government's response to recent evaluations of the New South Wales health system?

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT:** Last week saw two important national reports into the state of the health care sector, one from the Australian Medical Association and the other from the Productivity Commission—two reports, two days apart, and two different perspectives on how the New South Wales health system is progressing. I say this very clearly: The New South Wales Government welcomes debate on health care reform. There is a national debate going on with regard to health care reform. We will participate in that debate genuinely and constructively. But we know that there is an ageing and growing population, and we know that this means increasing demand for health care services. As I said, we welcome debate on health care reform. However, if that debate is to be meaningful it needs to be based on factual and up-to-date information.

While the Australian Medical Association report provides a useful snapshot of the performance of health systems across Australia, and it certainly highlights the pressure our public hospitals are under, it is a snapshot based on data that is some 15 months old. The report does not reflect the most recent data; nor does it reflect the implementation of the Government's Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for New South Wales. For example, with respect to patients requiring surgery within 90 days, the latest data reveals that in June 2009, 85.2 per cent of patients were treated within the recommended time frame. This is a marked increase from June 2008, when it was 75.5 per cent. The New South Wales Surgical Services Taskforce and the Government have been working assiduously since 2004 to improve surgery access for all patients, from the most urgent to the most routine. And they have enjoyed some success. The Government has also invested in excess of 2,000 new permanent beds and bed equivalents in the public hospital system since 2005.

The Australian Medical Association's treatment of emergency department performance does not reflect the growth in demand for these services. July 2009 saw 182,000 patients presenting at our emergency departments, compared with just over 161,000 patients presenting at our emergency departments in the same month last year—in other words, about 5,000 extra people per week presented to New South Wales emergency departments. For the record, emergency triage performance for 2008-09 has been at or better than national benchmarks, with the exception of triage category 3. Triage category 3 targets were significantly impacted on by the dramatic increase in activity in emergency departments as a result of swine flu. It is a tremendous credit to the hardworking doctors, nurses and other staff in our public hospital system that our emergency departments did as well as they did, given the impact of swine flu on them.

New South Wales Health continues to develop new models of care to create capacity to meet increased demand, but I believe some acknowledgement of more recent performance data is warranted. Last week also saw the delivery of the Productivity Commission's public and private hospitals draft paper. It is a more contextual analysis: it takes account of, and draws comparisons between, the public and private health systems. The Productivity Commission report draws attention to three important issues: first, that elective surgery in

public hospitals is more accessible for disadvantaged socioeconomic groups, as one would expect; second, that public hospital patients often present with more complex surgical and medical needs; and, third, that the public system is as efficient and competitive as the private hospital system in like circumstances.

The Government welcomes both these reports and, as I said, we welcome debate on health care reform. However, of course, the mainstay of the Government's health reform agenda is the report we receive from Mr Peter Garling, SC, in November 2008. The Government's response to Peter Garling's report—Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for New South Wales—is a \$485 million commitment to the people of New South Wales to continue to drive health reform. I am pleased to provide the House with an update on progress. On 12 October 2009 I released new guidelines for clinical handover to ensure greater patient safety in New South Wales hospitals.

Clinically "handover" refers to the exchange of patient information not just at the change of shifts but when patients are transferred to another ward, transferred for a test or appointment, or transferred to another hospital or community care. This handover is critical for patient safety and perhaps goes to the core of the tragic case of Vanessa Anderson, whose family continues to seek improvements in patient safety in honour of their daughter's memory. I acknowledge the interest and advocacy of the member for North Shore in this area.

The Government has accepted the advice of Mr Garling that NSW Health should introduce a mandatory shift handover policy that requires part of the handover to be at the bedside of the patient, for sufficient time to be allocated for the handover, for specific information to be conveyed during the handover and for a written or an electronic record to be made of the handover. The Government is also making progress in the implementation of other recommendations by Mr Garling. For example, funding has been allocated for 500 clinical support officer positions. Recruitment for those positions has been completed in many parts of the State and other areas are well advanced in filling those positions. The appointment of executive medical directors has occurred in many of the health services.

The new Health Bureau of Information has been established—I have announced its chair and chief executive officer—and it will provide important health information for the general public that is clearly understandable and relevant. I reiterate that the Government welcomes debate on health care reform but that debate should be based on factual and up-to-date information. The New South Wales Government is committed to continuing to implement the Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for New South Wales to drive change and systemic reform well into the future.

### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I direct my question to the Minister for Commerce. As the Minister responsible for Government advertising, how often does the highly paid Premier's chief of staff get personally involved, including approving the scripts for taxpayer-funded advertising?

*[Interruption]*

**Ms JODI MCKAY:** Calm, calm. Contain your excitement.

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms JODI MCKAY:** I find it extraordinary that the Opposition just does not get it and is so far wrong on this issue. The Premier has clearly indicated today that the Opposition is off the mark.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Do you believe him?

**Ms JODI MCKAY:** I believe what I know as Minister for Commerce. What I know is that the majority of advertising undertaken by the New South Wales Government—

*[Interruption]*

Let me finish what I am saying.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. I call the member for Terrigal to order.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** What I know is that the majority of advertising undertaken by the New South Wales Government is for public health and safety issues. The Government also has anti-smoking campaigns that have driven down the smoking rate in New South Wales over the past 10 years from 24 per cent to a new low of 18 per cent. The Government also has the Get Healthy and Dark Side of Tanning campaigns. For the Opposition to comment about Government advertising in a completely erroneous fashion—

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was clear. How many of the majority of advertising campaigns the Minister referred to are drafted by the Premier's chief of staff?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will resume his seat. The question also related to approvals. The Minister's answer is relevant to the question asked.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** For the Opposition to be completely erroneous in everything it is suggesting today is quite extraordinary. I am advised that the Investing in a Better Future campaign was approved in accordance with the New South Wales Government advertising guidelines. That is an important distinction to make. The decision is peer-reviewed and adjusted where necessary—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Wakehurst that he is on two calls to order. Members will cease interjecting.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** As I was saying, it was approved in accordance with New South Wales Government advertising guidelines, peer-reviewed, adjusted where necessary, and approved by the Budget Committee of Cabinet. It is important to ensure that the Opposition understands that this campaign was aimed at informing community members about infrastructure activity in their local areas. It was also aimed at informing community members about any potential disruption or inconvenience that may have been caused. I reiterate that it was approved in accordance with New South Wales Government advertising guidelines and included information about local jobs and easy access information about relevant tender opportunities.

I also inform the House that 129,406 extra visits were made to the site between 17 June and 16 July this year. The specific stimulus-related pages were viewed about 210,000 times in that same period. That indicates that the people of New South Wales are interested in the Government's Investing in a Better Future campaign. The people of New South Wales are interested in the money that this Government is investing in stimulus packages throughout the State. Once again, I reiterate that it was approved in accordance with New South Wales Government advertising guidelines.

### CITYRAIL SERVICES

**Mr ALLAN SHEARAN:** I direct my question to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister update the House on the performance of CityRail under the 2009 timetable?

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** I thank the member for his question and I appreciate his interest in public transport issues.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** The timetable was introduced a week ago.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** The timetable has delivered 100 new services across the weekday and 8,000 additional services for passengers across the peak period.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** Mr Speaker, you may be surprised to note that despite the doom and gloom from the Opposition, and the child who cried wolf over there, the world did not end on 11 October and chaos did not reign. As a matter of fact, the integration of the new timetable went very well. Hardly a surprise that all the scaremongering from the Opposition in the lead up to the integration turned out to be a stunt—the Opposition is all about stunts. The member for Willoughby was at her alarmist best.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** In between whingeing and whining, the member for Willoughby was trying to frighten everyone into believing that Armageddon was upon us. Here is a sample of the antics of the member for Willoughby, which I will quote:

On top of the train timetable changes ... western Sydney bus timetables will also change on 11 October ... which could potentially cause chaos.

I am pleased to inform the House that the reality was a far cry from the chaos predicted by the member for Willoughby.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** In fact, I will take the House through the past seven days of peak weekday service operations on the CityRail network. The first peak under the new timetable, which was introduced a week ago last Monday, was on-time running 99 per cent in the morning and 96 per cent in the evening; Tuesday, 99 per cent in the morning and 100 per cent in the evening; Wednesday, 99 per cent in the morning and 100 per cent in the evening; Thursday 98 per cent in the morning and 98 per cent in the evening; and rounding out the first week, Friday was 100 per cent in the morning and 99 per cent in the evening peak—far from chaotic. All of these were well above the benchmark of 92 per cent. Yesterday on-time running was 99.6 per cent in the morning peak period. The member for South Coast should listen, following her inane interjections.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** On-time running was 99.6 per cent yesterday morning and 99.5 per cent yesterday evening. Today's morning peak on-time running was 99.2 per cent. Again, all were above the benchmark of 92 per cent.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** The member for Willoughby should put politics aside for a moment and give credit where credit is due and a pat on the back to those hardworking CityRail staff. But her silence is deafening.

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** You sacked them.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** You are on two calls. Be careful.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Willoughby to order for the third time. In future, to save time, I may place her on three calls to order initially, rather than calling her to order a first and second time.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** Her silence is deafening. No thanks, no congratulations, not a crumb to offer the front-line staff who have delivered these on-time running performances. She only wishes it had failed. Gladys the Grinch would have been praying for it all to go wrong. She should be ashamed. Opposition members have not stopped there: unable to criticise the operation of the timetable, they are trying to convince commuters that they are worse off. That is wrong. In fact, there are 100 additional services across weekdays and an extra 8,000 seats during the peak hours. There are more peak services on the Western and North Shore lines and a new peak service on the East Hills line.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** Gladys will prime someone to say it. I refer to comments from satisfied customers who rang the 131 500 transport information line. One customer said:

The rescheduling of trains on the East Hills line between 7.30 a.m. and 8.30 a.m. has improved the system and created two additional trains that get me to Wynyard by 8.30 a.m. Congratulations.

A further customer said:

The new Northern line service has cut down on the amount of trains I have to catch to get to Macquarie University, which has also cut my travel time. The new timetable is very agreeable to me.

Another customer complimented RailCorp on the introduction of the express 8.02 a.m. service from Yagoona to Town Hall, making travel to work in the morning a breeze.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** The new timetable enables RailCorp to use the Chatswood interchange to full capacity. That is the Chatswood interchange referred to earlier in the stunt by the Leader of the Opposition.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** We can be sure that the local member has not been anywhere near the Chatswood interchange in a long time. The House will be aware that Sydney hosted the successful 2009 World Masters Games. Thousands of athletes have been in town enjoying what this great city has to offer. It is recognised internationally that no other city runs big events like Sydney does. Once again we delivered. But the member for Willoughby and her moaning colleagues cried wolf in the weeks leading up to the games. She got herself in a lather and whipped up a press release, filling people with fear. She made no attempt whatsoever to check the facts on the event or the timetable. She said:

It is a risky strategy having timetable changes coincide with a major world event.

She went on in her press release:

It is apparently also the case that there are no plans to put on additional transport services to cater for tens of thousands of competitors, officials and spectators.

If nothing else, the shadow spokesperson for transport follows the lead of the Leader of the Opposition: never check the facts, never get it right, and always pull a stunt that blows up in your face. If the member for Willoughby had gone to a Sydney train station she could have spoken to one of the helpful CityRail staff about the arrangements that were in place for the World Masters Games. If she had she would not have written "apparently no plans" in her press release.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Penrith to order. I call the member for Epping to order.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** She did not even have to go to a train station; she could have called 131 500 or visited the 131 500 Transport Info website, where all the details of the World Masters Games were clearly available. But, like the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Willoughby does not check the facts, and she certainly does not let the facts get in the way of a good yarn.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order, including the member for Cessnock.

#### **DALWOOD ASSESSMENT CENTRE AND PALM AVENUE SCHOOL**

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** My question is directed to the Premier. In light of the Premier's decision to spend millions of taxpayers' dollars on political advertising, can he explain to families from rural and remote New South Wales why Labor is closing the Dalwood Assessment Centre, which provides country children with learning difficulties access to specialist psychologists, speech therapists and doctors?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I am advised that the Dalwood Assessment Centre and Palm Avenue School is a joint health-education service located at Seaforth for rural and isolated students. The service is being remodelled by the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Training to deliver better health and education outcomes for rural and remote students. I am advised that there were some issues with the existing service. A significant number of students were not from geographically remote areas and students were not maintaining education gains during their stay at the school. The remodelled service is intended to take advantage of new technology available in schools, which provides an exciting opportunity to deliver the service in the bush. Obviously, it is better to support children as close as possible to their homes, schools and communities.

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** This will make the service more accessible for isolated students, particularly Aboriginal children. There will be a focus on identifying children early at school and providing services locally to support the child, family and school environment. It is aimed that children will start the program at an earlier

age, rather than when a child is between the ages of 9 and 12 years. It is proposed that the remodelled service will amalgamate with the Children's Hospital Education Research Institute. It is scheduled to begin in term two next year. This institute is a highly regarded facility that conducts research into the educational and psychosocial aspects of children with learning difficulties.

As a result of the planned changes no more referrals will be taken for the residential component of the Seaforth program after the current group finishes on 18 November 2009. Parents have been contacted to inform them of the changes. Any concerned parents will be followed up by the Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service and the Department of Education and Training. Until the new service commences students and family will be provided with ongoing support by both the Department of Education and Training and New South Wales Health. I am advised that the Department of Education and Training will continue to offer its regular follow-up education services to students who have completed the residential program. If the member for Murray-Darling wants to raise concerns about this issue he should feel free to contact the relevant Ministers directly rather than try to score a minor political point in the Parliament.

### CANCER TREATMENT

**Ms CHERIE BURTON:** My question is addressed to the Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Mental Health and Cancer). Can the Minister update the House on the latest efforts to improve cancer treatment in New South Wales?

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY:** This morning the Minister for Health and I visited the Oncology Day Centre at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Randwick to launch a new \$330,000 online program called eviQ Cancer Treatments Online. EviQ is a New South Wales innovation that will dramatically improve cancer treatment in this State and beyond. In a world first the Cancer Institute NSW has developed an online opioid dosage calculator that will provide nursing staff, medical specialists, general practitioners and pharmacists with a safe and accurate tool to properly manage patients' pain.

This world-first opioid calculator complements tools developed by the Cancer Institute to determine correct chemotherapy and radiation dosage treatment for individual patients based on the latest international evidence. Each dose is customised to the particular patient's weight, height, medical history and medication regime, and the electronic record of the calculation and any clinical notes form part of a patient's permanent file. The eviQ website contains the most up-to-date cancer treatment protocols available in Australia. These protocols are informed by the latest international evidence, written by specialist cancer pharmacists at the Cancer Institute and approved by a panel of oncologists.

For patients eviQ provides personalised information in plain language so they and their carers can understand and feel in control of their cancer treatment. Patients such as Kay Schubach, whom I met this morning at the chemotherapy clinic in Randwick, will benefit from this. Ms Schubach is 46 years old and was diagnosed with an aggressive and widespread stage four rectal cancer in May this year. Following surgery she began a course of chemotherapy treatment. She has now had seven of twelve treatments. EviQ offers patients like Ms Schubach the comfort and knowledge that her treatments are being measured and administered according to the latest available evidence.

With her own secure online account Ms Schubach is able to access the information she needs, such as expected side effects of treatment. For clinicians, cancer nurses, allied health professionals and general practitioners, eviQ provides the latest information and data about very complex cancer treatments. For Ms Schubach it means that through every step of the journey the various medical specialists, nurses and health professionals involved in her treatment know exactly how she is progressing.

EviQ is a New South Wales invention that harnesses the knowledge of clinical cancer experts across Australia. This is especially important in rural hospitals, where new information has in the past been harder to access. EviQ is the brainchild of leading oncologist and cancer researcher Professor Robyn Ward, who received the 2007 Premiers Award for outstanding cancer research for her internationally significant study into genetic causes of bowel cancer. EviQ replaces its forerunner, a basic online treatment reference site called CI-ScaT—Cancer Institute NSW Standard Cancer Treatments—which Professor Ward developed with the Cancer Institute in 2004. The current site receives close to 700,000 hits a month from cancer treatment facilities in New South Wales, other Australian States and, remarkably, as far afield as the United States of America and Russia.

The fact that eviQ's forerunner is drawing attention from around the world demonstrates that New South Wales is a world leader in cancer treatment and innovative ways to improve it. Today's launch of eviQ

means that there are now nearly 1,000 evidence-based protocols of cancer treatment available. EviQ will change the way patients are treated by providing global safety alerts within an hour of their release and updates to international evidence-based treatments within 24 hours—a far cry from the old method of waiting for printed updates of treatment guidelines, which are often out of date by the time of publication and delivery to cancer treatment facilities.

EviQ has been under development and testing for two years by information technology and clinical experts at the Cancer Institute NSW, which is an agency established by the Labor Government in 2003 to deliver the kind of innovative patient care programs that eviQ represents. Despite the progress we have made, cancer remains the biggest single cause of premature death in New South Wales, with one in two men and one in three women likely to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. I am pleased to report that Kay Schubach's treatment has progressed well despite her stage four diagnosis. Scans have so far found no further traces of cancer. She is a remarkable and brave woman. I am sure I speak for all members when I send our best wishes to Ms Schubach and to her family.

#### **MEMBER FOR BANKSTOWN, THE HONOURABLE TONY STEWART**

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** My question is directed to the Premier. How much will New South Wales taxpayers be forced to pay for the Government's legal costs in defending Supreme Court action launched by the member for Bankstown?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I can advise the House that I have had a meeting with Mr Stewart in relation to the litigation commenced by him in the Supreme Court against the State and Ms Chris Ronalds, SC. It was later agreed that Mr Stewart would discontinue proceedings and pay the defendant's costs. Yesterday I released a statement in relation to that matter. On the issue of costs, I am happy to release the Crown Solicitor's correspondence to the Department of Premier and Cabinet received today. That correspondence outlines the settlement negotiated and recommended by the Crown Solicitor.

#### **WORLD MASTERS GAMES AND CRAVE SYDNEY**

**Mr PAUL McLEAY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism. Will the Minister update the House on the success of recent major events in New South Wales, including the 2009 World Masters Games and Crave Sydney?

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Is she a volunteer or a participant?

**Ms JODI McKAY:** She is a volunteer and a participant. The World Masters Games has been a fantastic event for Sydney and New South Wales. The New South Wales Government has been extremely pleased to be a supporter of these games. The games came to an end on Sunday night with the closing ceremony at Darling Harbour.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. Question time has not yet concluded. Members should take a leaf out of the book of the member for Pittwater, whose behaviour has been exemplary today. I acknowledge that his parents are in the gallery during question time today. The Minister has the call.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** A special hello to Mr and Mrs Stokes. As I said, the games came to an end on Sunday night. Yesterday I had the pleasure of standing with the President of the International Masters Games Association, Kai Holm, who declared the Sydney 2009 World Masters Games were indeed the best ever. He said:

The Sydney 2009 World Masters Games has set a new standard, which is going to raise this event to an international level we haven't been to before—for us they have been absolutely the best Games ever.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** This has demonstrated once again that Sydney is Australia's premier events city. I acknowledge the bipartisan support that the Opposition has given to the World Masters Games. If members of the Opposition let me speak about the World Masters Games all will be well. We have held the best Olympic Games and now we have held the best World Masters Games. There were many great stories that came out of the World Masters Games over the nine days. More than 28,000 athletes from 95 countries came to Sydney. I will mention just a couple of the highlights. Ruth Frith, who is 100 years old, took up shot put in her seventies and she went on to claim six gold medals. Margo Bates, a 98-year-old multistroke swimmer from Adelaide,

received a standing ovation every time she got out of the pool to accept a gold medal. Carl Hebel, a 69-year-old athlete, whom the Premier met, walked 1,100 kilometres from Gympie in 21 days as part of his training regime to ensure he was in top condition for the games.

Daniel Kowalski, a former Olympian, was injured and was not going to participate in the games. I had the pleasure of meeting with Daniel during a sneak peek of the opening ceremony at ANZ Stadium. When he walked into the stadium he was immediately reminded of the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games. He went off and bought swimmers and goggles and he participated in the 800 metres freestyle. He came third in the heat and then won a gold medal that night. He was motivated by what he was seeing at the Sydney World Masters Games.

As well as 28,000 athletes there were 5,000 volunteers. These events do not simply happen without the dedication and commitment of the volunteers and sports officials and I wish to acknowledge them. They came from all over Australia and they worked tirelessly over the nine days of the games. As I have said before in this House, the Games are expected to contribute close to \$50 million to the New South Wales economy. We know that many games athletes will stay on after the games and take their time to explore Sydney and regional New South Wales. One need only talk to local businesses to appreciate the impact of the World Masters Games. I particularly mention Lithgow, which hosted the orienteering competition.

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

**Ms JODI McKAY:** The member for Bathurst told me that 1,100 competitors were in Lithgow during the orienteering events. They stayed at local hotels, used hire cars and ate in restaurants, which was a wonderful boost for the Lithgow economy. In conclusion—and I will conclude if members opposite will give me a moment to do so—the 2009 World Masters Games is not the only event that Sydney is hosting this month. The Crave Festival is also being held and last weekend about 12,000 comedy fans flocked to Cockatoo Island for the inaugural World's Funniest Island event. The centrepiece of the Crave Festival—Breakfast on the Bridge—will be held this Sunday and will involve 6,000 lucky people. This demonstrates that Sydney is like no other city in Australia when it comes to hosting events. Sydney is the premier destination for events in this country.

**Question time concluded at 3.21 p.m.**

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

**Motion by Mr Thomas George agreed to:**

That leave of absence be granted to Donald Loftus Page, member for Ballina, until 5 December 2009.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Clearly, all members of the House join me in wishing the member for Ballina a speedy recovery and return to this place.

#### OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

##### Report

**The Speaker** announced the receipt, pursuant to section 31AA of the Ombudsman Act 1974, of a report entitled "The Death of Ebony: The need for an effective interagency response to children at risk", dated October 2009.

**Ordered to be printed.**

#### POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

##### Report

**The Speaker** tabled, pursuant to section 103 of the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996, the report of the Police Integrity Commission entitled "Report to Parliament: Operation Lantana", dated October 2009.

**Ordered to be printed.**

## REGISTER OF DISCLOSURES

**The Speaker** tabled, pursuant to section 21 of the Constitution (Disclosures by Members) Regulation 1983, the Register of Disclosures by Members of the Legislative Assembly as at 30 June 2009.

**Ordered to be printed.**

## AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

**The Clerk** announced the receipt, in accordance with section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled "Government Licensing Project: Department of Services, Technology and Administration", dated October 2009, received out of session and authorised to be printed.

## LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

### Report

**The Clerk** announced the receipt, in accordance with section 10 of the Legislation Review Act 1987, of the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 13 of 2009", dated 19 October 2009.

## PETITIONS

**The Clerk announced that the following petitions signed by fewer than 500 persons were lodged for presentation:**

### Wagga Wagga Base Hospital

Petition requesting funding for and the commencement of construction of a new Wagga Wagga Base Hospital in this parliamentary term, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

### Tumut Renal Dialysis Service

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

### Tumut Hospital and Batlow Multiple Purpose Service

Petition asking that vital equipment be provided immediately to both Tumut Hospital and Batlow Multiple Purpose Service, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

### Tumut Hospital Anaesthetic Services

Petition asking that anaesthetic services at Tumut Hospital be made available immediately, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

### Bus Service 311

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

### Pymont Metro Station

Petition opposing the Metro proposal for a Pymont station at Union Square and requesting community consultation for a suitable site, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

### Drought Relief Worker Job Protection

Petition requesting that the jobs of drought relief workers be protected, received from **Mr Greg Aplin**.

### **Pet Shops**

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

### **Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill 2009**

Petitions opposing the Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill 2009 in its entirety, received from **Ms Clover Moore** and **Mr Richard Torbay**.

### **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**.

**The Clerk announced that the following petitions signed by more than 500 persons were lodged for presentation:**

#### **Royal Flying Doctor Service**

Petition opposing the current tender process and requesting that a permanent air ambulance contract with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, received from **Mrs Dawn Fardell**.

#### **Blue Mountains District Anzac Memorial Hospital**

Petition asking that services at the Blue Mountains District Anzac Memorial Hospital be re-instated and the future of maternity and paediatric services be assured, received from **Mrs Jillian Skinner**.

#### **Tanilba Bay Recreational Centre**

Petition requesting that the building at President Wilson Walk at Tanilba Bay be converted into a community-based recreational centre to serve the local community, received from **Mr Craig Baumann**.

**The Clerk announced that the following Ministers had lodged responses to petitions signed by more than 500 persons:**

The Hon. John Hatzistergos—Wagga Wagga Base Hospital—lodged 1 September 2009

The Hon. John Hatzistergos—Blue Mountains District Anzac Memorial Hospital—lodged 2, 3 8 and 10 September 2009

The Hon. Carmel Tebbutt—Blue Mountains District Anzac Memorial Hospital—lodged 24 September 2009

The Hon. David Campbell—Pymont Metro Station—lodged 3 September 2009

The Hon. Kristina Keneally—Olston Mine Proposal—lodged 9 September 2009

The Hon. Paul Lynch—Wallsend Aged Care Facility—lodged 6 September 2009

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Business Lapsed**

**General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 451 to 457 lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).**

### **CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**

#### **WIN Stadium**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [3.25 p.m.]: My motion should be accorded priority because the people of the Illawarra, and particularly of Wollongong, deserve a fantastic stadium and to have funds invested

on their behalf. What is more, they deserve better treatment by members opposite, who tar them all with the same brush and constantly talk them down. It is time that the mob opposite put up or shut up with regard to Wollongong and its people. They should be ashamed of the treatment they dish out to the people of the Illawarra.

**Mr John Williams:** What have you ever done for the developers?

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** The member for Murray-Darling knows more developers than I have ever known.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate when the House decides which motion will be accorded priority.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** My motion is important because it calls on the Opposition to join the New South Wales Government in confirming a commitment to jobs and infrastructure in the Illawarra. All the Illawarra ever gets from members opposite is negatives. They dump on the locals and talk them down; they never support the people of the Illawarra. I strongly urge members opposite to support this motion.

### Government Advertising

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [3.27 p.m.]: Given the handling by the member for Wollongong of her campaign finances, we hope that she is nowhere near the \$28 million being invested in a new stadium in the Illawarra. The people of the Illawarra deserve a stadium, as do other communities across the State. My motion is important and it should be debated because when Nathan Rees became Premier of this State 13 long months ago he promised that he would deal openly, honestly and accountably with the public of New South Wales. Since then we have seen time and again the same old tricks, ruses and deception perpetrated on the voters of this State. That was highlighted again today by a \$2 million advertising campaign. Documents obtained under freedom of information legislation read like a campaign manual from Sussex Street.

The Opposition raised three issues in question time today. The first related to the expenditure of \$150,000 on the production and design of a \$2 million advertising campaign. What is clear from the paper trail evident in the 250 papers released by the Government to the Opposition under freedom of information legislation is that incredibly images in a draft advertisement were not of a Sydney suburb but of Minnesota. A document dated 2.27 p.m., 17 June 2009 confirms that fact. Whether or not they were used, taxpayers paid the production costs, including the cost of accessing stock photographs of Minnesota rather than Sydney.

The second issue is the makeup of the focus groups engaged during the development of the campaign. Were they supposed to be representative of city, regional, coastal and rural New South Wales? Were they supposed to be representative of Armidale and Ku-ring-gai voters? No, the brief for the research agency clearly stipulates that the groups should include people who voted for the current Labor Government at the last election. The process was not about the average New South Wales resident; it was about hiding a politically based focus group behind a taxpayer-funded advertising campaign. It was a rort from start to finish. That is obvious from a document dated 1.17 p.m., 9 June 2009 that was among the 250 document released to the Opposition.

Today the Premier says that proposal was rejected. That would allow us in this debate later today to determine whether the Premier has again misled the House, has again been dishonest. If it were rejected why was that document not amongst the 250 pages we requested under freedom of information legislation? The Premier cannot have it both ways. He cannot say the politically motivated focus group was rejected but not produce a document to that effect, or claim we are misleading the House because we are relying on selective documents only. No document released to the Opposition says other than the fact that the focus group was politically manipulated, designed to make those opposite, including the member for Wollongong, attractive to the electorate at the next election.

The pièce de résistance is the involvement of the Premier's chief of staff in these advertisements, which is something the Minister for Commerce would not mislead the House about today. She gave a non-answer when asked on how many occasions the Premier's chief of staff personally involved himself or personally approved the scripts. This is the most curious of the lot, because on 13 May 2009 at 9.42 a.m. the Premier's chief

of staff sent the draft scripts to the Department of Commerce. These were not scripts provided by the advertising agency. We know that because on the same day, at 5.43 p.m.—the afternoon, not the start of the day when Mr Wedderburn's script came out—there is an indication that the agency just had its first meeting with the department about this campaign. The scripts were prepared before the agency had its first meeting with the Department of Commerce.

It reveals again why this House should debate this issue. We must get to the bottom of how often this happens, not just in relation to this advertising campaign but also to others; how often the taxpayers of New South Wales are being forced to foot the bill of the New South Wales Labor Party for polling, focus research and quantitative polling. We need those answers from the Mark Latham of New South Wales politics. Mark Latham with freckles or not, the public deserve honesty, accountability and decency from this bloke—Nathan Rees.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 43**

Mr Amery	Mr Furolo	Mr Morris
Ms Andrews	Mr Gibson	Mr Pearce
Mr Aquilina	Mr Greene	Mrs Perry
Mr Borger	Mr Harris	Mr Sartor
Mr Brown	Ms Hay	Mr Shearan
Ms Burney	Mr Hickey	Mr Stewart
Ms Burton	Ms Keneally	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	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms D'Amore	Mr McLeay	Mr Ashton
Ms Firth	Ms Megarity	Mr Martin

**Noes, 36**

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

**Pairs**

Ms Gadiel	Mrs Hopwood
Ms Hornery	Mr O'Dea
Ms Judge	Mr Page
Mr Khoshaba	Mr Stoner
Mrs Paluzzano	Mr R. W. Turner

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Suspension of Standing Orders: Precedence of Business****Motion by Mr John Aquilina agreed to:**

That standing orders be suspended to permit:

- (1) consideration forthwith of a motion of condolence for the Hon. Virginia Anne Chadwick, AO, a former Minister of the Crown and President of the Legislative Council; and
- (2) consideration of the motion accorded priority prior to the commencement of Government business.

**DEATH OF THE HONOURABLE VIRGINIA ANNE CHADWICK, AO, A FORMER MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, A FORMER MINISTER OF THE CROWN AND A FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**Mr JOHN AQUILINA** (Riverstone—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.39 p.m.]: I move:

That this House extends to Mr Chadwick and family the deep sympathy of members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained by the death on 18 September 2009 of the Hon. Virginia Anne Chadwick, AO, a former Minister of the Crown and President of the Legislative Council.

Many words have already been spoken in this Parliament about the outstanding contribution that Virginia Chadwick has made to the Parliament, the State and the nation. If one goes through the speeches committed to her in the Legislative Council—and particularly the booklet entitled "The Hon. Virginia Chadwick AO: Speeches & Tributes"—one can see great commendations, which one would expect from Liberal Party members, but also from Labor Party members and crossbench members. Last Wednesday in the Parliament a public tribute to Virginia Chadwick was held in the Strangers Dining Room. People came from all over the nation to attend. In a number of speeches, led by the Hon. Nick Greiner, we heard about another aspect of Virginia Chadwick about which many of us were probably unaware.

Virginia Chadwick made a great contribution to Australia as the Chairperson of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. She made a wonderful contribution to environmental protection of the Great Barrier Reef and in the substantial expansion of the marine park. She received recognition around the world for her work as chairperson of that authority. I was moved when listening to those speeches because I had little knowledge of that aspect of her great contribution to the public.

Virginia Chadwick was elected to the Parliament in 1978 and I have been a member of this place since 1981, so I am aware of the detail of her contribution to New South Wales in a number of capacities, but her contribution to the environment and the Great Barrier Reef during her time in Queensland is not well known to people in New South Wales and it should be. I am pleased to have the opportunity to place on record her wonderful commitment to and her role as champion for the environment, champion for the Great Barrier Reef and champion for Australia.

Others in the Chamber are better able than I am to give a detailed account of her many achievements as a pioneer parliamentarian, a trailblazer for legislation, and a social and educational reformer. She was the first female education Minister in this State and the first female President of the Legislative Council. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite will speak at length about her wonderful achievements within the Liberal Party and the other many firsts she was able to achieve.

I take this opportunity to place on record my long interaction with her on a professional and personal basis. It is a matter of public record that from July 1986 to April 1988 I was the Minister for Youth and Community Services in this State. This is and always has been a very difficult portfolio. Community Services is never easy, whatever one's political persuasion. It touches many lives and involves many issues and problems. In those days the Community Services portfolio was very large, encompassing youth and community services, juvenile justice, disabilities and mental health. It also had an adoptions branch. Local and overseas adoptions were still very popular in this State; in fact, in excess of 40 people worked in the adoptions branch.

During this period—July 1986 to April 1988—the plight of young people at the hands of paedophiles was coming to the fore. Prior to this, the subject had been taboo; no-one spoke about these matters and very little legislation was in place. In fact, a program called Stranger Danger, which was quite erroneous, was run. In

our limited knowledge of the circumstances, the program highlighted the problems that young people faced at the hands of strangers. Today we know that the greater danger quite often comes from people who are known by and often close to the children.

Virginia Chadwick was the shadow Minister during that period. Although her performance was always testing and detailed, she acted with the utmost professionalism at all times. She always tackled the issues, the policies and the processes; she never played the person. I can say with all sincerity that she never once caused me personal embarrassment, even though I was quite a young Minister at the time. I admired her for that. Leading into the 1988 election my director general was Vern Dalton. At that time he was a close friend and remains a close friend. Virginia Chadwick inherited Vern Dalton as director general of the department and kept him on in that role. Indeed, she established a close working and personal relationship with him. I know Vern Dalton remained a close friend of Virginia Chadwick right up until the end. It says something about the woman that she was able to take on a director general who was a close friend of mine and establish a very close personal and friendly working relationship with him.

Leading into the 1988 election and throughout the period I was Minister for Youth and Community Services, Joe Kowalewski was my media officer. He had been the editor of the *Blacktown Advocate* and he became a close friend. In fact, I am godfather to both his children, Lachlan and Gabrielle. It is unheard of on a change of government for an incoming Minister to retain the media officer of the former Minister. Virginia Chadwick did just that. She knew that Joe could not return to being editor of the *Blacktown Advocate* and she knew that because he did not have a political career as a media officer he would not be able to find a job. She kept him on and formed a strong personal relationship with him as well. That speaks volumes about her capacity to see beyond the political advantages.

In my long career in politics I have never heard of an incoming Minister taking on the media adviser of the former Minister and that person successfully making the transition. Indeed, Joe remained Virginia's media officer during the entire period that she was the Minister for Family and Community Services. It was only following the demise of Terry Metherell as the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, after which Virginia Chadwick became the Minister for School Education and Youth Affairs that Joe said he did not think it could work anymore and he took up his present job. Our roles were reversed and I became the shadow Minister to Virginia Chadwick.

Virginia Chadwick then took on Ken Boston as director general. He had an extensive reputation in public education in Victoria and was the Director-General of Education in South Australia. Ken Boston came to New South Wales with a lot of fan-fair and an extremely high reputation. I was the shadow Minister and I can recall looking to the future and wanting to make a good impression. So, quite unprecedented, I invited him to come in for a briefing. I sought the permission of the Hon. Virginia Chadwick, the education Minister at that time, for the director general to have a briefing with the shadow Minister. To my surprise, Virginia Chadwick had no hesitation in allowing him to do so. Ken Boston came in with a couple of senior officers of the Department of Education, and we had a very long afternoon going through all sorts of issues and through a number of policies.

When one thinks of that period of time, it was to Virginia Chadwick's credit that one could see how she absorbed issues. Over the ensuing couple of years, we in the Opposition saw the policy documents we had trotted out and proudly displayed to Ken Boston become the basis of government policy under Virginia Chadwick. She introduced a number of creditable and time-honoured education policies in her own right. They will stand the test of time. They are indeed remarkable policies. However, she was not averse to obtaining policy ideas from other sources. I am sure that when Ken Boston reported back to Virginia Chadwick some of the things he had seen, she would have embraced them warmly. Ken Boston became a very long-term and close friend of the Hon. Virginia Chadwick. When the tables turned again in 1995 and I then became the Minister for Education and Training, Ken Boston came over as my director general. Although I had known him professionally and personally before that time, we again established a strong and friendly personal relationship, which we have maintained to this day even though he is living in the United Kingdom. I know that Ken Boston's close relationship with Virginia Chadwick also continued.

As a number of people are aware, changes of government are very traumatic. They are traumatic not only for the Minister who loses; they are traumatic for the people coming in. Although you think you know what you will be facing, quite often it becomes very much a bright new world. I recall that when we moved into the office of the Minister for Education in Market Street—the department's head office was in Market Street in those days—I and some of the staff I had appointed went there with great expectations. When we walked into

the office, the place was like the Sahara Desert: there was absolutely nothing there. Everything had been shredded, even the phonebooks, except for one little item: a post-it note that had been placed on the Minister's chair. In Virginia's unique handwriting it said, "Mr Minister, it's been a hard fight and you won. Congratulations. I know you're going to enjoy being Minister for Education and Training, but expect me to make your job as hard as I possibly can in the future." It was a great tribute, and it was something I really treasured. I rang Virginia and thanked her for that note. In times following we often remarked on it.

Virginia Chadwick was a woman of great capacity, a woman of great human qualities. This is the point I would like to stress: her professional qualities and her professional contribution to this State and nation are a matter of public record. But what is not a matter of public record are the personal anecdotes, the personal interactions, and the personal warmth—personal warmth that I am sure members of the Liberal Party and members of the Coalition will say they experienced because they worked closely with Virginia Chadwick as partisan colleagues on that side. But I was her opponent in many ways. Indeed, I was her opponent through two changes of government. She shadowed me when I was Minister, then I shadowed her when she was Minister: the baton changed hands on two occasions.

Yet, we were still able to maintain a close and personal relationship over a long period. I believe that says a lot about the woman. It says a lot about her personal qualities and it says a lot about the sort of understanding she had. Leaving politics aside, it says a lot about why she was so well fitted to be a Minister in sensitive portfolios, such as Community Services and Education. As we all know, those portfolios affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of people at any one time. The policies that are determined in those portfolios and the way in which the portfolios are administered can have such a great impact, for better or worse, on the lives of the people concerned.

On behalf of the Government and my colleagues, but particularly on my own behalf and on behalf of my family, once again I extend to Bruce, Amanda and David, and to all the family and friends of Virginia Chadwick, our sincere condolences. This State and this nation have lost a great pioneering policymaker, a person of great worth, a person who has been a trailblazer in many, many ways, a person who has been nationally distinguished through the awarding of her Order of Australia in 2005 and through many other awards, such as the Banksia Award by the Banksia Environmental Foundation in 2004 and so many others that are listed.

We very much miss Virginia Chadwick. I miss her as a fellow professional, I miss her as a fellow parliamentarian, and I miss her as a person I respected highly—as I know she respected me, and said so publicly on many occasions. We had a warm relationship, a relationship that went beyond political terms. I think for some of the newer and younger members of Parliament there may be a bit of a lesson in that. At times I think we get a little bit too serious with ourselves in this place. We forget that above the politics come the human qualities, and that the human qualities are very, very important; indeed, they should transcend all other things. Perhaps I will conclude on that note, because of the example Virginia Chadwick provided in that regard.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.56 p.m.]: I join with the Leader of the House and at the outset indicate that as the Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity to speak previously he has given me the privilege of speaking first. I also wish to pass on my deepest sympathy to Bruce, who is in the Chamber today with his friend Ted Hayes, and also to David and Amanda, and their children, Elana, Mia and James. I know that Virginia was very much a family woman, a woman who was loved by everybody. My comments are very much personal. Many people have said much about Virginia over the last few weeks, both in this place and at the various memorial services. But my reflection is about my personal relationship with Virginia.

When I was elected to this Parliament in a highly publicised 1994 by-election at a time when the Fahey Coalition governed without an absolute majority, a radio journalist asked me who was the modern politician I most admired. A colleague later told me that my response, Virginia Chadwick, was an inspired choice as I had avoided offending any of my lower House colleagues, all of whom had worked very hard to get me elected. The truth was that it was not an inspired choice designed to avoid offence. It was the truth. My life crossed paths with Virginia's on many occasions and in many guises over the past 26 years. I suspect she never knew how much of a profound impact she made on my life. I admired her greatly, I respected her enormously, I was in awe of her wit, her wisdom and her compassion, and I loved her dearly.

Here was a politician who had devoted her life to making a difference to the lives of people in the various portfolios she had held, including time served as Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister

Assisting the Premier on Ageing, Youth Affairs and the Hunter, Minister for School Education and Youth Affairs, Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, and Minister for Tourism. Virginia was the first female Liberal Whip, the first female Liberal Minister in New South Wales, and the first female Presiding Officer when she became President of the Legislative Council on 29 June 1998. I first met Virginia Chadwick in 1983 when I won pre-selection for the 1984 election. On my desk in my electorate office I have a treasured small black and white photo of myself at my first meeting with Virginia—one of those photos that shadow Ministers or Ministers have taken with hopeful candidates that they then use in their campaigning.

Not successful at that election, I continued my work in journalism. In 1985, at the request of then Opposition Leader Nick Greiner, I interviewed and wrote profiles on a number of his shadow Ministers, including Virginia Chadwick. At that time Virginia was the Opposition Whip in the Legislative Council and shadow Minister for Youth and Community Services, and Consumer Affairs. The interview reflected Virginia's interest in social issues and her determination and interest in portfolios to make life better. It tells of her fiercely proud Novocastrian birth—the first in her family to complete school and attend university. It tells of her interest in issues around teaching, childcare and other matters of import. It also tells of her entry into political life because she and her friends in Newcastle were dismayed at the lack of political interest in the area that was considered "safe Labor". I quote from my interview with Virginia:

There were six State Labor Members for the area and three Federal Labor Members. The Labor Party felt it was safe so ignored the area, the Liberals thought there was no point.

Virginia and a group of friends decided to do something about it. Knowing it was unlikely they could win a Lower House seat, a group of six decided to nominate for the Upper House when a vacancy suddenly occurred. They realised the chance of winning was remote, but with six of them making pre-selection speeches based on the problems facing the ignored city, they reckoned they could at least bring Newcastle to Liberal attention.

Virginia was the backroom organiser—

she told me—

urging the group of lobbyists along. Her husband Bruce was one of the nominees who played the game over two pre-selections. When a third opportunity came up the "fellas" decided they'd had enough of making asses of themselves and told Virginia to put her money where her mouth was. She did, and out of a field of 50 came in fifth.

She finally won top spot on the Coalition ticket at the first popular election of the Upper House and in 1978, aged 33 and mother of a six and an eight year old, Virginia Chadwick was sworn in as a Member of the N.S.W. Parliament.

But it is the area of policy direction which Virginia finds most rewarding and for which she is noted.

Virginia said:

It takes a lot of time because I really believe that if you are going to change things it is important to have a clear, precise idea of how you are going to do it and how much it is going to cost.

Virginia went to the 1984 State election with nine thoroughly developed policy papers, which had been through several drafts and circulated to people in the field for comment. Virginia said:

Everybody develops policy in their own way, but this is the way I prefer because I feel that you have better policy that is more likely to be implemented if you have got the views of people affected by it.

That is very much a reflection of the way in which the Coalition is going about policy development today and for that I thank Virginia. A couple of years later it came as no real surprise, but a great honour, when Virginia invited me to join a tableful of other women in helping her develop her women's policy prior to the 1988 election. I was a volunteer, along with the others. Ironically the task I was given was to develop policy ideas based on issues identified by women working in the health system. Not surprisingly, perhaps, many of the issues revolved around children and the challenges of women working in the health system while having parenting responsibilities, as well as the concerns they had for the children, and their mothers, they were treating as patients.

Following the 1988 election of the Greiner Government Virginia appointed six women to join six others continuing as members of the New South Wales Women's Advisory Council. The council was chaired by Renata Kaldor, who reminded me at the tribute afternoon held in this Parliament last week of the quite avant-garde directions Virginia set for us as she reformed the way the council addressed women's issues. I was privileged to be one of those six members appointed by Virginia. "Double Disadvantage" had been the mantra until then—implying, of course, that being female was a disadvantage. But it was not for us newcomers—and it certainly was not for Virginia Chadwick.

We maintained an involvement in issues of domestic violence, of those issues confronting women in prisons and of indigenous women trying to get basic living conditions for their families. We established women's health subcommittees where we focused on, among other things, breast cancer screening—then a rarity. We took on issues around women in sport and women in business. Our workshops on finance and how to grow small businesses were standing room only. *Hansard* records that on 25 September 1991 the Hon. I. M. Macdonald asked a question about the Women's Advisory Council developing a register of women from which nominations would be made for board vacancies. Ever quick with a witty response, the Hon. Virginia Chadwick replied:

I am surprised at the honourable member's emerging interest in matters of importance to women. I hope he maintains his new-man approach

The work of the Women's Advisory Council under Virginia Chadwick set a new agenda. It was illustrative of her belief in tackling the big issues, taking on new directions and challenging the way it had always been done. It was during a Women's Advisory Council meeting discussing girl's education that I met a senior executive of the Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs. Not long after she contacted me about the position of Director of the Office of Youth Affairs that had been recently advertised. I applied and was appointed to that position in 1989. In July 1990 my path crossed Virginia Chadwick's again when she became the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. As has been described so eloquently by others in tributes to her, she was inspiring in that role, which she took on after months of upheaval and protest. I refer particularly to the words of the Hon. Catherine Cusack in the other place. Catherine worked with Virginia in many different roles, as did I, and was a personal friend for many years. Catherine captured the essence of Virginia Chadwick perfectly in her words.

Virginia was tireless and worked extremely long hours. She thoroughly read briefs, including all letters before signing them. She demanded much of people she worked closely with, but she was also great fun. She had an absolutely wicked sense of humour. She loved a glass of wine at the end of the day, was always good for a party, and seemed tireless in her interest not only in issues of great political and policy import, but in matters of family—hers and yours. She charmed those who had been trenchant critics and drove reform her way; never compromising on her vision for a revitalised school system with an independent Board of Studies, enhanced selective education, greater autonomy for principals and parent bodies, excellence and equity in education. The Leader of the Opposition reminded me a short time ago that Virginia was passionate about reading recovery—later claimed by a following Premier to be his—in education. Virginia was admired by unionists and respected by the government and non-government education sector, academics and parent bodies.

As a director of the Office of Youth Affairs, or OYA as she liked to call it, I had the privilege of participating in ministry executive meetings but representing the youth affairs satellite. Virginia was extremely supportive of the work of the small Office of Youth Affairs team. *Hansard* records her pride in the work done on behalf of disadvantaged young people who had dropped out of school and were so often represented in the high youth unemployment statistics of the day. She could rattle off the statistics about how many young people had participated in programs such as the Helping Early Leavers program, the Koori Youth program, the Circuit Breaker program and the Youth Arts and Skills Festival. She took delight in reminding Labor members who asked her questions about these programs that they were mostly located in their electorates. Virginia Chadwick was a champion of those who needed one—whether they were unemployed early school leavers who needed help, children who had been victims of abuse, or indigenous women of the Namoi Reserve in Walgett that she asked members of the Women's Advisory Council to assist.

In 1995 when the Coalition returned to Opposition Virginia chose to become a backbencher. She spent much effort thereafter supporting colleagues who would take on new roles—including me. She was a tireless supporter and loyal friend to anybody who needed assistance and, as the Leader of the House has indicated, that applied to people of all political persuasions. Virginia Chadwick was a most remarkable person. She could be cutting with her wit. Nevertheless, she always said it with a smile and no-one could take offence. When she was unexpectedly elected as President of the Legislative Council, an election I watched from the public gallery, the congratulations offered to her from all sides of the political divide reflected the respect and admiration afforded to her by many people of different persuasions.

I will refer briefly to the Great Barrier Reef years. As the Leader of the House said, these are years that not a lot of us knew much about. Many of us who had been in awe of Virginia's political achievements in the New South Wales Parliament only recently have become aware of the enormous impact she had in her later career as the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority from 1999

until 2007. In that role she achieved many things, including having 33 per cent of the reef declared protected—rising from a low 4.5 per cent. On her death World Wildlife Fund-Australia distributed a press release headed, "Reef Heroine Remembered", in which it said:

Virginia was a great Australian whose legacy to the Reef will live on.

Ms Chadwick's legacy is an inspiring example of the difference one person can make. All Australians can be immensely proud of what she has achieved.

Without Ms Chadwick's extraordinary leadership, judgment and people management skills, the protection of one-third of the Reef from fishing would not have happened.

In 2005 I travelled to Port Douglas with my daughter, Amy. On that occasion Virginia and her husband, Bruce, flew to Port Douglas to join Amy and me and Catherine Cusack and her husband, Chris, for dinner. What a night! We had pre-dinner drinks at the spectacular hillside home of Quiksilver's Chief Executive Officer, Mike Burgess, who was among the tourism operators and tough fishing fraternity battling the scientists of the reef. Prepared to be a bitter enemy, Burgess told us how his family became devoted Chadwick fans and friends. Her wooing of them was typical of the way she charmed those who had been prepared to be the most trenchant of critics, whether reef opponents or unionists who had been upset by early Greiner Government education reforms. A hilarious dinner followed, with Virginia regaling us with tales of her early days negotiating with the hordes of fishermen and her incredibly clever strategic positioning that brought the ferocious opponents to her side.

Virginia earned many awards throughout her working life. She was awarded a Centenary Medal in 2001 and appointed an officer of the Order of Australia in the 2005 Queen's Birthday honours. She was awarded honorary degrees from three universities and she led high-level overseas visits including the Australian delegation to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Despite these fantastic awards, she did not stand on ceremony. She liked to be called Virginia and many close working colleagues called her Min, as we were reminded last week. She always had her feet on the ground. She was at home doing a beekeeping course at TAFE, I well remember, making her wonderful ceramic teapots, bowls and tiles or attending high-powered conferences. She was the most loyal and supportive friend one could ever wish for. She adored her family, to whom I extend my personal best wishes. To Bruce, Amanda, David and the grandchildren, you can be extremely proud of a wonderful woman who touched many lives in the most positive way. Vale, Virginia.

**Ms JODI McKAY** (Newcastle—Minister for Commerce, Minister for Tourism, Minister for the Hunter, and Minister for Science and Medical Research) [4.13 p.m.]: This afternoon I speak with great honour, respect and awe in memory of the life of the Hon. Virginia Chadwick. As Minister for the Hunter, Minister for Tourism and a female parliamentarian, I want to draw attention to the contribution Virginia made to public life in New South Wales and, importantly, the Hunter region. Virginia was a long and loyal resident of the Hunter. She was born in Newcastle and educated at Newcastle Girls School, although she travelled abroad briefly to study in the United Kingdom. She returned to Newcastle where she studied and later entered her political life. I can verify to this place the respect with which Virginia Chadwick is held within the Newcastle and Hunter community.

Much will be said about Virginia Chadwick's proud record as the New South Wales Parliament's first female Presiding Officer with her election as President of the Legislative Council, the first female Opposition Whip and the first woman to gain ministerial appointment in a Liberal Government as Minister for Education. As I am sure many of my fellow female parliamentarians would agree, this House is enriched and strengthened by greater numbers of women taking on roles on the front bench of government. Virginia Chadwick in her 21 years of service to this State was a trailblazer and should be remembered for this. Last week I was fortunate to attend a memorial service for Virginia Chadwick, where I saw a great show of political support for Virginia. The memorial service was opened by Patricia Forsythe, another woman who has dignified herself within this place, who is held in great respect and who has strong connections to the Hunter region.

I draw the attention of the House to Virginia Chadwick's contribution as Minister for Tourism. She had a strong commitment to developing this industry, although not in this State alone. Virginia was the Minister for Tourism from 26 May 1993 to 4 April 1995. I am informed that in this role she carried out her duties with diligence and determination in an industry that was still very much in its infancy. She played a significant role in seeing this industry grow to become what is now a cornerstone of the New South Wales economy, employing 158,000 people and contributing \$27 billion to the New South Wales economy. Virginia's commitment to developing tourism is not restricted to her remarkable parliamentary career.

Not content with retirement from serving the public, Virginia continued to be a strong advocate for the tourism industry. She truly raised the bar during her service as the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, a position she held for eight years. Her defection to Queensland is forgiven, given the commitment she made to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. During that time Virginia delivered some of the most innovative marine conservation and biodiversity programs ever to occur anywhere in the world. This achievement in itself will help preserve a national landmark for generations to come and is truly a lasting legacy of her work. In addition to tourism, Virginia was Minister Assisting the Premier for the Hunter, a portfolio that I have the great honour to serve in. In this role Virginia would have been acutely aware of how important it is to ensure the needs of the people in the Hunter—a very parochial and passionate region—are addressed.

My contact with Virginia Chadwick was as a young journalist. I watched her perform in her role and represent the people of Newcastle and the Hunter region. She was always dignified, intelligent, empathetic and understanding. For a young female journalist interviewing her, there were times where it was awe inspiring to watch her in action, to know how good she was at her job and how well she represented the people she was elected to serve. I am truly saddened to hear of the passing of Virginia Chadwick and the great loss it represents to the Hunter community. However, I am confident that her contribution to the Hunter region and the New South Wales tourism industry leaves a perpetual legacy of which her family, friends and parliamentary colleagues may be truly proud.

Virginia Chadwick was a woman from Newcastle who was respected by both sides of the House. As the member for Newcastle, I personally have much to aspire to. I thank the House for the opportunity to draw attention to the important contribution that Virginia made as an advocate for the Hunter, a region that we both love. I acknowledge the considerable achievements that Virginia made and I extend my condolences to her husband, Bruce, and her children, Amanda and David, and their families.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS** (Upper Hunter) [4.20 p.m.]: It is with deep regret that I speak on behalf of the Leader of The Nationals and members of The Nationals about our former colleague and dear friend Virginia Chadwick. I was honoured to represent The Nationals at the recent memorial service held in Virginia's honour at Newcastle Cathedral. I noted the great range of people who were present, in particular the people who gave the eulogies, including Vern Dalton; a former Federal member of Parliament, Peter Morris; and her heroic daughter, Amanda.

Virginia Chadwick was the first female Liberal Minister, the first female education Minister, the first female Opposition Whip and the first female President of the Legislative Council. I know that has been said a number of times, but her achievements at that time were quite remarkable. Perhaps such achievements would not be viewed as remarkable nowadays, but in those times it was pioneering. Virginia held many portfolios during her time in Parliament. Of note was when the Greiner Government was elected in 1988 and she assumed the very big and very difficult portfolio of Family and Community Services. I take my hat off to any person who serves as the Minister for that portfolio.

At the time she was also the chairperson of the Hunter Parliamentary Task Force, which was a bipartisan task force of members of Parliament from the Hunter Valley. It was the first time such a format was tried. It was replicated by the incoming Labor administration in 1995 and subsequently. I remember that she was a champion, as was I, of the prospect and potential for the electrification of the Hunter rail line from Newcastle up to the coalfields into the areas of Maitland, Singleton, Muswellbrook and Scone, and perhaps even an extension to the Ulan coalfields when considerable tonnage is hauled down this railway line. It is possibly the most intensively used coal haulage rail line in the world. How visionary that was so many years ago. Extraordinary tonnages are now transported on that line utilising diesel fuel, imported probably from the Middle East, to cart coal to some of the world's biggest power stations and to be loaded onto ships to go to the Middle East to power their electric railways—quite an extraordinary thing to contemplate. How visionary Virginia was at that time.

Virginia was the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs following her time as Minister for Family and Community Services—if the first ministry was not big enough and difficult enough, certainly the next one was. Education is one of the two biggest portfolios in the government of New South Wales both in expenditure and magnitude, with some 80,000 employees and all the schools and the million students—the statistics are quite extraordinary. Yet Virginia took over the portfolio, and at a very troubled time in that area. She restored order, to put it mildly, and regained respect for the portfolio by genuine strong advocacy for teachers, students

and schools, including—and only a senior Minister could do this in Cabinet, and I saw it in action—advocacy in Cabinet for teachers salaries. Those who understand what I am talking about would acknowledge the degree of courage that would have taken at that time. I do not know how she and Premier Fahey remained friends.

Virginia was subsequently also Minister for Employment and Training and Minister for Tourism. In her time as education Minister she established the Board of Studies, which gave more structure to the curriculum in New South Wales. Decision-making was handed back to school principals in a number of areas, giving them personal responsibility for their budgets. Virginia ensured that more resources and funding were directed towards selective schools in order to provide more choices for public schooling to people across western Sydney.

Following her stellar parliamentary career, Virginia became the Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, a position she held for eight years. Virginia continued to make tough decisions in her conservation role, increasing the protected zones of the marine park from 4 per cent to 33 per cent. This set international benchmarks in marine conservation. Virginia also put in place measures to provide for and protect the reef's future, ranging from school education programs and tourism industry partnerships to conservation and research. As a result of her good work Virginia became an officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday 2005 honours list, and she received an honorary doctorate in 2009 at James Cook University in recognition of her significant achievements.

We in Parliament are focused on parliamentary activity, ministerial roles, Cabinet, executive government and so on. Whilst we know Virginia's contribution in that sphere of public life was great, I think equally as great was her contribution subsequent to Parliament in the areas that I have just mentioned. I remember two matters that affected me personally. At one point Virginia Chadwick was the chairperson of the Government Trading Enterprises [GTE] Reform Unit. I had been the chairman of that unit when I was the Minister assisting the Premier, but subsequently, when I became the Minister for Finance, Virginia Chadwick took on that role—a very difficult role indeed.

That time was an era of economic and structural reform in government. I had carriage of a particular bill in this place—Virginia being in another place—to create a structure for corporatised government entities. At that time we had a hung Parliament and the balance of power was held by Clover Moore, John Hatton and Peter Macdonald. Despite our best endeavours, the bill was lost. In those days those three Independents had guaranteed the Government confidence and supply but not any other legislation, and on this occasion that bill was lost. I was very angry and very disappointed, but Virginia Chadwick knocked on my door later to have a little co-commiseration session, after which I believe I was no longer angry but simply disappointed. But that was her way of thinking, that I would be upset, and she made the journey to put me back in order.

I remember another incident in the township of Merriwa. When Virginia took over the Education portfolio she undertook to carry out whatever ministerial appointments and commitments had been made by the previous Minister. Her first visit to country New South Wales was to the Hunter and to Merriwa on the first or second day after she took over the portfolio. She went to officially open a building at Merriwa Central School, which had been converted to become a new library. We attended the ceremony with several hundred parents, students and staff at a building that used to be called a portable. It was a wooden construction with a veranda and the official speeches were being made from the veranda with the audience on seats on the grass in front. I noticed out of the corner of my eye a person arrive wearing a pair of overalls and holding something. The time came for me to get up on the stage and introduce Virginia Chadwick as the Minister for Education, who was going to officially open the building.

As I was doing so I was handed a note that read, "Keep talking". That was not a problem: I kept talking—I was certainly able to do that! Then another note was handed up to me that read, "Okay now". I introduced Virginia Chadwick and sat down. She stood up, gave her speech, turned around and unveiled a plaque—which was a new plaque hanging on the hinges of the old plaque, which the workman in overalls had unscrewed in front of the audience whilst I was speaking. Everyone could see what was going on except for Virginia, the school principal and me. Her first plaque had her name on it 24 hours after she became Minister for Education through that unbelievable feat of the Department of Public Works. Along with other Nationals members, I extend my personal sympathies to Virginia's husband, Bruce, to her children, Amanda and David, and to the rest of her family. I join with other members in this place in honouring her memory and thanking her for her invaluable contributions to our State.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour) [4.30 p.m.]: First, I offer my condolences to Bruce, David, Amanda and their families. I am sad that I was not able to attend the memorial service held in Newcastle. In true

Virginia Chadwick spirit, I was at the year 12 presentation day at the Coffs Harbour education campus. I am sure she would have understood. I have probably known Virginia for as long as, if not longer than, most members. My history with her goes back to the heady days when Whitlam had to go. A friend of mine, Tony Richmond, and his wife, Penny, asked me if I would like to help with a Liberal Party campaign in Newcastle, and I did. The candidate was Arthur Thomas. If folklore is correct, Virginia may have ensured that his name was on a nomination form, but he was not in the country to sign it and, much to his chagrin, he was the declared candidate for the electorate of Newcastle.

Virginia and I met in Arthur's lounge room in Mayfield. We thought we needed some help and I suggested that the League of Rights, which was fairly active in Queensland in those days, should be invited to lend a hand. While I was making the phone call, Virginia unplugged the telephone and said that we would run the campaign and do it well. As a result of working on a booth in Mayfield, which is a Labor stronghold, I developed an interest in, and passion for, politics. It was all because of Virginia. She was a great campaign manager. If my memory serves me correctly, we managed a 7.5 per cent swing against the Joneses, who were legendary in Newcastle. In fact, we had them worried. However, the person most worried was Arthur Thomas, because he thought he might end up in Federal Parliament, which he did not want. We had a lot of fun during that campaign. Later, on a by-election night, we were having a few drinks and laughing in Virginia's office, as we often did, and she said, "I know that laugh. I heard it in Arthur Thomas's lounge room." We went on to work closely while she was in the ministry.

Virginia was a Novocastrian first. She was very proud of Newcastle, as all Novocastrians are. She took over as Minister for Education and Youth Affairs from Terry Metherell when everyone in this State knew that the portfolio was a poisoned chalice. The Teachers Federation was actively working against the Coalition. In fact, the Coalition was hated by the majority of people. I was president of the parents and citizens association at Tyalla when Terry Metherell was Minister and we could not get any answers out of him. When Virginia took over the portfolio not only did she resolve many of the issues with the Teachers Federation but she also gave an assurance to the mums and dads—as we were then with young families—that the Coalition would do a lot of good for education in New South Wales. I ended up as a member of her advisory committee.

The integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools was extremely high on Virginia's list of priorities. I visited the Frank Partridge VC Public School at Nambucca Heads with Virginia when Nambucca was in my electorate. The school had fully integrated young children with disabilities and that visit highlighted for me the importance of having our young people understand that someone with a disability is not disabled in the true sense of the word. After that we opened a new school with a special unit at Bayldon under Virginia's leadership. We also established another unit at Orara High School. Every time anyone went to Virginia with a problem about teacher aides or whatever her door was always open and she always gave a positive response.

When John Fahey was Premier and Minister for Further Education, Training and Employment he came to Coffs Harbour to turn the sod at the site of a new TAFE college. We told him that we also wanted a university. While we were on the site John asked us if we wanted a line drawn up the middle of the paddock and have the TAFE college on one side and a university on the other. We said yes and he told us to meet with him the next Tuesday. We went to Sydney and I was summoned to a meeting in his office with Virginia and we discussed the structure of the Southern Cross University, as it is now known. We now have one of the greatest education facilities in New South Wales. The site has a senior high school, a TAFE college and a university with cross accreditation. I put that down to the hard work and drive of Virginia Chadwick. Even though the campus concept was great, making it a reality was a bumpy road. I am sure that Bruce heard every night about the problems that Virginia faced with the three disciplines involved. TAFE, the education department and the university perfected jealousies.

Coming from Newcastle, Virginia could use a fairly colourful turn of phrase. They were arguing about the size of workspaces and desks. We were visiting the campus one day and Virginia had had enough and said that she had just the man to fix it. She called in Warren Grimshaw, who was the head of the Board of Studies at the time. I have recounted to the House previously that Warren told me in no uncertain terms when we got to Coffs Harbour that he would not stay long—he would resolve the issue and head back to Sydney. He is now happily retired in Coffs Harbour. Warren also held Virginia in very high regard.

Virginia was also Minister for Tourism. I think of her daily because she gave me three little Tourism NSW card wallets. I have the last one—which is very moth-eaten—in my pocket and it is a permanent reminder

of her and all the little giveaways. Virginia hated the grey-suited bureaucrats selling tourism. I remember her attending a tourism meeting on the North Coast and on her return to Sydney sending them all brighter ties—if they had to wear ties, at least they should be bright.

Virginia was a great character and was held in extremely high regard. The fact that we are speaking on a condolence motion for a President of the other place demonstrates the regard in which she was held across this State. Those who knew Virginia well know that she loved music. Every Christmas drinks function she held included a rendition of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" by her staff. Each staff member was coerced into performing one chorus, and the performers included Catherine Cusack, who is now a member of the other place, Rebecca Melkman and many others. They were good times, funny days and great memories. I offer my personal condolences to Bruce, Amanda and David, and Virginia's friends.

I hope that Newcastle finds a suitable memorial for Virginia, because she deserves one. We know what she was like and her achievements have been recorded in *Hansard* today. It would be appropriate to establish a fitting memorial—the naming of a park or the erection of a statue, although she would probably see that as pretentious. We should do something to immortalise the memory of someone who did so much not simply for New South Wales but specifically for Newcastle and the Hunter.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN** (Willoughby) [4.39 p.m.]: It is my honour to participate in the motion today honouring the contribution of an outstanding person who changed the course of New South Wales politics forever. Virginia Chadwick paved the way with many firsts: the first female Opposition Whip, the first female Liberal Minister, the first female education Minister, and the first female President of the Legislative Council. But Virginia's contribution to the betterment of New South Wales went way beyond this string of firsts. She was an individual of the highest calibre and a member of Parliament of incredible integrity, wit and class.

I did not have the privilege to work for or alongside Virginia Chadwick; rather, for me and for successive generations of political aspirants, Virginia was and is an incredible role model, held in great awe. It was great to be an active Young Liberal when Virginia was at her prime in State politics. The generous time she gave to nurture young people who aspired to hold public office one day was unstinting. As a member of Parliament her engaging style, based on intellectual rigour, inclusiveness and focus on outcomes was a standout. She ably demonstrated what could be achieved by combining compassion for the most vulnerable in our society with a practical, fearless, can-do approach. In an occupation often viewed cynically by the broader community, Virginia showed what could be achieved by bringing people of diverse backgrounds together in order to make much-needed reform—whether it was in the area of disability services, community services or education.

As outstanding as Virginia's contribution to Parliament was, it was but one part of a remarkable career in public life, and her legacy continues. Last week during the celebration of her life in this place I was privileged to bump into a gentleman called Leo who introduced himself to me at that celebration. He had never met Virginia and I asked him why he was there. He explained his story. I asked him to put it down on paper so I could include it in *Hansard* today. Leo said to me that Virginia made an enormous contribution to the Waverley Action for Youth Services [WAYS], which is where he is involved. Leo informed me that WAYS is a youth organisation and registered charity based in Bondi Beach providing a broad range of services to young people from 11 to 19 in the triangle from La Perouse to Redfern-Waterloo to South Head. It has offices in Bondi Beach, Bondi Junction, Double Bay, Maroubra and Redfern. Leo wrote:

We were previously housed in two down-at-heel terraces in Bondi Junction which were generously provided by Waverley Council but were the worse for wear. Several months before the Mar 1988 NSW election Virginia in her capacity as Shadow Minister for Youth and Community Services visited WAYS and promised us a new youth centre should the Greiner Opposition be elected.

They were in fact elected and Virginia became ... Minister for Family and Community Services and later also for Youth Affairs. The purpose-built youth centre at Bondi Beach was designed by us in conjunction with the architects and was duly opened in Sep 1992.

No doubt Virginia made many similar promises and decisions throughout the state. The impact of this particular promise by Virginia continues to be felt throughout the South-Eastern and Eastern Suburbs. I never personally met Virginia. I joined the WAYS Management Committee in Sep 1988, after her visit to us. But she changed my life for the better and also that of the thousands of local children who have passed through that youth centre. WAYS has since expanded to our current five offices assisting youth in the electorates of Coogee, Heffron, Maroubra, Sydney and Vaucluse ...

So Virginia is still fondly remembered and respected in our corner of Sydney. That is why I attended her Memorial Service at Parliament House last week on behalf of WAYS and the young people past, present and future who are better off thanks to Virginia Chadwick.

What a resounding comment. That is one small part of the legacy Virginia Chadwick has left. Her life after politics and, particularly, her role as chair of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority need mention. She has ensured that her lasting legacy goes way beyond the boundaries of our State. Her vigilance in protecting the natural wonder of the Great Barrier Reef is a service she has done for our country and, frankly, the global community. The best we can do to honour her memory in this place, I believe, is to aspire to be as courageous and continue to fight for those most vulnerable in our community.

I take this opportunity to extend my personal condolences to Bruce, to Amanda and David and the rest of the family and to say how proud I am to serve in the same party that Virginia was a member of, and how proud I am of the enormous influence she has had on my career and my life. I know her legacy will continue for successive generations. It is our responsibility to make sure that happens.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE** (Bega) [4.44 p.m.]: I also make a contribution to this condolence motion. In doing so I also give my sympathy to Virginia's family, to Bruce and to her friends. I only met Virginia on one occasion. I am speaking today because of the response and feedback I have had from people within the disability sector over the past week. When I spoke to the Hon. Catherine Cusack she indicated to me that Virginia had kept a press release following a decision she had made as Minister in which she was instrumental in the relocation of disability services out of the Department of Health. Apparently she kept this press release in a frame on her desk. It is important to have that noted in the House because that achievement and that decision have left a remarkable legacy for people with disabilities, their carers and their families in New South Wales.

When disability services were housed within the Department of Health people with disabilities were concerned that they were perceived to be unwell, they were perceived to be sick. The move was an important step, not only in the functions of government but also in the culture and the mindset of people with disabilities. When disability services were within the Department of Health people with disabilities were not getting the necessary focus and attention to their needs. Of course, a lot of the health budget was not directed towards the services that people with disabilities require. It was Virginia Chadwick who changed that, and that change led to disability services being transferred to the Department of Family and Community Services and ultimately to a stand-alone department, and that has served people with disabilities in a way that has made an enormous difference to thousands upon thousands of people.

Virginia Chadwick recognised that people with a disability were not sick and they deserved the focus of a dedicated department. As a result of that we have now seen services and support being provided to people with disabilities in a way that was unimaginable 20-plus years ago. I thought it was important to put that on the public record this afternoon. As a progressive Liberal I share many of the same ideals that Virginia had, and the influence that Virginia has had on the Liberal party is something I aspire to. I share her goals and aspirations for the people of New South Wales, particularly our most vulnerable in the community. I felt it important to recognise that part of her contribution, an important contribution that has affected thousands of people with disabilities, their carers and families. It has left a legacy that will remain forever.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst) [4.48 p.m.]: I also express my condolences, my sympathy, particularly to Bruce, who is in the Chamber today, and to David and Amanda and their children—David's children Mia and James, and Amanda's daughter, Alana. I met Virginia Chadwick when I was contemplating entering Parliament but I got to know her a lot better after being elected into this place in 1991. By that stage she had already served a number of years as the Minister for Family and Community Services. Of the Ministers at the time—and there were some very competent Ministers—Virginia Chadwick stood out for qualities that go beyond politics.

Virginia had a presence, a demeanour that was engaging. She spoke sincerely about issues. People who heard her speak understood that her comments came from somewhere deep within. That was not often seen in life generally; certainly not in politics. She did not take a superficial approach to life or to her role in Parliament; she took a substantive approach. As a new member of Parliament I felt I could look to her for advice. Indeed, I regarded her as a role model. Virginia became a member of the Legislative Council on 6 November 1978. She spoke for the first time a few weeks later, on 21 November 1978. Her engaging sense of humour was reflected at the beginning of her speech, which I place on the record:

Just three years ago when speaking to a senior parliamentarian of my desire to enter Parliament his advice to me was, "Go home and forget it", because in his words I was, "The wrong age, the wrong sex, from the wrong place".

Virginia showed clearly that she was the right age, the right sex and from the right place and that she had much to contribute to this place in her time in the Parliament. She went on to quote Lewis Carroll's observations in *Through the Looking Glass*. She said:

"Well, in our country", said Alice, "you'd generally get to somewhere else if you ran very fast for a long time, as we've been doing".

"A slow sort of country?"—said the Queen. "Now, here you see it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else you must run at least twice as fast as that".

Virginia spent her time in this place in major portfolios running at least twice as fast as was necessary to achieve great outcomes. She was an extraordinarily good Minister because she engaged with her constituency. She engaged broadly with those who needed it in order to support the best outcomes for those in the family and community services area and later in the education and youth affairs area. I understand from my electorate officer that she was extremely well regarded by the staff in her ministerial offices. My electorate officer, who has worked with me for more than 18 years, actually came to me direct from Virginia Chadwick's office. Noelene Barrell worked within Virginia's ministerial office as an administrative officer under Mark Scott at the time. Catherine Cusack was a policy adviser there. I asked Noelene what she thought about Virginia. She responded, "A really lovely lady, an excellent Minister for education; great empathy with young people; had a great working relationship with the ministerial staff." After noting that Mark Scott was director of media and Catherine Cusack was policy adviser, she said, "What else can I say? It was fun working in her office."

Virginia was a source of great wisdom to me with the portfolios I have held in opposition, particularly Community Services and Education. This was not necessarily in a partisan political way; it was her depth of understanding of the portfolios. I remember seeing Virginia down in the car park towards the end of my tenure as shadow community services Minister. They were pretty torrid times for the families involved with the department. I was involved with families who had babies that were suffering and young children who had died. It was very difficult and traumatic. Virginia spoke to me sincerely about those issues but as she walked away she had a little twinkle in her eye and said, "Whatever you have suffered, don't forget it is a lot worse if you end up being the Minister." That reminded me that if one day I was offered the position of Minister for Community Services, it might be an idea to refuse it.

Virginia contributed so much in this place that it is hard to go back over it. The tributes have given much of the detail and I do not propose to repeat it. I apologise to you, Bruce, that I was not able to be part of the service as I was overseas at the time. However, I thought of you all on the day and continue to do so. Members on both sides of the House, particularly, John Aquilina, the Leader of the House, have demonstrated our depth of feeling for Virginia. Many Opposition members also have expressed that here today. Virginia has left a lasting legacy for us all.

However, on a personal level, none of us can begin to know how you, Bruce, or your family are feeling. We want you to know we understand that but we also want you to know that our feelings are very much with you, David and Amanda. Bruce, you supported Virginia in becoming a member of Parliament. That is a challenge for a spouse. Most members know that quite often it is a challenge for their spouse when they enter Parliament: The transition is difficult; the period in here is difficult and I understand leaving is difficult. Bruce, you were part and parcel of that and you supported Virginia through those challenging periods. On behalf of everyone in the Parliament, particularly the State Liberal and National parties, I thank you for your contribution and I thank your family for allowing Virginia to share her time with the State of New South Wales, with the people of New South Wales and with us, as a political group, trying to bring better things to the people of New South Wales. Again, my condolences go to you and your family.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am sure members join with those who have spoken in offering our condolences to Bruce, Amanda, David and other members of the family.

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

## WIN STADIUM

### Motion Accorded Priority

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [5.00 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Government on its investment of \$28.9 million to upgrade the western stand of WIN Stadium; and
- (2) calls on the Opposition to join with the Government and confirm its commitment to jobs and infrastructure in the Illawarra.

It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of this motion. The people of Wollongong and the people of the entire Illawarra region are united in their support for this development. The project will deliver a world-class sporting and entertainment facility for the Illawarra. The project will provide a significant upgrade in facilities at the stadium. It will benefit spectators, players, hirers, performers and media in the staging of events.

As the Premier announced last week, a new two-tiered stand will be built, with 6,170 new covered seats. Overall this will increase the capacity of the ground by 3,758 spectators, to 23,150. I understand that the previous record crowd at the ground was 19,608. The replacement of the 50 year-old Western Grandstand at WIN Stadium and the smaller refurbishment of the Southern Stand will bring a range of benefits to the region, and not just for those wanting to watch the Dragons. The investment of \$28.9 million will bring great economic benefits to the region. First and foremost, it will directly and indirectly create 640 full-time jobs for the region, delivering a significant boost to our construction industry. It will benefit our hospitality and tourism industry, and it will increase the profile of the region. As the Premier said last week:

A great city merits a great stadium.

This is an upgrade the people of the Illawarra deserve and that the people of the Illawarra will get.

Many years ago the Government helped fund the Northern Grandstand and now it's time to finish the job ...

... replacing the 50 year-old western grandstand and putting a state-of-the-art facility in.

I have been pushing for this development for many years. I have asked, I have pleaded, I have argued and I have threatened—always in good faith and in the right spirit, but with a firm commitment that the Government should deliver this project for the people of Wollongong. I also acknowledge the efforts of the people of the Illawarra who have been advocating for this upgrade for so long. To all the sporting, business and community leaders who have supported this project over several years, I say thank you. I am proud to stand here today and say it has all been worth it. I am confident that this decision will guarantee the long-term future of the Dragons in the region. Joining the Premier, me, Dragons coach Wayne Bennett, the Minister for the Illawarra, David Campbell, and the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Kevin Greene, at the announcement last week, Dragons Chief Executive Officer Peter Doust welcomed the investment. He said:

The Dragons have always been committed to playing rugby league in Wollongong ... it is a key element in our overall strategic plan.

Mr Doust said the project would greatly enhance the club's confidence in its future in the Illawarra. Wayne Bennett said this would be the sporting facility the Illawarra deserves. He acknowledged that Wollongong was a great sporting town and said the announcement was great news for Dragons fans and the broader area. He also said it was a reflection of the Dragons' commitment to the region.

I am hopeful that the project will also lead to other sporting benefits for Wollongong, like a future A-league football team for the Illawarra and more sporting events of national and international significance. I call on the Federal Government to help us by making a contribution to the redevelopment of WIN Stadium. The New South Wales Government has asked the Federal Government to contribute \$14 million towards the project. But make no mistake, this project will happen. The Premier has already made it clear the New South Wales Government will deliver the project irrespective of the Federal contribution. As the Premier said at the announcement:

We are asking them for a contribution ... but if they can't come to the party ... we will go it alone.

The people of Wollongong will welcome the Premier's strong commitment. But this commitment does not come at the expense of other New South Wales Government investment in the region. I remain a passionate advocate for improved services in Wollongong. As I have said, the commitment to replace the old run-down western grandstand is essential to delivering a high-standard sporting and entertainment venue for the Illawarra. And it will not divert a single dollar from hospitals, roads, transport, schools or police in the region.

The Government has delivered record investment in the Illawarra and we will continue to demonstrate our commitment to the region. The 2009-10 budget delivers capital works and road maintenance expenditure of \$373 million to Wollongong, Kiama, Shellharbour and the South Coast. The Government has invested more than \$167 million in the expansion of Port Kembla, which will secure 1,000 jobs and inject \$200 million into the regional economy. Construction has begun on the \$151 million, 600-bed gaol in Nowra, creating 200 new jobs. In recognition of the importance of Wollongong Hospital, the Premier has announced a \$5.5 million expansion

of the emergency department from 28 to 35 treatment spaces and including a four-bed psychiatric emergency care centre. The Government has also provided \$15 million to the new \$30 million Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute being built at the University of Wollongong.

The Illawarra Advantage Fund has already offered assistance to 120 projects in the region, involving investment totalling \$219 million, and has created and retained 2,869 jobs over the life of these projects. On 18 March the Premier announced an additional \$3 million for this fund. The \$5.8 million permanent opening to Lake Illawarra is now complete. TRUenergy's \$430 million Power Station A at Tallawarra was officially launched on 18 March 2009. This is Australia's most efficient gas-fired power station. Integral Energy's \$18 million Mount Ousley zone substation is now up and running, securing the power supply for the northern suburbs of Wollongong, including the University of Wollongong. The \$215 million Illawarra Waste Water Strategy is now recycling around 20 million litres of water per day.

Spending on other major projects in the region in 2009-10 includes \$7.7 million for a new police station at Lake Illawarra, \$3.7 million for stage two of the Ulladulla High School upgrade, \$2.2 million for the upgrade of Unanderra railway station, including an easy access facility, and \$95.6 million for upgrading the Princes Highway, including the Conjola Mountain realignment and other road and road-related expenditure.

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast) [5.06 p.m.]: I am pleased to contribute to debate on this motion regarding WIN Stadium. I note the enthusiasm of the member for Wollongong. In fact, she was so enthusiastic that she turned up late for the debate. However, I join her in welcoming this kind of expenditure: \$28.9 million to upgrade the western stand at WIN Stadium. I thank the members of the community who have lobbied so hard and for so long for this facility. I have certainly been there on many occasions, as I have at the WIN entertainment stadium. They are in a beautiful location—indeed, one of the most beautiful locations in the State. Both facilities are wonderful. Certainly WIN Stadium is in need of an upgrade and has been for sometime. There is no doubt that I agree with paragraph (1) of the motion. I also congratulate the member for Wollongong if she has made representations on the issue. I have not seen that happen, but I imagine it would have happened. I certainly am aware of the community input into the issue, however.

The Illawarra is desperately in need of some good news stories. Over the past 12 months we have heard so many stories—with Wollongong council sacked, Shellharbour council sacked, and issues of corruption, including Labor councillor corruption. Today the front page of the *Illawarra Mercury* again reported corruption: three Labor councillors to be charged after their inability to provide truthful information during an Independent Commission Against Corruption investigation.

**Ms Noreen Hay**: They did not report corruption at all. You just keep badmouthing Wollongong. You just keep bunging it on. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK**: So it is great to have this kind of good news. I am certainly not ashamed to come into this place and say, "Well done, Wollongong" for a change, because its image has been tarnished by the Labor Party. Paragraph (2) of the motion calls on the Opposition to join with the New South Wales Government and confirms our commitment to jobs and infrastructure in the Illawarra—which, of course, we do. Implicit in the motion is the member for Wollongong's talking up of Wollongong in terms of infrastructure spending in that area. We only have to go back to the last budget to see some of the disappointing results for not only Wollongong but also the entire Illawarra and South Coast region. That is not just my opinion; it is the opinion of all the media commentators who had something to say at the time. Given that the motion speaks about infrastructure, I will deal first with the Princes Highway. Government spending on the Princes Highway was cut by 50 per cent. This year's budget allocated almost 10 times less funding for the Princes Highway than last year's budget. This year \$79 million was allocated for the Princes Highway, whereas \$144 million was allocated in last year's budget.

Many times in this place we have heard the member for Wollongong bleating and saying to us, "Pick up the phone to John Howard and get some more money." Since we have had Kevin Rudd, we have had half the expenditure on the Princes Highway. Thank you very much, Kevin Rudd—nothing! Members on the other side have not lobbied to ensure that major upgrading projects continue. In fact, projects have been slashed by 50 per cent. In this year's budget \$660 million was allocated to the Pacific Highway and \$337 million to the Hume Highway, but what was the allocation for the Princes Highway? The figure of \$79 million allocated to the Princes Highway is a disgrace and a reflection of the inability of those opposite to lobby for the Princess Highway. It is such a disappointment.

[*Interruption*]

Mr Acting Speaker, I ask you to call the member for Wollongong to order. I resent her interjections. I was very quiet whilst she read her prepared speech and said nothing. Let us talk about the Gerringong to Bomaderry project, a very important project for the member for Kiama. What has happened there? Very little money again! The Berry bypass, which encompasses some of that project, has been on the books for 25 years, but the member for Kiama has been unable to secure any kind of funding for it. We talk about planning, planning and planning but there is no money for it to proceed. Why is that? The amount of money has been cut.

In the overall budget spend we will see three times more funding per capita going to the Hunter region than to Kiama, Wollongong, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven and Wingecarribee. Some members on this side of the House may be happy about that but I did not hear members on the other side at budget time stand up for their areas and say, "Wait a minute, why are they getting three times more per capita spending on things such as police stations, schools and transport?" Why? They do not say a word because they are sitting in their safe Labor seats, trying to hide behind all the corruption and all the things that have happened in Wollongong. Keep your heads down and you will get back. Do not worry about it. Do not stand up and argue for your region. Do not argue for more money for the Princes Highway. We are getting a Warilla police station, which is five years overdue. Do not argue for the Berry bypass even though it has been on the books for 25 years. Members opposite do nothing. It is a very disappointing situation.

When the budget was released all the media outlets were talking about the slashing of funds—not just me. The media was talking about slashing of funds not only to the Princess Highway but also to all infrastructure spending. One media headline read: "Give the Illawarra a fair share of budget pie". The front page of the *Mercury* at the time read: "Record spending but for us...? Crumbs". That is what it represented to the Illawarra: crumbs. What is the unemployment rate in the Illawarra after all the hard work by the members opposite? The unemployment rate is 9.3 per cent, which is much higher than the State average.

Things have happened in Wollongong but not enough. Meanwhile, members opposite continue to sit in their safe Labor seats, sure in the knowledge that they will be re-elected if they keep their heads down and disassociate themselves from people such as Kiril Jonovski, Frank Gigliotti and Zeki Esen. I am sure the member opposite is familiar with those names. They are the names of three former Labor councillors who are going to be charged with taking part in corrupt activity. These sorts of things have been happening in Wollongong and people need to know about it. But members opposite have had nothing to say. There has been no lobbying. They have accepted from the Treasurer that their budgets will be slashed and the money will be given to the Hunter and elsewhere.

**Mr MATT BROWN** (Kiama) [5.13 p.m.]: I support the positive motion before the House, which refers to real action in my region. Unfortunately, all we have heard from members opposite is typical whingeing and whining, harping and carping, and talking the region down. I will not do that because the \$28.9 million redevelopment of the western grandstand at WIN Stadium and the lesser refurbishment of the southern stand will deliver great benefits to the people of the Illawarra. First, it will deliver a world-class sporting entertainment and concert venue. The new two-tiered stand will provide around 6,170 new sheltered seats, increasing the capacity of the ground by more than 3,500 seats to a very impressive 23,150. The Rees Government is to be commended for acting to secure the future of the stadium as a first-rate venue for Wollongong. The project will deliver other enhancements—

**Mrs Shelley Hancock:** What about the Princes Highway?

**Mr MATT BROWN:** The member for South Coast interjects about the Princess Highway. I want to make sure it is on the record that Einstein on the other side of the House has not read the motion. The motion is about WIN Stadium. The project will deliver other enhancements, including improved patron access and facilities, such as toilets, turnstiles, box offices, and food and beverage areas; four new areas to be leased to business usable as shops, eateries, sports medicine facilities or sport offices; two new function rooms usable as game day events and corporate functions and conferences; new player facilities; 21 new corporate boxes; and brand new media facilities.

[*Interruption*]

The hypocrisy on the other side of the House is breathtaking. The member for South Coast criticised the member for Wollongong for interjecting. Since the member for the South Coast has sat down she has done

nothing but interject. I am not scared of her weak words. The greatest beneficiaries of these improvements to WIN Stadium will be Dragon's fans—go the Dragons! This money is in addition to the more than \$7 million invested in WIN Stadium by the Government since 2000 and underlines the Government's commitment to rugby league in this State.

WIN Stadium will become an entertainment facility of international standards. The development of such a quality facility will open up other possibilities for future events. For example, the stadium could one day be home to an Illawarra-based A-league football team. It could attract significant rugby union fixtures, such as Waratah games, and let us not forget other major events such as concerts, shows and conferences. The stadium may again host the Supercross Masters, as it did in 2006. We should also not forget the economic benefits of the project.

*[Interruption]*

The member for South Coast again interjects and yawns as if my speech is boring. I can inform her that the people of the Illawarra are very happy to see this massive investment in our stadium. It will be a huge boost to the region's construction industry, providing 640 full-time equivalent jobs both directly and indirectly. In addition, the region will benefit from the hospitality and tourism jobs, which will flow from the venue. This is further proof that the Rees Government is absolutely committed to the people of the Illawarra.

The member for Wollongong has already touched on the Rees Government's record when it comes to the Illawarra, but I will recap some of our investments in the region. An amount of \$42 million has been allocated for new road projects, \$4 million for new buses, \$7.7 million towards the new Lake Illawarra Police Station, \$2.2 million towards the \$11.4 million upgrade of Unanderra Railway Station, and \$7 million for a new tug berth for the outer harbour at Port Kembla. Huge amounts of money are coming in to the Illawarra region.

I recently attended the open day for the Oak Flats to Dunmore upgrade, a huge \$120 million road upgrade and a great boost to the Illawarra. I can inform the member for South Coast that the local residents do not see that road as crumbs but rather as a vital piece of infrastructure—the missing link—and they are very excited about its opening in the very near future. But it will not stop there. The Rees Government is committed to infrastructure in the Illawarra. Recently the new alignment of the Princes Highway was announced. The member for South Coast talks about the Princes Highway, but it was under the Rees Government that the new direction for that highway was decided. This Labor Government has a proud record in providing such important infrastructure to the Illawarra region.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS** (Upper Hunter) [5.18 p.m.]: I state at the outset that I do not begrudge Wollongong receiving \$29 million for WIN Stadium but it makes my blood boils that no consideration has been given to the plight of a similar stadium in Newcastle. I refer to the EnergyAustralia Stadium, which is part of the Hunter International Sports Centre Trust. The Rees Government has embarrassed the Newcastle Knights, the Newcastle Jets and the iconic EnergyAustralia stadium. The Knights rugby league club is probably the most important social and sporting institution in Newcastle and the Hunter.

**Mr Matt Brown:** Point of order: I am reluctant to take this point of order because I know that all members, including Opposition members, are committed to advocating for the need of their region. This motion is specific to the Illawarra region, not the Hunter area. I ask that the member for Upper Hunter be directed back to the motion.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** To the point of order: Government speakers have referred to a number of issues. This motion, if specific at all, is about sporting stadia. Government members have talked about roads down the South Coast and up the North Coast. They have mentioned the Pacific Highway. Funding for stadia in New South Wales is a most important and relevant part of this motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris):** Order! I have extended a degree of latitude to members on both sides of the House during the debate. The member for Upper Hunter has the call.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** The stadium is under construction following a \$60 million grant from the Federal and State governments. The construction has stalled due to a \$6 million shortfall. Where the western grandstand once was there is a vacant hole. The earlier stages of construction have overrun or the contracts cost far greater than anticipated. But for \$6 million, it is a gross embarrassment. This is a National Rugby League [NRL] ground, as is WIN Stadium, yet there is a vacant hole where a new grandstand should be under

construction. As I said, the first stages of construction were more costly than expected. The Knights are seriously disadvantaged. This has affected the Knights financial position and will impact on their home games next season.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order: I ask that you reconsider your previous ruling. My motion specifically relates to WIN Stadium in Wollongong and infrastructure and jobs in the Illawarra. Whilst I accept that both sides have had some latitude, the member for Upper Hunter has raised an issue that is not related to the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris):** Order! The wording of the motion is specific to WIN Stadium. While I have extended a degree of latitude during this debate, I ask the member for Upper Hunter to refer to WIN Stadium.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** WIN Stadium will form an important part of the network of stadia throughout the State. There is an embarrassing hole in that network at Newcastle. Whilst I am pleased to see the development of WIN Stadium, there is a vacant hole in Newcastle that is entitled the "ALP" hole. Government members should be ashamed of themselves. Not only will the construction of an international stadium allow the continuation of NRL and Jets fixtures, it will also enable Newcastle to be part of the FIFA bid for the World Cup—which I am sure the Illawarra also wants to be a part of—and Super 15 rugby union games to be staged in Newcastle.

However, but for a measly \$6 million the stadium that will be constructed will not be of international standard and will not qualify to stage these events. It is an impasse and an embarrassment. I call on the Rees Labor Government to not only do the good work of providing funds for the development of WIN Stadium in Wollongong, which I am delighted to see, but also continue the contribution throughout the rest of the State. I do not begrudge Wollongong its \$29 million. But what have the people of the Hunter done to earn the complete disregard of this Labor administration? The Government takes them for granted. All that is needed is \$6 million. The Government proves its disregard for the area by not providing this funding.

**Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong)** [5.23 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Kiama and the member for Upper Hunter for their contributions. Although the member for Upper Hunter did not speak to the motion, I believe that he was speaking on behalf of his electorate. However, I am concerned about comments made by the member for South Coast. If the member ventured from the South Coast to attend meetings at Shell Cove with senior Opposition members to listen to the needs, wants and views of the people of the Illawarra, you would see more people in a bus shelter. I would have said a telephone box, but that is too common.

The people of the Illawarra have made it clear that they do not want Shelley Hancock speaking for them. They know that the New South Wales Opposition dumps on the Illawarra. The member for South Coast stooped to a new low today when she raised an issue under the guise of parliamentary privilege about people facing a court case. She is a disgrace. People in this country are entitled, thank God, to their day in court. To be charged does not mean a person is guilty. As I said, thank God that in this country we have a system where people are deemed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

**Mrs Shelley Hancock:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The member for Wollongong is misleading the House. I indicated that three people were charged. I did not imply in any way that they were guilty of the offences with which they had been charged. As usual, the member for Wollongong is misleading the House.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** As usual, the member for South Coast wanders around dumping on the Illawarra and the people of Wollongong. She is negative, critical and whiney. She is trying to do as much damage as she can to the reputation of the people of Wollongong. I will be positive about the people of Wollongong. I will talk up Wollongong and the Illawarra and the needs of our region. I will work with my colleagues for the area, as we have done. When the member for South Coast gets some of her own medicine she does not like it. In relation to spending in the region, a sum of \$86.1 million has been allocated for electricity infrastructure projects by New South Wales electricity agencies. These agencies operate in competition with the private sector and interstate companies, and their project details are commercial in confidence. There is \$1.7 million for the child and adolescent inpatient unit at Shellharbour Hospital and six new dialysis chairs at Shellharbour Hospital under the Renal Illawarra program. The cost for the chairs is not disclosed as the project is yet to be tendered and its cost is considered commercial in confidence.

The commitment of the \$28.9 million redevelopment of the western grandstand at WIN Stadium furthers the Government's record on delivering infrastructure and services to the people of Wollongong and the broader Illawarra region. I remind the House that under the last New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government, the Greiner Government, the Illawarra was left with a big hole where there should have been a cancer unit. Thanks to the Labor Government we have that cancer unit. Kiama Hospital was closed under those opposite. They had no commitment to mental health services. Under them there was nothing for the people of the Illawarra. If they had their way the people of the Illawarra and Wollongong would get nothing. They make much of a few bad apples. At the first opportunity the people of the Illawarra and Wollongong will show them that they do not appreciate the Opposition painting them all with same brush and continually badmouthing Wollongong and the Illawarra. Any time any Opposition member wants to have a run in my seat, they should come on down. The people of Wollongong and the Illawarra are not fooled by their deceit and dishonesty.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT (LAND TRANSACTIONS) BILL 2009**

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

#### **LIQUOR AND REGISTERED CLUBS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009**

##### **Agreement in Principle**

**Debate resumed from 24 September 2009.**

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS** (Upper Hunter) [5.28 p.m.]: I have pleasure in leading for the Liberal-Nationals Coalition on the Liquor and Registered Clubs Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. I indicate at the outset that following discussions with the Minister and the Minister's agreement to amend this bill by a Government amendment, the Opposition will not oppose this bill after the amendment has been made. The bill contains many, many parts because it seeks to tidy up the implementation of the rewritten Liquor Act, which commenced on 1 July 2008, and deal with a number of unintended consequences, even some errors of drafting and so on.

The bill refers to registered clubs. A number of positions will be rectified very much to the advantage of the registered club movement. In particular, clubs will be allowed to issue seven-day temporary memberships, outdated membership limits that are more than 40 years old will be removed—those limits referred to capacity limits at a time when clubs were overcrowded and there were fire issues and other issues that are outdated now that building laws have progressed and such aspects are covered—and they will be allowed to operate commercial catering to strengthen club businesses. I will be very pleased to see that happen because it will allow clubs to diversify their activities and lessen their dependence on gaming revenues. Clubs usually have a significant investment in catering operations. The bill will now enable them to be a little bit more commercial and to carry out catering operations to an even greater extent, perhaps at times when they would not otherwise be as busy.

A number of provisions relate to the Liquor Act. Rather than deal with each and every one of them I simply indicate that the Opposition will not oppose this bill provided an amendment is made concerning one item. The bill included a new section to the Liquor Act, section 80 (9), which would deny people the right to legal representation in the event of noise disturbance dispute conferences. Unfortunately, this aspect of the bill focuses our attention on a very, very big problem in the way in which this Government has dealt with issues relating to liquor: the responsible service of alcohol in our community and the management of liquor licensing throughout the State. We have experienced one policy yielding to another policy yielding to another policy on a very regular basis over the past few years. This matter had a particular focus when the Premier issued a press release during November 2008 for the implementation of a list of 48 licensed venues on 1 December 2008.

This list was supposed to be an active list to be added to and deleted from according to statistics, but a number of licensees took the Government to court. The Government introduced emergency legislation in literally one day to effectively win the court case, which I thought was an extraordinary moment in the legislative history of this place. I will not go through all those old issues now, but it was quite an extraordinary defeat of an ordinary citizen's right to be heard in another place and to have recourse to an appeal through the

court system. The blurring of the separation of powers that occurred on that occasion was beyond my belief. But the list has never moved. As it turned out, it had to be legislated and the Government considered—once again by announcement—a star-rating system. That plan was abandoned prior to its implementation because it was going to be unworkable.

Now we have a list of 100, a ranking system yet to be implemented and a proposed regime of management that goes with it. I am just pointing out that it has been a very volatile period of time in the whole area of liquor licence management by this Government. This bill will rectify errors of drafting and unintended consequences and will make other minor amendments to all sorts of items. It is like putting a focus on the portfolio with a statute law reform type of bill. But to have nicely tucked away in the bill the elimination of a citizen's right to legal representation is utterly unacceptable; it is a denial of natural justice and we will oppose it.

Quite a number of third parties, including the Law Society of New South Wales and the Australian Hotels Association, were very strongly opposed to this bill, even though the bill was something that they had sought. A number of licence applications that had not been completed by the Liquor Administration Board when it was abolished have remained in limbo all this time because the replacement Act did not give jurisdiction for a flow-on to the Casino Liquor Gaming Control Authority. This bill now does that. I believe there are seven applicants who have been desperately waiting for this bill, but I spoke to their legal representatives, I spoke to the Australian Hotels Association and I spoke to the Law Society and it was considered that the issue of natural justice had far greater importance to those applicants than the time delay.

I thank the Minister for engaging in these discussions and negotiations. I thank those third parties I have already mentioned and the number of lawyers, who are too numerous to mention, for their contributions to this issue. I am pleased that the Minister will move an amendment that will eliminate proposed section 80 (9). The bill will then do many good things and it will not be contaminated by that rather noxious denial of natural justice in our society. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms MARIE ANDREWS** (Gosford) [5.40 p.m.]: I take much pleasure in supporting the introduction of the Liquor and Registered Clubs Legislation Amendment Bill. Social, demographic and commercial changes over the past 10 years have increased the challenge for clubs to remain competitive and sustainable. As many members would be aware, in June 2008 the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal released its report of the most comprehensive review into the registered clubs industry in New South Wales. The Government commissioned this review in March 2007 as part of its commitment to ensuring the New South Wales clubs movement remains sustainable and the valuable community support it provides is maintained.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal examined a wide range of issues and challenges facing clubs, including the social and economic contribution clubs make to the community, the commercial, social and regulatory pressures on the industry, and emerging industry trends. It also looked at issues relevant to club governance: reducing red tape, improving financial management and identifying training and development needs. The review also recognised the different needs of clubs in metropolitan, regional and remote areas. The report confirmed the significant contribution clubs make to the New South Wales economy and the need for continued government support. The report also estimated that the value of clubs' contribution to social infrastructure in New South Wales in 2007 was \$811 million. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal made 69 recommendations in its final report. Many of the recommendations relate to financial reporting and benchmarking, education and training to improve club management, diversifying club operations and measures to ensure industry viability.

ClubsNSW has responsibility for implementing the majority of the recommendations, with other recommendations being implemented by the Government. Some of the recommendations require considerable development work by the club industry. In this respect, ClubsNSW has been working with representatives from club industry bodies and the Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing to progress the implementation of the recommendations. This involved ClubsNSW establishing various subcommittees to consider specific areas relating to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's key recommendations. As part of that process, the Government is also working with ClubsNSW to help establish a club viability panel to identify and help clubs in financial difficulty. The Government is working with ClubsNSW to establish a pilot scheme in a number of areas in which struggling clubs are located.

These are complex issues and this work may lead to other changes to the registered club laws. The proposed amendments to the Registered Clubs Act implement the Independent Pricing and Regulatory

Tribunal's recommendations to remove unnecessary regulatory restrictions on clubs. This will enable clubs to issue seven-day temporary memberships to reduce costs and increase visits, to remove outdated membership limits, which are more than 40 years old, and to expand their catering operations to strengthen their businesses. Under the current law temporary members are required to sign a register each time they enter a club's premises. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recommended that the Registered Clubs Act be amended to allow clubs to issue seven-day temporary memberships. While having to sign in for each visit does not necessarily provide a disincentive to all patrons visiting a club, the proposal would be especially useful for clubs that have relatively high levels of temporary member visitation, especially those in tourist and business centres.

The Government agrees that there is scope to make the sign-in process for temporary members more flexible and reflective of the individual circumstances of clubs. The proposed seven-day membership would allow the patron to visit the club during that period without having to sign in for each visit. The patron would still need to present his or her temporary membership as he or she entered the venue for each visit. Under the flexible arrangements individual clubs can decide how many days of membership a temporary member is entitled to without having to complete the sign-in register. If a club wants a temporary membership of more than seven days, the amendment will allow it to apply to the Casino Liquor Gaming and Control Authority. The authority may approve longer periods of up to 30 consecutive days.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal also recommended that the Registered Clubs Act be amended to remove outdated membership limits. The Act currently restricts club membership numbers, but that can be varied through application to the Casino Liquor and Gaming Control Authority. Few applications have been received in recent years and all have been approved. The provision is outdated and causes unnecessary red tape. It has been in place since the late 1960s and appears to have been introduced to address concerns about venue overcrowding. These overcrowding issues are now adequately addressed through planning and fire safety regulations. This bill will delete the provision from the Registered Clubs Act.

The Government is also assisting clubs in reducing their reliance on gaming machine revenue by allowing them to diversify their businesses into areas such as health and fitness, childcare, and retail and residential interests. The Registered Clubs Act currently prohibits clubs from providing off-site catering at functions sponsored and paid for by persons who are not members of the club. This bill will amend the Act so that clubs can cater off-site to non-club members. That will enable clubs to expand their business activities and be competitive in the market.

This bill also contains a range of miscellaneous liquor law amendments. The new Liquor Act, which commenced in July last year, was a significant departure from the previous liquor licensing arrangements. Since July 2008 a number of implementation issues have been identified that require amendments to the liquor laws. Also, after 12 months of operation it is appropriate to undertake some finetuning to clarify issues that have been identified by stakeholders that also require amendments and the amendments in this bill will achieve that. They are routine and machinery-type matters that will assist in the efficient and effective operation of the liquor regulatory system. I take much pleasure in supporting the bill and commending it to the House.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [5.47 p.m.]: The Liquor and Registered Clubs Legislation Amendment Bill deals with a subject that is very dear to my heart because I spent 27 years managing clubs. This bill represents the first positive moves from this Government affecting the club industry of New South Wales. I led the Tweed Heads Bowls Club, which had a very large membership, and I worked at the great Revesby Workers Club and before that at the Georges River 16ft Sailing Club. The club industry campaigned long and hard for change, but for a long time the Labor Government has forgotten about all the good community work the industry has done. We are now suffering the effects of that policy.

The amendments to the provisions covering temporary membership are a good move. When I was employed at the Tweed Heads Bowls Club we had between 20,000 and 40,000 visitors a month, particularly in winter when our Victorian visitors joined us and during the school holidays. That influx of visitors would cost us about \$80,000 a year for stationery and would result in long queues in the foyer. Our close proximity to the border also presented difficulties. About 47 per cent of our patrons were from Queensland and they obtained temporary membership. Removing the outdated membership limits will also assist the clubs industry. I applied for an increase in the membership limit on many occasions and it was an arduous task. I was also working at the club at the time and played a small part in achieving the repeal of section 23 (1) (g) of the Tax Act. Tweed Heads Bowls Club and a bowls club at Port Macquarie set a precedent and we received a massive \$3.5 million refund.

The provisions allowing registered clubs to operate commercial catering operations will strengthen their financial position. Many years ago, in the mid 1990s, I took the step as general manager to branch out. We created a liquor shop past the sign-in point for our members and temporary members. We also took the step of creating our own butcher shop and our own bakehouse. Not only could we supply our own club product but we could also supply our shop. That shop had a tremendous effect on the financial viability of the bowls club. Effectively, the profit we made from that shop in the foyer funded the cost of the reception point. We made a profit of around \$180,000 a year, and that was the labour content of the cost of running the foyer seven days a week. Recently I attended the New South Wales Registered Clubs convention on the Gold Coast. The Minister and the shadow Minister were there and both made very positive contributions.

**Mr Thomas George:** I hope it was the Tweed section.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** I take the point of the member for Lismore. I have been working with the Twin Towns Services Club, which is well on the way to creating its own convention centre which, hopefully, will see New South Wales conventions come back across the border. We get quite parochial about that. In creating those extra things we are always hamstrung catering outdoors. In the early 1990s, when Richard Face was gaming Minister, there was a clear intention by the Government that ultimately taxation levels would increase and clubs had to start to diversify. I even went down the line of trying to encourage the Bendigo Bank to relocate to the club because a lot of our local banks were closing, but that is still prohibited under the Registered Clubs Act and the Liquor Act.

I can understand the concern about banks being adjacent to gaming machines. While I am not opposing these conditions, I think we need to look further into the future viability of our clubs and give them the opportunity and ability to do that. I know the Bendigo Bank was keen to locate there. It had good support from the 20,000 or 30,000 members of the club. Our mainstream banks were closing down but we were still prohibited under the Act to locate the bank even on the outside of the club where there was no internal access from the bank to the club. A lot more needs to be done there. I am a director of Bowls Australia, the national lawn bowls group. I am the longest-serving director. I have been there 14 years. I think I am the only living life member.

**Mr Kevin Greene:** Didn't you stand down?

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** No, I am standing down in about three weeks. A very good friend of mine, Ian McKnight, recently was elected as President of Bowls New South Wales. According to surveys we conducted, particularly in bowls clubs—and members know that most small communities throughout New South Wales have a bowls club—it appears that currently 60 per cent of them are technically insolvent.

**Mr Kevin Greene:** I have rolled up to a few.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** The President of Bowls New South Wales made mention to me of the bowling prowess of the Minister. I made the comment, "I hope you let him win," and they assured me they did. This legislation is a positive step for the club industry. I believe there is a new air of consultation. I understand the majority of these provisions have come from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal report. Representatives of Clubs New South Wales and other major clubs are endorsing these provisions as well. With regard to outdoor catering, many years ago I was approached by the general manager of the Foster-Tuncurry Ex-Services Club, a very large club in the Myall Lakes electorate. I was approached on the weekend by that general manager and he assures me their shop is going extraordinarily well and the club plans to expand it. It is a very well-run club.

There are other provisions to restore trading rights that existed in the former Liquor Act for hotels and on-premises licences for Sundays, Christmas Day and Good Friday. The legislation also aligns the rules governing cider, sherry and mead producers with wine producers and allows metropolitan brewers and distillers to sell direct to the public from their licensed premises. This is all very well. We have one winery within the Tweed, and I am sure it will be pleased with some of these provisions. The legislation clarifies that a business owner may apply for the transfer of a liquor licence. This provides greater clarification.

One of the overriding concerns not only in my area but in many other areas is the amount of violence associated with liquor venues. In the Tweed we are a little different. We have that unusual thing where the majority of our liquor areas shut down at a reasonable time, at one o'clock or thereabouts, but unfortunately across the border—and this is exacerbated at the moment with the difference in time zones—they go to 3 o'clock

or four o'clock. Many young people then cut across the border and create antisocial behaviour on the streets of the Tweed. Unfortunately, at times a negative picture is painted of our liquor industry, yet it has conducted its business in a responsible manner. Unfortunately, I need to inform the House that in the past several months two young people have been murdered on the streets of Coolangatta adjacent to liquor venues. Greater work needs to be done in that area.

Our liquor accord works extraordinarily well. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research figures for this year are not available yet but in 2007 our licensed premises had 127 offences under the Liquor Act. That has dropped to 88 in 2008 and I estimate there will be a further drop in 2009. There has been a good rapport with the Department of Gaming and Racing following the implementation of a number of these provisions. The Tweed alone has around 150 liquor licences—that is, restaurants, bottle shops, pubs and so on. Liquor is a big concern in my electorate. For seven years in a row we had the highest incidence of drink-driving per head of population of any electorate in New South Wales, which is a big shame file. Massive amounts of alcohol are consumed. We have a population of 80,000 and about 50,000 Queenslanders a day cross the border. The two largest beer manufacturers in the nation have compared notes on that, and we consume well over three million litres of beer, which is a real problem.

I do not oppose this bill. It is long overdue. I ask the Minister to look also at other issues, especially those affecting registered clubs. Let us try to make procedures simpler. Clubs, particularly the small clubs, are doing it tough and they are trying to the best of their ability. Once again, I am 100 per cent for the Tweed.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN** (Bathurst) [5.58 p.m.]: I am 150 per cent for Bathurst. I support the Liquor and Registered Clubs Legislation Amendment Bill and congratulate the Minister for Gaming and Racing on the work he has done to date. The new Liquor Act has been in place for a little over 14 months. It represented the most significant reform to the liquor licensing laws in this State for a quarter of a century. It replaced the former court-based licensing system with a new administrative-based system that has provided real benefits for industry and the community. A key objective of the laws is the balanced development of the liquor industry through a flexible and practical regulatory system with less red tape, and that is very important. The new licensing system strikes a balance between sensible controls and allowing the industry to grow. Fees payable under the new system were reduced to assist business. These were significant. For example, the fee to establish a small bar was reduced from upwards of \$10,000 to just \$500.

Similarly, the fee to enable a restaurant to serve liquor without meals fell from more than \$5,000 to just \$50. In introducing the new licensing system the Government has also focused on overhauling forms and processes to make it easier for applicants and licensees to understand their rights and responsibilities. New record-keeping processes using the Government licensing system have been introduced to allow regulators to provide a better service to business operators and other customers. Work is underway at present to expand the availability of electronic-based applications, which will save time and costs for applicants and regulators.

The New South Wales Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing has also produced social profile reports to help applicants and local communities better understand the alcohol-related issues that are an important factor in determining licence applications. Much of this work occurs behind the scenes and is not high profile. However, it does provide benefits to industry and the public, as well as improving the effectiveness of law enforcement, another important aspect.

During the first 12 months of operation of the new Liquor Act more than 2,100 new liquor licences were granted. Well over half of these were approved for the many community, charitable and sporting functions that are held around New South Wales every weekend. This is particularly important for regional areas. Some of the other notable outcomes during the first 12 months include 115 new producer wholesaler licences for wine producers and liquor wholesale businesses. Also, just over 420 new on-premises licences were granted for businesses ranging from restaurants and public entertainment venues to surf clubs that wish to be able to hire out their premises for private functions, giving them another income stream to carry out their important community work.

There is also evidence that existing businesses are expanding their operations by moving into complementary areas, such as restaurants that now wish to also provide catering services for functions away from their premises, which was mentioned earlier. The new Liquor Act provides the flexibility that is required in a modern regulatory system to allow these types of developments. It is also notable that more than 920 authorisations were approved for licensees during the first 12 months of the new Act. Over 500 of these permitted hotels to cater at functions away from their premises, which is a long-established right for hoteliers.

A good example was at the Bathurst V8 race this year where, instead of outside caterers being used, a local licensee organised local hoteliers to provide refreshment and food at Mount Panorama. That helped the Bathurst economy whereas previously the money had gone to major corporations outside the Bathurst area.

During the first year of the new liquor laws 175 primary service authorisations were also granted. These allow restaurants to sell liquor without meals and help to provide communities with a greater choice of drinking and entertainment venues. All of these applications have been considered in the context of the objects of the new Liquor Act, which focus on balancing industry and community needs, while recognising that there must be proper controls over the sale and supply of alcohol. All members would agree there are issues around that in all our electorates.

The Act requires community consultation for high-risk liquor applications and public submissions are welcomed in relation to any application that is made. To facilitate this the New South Wales Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing has provided an easy-to-use online system so that submissions can be made electronically. Where there are concerns about the density of licensed premises and the extent of liquor trading hours the Government has shown through recent amendments to the liquor laws that it is willing to act to freeze licence applications and prevent new 24-hour venues.

Given the very substantial changes to the licensing system introduced by the new Liquor Act, it is not surprising that some minor implementation issues have arisen. The amendments in this bill address these matters. While the amendments are minor they do bring real benefits to licensees in the community. Cider, perry and mead producers will have the benefit of the wine producer reforms introduced last year. These reforms include the operation of a drink-on-premises authorisation, along with sales of their product to the public at wine shows and local producer markets.

Ian Glen, a young man from Bathurst, went back to his parents' native Scotland, worked for one of the big distilleries in Scotland, gained qualifications as a distiller, returned to Bathurst and set up the Stone Pine Distillery on Gormans Hill Road, Bathurst. He is making a range of liquors, vodkas and the like based on native Australian plants. I am not a connoisseur of spirits—beer and wine are more my forte—but he is doing extremely well at the high end of the market.

**Mr Thomas George:** Bring some here and we will try it—at the next Lions Club meeting.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** I may well. Ian came to me a couple of years ago and said, "We are really stifled as a small family operation in trying to get our operation going because of the cost to set it up". It was going to cost them \$15,000 or \$20,000 for the initial licensing. It is now only \$500. He has been able to get his business up and running and provide some pretty good headaches for people around the area. The changes to the bill also allow metropolitan brewers and distillers to sell their products directly to the public and place them on a level playing field with regional producers. That is a turnaround: metropolitan people being on a level playing field with people in the regions. The amendments provide a boost for metropolitan microbrewers, who, like their regional counterparts, will be able to make direct-to-the-public sales. This includes sales via mail order and through the Internet. The popularity of boutique beer from these producers has increased as sales of premium beer have risen. The amendments will provide these producers with increased market exposure.

The disturbance complaint amendments in the bill will benefit local communities experiencing undue disturbance caused by licensed premises and their patrons. Certain areas in my electorate are experiencing this common problem. This measure recognises that the matter must be addressed. The existing disturbance complaint process was introduced in the late 1980s as an informal means for police, local councils and residents to take actions to address disturbance to the quiet and good order of their neighbourhood. Ideally, the process should operate with minimal formality and technicality. This is set out as an object of the legislation in section 3 of the Liquor Act.

However, recent developments have seen the process become bogged down in legal argument. Instead of productive meetings where the parties to a complaint discuss and try to resolve the issues, complaint conferences have become forums for solicitors and barristers to raise points of legal argument about process. Costs have risen dramatically and local communities are at risk of being excluded from the very process that is supposed to help and protect them. This does nothing to address the alcohol-related problems being experienced by the community. The amendments in this bill are necessary to fix that, and I support them. They will help to ensure that disturbance complaints can reach a productive outcome or, where appropriate, that other regulatory tools in the new Liquor Act can be utilised instead to reduce alcohol-related problems.

Businesses and communities across New South Wales have benefited from the substantial liquor law reforms introduced by this Government, and this is another example. This bill will ensure that those reforms continue to produce better outcomes for industry, consumers and the public in general. For those reasons I support the bill.

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE** (Lismore) [6.08 p.m.]: I speak on the Liquor and Registered Clubs Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. The object of the bill is to amend the Liquor Act 2007 as follows:

- (a) to clarify the trading hours that apply to hotels and certain licensed premises (such as restaurants) on Good Friday and Christmas Day,
- (b) to restrict the granting of extended trading authorisations for hotels and licensed public entertainment venues in relation to Good Friday and Christmas Day,
- (c) to enable cider, perry and mead producers, and beer and spirit producers, to sell their own products on their licensed premises directly to the public (ie, cellar door sales),
- (d) to modify the way in which the Director-General of Communities, NSW may deal with complaints about the disturbance caused by or in relation to licensed premises,
- (e) to make other amendments of a minor, administrative or consequential nature.

The bill also amends the Registered Clubs Act 1976 and the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority Act 2007 to provide for persons to be admitted as temporary club members for a period of up to seven consecutive days or for a period of up to 30 consecutive days with the approval of the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority; to remove provisions restricting membership numbers for clubs; and to make other minor amendments of an administrative or consequential nature. As the shadow Minister rightly said, following the good work he did with the Minister, we will not oppose this bill. The Nationals have enormous potential because the House heard from a licensed club manager and now a former hotel licensee.

*[Interruption]*

It is marvellous that the member for Rockdale has answers today; he did not have answers yesterday. I have always placed on record my interest in a hotel. I now can safely stand here and say that I do not have an interest in a hotel. The other day I spoke to a hotel licensee who received a letter from the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing informing him that eight incidents were reported against his business. He rang the office and eventually received information about those eight incidents. One recorded incident was when his hotel had been broken into at 2 o'clock in the morning and he had caught the person in the upstairs residence.

On another occasion a customer was sitting in his car at a drive-through bottle shop while his wife purchased a bottle of wine. A bloke walking past along the street saw him in the car, approached him and jobbed him in the face. Apparently the passer-by had wanted to confront this man for some time. The police were called and this resulted in the reporting of the second incident against the hotel. A further occasion involved his security personnel refusing a person entry because he was intoxicated. They are just three examples of a licensee doing the right thing but having incidents recorded against the hotel. My concern is that through the unnecessary recording of incidents this list will be much bigger than the present 100.

**Mr Kevin Greene:** No, we won't.

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE:** I hope there will be more cooperation. I will talk further to the Minister when I receive a letter from this particular licensee. Unless commonsense prevails, licensees carrying out the requirements of their licence by refusing entry to intoxicated people will have similar incidents reported against their hotel. In the instance I referred to it appears that when entry was prevented the person concerned refused to accept that decision, security personnel obviously manhandled him to remove him from the place but he kept returning and the police were contacted. The person had not even entered the premises yet that was recorded as an incident against the hotel. I have not conferred with the shadow Minister on this issue, but I believe all licensees should be required to attend liquor accord meetings. Hotel and club representatives are becoming part of these accords, but other outlets such as bottle shops that open at 7.30 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. sell just as much alcohol, sometimes more, without a requirement for the licensee to attend accord meetings.

Until all relevant participants attend these meetings to address community concerns nothing will work. A licensee must be required to attend a local liquor accord meeting. When licensed premises, police and council

work together the attitude to the sale of alcohol and the treatment of the community will be more responsible and will combat a problem we all experience. Again I thank the shadow Minister for working closely with the Minister and his department. I am pleased to say that we will not oppose this bill.

**Mr KEVIN GREENE** (Oatley—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [6.14 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate. The amendments in this bill are important in helping to secure the future of registered clubs in New South Wales. They are part of a range of initiatives the Government and the club sector are working on. I commend Clubs NSW particularly for the work it is undertaking to ensure that clubs continue to contribute to local communities in the future. This bill makes finetuning changes also to the new liquor laws so that the benefits of the new licensing system continue to be realised by all stakeholders. I take this opportunity to respond briefly to a couple of points made by members.

The member for Gosford and the member for Bathurst made a number of good points and positive comments about the legislation. Their contributions certainly were appreciated. It is great also to have the bipartisan support of the shadow Minister, the member for Upper Hunter, the 100 per cent member for Tweed and the member for Lismore. I thank them for their support and their generous comments about the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, particularly the comments of the member for Tweed about the great work by the office in his area. However, members on the Opposition benches still have concerns about other changes the Government made in response to alcohol-related violence. The Government has implemented strong measures. The member for Tweed indicated that alcohol-related violence is a concern in his community, as indeed it is in all communities. That is why this Government has acted so strongly.

Unfortunately, the shadow Minister made some inaccurate comments, but I shall not address them in great detail except to say that our regime clearly indicates the parameters to licensees. I am happy to discuss with the member for Lismore the matters he raised, but I can indicate that licensees and local area commands have ongoing communication regarding the recording of incidents so that people know exactly what is involved. Again, it is part of the Government's strong regime to ensure ongoing communication so that we cannot have alcohol-related violence in our communities. Opposition members are nodding in agreement. The Government has acted strongly and decisively and will continue to do so. We will continue to work also with the Australian Hotels Association, Clubs NSW, police and the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing to strengthen this regime and, most importantly, strengthen communication to benefit all our communities.

I appreciate the comments of the member for Tweed and his positive support for the initiatives of this bill regarding changes to benefit the club industry. I place on record that next year further legislative changes will be introduced. The Government has addressed a number of the 69 recommendations of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal in this legislation and will introduce additional changes in the future. Discussions continue with Clubs NSW. As has been indicated, we have a clubs working party and we are working towards having a club viability panel.

Comment has been made about club closures. All members, and the member for Tweed in particular, would recognise that the strength of clubs comes basically from the support of their members. As I have said before, clubs come into existence as a result of a group of people coming together to support a particular cause through the formation of a licensed club venue. The profits from that venture, which come from the support of members, go to the cause they are supporting, whether it is a bowling club, an RSL or ex-services club, a sporting club, or whatever. Everything hinges on the ongoing support of members. If members do not support their club, the club will find it difficult to survive in any economic climate. Club memberships must support the clubs or the clubs will continue to struggle. That has been the underlying cause of the demise of a number of clubs over the last decade in particular. It basically comes down to the failure of club members to support their club.

As I have said, we are looking to make additional changes in the new year to continue to support the club industry. The member for Tweed referred to my recent attendance at the Clubs NSW annual general meeting and the comments I made at that function, which I will not go into today. I conclude by acknowledging the concerns about the provision in the bill dealing with legal representation at disturbance complaint conferences under the Liquor Act. The Government foreshadows moving an amendment in the consideration in detail stage to delete that provision from the bill. I particularly note the support of the member for Upper Hunter for that amendment. I commend the bill to the House.

**Question—That the bill be agreed to in principle—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill agreed to in principle.**

**Consideration in detail requested by Mr Kevin Greene.**

#### **Consideration in Detail**

**Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.**

**Mr KEVIN GREENE** (Oatley—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [6.23 p.m.]: I move the Government amendment:

Page 9, schedule 1 [29], lines 4 and 5. Omit all words on those lines.

The Government acknowledges that there are concerns about the provision in the bill that a complainant or licensee is not entitled to be legally represented at a disturbance complaint conference. While this provision is consistent with the aim that the complaint process be an accessible and effective mechanism to address neighbourhood disturbance, and the Government supports the intent of the original amendment, given the concerns raised by industry around implementation we will consult further with industry with a view to reintroducing the provision at a later date.

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

**Government amendment agreed to.**

**Schedule 1 as amended agreed to.**

**Schedules 2 and 3 agreed to.**

**Consideration in detail concluded.**

#### **Passing of the Bill**

**Motion by Mr Kevin Greene agreed to:**

That this bill be now passed.

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

### **RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT BILL 2009**

#### **Agreement in Principle**

**Debate resumed from 24 September 2009.**

**Mr PHIL KOPERBERG** (Blue Mountains—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.26 p.m.]: I support the Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2009 and in so doing wish to make a number of observations. The underlying purpose of the bill is to enhance the capacity of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service to improve the identification of the cause and origin of fires, to give to the commissioner certain powers to enable him and his staff to do precisely that, and to transfer some hazard management activities from local authorities, to wit local government councils, to the Rural Fire Service.

It is pertinent at this time to point out that it has always been possible for local government to confer certain powers which it had under both the Local Government Act and the Rural Fires Act 1997 to the Rural Fire Service, but this was done under the provisions of what were called service level agreements. In essence, this meant that a council could decline to confer those powers, which gave the administration of the Rural Fires Act in New South Wales a challenging task, inasmuch as it would have to deal with some aspects itself whilst relying on local government councils to deal with other aspects. It is noteworthy that the partnership that exists

between local government and the Rural Fire Service is absolutely critical. The bill in no way reflects upon the capacity or competency of local government to do certain things; rather, it is a means of providing a more cohesive system at a time when bushfires and other natural disasters are pre-eminent in our thinking.

If there were a need for a reminder, the recent fires in south-eastern Queensland and north-eastern New South Wales are a germane reminder that the bushfire season is upon us. Bushfire seasons are always challenging, both for people who live in bushfire-prone areas and for the firefighters who have to protect those people from fires. In New South Wales we are blessed by the fact that tens of thousands of volunteer firefighters and their salaried counterparts from the New South Wales Fire Brigades, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and others are considered to be amongst the best in the world in that regard. We have seen the Rural Fire Service evolve from 142 separate services into a most cohesive organisation, which, I might add, is the envy of the world. So it is timely that the Government—which has always supported the endeavours of our volunteer firefighters and the salaried people who support them—has introduced amendments to the Act which give the Rural Fire Service and its staff the tools necessary to protect New South Wales better than it is already protected.

On 7 February 2009 we watched in horror as the Black Saturday fires raged in Victoria as a consequence of almost unprecedented meteorological conditions. Record-breaking temperatures prevailed over much of south-eastern Australia and winds reaching speeds of well over 100 kilometres an hour blew for hour after hour. All that impacted upon countryside that already had been ravaged by drought. As a consequence of those horrific events there was unprecedented loss of life in Victoria. Not since the Prestigo fire in the United States of America in the 1800s, when some 1,500 people perished as a consequence of a timber town being destroyed by wildfire, has the world seen such tragic loss of life as a consequence of a bushfire.

In the wake of the Black Saturday tragedy, the New South Wales Premier asked the Attorney General to undertake a comprehensive review of New South Wales arson laws. It is a sad indictment of society that so many tragedies are the consequence of fires that have been deliberately lit. During my 21-year tenure as the Rural Fire Services Commissioner there were certain years when the incidence of arson would account for up to 50 per cent of the total incidence of bushfires. In many cases, people lost personal possessions and were injured. But with the introduction of advanced technology, science and surveillance, fortunately it is easier, although still very difficult, to accurately pinpoint the cause and origin of fires, particularly when it comes to the well-planned execution of an act of arson.

The Attorney General's Department sought input from the Rural Fire Service, the New South Wales Fire Brigades, NSW Police, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the New South Wales Sentencing Council. The subsequent review found that existing arson laws in New South Wales are very strong. Over the past 40 years I have noticed that they have been made stronger and stronger to act as a deterrent. The public of New South Wales, particularly those living in bushfire-prone areas, would expect that to be the case—and indeed it is the case. New South Wales laws deal with specific and general offences applying to bushfires. Specific laws range from dealing with a minor infraction at one end of the spectrum, such as lighting a fire in a reserve and a maximum penalty of \$550, to indictable offences under the Crimes Act 1900 that are punishable by terms of imprisonment of up to 14 years.

Specific laws coexist with other general offence provisions, such as manslaughter and property offences involving circumstances of aggravation when damage is caused by fire. Offences that include damaging property with the intention of endangering life and manslaughter attract a maximum term of 25 years imprisonment. The review confirmed what previously had been suggested by a number of studies—that even with the existence of a range of tough penalties, the nature of the offence presents significant difficulties in apprehending and preventing fire-related crimes from recurring. Acts of arson invariably are committed in bushland areas where there is an expectation of other people not normally being around. For example, firefighters do not arrive until after a fire has been detected and they have responded to a call. The plan of people who commit the very serious crime of arson includes locations that will not be attended by law enforcement or firefighting agencies for some considerable time after the offence has been committed.

Fire-related offences typically are committed by solitary individuals in isolated areas. The bushfires they create often destroy the means by which the fire has been lit. As is the wont of people who perpetrate such crimes, they find a range of means by which to set fires. Obviously I will not describe them in detail; suffice it to say that incendiary devices with time-delay components are often used. In recent years I have been privy to information showing that the incidence of such offences has decreased as a result of police surveillance, particularly on days when bushfire conditions are rated as high. Would-be offenders are being dissuaded from

committing criminal fire-related acts because of the very high degree of surveillance and monitoring offered by the application of up-to-date technological equipment. The characteristic problems I have outlined are part of the reason that it is so challenging to obtain the evidence required for prosecutions under specific bushfire laws.

The review identified the need to address difficulties experienced in deterrence, investigation and prevention. That is why the review's recommendations focused on areas of greatest need—in particular an increase in penalties for minor but specific offences related to specific behaviour directed towards fettering education of the public and the provision of new investigative powers to assist the Rural Fire Service to identify the cause and origin of fires. The bill sets in place changes recommended by the review. Under the new laws, designated Rural Fire Service officers will be empowered to remove people and objects from fire scenes. That brings New South Wales laws into line with powers that already have been extended to the New South Wales Fire Brigade, and they deal predominantly but not exclusively with property fires within fire districts constituted under the Fire Brigade Act.

The power to remove people from a fire scene in the immediate aftermath of a fire has two principal purposes: first, it ensures the safety of individuals and, second, it removes the opportunity for people suspected of arson to destroy evidence. Rural Fire Service officers also will have power to enter private property, except residences, to investigate and secure evidence for a period of up to 24 hours following the occurrence of a fire. After the expiration of that 24-hour period, the Rural Fire Service Commissioner may seek a search warrant to enter the premises I have described. Those laws are designed to give Rural Fire Service officers, who are often first on the scene, the best chance of locating the source and cause of a fire in the critical period immediately after ignition.

The Government treats bushfire arson offences extremely seriously, as it ought. It is clear that in New South Wales, throughout the country and internationally, deliberately lit fires often have caused not only loss of property and serious injury, but also—tragically, from time to time—loss of life. The legislation will double on-the-spot fines from \$550 to \$1,100, but fire-related offences that proceed to court will attract maximum penalties of up to \$5,500. Laws that will double the fines for breaches of common sense also will be an important deterrent and hopefully will reduce the risk of fires starting in high-rise areas. The new laws will give rural firefighters enhanced powers to better protect the people of New South Wales and their property from bushfires, both now and well into the future.

**Mr Thomas George:** There is only one way to protect them, and that is to do some controlled burning.

**Mr PHIL KOPERBERG:** Indeed, yes. The member for Lismore well knows that I am a staunch advocate of broadacre burns to reduce fuels around large tracts of land, particularly on ridges where it causes the least environmental damage to flora and fauna. I am sure that the Minister, the Rural Fire Service and others who manage lands from time to time will continue to advocate for that activity to be undertaken. In conclusion, I make the point it that is pertinent for this bill to be introduced and dealt with by the House at a time when a possibly challenging bushfire season is imminent. I do not subscribe to the hyperbole that is often associated with predictions of a fire season.

However, given that so much of New South Wales remains drought declared, particularly inland New South Wales where we see daily the agony of our agricultural community as the drought continues its impact, grassed and forested areas are more prone to extreme fire behaviour. We have also seen a gradual increase in the types of weather conducive to severe fire. This fire season, like all fire seasons, will prove to be very challenging. We should be forever mindful of the thousands of men and women who go forward every summer and risk their lives to save our property and care for our wellbeing. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove) [6.40 p.m.]: The Opposition strongly supports the Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2009. The object of the bill is to amend the Rural Fires Act 1997 to provide that certain bushfire hazard management functions of local authorities, for example councils, are to be exercised instead by hazard management officers of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service; to enable the Commissioner of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service to enter and inspect land, with or without the consent of the owner or occupier to investigate the cause or origin of a fire; to enable the commissioner to apply for a search warrant to enter and inspect land to investigate the cause or origin of a fire; to enable an officer of a rural fire brigade to remove persons or things who or that are an interference from a fire or other emergency; and to increase the penalty notice amounts for certain fire-related offences such as failing to comply with hazard reduction notices, lighting a fire during a total fire ban and leaving fires unattended.

Horribly, some people go out of their way to deliberately light these fires. All members of this House agree to the strengthening of the law to pursue such people and bring them to justice. On behalf of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition I acknowledge and pay tribute to the New South Wales Rural Fire Service for the fantastic job it performs. This bill will strengthen the ability of that service to fight fires, improve the safety of property and, most importantly, improve the safety of those who put their lives on the line to fight these fires. I also acknowledge the member for Blue Mountains, Mr Phil Koperberg, who played a major role in the formation of what is arguably the best fire service in the world.

The bill empowers the New South Wales Rural Fire Service commissioner and officers to enter and inspect land, and shifts the responsibility for bushfire hazard management in rural fire districts from local authorities, such as local councils, to the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. Schedule 1 [9] replaces existing provisions that enable a local authority to issue a notice to the owner or occupier of land to carry out bushfire hazard reduction work, with provisions that enable such a notice instead to be issued by a hazard management officer of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. The new provisions will operate as follows:

Proposed section 65A provides that the Commissioner may nominate a member of the NSW Rural Fire Service as a hazard management officer. Schedule 1 [26] inserts a definition of *hazard management officer* for the purposes of the principal Act.

Proposed section 65 enables authorised persons (who will not include hazard management officers) to carry bush fire hazard reduction work on certain land with the permission of the appropriate persons or bodies.

Proposed section 66 enables a hazard management officer to require the owner or occupier of any land to carry out bush fire hazard reduction work on the land by a notice. An owner or occupier who fails to comply with such a notice is guilty of an offence.

Proposed section 67 enables an owner or occupier of land on whom a notice requiring bush fire hazard reduction work has been served to lodge an objection with the hazard management officer.

Proposed section 68 provides for an appeal to be lodged with the Commissioner by a person who has lodged an objection.

Proposed section 69 enables a hazard management officer to enter land to determine whether a notice should be issued, or has been complied with, and requires the officer to notify certain authorities if notice is given and to keep records in respect of notices.

...

Proposed section 70—

which is incredibly important as we approach what is predicted to be a very hot summer and note climate change conditions—

... enables the Commissioner to carry out bush fire hazard reduction work required to be done by a notice if the owner or occupier of the land concerned fails to carry out the work.

From time to time local authorities may through neglect or the political leanings of certain councils, as the member for Tweed would agree, not bend in their attitude to hazard reduction and put people's lives at risk. I pay tribute to the shadow Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon. Melinda Pavey, who has conducted extensive consultation with the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. The member for Tweed and the member for Lismore are also very passionate about and major supporters of their local rural fire service. The bill will provide statewide consistency in the way hazard management is approached and a structure to deal with the land managers in each fire zone district. Zone managers will now be accountable for inaction on hazard reduction burns within reason. The Coalition commends the bill to the House and pays tribute to the men and women who will fight the fires this fire season. We pray and hope that the bill will continue to enable those men and women to carry out their work more safely in their various combat roles.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [6.47 p.m.]: The Rees Government and our fire services remain resolute in our commitment to protect life and property from the threat of bushfire. The amendments to the Rural Fires Act are another concrete demonstration of that commitment. As a result of lessons learned over many bushfire seasons, New South Wales has developed an integrated, cohesive and coordinated approach to bushfire prevention, as well as firefighting. This approach recognises that no single solution will provide immunity from fire but that a suite of carefully developed strategies and measures must be put in place to help minimise bushfire risk. Hazard reduction, including a mixture of burns, mechanical and manual clearing, is one of these measures, along with responding to community complaints about bushfire hazards, engaging with and educating "at risk" communities, and improving our standards for assessing developments in bushfire-prone areas.

Over many years the Government has been moving toward a one-stop shop for bushfire-related matters manifested in the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. The bill provides further clarity in relation to the responsibility in ensuring that hazard reduction works are completed and the environmental approval process is as simple as possible. The bill will make the New South Wales Rural Fire Service the sole agency responsible for pursuing hazard complaints and issuing environmental approvals on private lands located in rural fire districts. This will streamline and simplify the current arrangements, which include a mixture of responsibilities by State and local governments in this area. Hazard reduction itself provides no guarantee that a bushfire will not occur or that it can be confined and easily controlled. That is especially true during unprecedented extremes of weather and fire behaviour, such as those experienced in Victoria, during which fires can spot many kilometres ahead of the main fire front.

It must also be recognised that New South Wales has approximately 20 million hectares of bushfire-prone land, and clearly it is impossible to fireproof the whole State. Nonetheless, we know that we cannot afford to be complacent as the fire season approaches, particularly with drought conditions persisting over most of our State. Throughout the cooler months fire authorities, local councils and other land managers have been doing all they can in carrying out hazard reduction works. In 2007-08 prevention and mitigation activities, including hazard reduction burning, clearing, development controls, community engagement and responding to complaints about bushfire hazards, afforded protection to more than 185,000 properties worth more than \$92 billion. On current indications, the 2008-09 figures are likely to be even better—in the vicinity of 200,000 properties worth around \$100 billion protected.

The Minister has reported that there has been a 20 per cent improvement in the rate of hazard reduction works completed over the past year. Data collected to date by the Rural Fire Service indicates that almost 70 per cent of the ambitious schedule of programmed hazard reduction activities was completed in 2008-09. This is up from 58 per cent in the previous year. This is testament to the determined efforts of our fire services and land agencies to use every window of opportunity to complete as much of their scheduled works program as possible. Agencies across New South Wales are on track to achieve more hazard reduction and protect more homes than we have seen in a number of years. When conditions are right our fire services and land management agencies will continue to maximise the number of hazard reduction operations undertaken each year in readiness for the next bushfire season.

This year's record \$216 million Rural Fire Fighting Fund includes more than \$17 million for bushfire mitigation works, including \$2 million to help elderly and other vulnerable residents to reduce their bushfire risk. As we move into a bushfire season that has the potential to be far worse than in recent summers, the people of New South Wales can be proud that in the Rural Fire Service we have a firefighting force recognised as among the best in the world, with the morale, resources and facilities to match, and with these amendments even stronger supporting legislation.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [6.52 p.m.]: As members would be aware, I participated in a condolence motion relating to the recent death of a firefighter, Andrew Packy Turnbull, who was a young family man. I endorse the comments of previous speakers about the great actions of the volunteers who put their lives at risk to protect property and other people. My son is a fairly active member of a local brigade in the Tweed area. I have some concerns about the five objects of the Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2009, and I ask the Minister or the Parliamentary Secretary for some clarification. The first object is to provide that certain bushfire hazard management functions of local authorities—that is, councils—are to be exercised instead by hazard management officers of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. I have read the Act fairly extensively about the powers of the hazard managements officers.

The land on which the fellow lost his life after suffering a heart attack in a fire is under the control of the Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council. That is a good land council and we have a good rapport with the indigenous people in the Tweed. Originally, the land was under the control of the local council; it is now under the authority of the local Aboriginal land council. Basically, the people of Dune care and Landcare do not do any work on that land, which has lots of weeds. At times the local Aboriginal land council has had difficulty managing that great asset. Will hazard management officers have power to inspect the property and make recommendations, and will those recommendations be binding? At the same time we have had other incidents with other government departments. One particular area of land adjacent to private property in the Tweed is under the control of the Roads and Traffic Authority. However, the Roads and Traffic Authority has steadfastly refused to undertake any hazard reduction or anything of that nature.

The owner of the land wants to develop the property but he has been forced to move his boundary another 30 metres from the building line. I have talked to sources in the Rural Fire Service, and they believe

their hands are tied, particularly when it comes to dealing with another government department in relation to orders and so on. It is paramount that that matter is clarified and considered. A previous speaker referred to the terrible Victorian bushfires, et cetera. I have no objection to the Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service applying for a search warrant to enter and inspect land to investigate the cause of a fire. That is a great idea. However, the bill refers to a period of only 24 hours. Considering some remote and regional areas of New South Wales, the inspector or investigator may require more than 24 hours to enter a property. I simply question why the bill provides such a limited time frame. For example, inspectors usually travel to the Tweed from Grafton or Sydney, and in many cases that cannot be done within 24 hours of a fire, particularly if the fire occurs on the weekend or personnel are on leave, et cetera.

I have no problem with providing an officer of the Rural Fire Service with the power to remove persons or things that are interfering from a fire or other emergency. Given the devastation caused by fires, I fully support increasing the penalties for certain offences. However, I seek clarification of the penalties that affect arsonists. I would like some thought given to rehabilitation and forced community service for juvenile arsonists. I am sure members on both sides of the House would agree, considering the terrible effects of fires lit by juveniles in regional areas. Action has been taken in the Tweed. Between October 2008 and October 2009, 22 hazard reductions have been undertaken in the Tweed electorate, but unfortunately the local Aboriginal land council and the Roads and Traffic Authority did not participate—I think it is mainly a jurisdictional matter.

Of those 22 hazard reductions, 18 were hazard reduction burning in the Tweed. The Tweed is being affected by significant bushfires burning on the other side of the border as I speak. The men and women who volunteer for the Rural Fire Service do an excellent job. I am concerned about the time frame of only 24 hours in which to investigate a fire, particularly in regional areas. It takes a significant amount of time for an investigator to get to a fire in the Broken Hill area. I am concerned also about interaction between government departments. On a number of other issues, at times silos are built up within government departments. Technically the Rural Fire Service has its hand tied behind its back when dealing with the Roads and Traffic Authority to remove a hazard that could create a life-threatening situation. It also affects the indigenous people in the Tweed. I do not oppose this bill. I am 100 per cent for any movement to prevent bushfires in the Tweed.

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

## **GREATER WESTERN AREA HEALTH SERVICE**

### **Matter of Public Importance**

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL** (Dubbo) [7.00 p.m.]: I speak on the delivery of health services, which is a matter of public importance to western New South Wales. This is another wake-up call to those responsible for making decisions based on health planners attempting to shoehorn communities into a predetermined model rather than developing a health system that responds to needs. Bureaucrats take the view that we are being parochial and we need to get over ourselves. In reality, they have completely lost touch. I hear their explanations, which can be persuasive. However, in recent times there has been an obvious lack of contact with the community. Surely when planning infrastructure and health services the major issue of transport should be considered. We do not have an hourly rail service or a regular bus service between centres. Clearly, the bureaucrats do not understand our transport limitations or appreciate the role of Dubbo as the major service centre to the greater part of western New South Wales. They are not keeping pace with the rate of development in the city, which places even greater demands on our health services.

I will give two recent transport examples. In September I was contacted by a Balladoran woman whose seriously ill husband was transported from Dubbo Base Hospital to Orange Base Hospital for treatment. She was pleased with the treatment her husband received. But she was horrified that Dubbo Base Hospital could not deliver this care and the ambulance had to come from Orange and return with her husband, taking around six hours, including the preparation time needed for his journey. She feels this would have been an extremely expensive exercise and that Dubbo Base Hospital should be able to provide the care needed for patients who come from outlying areas further out west. She and her husband have a farm. She was unable to travel to Orange to visit her husband as she had animals to look after on the property and it was too far for her to travel to Orange in a day.

I was contacted also by a woman whose husband has multiple sclerosis and needs a health check twice a year by a neurologist. He had been seeing a visiting Sydney neurologist in Dubbo. However, this doctor is no

longer able to visit the area. My constituent advised me that now they will have to travel to Orange. By ambulance it will cost \$1,500, which would be covered by their private health insurance. However, they have been advised that he does not qualify for ambulance transport. The only other alternative for this gentleman, who has other needs, is to pay \$1,200 for a return trip by taxi from Dubbo to Orange, which is not covered by their private health insurance. His wife is the sole income earner and cannot afford these costs.

When I google for a neurologist in Dubbo the addresses given are in Orange. Many Dubbo residents are seen by Orange neurologists. My family have used them and have received excellent treatment. However, for many the transport costs preclude any further treatment. Not all patients who are transferred to hospitals at Dubbo or Orange or to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, for example, are returned to their local hospital. Many patients receive their final medical treatment at the hospitals to which they are transferred. They are discharged and, in many cases, have to find their own way home. Healthcare planning should always take into account the safe delivery of patients to their homes. This is not the role of clinicians, but the issue must be addressed.

On 16 October 2009 I was advised that a Dubbo constituent who suffered a heart attack was admitted to Dubbo Base Hospital and transferred to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for emergency treatment. Upon completion of her treatment she was advised that she was to be discharged that day. Having no family, she had to contact a trusted neighbour to assist with her travel. She decided against train travel as it was too long a journey for her and so she had to pay full fare for an air flight. It was humiliating for her to travel by taxi to the airport and wait for the plane at the gate lounge in her pyjamas. An old, oversized tracksuit was offered to her. However, it was totally unacceptable. We must have a program in place whereby rural residents can travel home in dignity. Many professionals are not aware of a patient's lack of assistance or money to cover costs.

People now are retiring to areas that have good medical services. For many it is not a sea change but a tree change. Many people are moving closer to their area's larger centres. A large proportion of our catchment has limited transport options. The Dubbo catchment is well serviced with regular flights to Sydney. In fact, the airport is a major regional air transport hub that connects to areas west of Dubbo. Last week I said publicly that no doubt the health service plans look good on paper. I am not opposed to Orange Base Hospital being classified as a centre of excellence and a level five facility. But do any of these decision-makers speak with the affected community leaders, the patients or their families? Despite creative number crunching by the Greater Western Area Health Service, Dubbo services a far greater area of need and greater numbers. It has a known catchment of 170,000 people.

Communities in western New South Wales are fighting hard to retain their existing health facilities. Local shires and councils are coming forward. Forbes Shire Council is providing a walk-in, walk-out medical facility on Forbes Hospital grounds, and Narromine shire has successfully constructed a medical facility that includes a dental surgery. It is now looking at extending this facility. Two weeks ago the Parkes shire and North Parkes Mine held the GP Cup. With 20 sporting teams sponsored at \$1,000 each, they raised \$20,000 to provide support for their existing medical community and to encourage its growth. Dr Gale from Parkes said he was greatly humbled that he had the support of such a community.

These councils and many others in New South Wales are forced to take similar steps to support their communities, who are fearful of a further deterioration of their medical services. Their hospitals no longer provide maternity services. Many communities were sold on the concept, "What we have for you is a better model. How would you like a multipurpose service [MPS] in your area?" There are now multipurpose services in the areas that are under threat. Some have eight aged care beds and two acute care beds. Some medical professionals have been convinced that the Government can increase resources to larger facilities, such as Dubbo, if multipurpose services were all aged care. There would be no acute care beds in those areas. The people who accepted the advice years ago to move to a multipurpose service now find they no longer have a top facility—although I cannot speak highly enough of the staff.

There is also a danger to communities such as Dubbo Base Hospital and surrounding hospitals north, south and west of Dubbo. On 16 October 2009 the Greater Western Area Health Service announced that it would set up a rural education centre. Orange is now to be known as the hub-and-spoke model for healthcare provision in the area. This was announced to the media in the past week. However, it was not reported or announced to those currently working in the education sector of the organisation. Once again, there is a lack of communication with staff and the community. There is nothing parochial about this debate. It has been evident for at least 20 years that Dubbo was rapidly developing naturally and government departments were transferring to the area. The identification of other cities as the major catchment is an easy exercise. If we drew a radius around the many areas, it would show a larger catchment for services. Residents, medical professionals and

community groups lodged submissions to the Garling inquiry. Their cries are being ignored. We are still waiting for a Director of Medical Services at Dubbo Base Hospital. The position has not been advertised, yet the same positions have been filled at hospitals in Wagga Wagga and Goulburn. It has been stated:

Heads of departments and senior people within the departments provide direction to junior medical officers.

That is why it is important to fill the position of Director of Medical Services. The medical professionals are working flat out in their clinics and undertaking surgery. Health workers have advised me that they are howled down if they disagree with decisions that are being made about hospital operations, particularly in relation to the western region. In recent emails I have been howled down for supporting the area that I feel passionate about. I received two emails in relation to my stance on the present practice of transferring patients to Orange. Western New South Wales communities accept that people need to be transferred to an available bed for higher intensive care treatment, whether it is at Orange or Royal Prince Alfred hospitals. However, they do not accept that they should be transferred if local hospital staff have the skills to carry out the procedures. [*Time expired.*]

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.07 p.m.]: I thank the member for Dubbo for bringing this matter of public importance to the attention of the House. Providing equity in care to the people of western New South Wales will always be a challenge for any government. The world-wide shortage of medical staff will hopefully improve over the next few years now that we have an increased number of medical students. The isolation and distances involved, the greying of Australia, and the increasing complexity of health care are all challenges that we will need to meet if we are going to provide equitable health care to the people of western New South Wales. The New South Wales Government and the Department of Health are wholeheartedly committed to delivering strong and sustainable health services in western New South Wales.

I am pleased to pay tribute to the staff at Dubbo, Bathurst, Orange and Balranald, whom I met on my visits to western New South Wales in January with the Garling forums. I place on record my admiration for the professionals involved and their commitment to the people with whom they share their lives. The commitment of the New South Wales Government is shown by the significant investment in the Greater Western Area Health Service [GWAHS], as well as in capital projects. In addition, there are the improvements in health care that will come through the Garling recommendations. This financial year the New South Wales Government is investing \$553 million in the Greater Western Area Health Service, which is an increase of \$42.9 million on last year's budget.

Major health service enhancements for GWAHS include a new eight-bed medical assessment unit at Orange worth \$2.1 million, which is part of \$17.7 million in funding statewide. Also, various smaller amounts of funding will improve the quality of care, such as \$843,000 to continue to roll out 10-hour night shifts for nurses at Coonamble and Cowra, \$150,000 for additional clinical trauma services staff at Orange and \$150,000 for clinical nurse educators.

The Government is delivering \$603 million in capital investment across the State this year, which is part of a \$2.4 billion four-year program to upgrade or rebuild a number of health facilities across the State. In GWAHS it includes \$28.8 million for Orange Base Hospital, with \$6.5 million for radiotherapy, \$3.3 million for maintenance and \$1.1 million for dental services as part of a \$250 million project. There is also funding of \$13.3 million for a multipurpose service at Balranald—I visited it recently and pay tribute to the staff—and \$6.8 million for a multipurpose service at Eugowra. The budget also includes funding to start construction of a combined multipurpose service-HealthOne facility at Coonamble, \$607,000 for the Bathurst Base Hospital redevelopment, and funding for the Bathurst Base Hospital heritage building upgrade works.

There are also new programs to improve the quality of care for patients. For example, at Dubbo a caesarean section elective midwife program allows a midwife to stay with the mother of a well newborn baby from birth until she is transported to the post-natal ward. The Dubbo hospital in the home service aim to provide an alternative to inpatient care. One of the greatest doctors I have ever met in my life, Dr Geoff Hardacre, is involved in the Hospital in the Home service in Dubbo. A 12-month review of Hospital in the Home has shown that it has saved 1,800 bed days, with excellent patient satisfaction survey results. Dubbo's physiotherapy department fracture clinic was redeveloped recently and, as a result of those improvements, it has been recommended to receive a commendation from the director general as part of the Baxter Awards.

Dubbo Base Hospital's Orana Pathology Service was recently ranked in the top 10 out of 500 laboratories in the world for quality assurance testing. But it is not just Dubbo. The \$214 million redevelopment of Orange Base Hospital and Bloomfield Hospital is underway. I place on the record my

admiration for the medical staff council that I met in Orange in January. Orange hospital's current intensive care service was recognised recently by NSW Health as the only rural inland level 5 intensive care unit west of the Great Dividing Range. The service will reduce the need for many patients to cross the sandstone curtain to access high-quality intensive care.

Orange Base Hospital is also currently recruiting the position of a rural trauma clinical nurse consultant, which will enhance the establishment of trauma services in the greater western area. This will result in improving trauma care for patients who have required activation of the trauma system. At Bathurst Base Hospital the new state-of-the-art infusion pumps, part of a \$70 million initiative by the New South Wales Government announced in September, will benefit many of the 760 people admitted to the intensive care unit each year.

At Broken Hill hospital the renal dialysis unit is being expanded from two chairs to six chairs thanks to a \$432,000 enhancement. That will allow up to 24 patients to be treated each week to meet the increasing demand for renal dialysis services not only in the Broken Hill region but also across the State. Broken Hill hospital recently established a fast-track clinic alongside its emergency department. This has taken pressure off the emergency department and allowed staff to focus on the sickest patients. Dubbo, Bathurst and Orange hospitals have also introduced team nursing in their surgical wards to enhance the skills mix and allow for guidance from senior nursing staff to more junior staff when delivering safe patient care.

I refer also to the Garling inquiry—the most comprehensive review of acute hospital services ever undertaken in New South Wales. As Mr Garling said, New South Wales still has one of the world's better health systems. It is recognised across the world as being able to provide something that very few countries are able to offer: universal health care that is open to everybody, regardless of their ability to pay. This is an enormous achievement of which most countries in the world are very envious. The Garling recommendations mean that there will be an enormous improvement in health care over many years. The Government has allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to their implementation, and I commend them to the House.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon) [7.14 p.m.]: The member for Dubbo has raised as a matter of public importance the delivery of health services in western New South Wales. One thing about which the member for Dubbo and I are in heated agreement is that this is a wake-up call. In recent years—particularly the past two years when I have been the member for Barwon—the most common complaints have been about health services and their delivery in western New South Wales. That is my area of greatest concern. The people responsible for delivering health services in New South Wales are members of the New South Wales Labor Government. It is not the bureaucrats, the staff or managers but the Minister, her advisers, the Cabinet and the Government.

I am reminded of a recent conference with the Rural Doctors Association when the member for Macquarie Fields was put under pressure—he took it in good stead—and advised the association that if members want to fix health in rural New South Wales they should join The Nationals! Members of The Nationals are the only ones who have put up plans for rural health in New South Wales. We are the ones who, in a Coalition government, will be able to deliver a decentralised health system where one size does not fit all and where local decision-making not only is appreciated and honoured but also is effected. Let us not get caught in the trap of blaming bureaucrats and the leaders of the Greater Western Area Health Service for the woes of Dubbo. Let us be under no illusion about that.

It is interesting to note that there is no real shortage of members of the medical fraternity—whether it be allied health workers or professionals—in the non-government sector. In fact, it is plain that NSW Health has a cultural problem with employing and retaining staff. We must be aware of the facts. If the member for Dubbo were not so busy sidling up to the Government on these issues and were a little more supportive of some of the options suggested by The Nationals in the past couple of years, the area health services and the delivery of health services out of places like Dubbo to western New South Wales would be far more advantaged. It is also interesting to note that over time Dubbo has become quite insular in its thinking when it comes to leadership on health issues. So it is by some miracle that it has discovered that it might be the front door for health delivery to western New South Wales. The Nationals agree that Dubbo should be the front door for service delivery to western New South Wales but we also believe in a regional, team-based approach, and not the insular, inward-looking approach that was reported recently in Dubbo and in the press.

It is The Nationals, in coalition with the Liberals, who have put up the proposal to debunk the current over-sized area health services. The clinicians recognise—as would the bureaucrats if they were allowed to

speak publicly—that the system does not work. The system needs to be returned to the community, and that is what The Nationals have pledged to do in government. It does not help health service delivery in western New South Wales when Orange—an electorate that is represented by a member of The Nationals, and I suspect will continue to be so—has a great clinical network and well over 40 specialists, while Dubbo has fewer than 10 specialists. Dubbo people will need to build the clinical network and enhance the leadership in that electorate.

This is not about what I call the politics of envy. This week in an article in the *Central Western Daily* the member for Dubbo accused bureaucrats of not acknowledging Dubbo's role in the region. She was slated for suggesting that Orange Base Hospital had an abundance of staff that could be utilised in both cities. Health Services Union spokesman Gerard Hayes insisted in a report that there was not anywhere in the State "where there is an abundance of personnel". The days of the politics of envy are gone. We want positive solutions. We want plans for the west, we want action plans, we want dialysis plans, we want staffing plans and we want a plan for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. That is not going to happen under the current structure, it is not going to happen under the current Government and it is not going to happen whilst the politics of envy are being played out of the seat of Dubbo.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL** (Dubbo) [7.19 p.m.], in reply: I promise I will not use the nickname of the member for Barwon; I will take the high road instead. I thank the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Barwon for participating in this debate. The member for Macquarie Fields rightly referred to staff shortages in the health system across New South Wales and also mentioned the Government's commitment to capital works projects. I was looking forward to clarification of the comments last week by the chief executive officer of the Greater Western Area Health Service when he said we have to wait and that Dubbo will have its day. I was hoping for an announcement. Surely we should not be playing ducks and drakes in this debate. This is not a debate about political envy. The only envy will come from The Nationals, whose parliamentary seats diminish in number at every State election.

I want to know what project the chief executive officer of Greater Western Area Health Service has in mind for our community—and not just the community of Dubbo. The member for Barwon did not indicate clearly that in Dubbo we service a large area and we take pride in doing so. We want to continue to service a large area. Statistics show that 170,000 people use the services in Dubbo. It was 160,000 people back in the 1980s, and I know that the number has increased even more. I call on the chief executive officer or the Minister for Health to state what Mr O'Connor has in mind for Dubbo. The communities of the western region deserve to know what plans are in progress and what will happen. The region has been identified for some time as an area in which there is a large concentration of chronic illnesses. Will that issue be addressed? Who knows? We will have to wait and see.

I also want support for what the member for Macquarie Fields said about Dr Hardacre and Dr Randall Greenberg and all the other clinicians and staff who service Dubbo Base Hospital. The work they do within the infrastructure they are given is truly amazing. I have heard about the redevelopment of the physiotherapy clinic. I hope that the issue of storage also will be taken on board because at the moment all the physiotherapists' equipment—the walking sticks, frames and so on—is stuck in the TV room, where the loved ones of patients in the emergency department or the intensive care unit go for some time out. I hope the clinic's redevelopment will include a storage area.

The member for Macquarie Fields also spoke about the Garling inquiry. I have been advised that, following the inquiry, the only thing different happening in Dubbo so far is that all staff wear different coloured badges. I know it takes a long while to roll out the process, but I look forward to it happening. The member for Barwon said that one of his most important plans for New South Wales is health. The member for Barwon is in Sydney more often than he is in his electorate. I represent many people in his area and health workers are all paid by the taxpayers. In fact, in his electorate people regularly ask, "Where's Wally?" "Wally" is often down in Sydney in Parliament cleaning up his act to try to be a Minister one day rather than doing his current job of representing his community. I have worked hard.

The member for Barwon made some statements in the press this week about how I do not work with the Coalition. That is not true. As an independent I work with the government of the day—which happens to be Labor at the moment—and I also work with the Coalition. I invited members of the Coalition to come to my Royal Flying Doctor Service rally but they did not attend. I also attended the health rally that the Coalition held outside my office. I even invited the member for Barwon into my office for a cup of tea and we spoke together.

I also work with the Federal member, Mark Coulton, on cancer care for Dubbo and how to improve facilities. Although not connected with the issue of health, I also attended the Condo research rally with The Nationals. To say that I do not work with The Nationals is a furphy and a very ill-advised comment.

I went to the social plan meeting that Coalition members held when they came to Dubbo. I hear from the member for Barwon the policies that the Coalition has on board. They say they are going back to the community and are having more input. I cannot agree more with that, but turning around health will take a lot more than a hospital board. We are still going to have the problems of not enough prevention programs and of obesity, for example.

We have to watch more and more fast food outlets opening in Dubbo. The bookending of outlets is of great concern to me—we have KFC at one end of town and McDonald's at the other end. I have been critical of the council for approving those developments. If the Byron Bay and the Blue Mountains communities can get together and oppose fast food outlets, why can Dubbo not do it also? The member for Barwon mentioned the member for Orange. I bear no ill will towards the member for Orange. He is a fine member of Parliament and a fine member of his community. I have never denigrated him or put down the doctors and services available in Orange. Every area should have a health excellence centre.

**Discussion concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.26 p.m. until  
Wednesday 21 October 2009 at 10.00 a.m.**

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