

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday 23 October 2009

ABSENCE OF THE SPEAKER

The Clerk announced the absence of the Speaker.

The Deputy-Speaker (The Hon. Tanya Rachelle Gadiel) took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

The Deputy-Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (POSSESSION OF KNIVES IN PUBLIC) BILL 2009

Bill received from the Legislative Council and introduced.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I advise the House that I have received a written authority from Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, MLC, advising that the member for Tamworth will have carriage of the bill in the Legislative Assembly.

Agreement in principle speech set down as an order of the day for a future day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced that the following petitions signed by fewer 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**.

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**.

Bus Service 311

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

Pet Shops

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

Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill 2009

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

Livestock Health and Pest Authorities Rate Increases

Petition requesting an immediate moratorium on Livestock Health and Pest Authority rates and requesting that the locust loan become a grant, received from **Mr John Turner**.

Berowra Police Station

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

National Parks Tourism Developments

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

The Clerk announced that the following petition signed by more than 500 persons was lodged for presentation:

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**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Business Lapsed**

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 471, 472 and 475 lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Postponement of Business**

General Business Notice of Motion (for Bills) No. 4 postponed on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire on behalf of Mr Greg Smith.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! Debate on General Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) having been postponed, the House will now proceed to Government business.

JUDICIAL OFFICERS AMENDMENT BILL 2009

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry Collier, on behalf of Mr David Campbell.

Agreement in Principle

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.03 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The main purpose of the Judicial Officers Amendment Bill 2009 is to amend the Judicial Officers Act 1986 to provide for the temporary exchange of judicial officers between the State and Territory courts and

administrative decisions tribunals. The New South Wales Government has been the driving force behind the development of this judicial exchange program through the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General [SCAG]. It represents a further step towards building a national judiciary, which will in turn bring benefits to the New South Wales justice system.

The Attorney General gained the support of his SCAG colleagues for streamlining and formalising the exchange of judicial officers between jurisdictions following a proposal put forward by the Chief Judge of the New South Wales District Court. The bill is based upon the model provisions approved by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. It is underpinned by agreed principles for exchange, which will be the subject of a formal agreement between participating jurisdictions. Other Australian jurisdictions have expressed their support for judicial exchange as facilitated by this bill.

New South Wales is the first jurisdiction to introduce this model legislation. The Government anticipates that the other participating jurisdictions will soon follow. The proposed judicial exchange reforms are generally supported by the judiciary, including the Chief Justice, and will streamline the process for arranging exchanges, which are currently undertaken on an ad hoc basis, allow the beneficial exchange of information and ideas between judicial officers in Australian jurisdictions, and contribute to the development of a national jurisprudence, while at the same time generally enhancing judicial development.

The bill also amends the Judicial Officers Act 1986 to clarify the operation of the doctrine of incompatibility of office, including its application to judicial exchanges. The proposed judicial exchange provisions allow the Attorneys General of the Commonwealth, States and Territories to enter into arrangements for the temporary exchange of judicial officers between New South Wales courts and corresponding interstate courts. Such "exchanges" may involve an actual exchange of judicial officers between two jurisdictions, but also cover situations where a State or Territory judicial officer sits in another jurisdiction without reciprocation from the other jurisdiction.

An example of such a situation would be where local judicial officers are precluded from hearing a matter because of a conflict of interest and an interstate judicial officer is asked to hear the matter. While these situations do not arise very often it is important that there be clear mechanisms to cover such circumstances. Such one-way arrangements may also take place in the case of Federal Court judicial officers. For constitutional reasons, State and Territory judicial officers cannot sit on a Federal court. Nevertheless, the Commonwealth Government has expressed a willingness to allow one-way exchanges so that Federal Court judicial officers can sit on State or Territory courts.

The legislation has also been drafted to allow New Zealand judicial officers to participate should such an arrangement be entered into at a future date. The bill provides that the term of an appointment made under the exchange arrangements is limited to six months initially, but may be renewed. An appointment may be terminated at any time in accordance with the arrangement. A list of New South Wales courts and corresponding courts in other jurisdictions that have been approved to participate in the exchange program is set out in the schedule to the bill.

The principles for exchange underpinning the legislation include a requirement that the relevant Minister in each jurisdiction must approve the exchange, or any extension made under an agreement entered into in accordance with the legislation. The principles also provide that heads of jurisdiction may not participate in the exchange program—it would be inappropriate to have the person responsible for the overall management of the court absent on an exchange for an extended period. Judicial officers will generally continue to be remunerated, and to accrue pension entitlements, as if they are undertaking their substantive role in their home jurisdiction.

Subject to any agreement between the relevant heads of jurisdiction, where a State or Territory judicial officer sits in another jurisdiction other than by way of a two-way exchange arrangement, the host jurisdiction will reimburse the home jurisdiction for the salary of the judicial officer. Other matters, such as expenses associated with the exchange, are also covered by the agreed principles. The proposed exchange program will contribute to the growth of jurisprudence, and benefit both participating judicial officers and jurisdictions through exposure to new ideas, improved court procedures, and perspectives on the court system.

The doctrine of incompatibility of office essentially provides that certain office holders cannot simultaneously hold incompatible offices. The Judicial Officers Act 1986 currently provides that the doctrine of incompatibility of office does not operate to prevent a judicial officer from being appointed to act in another judicial office, or to require the surrender or vacation of the original office as a result of the new appointment.

The bill will remove any uncertainty that the doctrine of incompatibility of office does not operate to prevent a judicial officer from being appointed to any other court or tribunal, whether the judicial officer's appointment is in an acting, temporary or permanent capacity. This principle will also extend to appointments in jurisdictions outside New South Wales and the bill clarifies that it applies to all tribunals having judicial or quasi-judicial functions. For example, it will make it clear that the doctrine does not prevent a judicial officer from sitting on a tribunal such as the Medical Board or the Workers Compensation Tribunal, while still holding office as a Supreme Court or District Court judge. The proposed judicial exchange program facilitated by this bill will expose judicial officers to a diversity of work and systems in other courts. Jurisdictions involved in the exchange will benefit from new ideas and improvements to their courts. Judges will gain greater experience and perspective on their role in the court system. With this bill, the Government is leading the way in establishing this program. I commend the bill to the House.

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

COURTS AND CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry Collier, on behalf of Mr David Campbell.

Agreement in Principle

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.11 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The purpose of the Courts and Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 is to make miscellaneous amendments to courts and crimes related legislation. The bill is part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program. The bill will amend a number of Acts to improve the efficiency and operation of courts and tribunals. The bill will also make minor amendments to a number of Acts relating to statutory bodies within the Attorney General's portfolio. I will now outline each of the amendments in turn. Schedule 1 contains amendments of Acts relating to eligible judges. Under a number of Acts, there are provisions to designate certain judges of the Supreme Court as eligible judges for the purposes of exercising a power as *persona designata*—that is, in their personal capacity rather than as a judge of the court.

The types of tasks judges undertake in this capacity include the issuing of certain warrants and the declaration of criminal organisations. The eligible judge provisions were originally introduced into the then Listening Devices Act in 1996 on the advice of the then Solicitor General. The amendments were considered appropriate in light of the High Court's decision in *Kable v Director of Public Prosecutions*, which cast doubt upon the ability of the New South Wales Parliament to confer certain functions on the Supreme Court. The existing provisions provide for the appointment of eligible judges in similar terms, with each Act requiring the consent of the relevant judge and a declaration by the Attorney General. The judge may revoke their consent and the Attorney may revoke any declaration.

From the introduction of the eligible judge provisions in the Listening Devices Act in 1996—now the Surveillance Devices Act 2007—through to the creation of similar provisions in the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Act 1998, Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, and Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002, there were no objections to the role of the Attorney General in the appointment of judges to carry out these functions. Following the introduction of the provisions in the Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Act 2009, there has been some speculation that the existing provisions could give rise to at least the appearance of an infringement upon judicial independence due to the ability of the Attorney General to revoke declarations of his own accord. The Attorney General has never exercised his discretion either to reject a nomination or to independently revoke one, and it was never intended, and has never been used, to provide the Attorney General with such a deliberative role in determining which judges should exercise these functions.

As such, it is appropriate to amend the provisions in the various Acts to reflect the practice that the Attorney General has no role in vetting these appointments. The bill accordingly revokes the power of the Attorney General to revoke the declaration of an eligible judge and provides instead for the automatic revocation of the declaration if the Supreme Court judge revokes his or her consent, resigns or the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court advises the Attorney General that the declaration should not continue. The bill also puts

beyond doubt that the selection of eligible judges to exercise any particular function under the Act is not one by the Attorney General or other Minister nor is the exercise of the functions of an eligible judge one subject to the control or direction of the Attorney General or relevant Minister. The references to eligible judge in the case of the Surveillance Devices Act extend to eligible magistrates. I now turn to the amendments contained in schedule 2 to the bill.

Schedule 2.1 contains amendments to section 22A of the Bail Act 1978, which sets out the test to be applied by a court in determining whether to refuse to hear a further application for bail by an accused person. In 2007, section 22A was amended to limit the circumstances in which a person could make multiple applications for bail. At the time of introducing the amendment, it was said:

The changes are necessary to guard against unnecessary, repeated bail applications that serve only to inflict further anguish upon victims.

It was further said:

The changes will also prevent what is known as 'magistrate shopping'—the process of going from magistrate to magistrate, or judge to judge, with hope of obtaining a different outcome.

These policy goals remain valid. However, it has become apparent that there has been significant misapplication of the section, which has coincided with an increase in the number of people being remanded in custody. The revised test contained in the Courts and Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 substantially replicates current section 22A, but with an important difference: any ambiguity that might have developed around the requirement that facts and circumstances be "new" in the current section 22A has been removed. Any relevant facts and circumstances that have previously not been brought to the attention of the court are grounds for a further application for bail. The court need not consider whether those facts or circumstances justify the grant of bail before deciding whether to hear the application for bail.

Some examples of relevant facts and circumstances that could justify a further bail application could include: the presentation of a report prepared by Juvenile Justice; the presentation of any report or document prepared by a government or non-government agency or expert containing data relevant to the circumstances of the applicant or facts not previously brought to the attention of the court; the availability of persons to act as sureties or to supervise the applicant in some way; the availability of a place of residence; the availability of a rehabilitation centre or program; the availability of a sum of money, or an increased sum of money for surety purposes; a delay in the progress of the proceedings; a change in the health or mental state of the applicant; a change in circumstances of a dependant or family member of the applicant; the withdrawal of charges or the finalisation of other matters before the court; or a significant change in the strength or the nature of the case against the applicant.

What an accused cannot do is re-apply for bail simply because he or she happens to be in court that day, or because a "sympathetic" judge is sitting, or, in the most despicable of circumstance, because he or she wants to harass the victim. The Law Society of New South Wales has indicated its support for this amendment, describing it as "a step in the right direction". However, the society has suggested that more needs to be done; specifically that young people charged with criminal offences should be exempt from the requirements of section 22A.

This approach was considered by the Government in detail and ultimately rejected for a number of reasons, including the following. First, excluding young people undermines the policy of protecting victims from the stresses of repeat, unnecessary bail applications. Nobody would suggest that a young person should, merely because of his or her age, be allowed to make applications that are a waste of time and place stress on victims. Second, excluding young people undermines the policy of preventing judge "shopping". Again, an alleged criminal's age does not justify him or her manipulating the administration of justice. Third, the usual reason advanced for the need to exclude young people from section 22A is that children, by virtue of the limitations of their age and circumstances, are unable to put adequate instructions to their lawyers on the first occasion they appear, resulting in bail applications that fail because of a lack of information being provided, which in turn prevents second applications from being made.

These amendments make abundantly clear that in this situation a second application can be made when the young person is able to provide more complete instructions, and so this reason for excluding young persons falls away. The revised section therefore preserves the important policy goals of protecting victims and stopping judge "shopping", while ensuring that those who should be granted bail are not denied bail because of procedural hurdles.

Schedule 2.5 to the bill amends the Children's Court Act 1987 to enable a Local Court magistrate to exercise the jurisdiction of the Children's Court without being appointed as a children's magistrate. A local court magistrate will be able to exercise the jurisdiction of the Children's Court when authorised to do so by the President of the Children's Court and the Chief Magistrate. The amendment is necessary because an old 1992 proclamation dealing with Local Court magistrates exercising Children's Court jurisdiction is now out of date. The amendment to the Children's Court Act is strongly supported by both the President of the Children's Court and the Chief Magistrate. As a result of the amendments to the Children's Court Act, the bill also makes consequential amendments to the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987, and the Children Legislation Amendment (Wood Inquiry Recommendations) Act 2009.

Schedules 2.6 and 2.11 to the bill amend the Civil Procedure Act 2005 and the Industrial Relations Act 1996 respectively, to enable the Civil Procedure Act and Uniform Civil Procedure Rules to be applied in civil proceedings in the Industrial Relations Commission. The application of the Civil Procedure Act and Uniform Civil Procedure Rules is consistent with Government efforts to increase the efficiency of the court system and to promote consistency in procedures across jurisdictions where appropriate. The amendments have the strong support of the President of the Industrial Relations Commission. The President will be a member of the Uniform Rules Committee, or he may nominate a judicial member of the commission to represent him on the committee.

Schedule 2.7 to the bill amends the Confiscation of Proceeds of Crime Act 1989 to make it clear that the power to issue search warrants under division 1 of part 3 of the Act, which relates to search powers, is exercisable by an authorised officer within the meaning of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002.

Schedule 2.8 amends the Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Act 2009. Earlier this year, the Government passed the Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Act in order to disrupt and dismantle criminal gangs that actively threaten public order in this State. Since the commencement of the Act, New South Wales police have been working tirelessly through initiatives such as Operation Raptor to investigate and prosecute those involved in organised criminal groups engaged in illegal activity. In doing so, and in reviewing their powers under the Act, a number of issues have arisen regarding provisions of the Act that could be tightened in order to assist police law enforcement activity in this area.

The bill therefore contains some minor amendments that will assist police in the enforcement of these laws. The bill clarifies that control orders can be issued against persons who, although they may say they are no longer members, continue to be involved with these criminal groups. One purpose of the Act was to break up these gangs and disrupt their ability to conduct organised crime. From this perspective, genuine resignations from such gangs is a desired outcome of the legislation, and this amendment does not seek to jeopardise that outcome.

Police were concerned, however, to ensure that criminals who "pretend" to resign from a gang, and thus try to avoid coming within the scope of the Act, but nevertheless continue to associate with the gang and engage in organised criminal activity, will still be caught by the laws. Police expressed concern that where a person who is a member of a declared organisation asserts that they are no longer a member, it may not be possible to seek a control order against the person under section 19 of the Act. The current definition of "member" under the Act includes "a person who is treated by the organisation or persons who belong to the organisation, in some way, as if he or she belonged to the organisation". This definition is likely to cover people who falsely assert that they are no longer members of an organisation, although it necessitates proving that they are still treated as a member of the organisation by other members of the group even though they have officially resigned. The amendment will mean that involvement with group members by a former member will be enough, and ensures that just "handing in your colours" will not prevent police enforcing the Act.

New South Wales police have also raised concerns that persons targeted under the Act are likely to be uncooperative, or actively avoid being served with notices under the Act to avoid being caught by its provisions. As a result, the bill contains new powers for police to request identification particulars from a person who needs to be served with an interim control order and furthermore to detain such a person for a reasonable period, and no longer than two hours, in order to effect service where that person refuses to remain in one place long enough for service to be effected. There will be an offence of refusing to provide identification or providing a false identification in such circumstances. The bill also contains a similar power allowing police to request identification particulars from anyone suspected of committing an association offence under the Act.

The bill clarifies the ability of police to apply for alternative methods of service of an interim control order, provided all reasonable steps have been taken to personally serve the order. Interim control orders do not take effect until they have been served upon the controlled member, and must be served within 28 days. This amendment will clarify that police need not wait until the end of the 28 days before applying for substituted service. Finally, the bill creates an additional offence applicable to persons who are the subject of a control order of associating on three or more occasions within a three-month period with other controlled members, carrying a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment.

The Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Act already contains an offence of association applicable to controlled members, which carries a penalty of up to two years imprisonment for a first offence, and an offence for subsequent associations carrying a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment. However, the latter is applicable only where the person already has a conviction for the first-time association offence. This amendment will better equip police to bring charges against individuals who do not have a prior conviction for an association offence but flout the laws by continuing their association with other controlled members. These amendments will ensure that police have the powers they need to dismantle criminal gangs in New South Wales.

Schedule 2.9 to the bill amends the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to enable the Industrial Registrar to make orders commencing summary proceedings with respect to offences that may be dealt with by the President or a judicial member of the Industrial Relations Commission. The Industrial Relations Commission will take over the criminal jurisdiction of the Industrial Magistrates Court upon the commencement of the Industrial Relations Amendment (Jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission) Act 2009. The amendment contained in the present bill will ensure that when the Industrial Relations Commission assumes responsibility for this additional jurisdiction, the criminal proceedings before the commission will be as simple and efficient as possible.

Schedule 2.10 to the bill amends the Evidence (Audio and Audio Visual Links) Act 1998 to enable all employees of the New South Wales Police Force, not just sworn officers, to give corroborative evidence by audio and audiovisual link. The amendment is consistent with Government efforts to increase the efficiency of the criminal justice system through the use of technology where appropriate.

Schedule 2.12 to the bill amends the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to: firstly, remove a superfluous definition of authorised officer in section 46(1) of the Act; and, secondly, to make it clear that the eligible applicant for a covert search warrant need not intend to personally execute the warrant.

Schedule 2.13 to the bill amends the Legal Profession Act 2004 to put beyond doubt the power of the District Court to hear appeals against decisions of cost assessors arising under the Legal Profession Act 1987. The District Court has already been given jurisdiction to hear appeals against decisions of cost assessors arising under the Legal Profession Act 2004. The amendment will ensure that all such appeals are heard by the same court.

Schedule 2.14 to the bill makes two amendments to section 25 of the Local Court Act 2007, which sets out the composition of the Local Court Rules Committee. First, section 25 will be amended to enable the Chief Magistrate to appoint any officer of the Local Court to the Local Court Rule Committee. Currently, the Chief Magistrate may appoint only a Local Court Registrar to the rule committee. There may be other officers of the Local Court who could bring relevant experience and expertise to the Committee. Second, section 25 will be amended to provide that the Minister need appoint a person as a member to the Local Court Rule Committee only if the Minister thinks it appropriate to do so. This will align the position of the Local Court Rule Committee with that of the District Court Rule Committee.

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

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Government business having concluded, the House will now proceed to Orders of the Day (Committee Reports).

COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

Report: Operation of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993: Discussion Paper

Debate resumed from 25 September 2009.

Mr MATT BROWN (Kiama) [10.33 a.m.]: It is with pleasure that I speak to the report of the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission entitled "Operation of the Health Care Complaints Act

1993". At the outset, I would like to thank my colleagues on the committee: the Chair, Helen Westwood; the deputy-chair, Judy Hopwood; the member for Cessnock; and the member for Charlestown; and members of the Legislative Council the Hon. David Clarke and Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. Much work was done by the staff of the committee: its manager, Mel Keenan, and its research and committee officers Jo Alley and Cheryl Samuels, Jacqueline Isles and John Miller. I thank the numerous people and organisations that provided submissions to the committee. Those were of enormous benefit. The committee received a total of 27 submissions, some from individuals and some from organisations, such as the New South Wales Nurses Association and the Council on the Ageing.

The report was made pursuant to three terms of reference: first, the identification and removal of any unnecessary complexities in the New South Wales healthcare complaints system; two, the appropriateness of the current assessment and investigative powers of the Health Care Complaints Commission; and, three, the effectiveness of information sharing between the Health Care Complaints Commission and area health services and registration authorities in New South Wales. The committee was asked to report to the Parliament on any matters connected with the committee's statutory functions.

The report under discussion today deals with the first of those terms of reference in chapter 2. The issues raised for consideration here were with respect to any unnecessary complexities in the healthcare complaints system regarding the practicalities of making a complaint, additional problems facing complainants with special needs, communication generally, and the wide range of registration authorities to be dealt with. The issues raised in the second term of reference were dealt with in chapter 3 of the report. They were with respect to the current assessment and investigative powers of the commission, the conduct of the investigation process, timeliness and final outcomes of the process. The third term of reference was dealt with in chapter 4. Here, the issues raised and discussed were with respect to information sharing between the commission and the area health services and registration authorities, including area health services not being informed of complaints relating to practitioners or not being updated on such complaints.

Twenty-nine issues were raised and dealt with in the report. A number suggested amendments and reforms to the governing Act. Those matters can be seen in the report. A lot of thought and work went into the compilation of this report, and I am pleased that there is opportunity to discuss it in the Chamber this morning.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [10.37 a.m.]: I take this opportunity to make a contribution to discussion on the report of the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission entitled "Operation of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993: Discussion Paper". In doing so, I refer to the foreword by the Chair, the Hon. Helen Westwood:

One of the main functions of the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission, under s 65(1)(d) of the *Health Care Complaints Act 1993*, is to report to Parliament any change that the Committee considers desirable to the functions, structures and procedures of the Health Care Complaints Commission.

It was with this responsibility in mind that the Committee recommended, in the wake of its Inquiry into the conduct of the Commission's investigation into the complaints made against ex-practitioner Graeme Reeves, that the Health Care Complaints Act be the subject of a thorough review, to identify any unnecessary complexities in the health care complaints system in New South Wales.

The Committee subsequently deferred its Inquiry, due to the impetus for a National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, an important component of which was to be a national health care complaints handling system. The Committee had serious concerns that the scheme proposed would be a retrograde step towards a discredited system of self-regulation, and was pleased when the then-Minister for Health, Hon John Della Bosca MLC, announced in the Legislative Council on 23 June 2009 that New South Wales had brokered an agreement for the retention of the Health Care Complaints Commission as part of the national scheme.

In highlighting issues in this Discussion Paper, the Committee is not in any way advocating for their implementation at this time. Indeed, the Committee notes that there may be perfectly valid reasons why a seemingly reasonable course of action cannot be followed. Rather, the Committee has paid close attention to the submissions made in order to bring these issues into the public discourse on the operation of the health care complaints system in New South Wales. Accordingly, the Committee hopes that its Discussion Paper will foster debate on these important matters, and looks forward to the response of healthcare practitioners, consumers and the wider community.

The committee report lists 29 wide-ranging issues for discussion. Under the heading "Principles of a complaints handling system for the 21st century", at page 2 in the background to the report, it says:

1.10 In considering the operation of the Act, the Committee has been cognisant of other Australian jurisdictions, and in overseas jurisdictions where comparisons are appropriate. It has concluded that the optimal way to ensure the protection of the health and safety of the public is a health care complaints system governed by the following principles—

I also deem these to be extremely important—

- **Accountability:** Decision-making authorities must be accountable to the New South Wales community in carrying out their statutory functions;
- **Transparency:** Decision-making processes should be open, clear and understandable for both the consumers and the professions;
- **Fairness:** Decision-making authorities should maintain an acceptable balance between protecting the rights and interests of patients and those of the practitioners;
- **Effectiveness:** The regulatory system should be effective in protecting the public from harm and supporting and fostering equity of access and the provision of high quality care;
- **Efficiency:** The resources expended and the administrative burden imposed by the regulatory system must be justified in terms of the benefits to the New South Wales community;
- **Flexibility:** The regulatory system should be well equipped to respond to emerging challenges in a timely manner, as the health care system evolves and the roles and functions of health professions change.

In conclusion, I look forward to the responses to this discussion paper and to the evaluation of the Act. I am sure that some very valuable recommendations will flow from the inquiry into the operation of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993.

Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 13 of 2009

Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.

Mr ALLAN SHEARAN (Londonderry) [10.41 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak briefly on the recent Legislation Review Digest Report No. 13 of 2009, which was tabled on 19 October 2009. The Legislation Review Committee examined 11 bills in that digest. The bills considered by the committee included the Child Protection (Nicole's Law) Bill 2009, Crimes Legislation Amendment (Possession of Knives in Public) Bill 2009, Crown Lands Amendment (Special Purpose Leases) Bill 2009, Education Amendment (School Attendance) Bill 2009, Housing Amendment (Registrable Persons) Bill 2009, Industrial Relations Further Amendment (Jurisdiction of Industrial Relations Commission) Bill 2009, Liquor and Registered Clubs Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill 2009, Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Amendment (Demerit Points) Bill 2009, Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2009, and Transport Administration Amendment (Rail Trails) Bill 2009.

I will now provide a brief summary of the main concerns raised by the Legislation Review Committee in that digest. In relation to the Child Protection (Nicole's Law) Bill 2009, the committee raised concerns in regards to section 5, which provides for the publication and availability of certain information about "registrable persons" contained in the Child Protection Register established under section 19 of the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000. The committee referred to Parliament the issue of whether section 5 of the bill unduly trespasses on a person's right to privacy.

In relation to the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Possession of Knives in Public) Bill 2009, the committee raised concerns about the proposed change in penalty structure for the possession of knives in public places and schools under section 11C of the Summary Offences Act 1988 and an increase in penalties under section 27 Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002. The committee expressed concerns that the bill may disproportionately impact on the personal rights and liberties of children and young people and constitute excessive punishment.

In relation to the Crown Lands Amendment (Special Purpose Leases) Bill 2009, the committee raised concerns about provisions in this bill and noted that it had previously commented on the Western and Crown Lands Amendment (Special Purpose Leases) Bill 2008 in Legislation Review Digest No. 8 of 2008. With

respect to the 2008 bill, the committee commented that certain provisions in the bill might make individual rights unduly dependent on insufficiently defined and wide administrative power. In the current digest, No. 13 of 2009, the committee made similar observations with respect to clause 3 of the Crown Lands Amendment (Special Purpose Leases) Bill 2009.

In relation to the Education Amendment (School Attendance) Bill 2009, the committee also expressed concerns, for example, that section 23, which would significantly increase the penalties for non-attendance at school, may trespass on personal rights and liberties and constitute excessive punishment. The committee also expressed concerns that provisions such as section 22A may impact on the right to privacy of young people.

The controversial Housing Amendment (Registrable Persons) Bill 2009 prompted a number of concerns. I hasten to point out that the committee is obligated to raise concerns within its terms of reference regardless of the fact that the bill has already been passed and regardless of what personal views members may hold on the policy intent of the bill. The committee made a number of comments about the bill in relation to the proposal to amend the Housing Act 2001 to enable the Director General of the Department of Human Services, or its delegate, based on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Police, to terminate the lease of a tenant who is renting public housing who is a registrable person under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000. Under the bill, the Commissioner of Police may make such a recommendation if the presence of the tenant is creating a risk to their safety or the safety of others in the locality.

The committee made comments about the following issues relating to trespasses on personal rights and liberties under the Legislation Review Act 1987. Retrospectively, the committee expressed concerns that section 58B, which provides that the director general may, on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Police, terminate the lease of a tenant who is renting public housing who is a registrable person under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000 extends to a lease that was entered into before the commencement of part 7A and may trespass unduly on personal rights and liberties. Denial of Compensation, section 58D (1), provides that no compensation is payable for acts or omissions of a person in good faith in the purported administration or execution of part 7A. However, the committee noted that section 58D (2) provides that a tenant must be paid any rent, fee or charges for occupying the public housing referable to a period after termination of the lease under part 7A of the bill.

In relation to procedural fairness the committee noted that under section 58E of the bill, part 5 of the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 would not apply to or in respect of the termination of a lease under part 7A of the bill. The committee expressed concerns that this may unduly trespass on personal rights and liberties including the right to procedural fairness, as part 5 of the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 provides for the provision of notice of termination within certain time periods and rights of review.

In relation to the exclusion of judicial review, the committee also commented on proposed section 58F, in particular that it excludes all reviews and appeals of the functions conferred on the director general or Commissioner of Police and their delegates. Section 58F also provides that proposed section 58F (2) applies whether or not the rules of natural justice—procedural fairness—were complied with by the director general or Commissioner of Police and their delegates. The committee commented that this provision makes rights and liberties of individuals unduly dependent on non-reviewable decisions and referred it to Parliament for its consideration.

Finally, the committee referred various provisions of the Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2009 to Parliament for its consideration. For example, the committee expressed concerns that proposed sections 33B and 33C, which provide the NSW Rural Fire Service with powers to investigate a fire in its aftermath, may unduly trespass on personal rights and liberties.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [10.56 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the take-note debate on the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 13 of 2009", dated 19 October. I will refer briefly to the Rural Fires Amendment Bill 2009. The bill typifies the consideration and debate the committee undertakes in dealing with the legislation that comes before it. I am sure all members will be familiar with the dilemma posed by the infringement of people's rights as opposed to the general good of the community.

The bill amends the Rural Fires Act 1997 to make further provisions in relation to the management of bushfire hazard reduction, the investigation of rural fires, and the functions of the NSW Rural Fire Service. It also increases the penalty notice amounts for certain fire-related offences. Its objects are to provide that certain

bushfire hazard management functions of local authorities, such as councils, are to be exercised instead by hazard management officers of the NSW Rural Fire Service; to enable the Commissioner of the NSW 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 up to 24 hours after the fire has been put out; 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 that are an interference from a fire or other emergency; and to increase the penalty notice amounts for certain fire-related offences under the Act.

My electorate comprises 50 per cent bush and includes two national parks so this legislation is very relevant to my area. I am constantly in communication with emergency services generally but particularly Rural Fire Service officers and Fire Brigades officers and others who participate in fighting fires. We are heading into what is forecast to be a very serious fire season, so this type of legislation is very important. I refer now to a concern raised by the committee with regard to this legislation, which appears as No. 14 on page 57 of the digest. It states:

The Committee is of the view that the proposed section 22 may abrogate certain common law rights relating to trespass and personal property. However, the Committee understands that the grant of power in proposed section 22A may be in the public interest and required in certain circumstances to protect members of the public.

Another concern was raised in relation to proposed section 33B. The committee stated:

The Committee is of the view that proposed section 33B may abrogate certain common law rights relating to trespass and personal property. However, the Committee understands that the grant of power in proposed section 33B is intended to allow the NSW Rural Fire Service to investigate the cause or origin of a fire. The Committee also notes that the power to enter is not a "timeless power" but rather is only provided for a period of up to 24 hours after the fire has been put out to provide for an investigation of the cause and origin of a fire.

This is important legislation in as much as it affects the ability of the Rural Fire Service to undertake not only its firefighting responsibilities but also its investigative responsibilities. Despite the fact that the committee raised certain considerations relating to the ability of fire service personnel to enter, seize and move property, it is important that this authority have the ability to investigate and find out exactly what has gone on in a fire and make sure everything is done to protect the community. Therefore, the legislation, whilst it might seem to trespass on some rights, certainly has the public good and the safety of the community in general in mind. The committee also referred to increased maximum penalties and the disproportionate impact that might have on children and young people. Suffice to say that this bill demonstrates the difficulties and complexities facing the committee in dealing with such legislation. I commend the committee and the secretariat for their good work in dealing with the legislation coming before the House this week.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [10.53 a.m.]: In speaking to the Legislation Review Committee's "Legislation Review Digest No. 13 of 2009" I bring to the attention of the chairman and the committee the Transport Administration Amendment (Rail Trails) Bill 2009. I know that the committee dealt with a number of bills, and I have said previously how appreciative other members and I are of the work the committee does. This is a very valuable document. After I read the bill a couple of questions came to mind. First, the bill has not come before the Parliament and has not been debated because I understand that amendments to the bill are to be brought forward, as the Minister has suggested in media reports and articles.

I ask the chairman whether he will consider the effect of those amendments on the bill in his next report to the Parliament. The reason for that is that the bill that the committee has spent time assessing and reporting on will no longer be the bill that we will debate next week because, as has happened on previous occasions, the Government has found flaws in the bill and has drawn up a series of amendments. However, those amendments have not been scrutinised by the committee. Before the chairman reports to the Parliament in the next digest, the amendments and their effects on the bill should be made available to the committee. I will tell him why. The report states:

Sale or other disposal of railway tracks and other works (without closure)

The new provisions will allow a rail infrastructure owner to sell or otherwise dispose of railway tracks and other works used in connection with a railway line. This will no longer be regarded as a closure of the railway line concerned. However, the sale or other disposal of the land concerned will continue to require the authorisation of the Minister for Transport as referred to above.

I put it to the House that, under this bill, once the land is declared no longer of use to the Crown it automatically can trigger a land claim. I want to know when the chairman of the committee presents his report to Parliament next week whether, if that is the case under the bill in its current form, it will still be the case under the proposed

amendments. Alternatively, will it mean that only the land will be leased, in which case it has a meaningful purpose and a use to the Crown? I can point to examples and a precedent that was set in Wagga Wagga where a land claim rightfully was lodged on an old derelict building, the Roads and Transport Authority building in Gurwood Street. There were a number of court cases with regard to possession of that building and eventually its ownership was transferred to the local Aboriginal corporation.

I am forecasting the possibility of more claims. No-one is denying the right of any individual Australian to exercise their rights under the law. I am asking whether this could be the outcome under this bill. Some reference to this in the next report that the committee prepares would be appreciated by members and indeed by the wider public, some of whom perhaps are interested in rail trails and will read this in *Hansard*. Indeed, it may interest any corporation that is considering making a claim on a piece of land. I understand that is possible, and under the legislation it is within people's rights to do so.

I hope I have clarified my concern about that for the chairman and committee members. I seek a response with regard to the effect of the amendments before the committee prints and distributes its next report so that we all understand the legislation that will be put before the Parliament. That will move us forward from the committee's report on the current bill and enable us to consider the bill that the Government will seek to amend next week.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I am sure the chairman has taken those words on board.

Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Report noted.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) having concluded, the House will now proceed to private members' statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PACIFIC HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [11.02 a.m.]: Today I raise again in the House safety on the Pacific Highway. As members would have heard on the six o'clock news this morning, two cars and three semitrailers were involved in an accident on the Pacific Highway south of Coffs Harbour at Macksville, just north of Warrell Creek. One driver was killed and others have been taken to hospital, including one of the semitrailer drivers, who is in shock. It is poignant that today in the *Coffs Coast Advocate* is an article about the bypass at Warrell Creek and Macksville. The article states:

Nambucca Valley property owners opposing the Roads and Traffic Authority's planned Warrell Creek highway bypass have called for its environmental assessment to be released.

The Roads and Traffic Authority initially requested an environmental assessment in 2003. I understand that the work is able to commence. However, this morning the Roads and Traffic Authority website states in relation to the Warrell Creek bypass "Environmental assessment commenced." In 1996 this Government promised that a dual carriageway between Hexham and the Queensland border would be completed by 2006. In the past three weeks, or less, there have been three deaths on the Pacific Highway between Woolgoolga and Macksville. Following the death at Valla last week I called for an audit of the Pacific Highway, particularly in relation to black spots, and for the identification and upgrade of routes around black spots so that when accidents occur—and tragic accidents occur almost on a weekly basis—motorists can get around them.

In relation to this morning's accident, I understand that heavy vehicles are not yet able to move past the accident site and traffic is still held up as only one lane is open. Over the weekend traffic will be bedlam, and the potential for accidents on this section of road over the next 24 hours will increase dramatically because drivers will be frustrated and tired. This morning an anonymous phone caller informed me that \$10 million has been cut from the road maintenance budget for the Pacific Highway—yet again another budget cut. I understand this morning's accident was caused by driver error. When there are budget cuts to road maintenance year in and year out, when the Government breaks its promise to complete the upgrade of this road, when in excess of one

death a week occurs on the Pacific Highway, we are in trouble. Those who travel regularly on the Pacific Highway—as does the Acting-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) and all other North Coast members to service their electorates—take their lives in their hands. Heavy vehicle traffic is increasing daily.

In the past the State Government has blamed the Federal Government. Only this week the Federal Opposition transport spokesman advised that the \$3.1 billion allocated by the Federal Government has been matched by only \$500 million from the State Government. It is now estimated that the road will not be completed until 2016. It is probably one of the busiest roads in Australia, and it is the busiest arterial route in the north of the State. Yet there are funding cuts to road maintenance and deaths occurring week by week. Last week in response to my call for an audit Mr Higgins said we did not need an audit. Out of 677 kilometres of the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border only 300 kilometres has been completed. Another 104 kilometres is currently under construction. I welcome these works. Any work saves a life. With dual carriageways, driver error—which I believe caused today's accident—probably would result in a non-fatal accident. I have lost too many friends and constituents in accidents on the Pacific Highway.

I call on the Government to audit the Pacific Highway and to take interim measures at black spots where deaths are occurring to ensure that the chance of fatal crashes is eliminated or minimised. I am fed up with a death a week on the Pacific Highway. In the past fortnight there have been three deaths in just over 10 days. It is not good enough to say that an audit is not required. The Government must repair the road around Nambucca Heads, where an accident occurred last week, and Woolgoolga, as the road has been damaged by the floods. The Government must take these measures so that accidents do not continue to maim and kill people.

KELLYVILLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr JOHN AQUILINA (Riverstone—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.07 p.m.]: Last Monday, 19 October 2009, almost 200 residents of the electorate of Riverstone, particularly residents of Kellyville Ridge, protested against a proposed development on the site of 6 Merriville Road, Kellyville Ridge. The proposed development is for the establishment of two-storey to eight-storey towers, comprising 268 home units. It is an outrageous development that is akin to parking a jumbo on a postage stamp. It is a disgraceful proposal. I have seen many development applications in the extensive period I have been in public life, but this takes the cake as an ambit claim. This is by far the most outrageous ambit claim I have ever seen by any developer proposed for such a small site. This area is totally unsuited for this type of high-rise development.

Across the road from the proposed development are single-storey residential homes. Across this very narrow street it is proposed to develop eight-storey units with parking for 495 vehicles. The proposed development is grossly inappropriate and outrageous. The town planning for this area—and I have been the local member since the area was released for residential purposes—was never intended for high-rise development. The area has a large proportion of young families with small children. Already there is a concentration of cars in this small area. The area is totally unsuited for high-rise development. It will result in a concentration of more cars on roads that already are overburdened and pose an extreme danger for the young children who live in the area and who move to the area. There are a number of reasons why the Minister should not approve this development application. I have written to the Minister in detailed terms, pointing out some of the reasons. They include:

The development is out of scale with the residential development nearby.
The development will create further traffic problems in that location.

Indeed, it will create dangerous traffic problems in that location.

There is totally inadequate allowance for parking.
It is far too intensive for the existing road network in that location.
Inadequate provision for open space requirements.
Existing residential property will devalue, as it will create slum-like environment.

We have already seen evidence of this. Several years ago development applications to Blacktown City Council for the construction of a number of multi-storey units close to this location elicited a major public outcry, which I supported. As a result development applications were substantially modified, in some cases not proceeded with, and a number of them were disallowed by Blacktown City Council. Tragically, the story since has not been a happy one. As was anticipated by the local community, the construction of those units has created a detrimental impact on the amenity of the local area. The impact will be further intensified if this proposed development is allowed to go ahead.

Among the concerns that were raised at the time were overdevelopment of the site, severe traffic congestion particularly on the narrow residential roads in the area, and unsavoury social elements, given the proximity of the site to the Ettamogah Pub and the Mean Fiddler Hotel. I regularly receive complaints in my electorate office from persons whose fences have been kicked in, whose homes have been vandalised and whose front and back yards have been used as rubbish tips by patrons from the hotels. That occurs as a result of the high concentration of people in the location. To continue to compound the existing problem by constructing an additional 268 home units is a planning outrage in every sense and one against which I strongly lend my voice.

Already the local traffic is an absolute nightmare. When the area was planned it initially was envisaged as a community of single residential dwellings. Consequently, local streets are narrow and even the main thoroughfare of Merriville Road is far too narrow and congested with the volume of traffic it currently experiences. There is ample argument to reject this development application out of hand. As I said earlier, the developer has made an ambit claim. In fact, the whole concept is so out of place in this location the developer should be told to go away, reconsider, come back and provide a development with single-storey homes.

ST GABRIEL'S SCHOOL FOR HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (Castle Hill) [11.12 a.m.]: Two years ago I spoke in this place about the wonderful work being done by St Gabriel's School for Hearing Impaired Children in Castle Hill. Established 87 years ago in the Edmund Rice tradition by the Christian Brothers, St Gabriel's has had an enviable record of assisting hearing-impaired children over many decades. Traditionally, the school has catered for children from kindergarten to year 10, with students who want to sit the Higher School Certificate able to transfer to the adjacent Gilroy College, although many switch to mainstream schools earlier than that.

Since 1974 the St Gabriel's Hear the Children Early Intervention Centre has been an integral part of the school. For the past 25 years it has been using an auditory-verbal program, which teaches these children to maximise their use of residual hearing to learn language and speech. Members will appreciate that the earlier a child is diagnosed and therapy begins the better the outcome. The St Gabriel's curriculum, which was launched in 2001, is at the cutting edge of early intervention programs for the deaf, both in Australia and overseas. It targets the areas most at risk from deafness, including hearing, language, speech, cognition, social interaction, and fine and gross motor skills.

More than 90 per cent of the children who enter the program are able to begin normal schooling by the time they turn six—a remarkable achievement by anyone's standards and one that is giving literally hundreds of kids the chance to live normal, happy and productive lives. The success of the program can be judged by the outcomes. One grateful father at last year's presentation evening thanked the school for giving his profoundly deaf son the gift of speech—the sort of statement that brings a lump to one's throat. Unfortunately, the Christian Brothers, who run the school, have now decided after 87 years of operation to change its charter to cater for children with a range of disabilities. This means that they can no longer justify funding the early intervention program, and more so because it has never received a single cent of State Government funding.

It cost the Christian Brothers \$10,000 per child per year to run the early intervention centre and the cost cannot be justified now that the hearing impairment will no longer be the major focus of the school. Tragically, this wonderful organisation, which has helped so many hundreds of children over such a long period, will be closing its early intervention centre at the end of this year. In 2004 I wrote to the then Minister for Disability Services—now the Deputy Premier—seeking funding, and I was told that new money would only be allocated to organisations that target a range of disabilities. Ironically, many of these centres use the St Gabriel's curriculum.

Yvonne Keane of Kellyville leads the Hear the Mums Action Group, a group of parents who are fighting to save the centre. Yvonne visited me in my office a few weeks ago. Her six-month old son, Asher, has a mild bilateral hearing loss identified at birth through the Government's Statewide Infants Screening Hearing [SISH] Program, which aims to identify by the age of three months all babies born in New South Wales with a hearing loss. Mrs Keane told me what was so special about the Hear the Children Early Intervention Centre. It is not just the auditory-verbal curriculum, wonderful as it is, or the dedicated staff, one of whom—speech therapist Charmaine Mercer-Moseley—accompanied her; it is the pastoral care, the personal attention that only a small centre such as St Gabriel's can provide.

Mrs Keane wanted to save the early intervention centre by re-establishing it in the childcare centre next to Tallowood Special School in Kellyville. She said that it would cost just \$200,000 a year to run, based on

20 children attending. I told her that the early intervention centre would have to remain affiliated with St Gabriel's or another centre to attract government funding. She and Ms Mercer-Moseley have been talking to the Catholic Centre for Hearing Impaired Children in Strathfield about becoming an outreach facility of the Strathfield centre. But time is running out and it seems unlikely that a suitable agreement can be thrashed out before 2010. I might add that the Strathfield centre uses the St Gabriel's curriculum and receives \$200,000 a year in State Government funding, and it has only 17 children compared with St Gabriel's 20.

The good news is that St Gabriel's has agreed that the early intervention centre can continue to operate in Castle Hill next year, giving it some breathing space, as long as some funding can be found. The question that the Government has to ask itself is: What will happen to these children if the centre closes? If they all go to Strathfield, for example—I do not know whether this centre is big enough to accommodate all of them—I assume that the church will apply for additional money from the Government. Any cost savings that the Government currently makes by refusing to fund St Gabriel's early intervention centre are illusory. On 13 September the Premier issued a press release entitled, "New South Wales Leads the Country in Infant Hearing Screening." In that press release he boasted:

Since beginning, the program has referred more than 1,700 infants bilaterally and diagnosed more than 650 babies with a significant bilateral hearing impairment.

NSW has achieved the highest percentage of newborn hearing impairment screening in Australia. In 2007/08 more than 98 per cent of newborns were screened.

My question is: What is the point of picking up deafness in newborn children if the Government is not prepared to do anything about it? It is like diagnosing appendicitis and sending the patient home with a packet of Advil. The children in St Gabriel's early intervention centre do not come primarily from my electorate: in fact, only two children do. The rest come from all over Sydney—from Cabramatta, Hawkesbury, Lane Cove, Sydney, the Blue Mountains, Riverstone and Smithfield—that is, four Labor and three Liberal electorates and one Independent electorate. I ask the Minister for Ageing, Disability and Home Care, in this Week of the Deaf, for an urgent meeting with the Hear the Mums Action Group with a view to providing stopgap funding to tide over St Gabriel's early intervention centre until a more permanent arrangement can be made.

CESSNOCK ELECTORATE POLICING

Mr KERRY HICKEY (Cessnock [11.17 a.m.]: Today I refer to policing in the Cessnock electorate and to the problems to which communities in Cessnock have been subjected. The culture that is apparent in the community is: It is everybody else's issue and not mine. That culture is apparent at meetings at which community members blame the Government, the police or others, but do not name themselves and are not forthcoming with vital information to ensure that offenders are subjected to the full force of the law. That culture is apparent when crime is spoken about in the community. Last weekend I was privileged to attend a meeting at Weston, where crime and policing were again raised and debated for quite sometime. The main points that were made clearly related to policing.

One of the residents told those attending the meeting that two windows had been broken in the front of his home. When the resident rushed out he saw two youths running up the road. He pursued those youths and watched them as they ran into their families' premises. He knew the youths as members of those two families constantly rode unregistered motorbikes around the community. Everyone at the meeting named the families and the children, so it would be fair to say that those children were well known in this community. Two police officers attended the scene. The affected resident told the meeting that one officer was as keen as mustard to address the issue, but the older officer told the resident that unless he saw the children throw the rocks that smashed the windows there was nothing the police could do.

The affected resident wanted police to talk to these families about the incident and to inform them that the community was aware of the perpetrators of such mischief. The resident contacted the police on several occasions and was told that no incident report had been prepared. It took him a further six weeks to obtain an incident report number in order to make an insurance claim. This was just one of the many complaints referred to at the meeting. My office constantly receives complaints about the lack of policing in the Cessnock area. Those attending the meeting were also told of an incident at Kurri Kurri involving a local bread shop employee who knocked off work at 3.00 a.m. and who was driving along the main street. Youths from the local park in Kurri Kurri crossed the road at the pedestrian crossing, which resulted in the employee stopping at that crossing. The youths descended on the car and opened all the doors. When the driver got out the car to the shut the doors the youths set upon him and bashed him. I am told that the driver sustained injuries.

Youths have been causing problems in this area for quite sometime. The locals are fully aware of these issues, so why are the police so seemingly unaware? Perhaps mobile policing is just not working and local intelligence is not being utilised to prevent some of these incidents from occurring. To be fair, when I attempted to establish whether anyone had raised these issues with the police I found that some time ago, when the infamous BMX gang was running amok in the community, the police were made aware of these issues. Why would police officers not question a group sitting around in a local park at 3.00 a.m.? That is what the community expects and wants. There have been other violent incidents, such as the bashing of a local at Bellbird. That gentleman was in a coma for a week.

Community members were not willing to become involved by providing the police with information. One local said, "No-one wants to become involved as the police know who are the perpetrators. If anyone comes forward with information, who will protect them and their family members?" I am concerned as one resident has been in a coma for a week and the perpetrators of the crime seem to believe that they have got away with this crime. I am not placing any blame on front-line police but I am asking local commanders and police in charge of the rostering of officers to give the Cessnock electorate a fair go and to enable front-line officers to address these problems. If the statistics reveal that there is no need for an inquiry into mobile policing I will point to the issues that were raised at the meeting, such as the assault on Mr Morris, the employee at the bread shop, the house destroyed at Cessnock, and the windows that were smashed.

Communities should not remain silent on crime. The non-reporting of criminal acts should be investigated so that we are fully aware of these problems. People are keeping these issues under wraps but it will not be long before they take measures into their own hands. That is not what we want. I ask the local commander to address as a matter of urgency crime in the Cessnock electorate. [*Time expired.*]

CRONULLA SUTHERLAND WATER POLO CLUB

Mr MALCOLM KERR (Cronulla) [11.22 a.m.]: This morning I speak in relation to Sutherland Shire Council's stance towards and relationship with the Cronulla water polo community. I will outline a brief history of the Cronulla Water Polo Club, whose president is John Zagame. The seed for what was to become one of Australia's great water polo clubs was sown by the merger of teams from the Gympie Bay and Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club, which in 1963 entered a team in the third division of the Sydney metropolitan competition. The *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* reported that Frank Jordan was to convene a meeting at Cronulla Surf Club for the purpose of starting a water polo club in the area. The intention was to enable local players to become eligible for selection in the New South Wales, Australian and Olympic teams.

Frank, who represented Australia in the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games, attracted an eclectic group of people to that meeting, and the club was formed in 1964 as the St George and Sutherland Shire Amateur Water Polo Club. One of the people who responded to the report of the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* was Bill Jones who, along with Kevin Jones, Bob Boufler, Gary Chapman, John Crisp, Bill Eadie, Doug Lyons and Col Williams, constituted the club's first ever first grade team. In the second grade of the inaugural year was a young Bruce Falson, who is now one of Australia's most successful coaches, and in third grade was the ever-young Geoff Sara, who represented the club as a player for 43 consecutive years.

The first ladies team was entered in the competition in 1968-69, and won the club's first title and inaugural first grade premiership that year. The team was coached by Peter Kerr, whose brother Andrew Kerr is well known in water polo and Olympic circles. Unfortunately for me and fortunately for them, we are not related. The team included Adrian Turnbull, Julie Girdler, Virginia Turnbull, Meredith Lancer, Vicki White, Ruth Hardingham, Marilyn Mitchell, Jenny Dunn, Carolyn Keats and Carole Missingham. This was the start of a small run of five premierships in seven years and preceded the dominance of Sydney University, which then won 13 premierships in a row. On 20 July 1970 the club changed its name to the Cronulla Sutherland Water Polo Club following an invitation by the Cronulla Sutherland Leagues Club to become an affiliate of the Sharks.

It is important to recognise the vital role played by high schools in those early years and the coaches and administrators dedicated to the sport's development and growth. In the 1960s and 1970s all high schools had competitive programs and Cronulla High School led the way through the early platform established by Doug Lyons. Doug, as a first grade player with the club, became a role model. A science teacher at Cronulla High School, he helped set the standard and promoted the perception that "the game of water polo is the best thing since sliced bread".

Meanwhile, the Sutherland shire's Junior Water Polo Association became the nursery for future development. At that time the entire club's training programs and games were conducted, as the member for

Tweed would recall, at the Gunnamatta Bay Baths—where he had 100 per cent of his swimming training. The member for Tweed would have known it affectionately as "Gunna". Despite this magnificent history, the situation in which the club finds itself is most disheartening. I received a letter from John Watkins, the past President of Cronulla Sutherland Water Polo Club, who stated:

As the immediate past president of Cronulla Sutherland Water Polo Club I have attempted many times over many years to address strategic and policy level dilemmas that impact suitable and desired operational service delivery to our community. Time and time again we are ignored and the development of our people and our community programs for recreation, emerging elite and elite is continually thwarted and derailed.

We have often been told that there are two types of programs at Sutherland Leisure Centre "ours and yours". It seems that Council (SLCs) runs monopoly facilities with full retail programs staffed by professionals and subscribed to by consumer patrons whilst water polo ... is charged a specific pool hire fee on top of full retail usage charges.

When Mr Watkins asked whether water polo was being discriminated against, the answer was yes. This matter must be rectified.

CHARLESTOWN ELECTORATE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr MATTHEW MORRIS (Charlestown) [11.27 a.m.]: This morning I speak about the economic growth that is rapidly taking place not only across the local government area of Lake Macquarie generally but in the Charlestown electorate in particular. Two developments have taken place recently on Hillsborough Road. I have mentioned Hillsborough Road in this place before, but today I speak about the significant contribution that the quite large variety of retail and commercial outlets situated on Hillsborough Road makes to our local economy.

First, I mention the financial services company Evolution. It officially opened its premises recently, on 1 October. The company was located historically in the city area of Newcastle, with an ancillary office at Cardiff. But, following some events there, it chose to relocate into more central and larger premises on Hillsborough Road. The significant contribution that the company is making to our local economy—and particularly the way that it has taken what was effectively an industrial shed and turned it into a suite of offices—is quite remarkable. The company is very proud of the design and layout of its new office and the materials used in its construction. The community is very much interested in it also because it sets a new tone for office accommodation. It is more environmentally friendly as its design means better use of light, energy and water. More importantly, the premises are most suitable for the company's purposes and comfortable for its staff.

Secondly, the Warners Bay Bulky Goods Centre development was opened on 10 October. Retailers operating out of that development include Autobarn, the Good Guys, Adairs and a range of other well-known retailers. This project is of a significant scale and will obviously make a huge contribution to our local economy. I was very pleased to be there on the day and join the mayor of Lake Macquarie and a number of representatives of the company in participating in and witnessing the official opening of this development. What makes the development a little more unique and a little more beneficial to the economy is the contribution it has made to the upgrading of Hillsborough Road. Around \$2 million worth of upgrades has been carried out on Hillsborough Road, including additional lanes, new signals and, most importantly, better access along Hillsborough Road in and around a number of the developments situated on that road. This development is a huge part of our agenda to fully upgrade the entire length of Hillsborough Road.

Clearly, jobs are a key issue for our local economy, and it is pleasing that the new bulky goods area has made a sizeable contribution, providing around 200 immediate jobs and flow-on jobs that will result from an increase in the area's workforce. I congratulate particularly the tradespeople who put in a huge effort to bring the project to fruition. I know there was significant pressure on the road construction crews to get those works finished. In fact, the Newcastle *Herald* was generous enough to start harassing and quizzing people as to why the project was taking so long.

Those workers put in a tremendous effort and we have a great outcome that will benefit the broader community. I congratulate all the staff at Evolution and the people associated with BB Retail Capital, which put the Warners Bay Bulky Goods Centre in place. We thank them for their confidence in our local community and for their contribution to our region.

POLICE BRAVERY AWARDS

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [11.32 a.m.]: In a special ceremony held on 16 October in Sydney, 17 New South Wales police officers were honoured for bravery by the Governor, Her Excellency Professor

Marie Bashir. Of that 17, two were a husband and wife team from Tweed Heads. In March 2007 Acting Sergeant Brett Crossan and Senior Constable Louise Crossan risked their lives when they dived into dangerous surf at Belongil Beach, Byron Bay, to rescue a 26-year-old Japanese woman. At the time they were stationed at Byron Bay, and with concern only for the local community they searched the seaweed-filled heavy seas while fully clothed. It was a storm-swept day, and they put their lives at risk. With no thought for their own welfare, they responded immediately and searched for more than an hour with other emergency services, including two helicopters. Unfortunately, despite an extensive search over several days, the woman was not located and was presumed drowned.

The couple are now stationed at Tweed Heads and were honoured with bronze bravery medals by the Royal Humane Society. In accepting the award, this model couple acknowledged that they were just doing their job. I stand 100 per cent behind the men and women of our local police force. In fact, I have accompanied local police on several occasions, particularly on a Friday night, to see their fine work and also to give me a greater understanding of the pressures and issues they face. They do a sterling job and really give 100 per cent to the local community. Brett and Louise have received various police awards, but this was their first from the Royal Humane Society. The couple met when training together in Goulburn nine years ago and will celebrate their seventh wedding anniversary next month. They have one son and are expecting their second child in December. It will be a big year for Brett and Louise, and I wish them all the best.

Unfortunately, the Tweed-Byron Local Area Command, which covers a significant and rapidly growing area, is short on resources. Many times in this place I have mentioned the ratio of police per head of population. Currently, according to information supplied to me by the New South Wales Police Association, the State average sits at around one officer per 550 people. In the Tweed-Byron Local Area Command that ratio sits at around one officer per 750 people. If we consider also the Queensland vehicles that come across the border each day, the ratio would probably jump to one police officer per 1,000 local people. This puts an enormous amount of strain and pressure on those police. Recently I met with the Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione, in a one-on-one meeting and informed him of those statistics. He has promised to visit the area and speak to the local Tweed police force.

Superintendent Michael Kenny leads the local area command. He takes an active role in the local town and is very dedicated. I have dealt with the superintendent on a range of issues and find that he gives 100 per cent to the community. He is also a stalwart at our local Cudgen Headlands Surf Club. I have seen him on patrol on Christmas Day and other significant holidays. The Tweed region needs attention to detail regarding local criminal activity. Recently I asked a question in this place about the quantity of illicit drugs confiscated within our local area. In the past 12 months the amount was well over 53 kilos. Information to hand currently rates our region third in the State behind Kings Cross and Parramatta. The region needs its own drug squad, and I will continue to campaign for it. I reiterate that Acting Sergeant Brett Crossan and Senior Constable Louise Crossan showed little regard for their safety but a lot of regard for the local community. They are well deserving of their awards and I am pleased that they are based at Tweed Heads police station. Once again, I am 100 per cent committed to the Tweed.

CHEMSAL AUTOMATED LAMP RECYCLING PROCESS

Mr ALLAN SHEARAN (Londonderry) [11.37 a.m.]: I convey to the House my great pleasure when recently I officially opened and launched Chemsal's new automated Balcan Lamps Processor for recycling lamps at the St Marys Chemsal Chemical Waste Facility. Chemsal is a waste-processing facility licensed by the Department of Environment and Climate Change for the safe processing of a number of waste recycling services. About three years ago Chemsal relocated its waste recycling service from Wetherill Park to St Marys. It has 21 employees and is located within the north St Marys industrial area. The process I launched provides for the automatic recycling of fluorescent tubes, compact fluorescent lamps [CFLs] and high-intensity discharge [HID] lamps by feeding the fluorescent tubes directly into a compact crusher separator machine that separates the glass, aluminium, caps and phosphor powder containing mercury. The mercury and all other components are recovered for reuse—for instance, the crushed glass is recycled into wall insulation and glass products, and the aluminium is reused for soft drink cans, while the hazardous phosphor is separated for reprocessing.

Members will be aware that mercury is toxic to the human nervous system. The traditional practice of disposing fluorescent tubes to landfill cannot continue as it allows mercury to be released into the environment, including into our river systems. I am advised that 50 million fluorescent tubes and mercury lamps end up in Australian landfill each year. With the phasing out of incandescent bulbs from 2010, that number is set to grow. An alarming fact is that a mere spoonful of mercury could destroy human use of a lake for hundreds of years.

By investing in an automated lamp recycling process, Chemsal now has the processes to turn this around and stop lamps being sent to landfill, which is a key priority of the New South Wales Government. Interestingly, the machinery and technology that Chemsal has introduced will have the capacity to more than accommodate the lamp recycling needs of this State.

The process at this government-licensed facility takes 10 minutes and processes up to 1,000 lamps and tubes per hour. Organisations such as Chemsal can advise the commercial and public sectors of the best solution for their specific requirements for collection and safe temporary storage of used lamps. Earlier this year, following the Environment Protection and Heritage Council meeting of State and Territory environment Ministers, the Federal Environment Minister announced a national Fluoro-cycle scheme. Chemsal's new automated processor marks an important step in this scheme. Of course, achieving a reduction in waste generation and turning waste into recoverable resources have been key priorities of the New South Wales Government for many years. The Government has introduced significant changes to waste legislation and has been working collaboratively with local government, businesses, households, recyclers and other key stakeholders to deliver effective waste reduction programs, with significant success. Of course, in order to promote long-term success it is essential to have everyone involved.

The Fluoro-cycle scheme is a voluntary partnership between government and industry to reduce the amount of mercury-containing waste being disposed of to landfill through increased recycling of mercury-containing lamps. Building on the existing commitment of many Australian companies and other organisations, the initial focus of the scheme is on those sectors that account for the largest consumption of mercury-containing lamps—namely, the commercial and public lighting sectors. The Australian Government and the Lighting Council Australia, in collaboration with the Property Council of Australia, the Facility Management Association of Australia, the Australian Council of Recyclers, the Australian Local Government Association and other key bodies are delivering fluoro-cycle jointly.

The St Marys Chemsal plant provides a collection and resource recovery service for all types of mercury-containing lamps. The introduction of the Balcan Lamps Processor at St Marys enhances Chemsal's capacity to recover and recycle all forms of mercury-containing lamps Australia wide. It will give commercial and industrial lighting users an affordable disposal option for their mercury-containing lamps. At the same time, it will increase the recovery of valuable resources by safely recovering and recycling the mercury, glass and aluminium in the lamps.

I congratulate Chemsal on its endeavours. In particular, I congratulate Chemsal State Manager Ian Parkes, who pointed out that the plant was the first of its kind in New South Wales. Previously, recycled lamps were sent to the company's Melbourne head office. Chemsal will now be able to save transport costs by offering the service of this processing plant at St Marys. Additionally, I acknowledge the attendance at the launch of John White, Managing Director of the Dolo Amtrix Group—the parent company—and Mr Ian Thompson, the chairman of the board. I am pleased that such an initiative has been located in my electorate and I wish all involved every success.

BEGA CHEESE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega) [11.42 a.m.]: I have always said that environmental policy should be based on sound science and good investment in natural resource management not emotive politics. All too often we hear from the Greens and other people who want to drive the emotive agenda rather than celebrate some of the work being done in the community. The week before last Bega Cheese invited me to the Daisybank property in the Bega Valley, which is owned and run by the D'Arcy family. The gathering, which included a large number of Bega Cheese suppliers, was organised to celebrate the Bega Cheese Environmental Management System project. It was established in 2001 that a program would need to be initiated to improve the environmental performance and natural resource management outcomes of the dairy industry on the far South Coast.

Farmers from across the Eurobodalla and Bega Valley shires have worked in partnership with Bega Cheese and the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority to roll out a program to improve on-farm environmental management systems. A number of incentive programs was rolled out and it is very pleasing that that more than 80 on-farm projects have been implemented. Approximately \$2 million of public money was invested, and that leveraged a further \$6 million of private investment by farmers. Of course, the flow-on stimulus to the local economy has been significant.

The Bega Cheese Environmental Management System has delivered approximately 80 on-ground projects, including 70 kilometres of riparian wetland fencing protecting approximately 200 hectares of riparian land; 110 hectares of revegetation and remnant vegetation management; 184 off-stream watering points; remediation of 13 priority erosion sites; 18 dairy laneway upgrades; 12 stream crossing upgrades; 33 effluent upgrades resulting in the re-use of about 130 megalitres of effluent across 230 hectares each year; soil testing and nutrient mapping across 90 farms; and dung beetle assessments across 22 properties. It was great that Barry Irvine from Bega Cheese was able to bring everyone together to celebrate with representatives of the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority and other partners involved in the program, including, of course, representatives of the Bega Valley Shire Council to celebrate the work of many of the farmers and to recognise their efforts with an accreditation certificate.

I was pleased to present an evaluation of the programs and projects that were rolled out. This demonstrates that the dairy industry on the far South Coast, in particular, has been doing an almighty job to recognise not only the great benefits to be gained by the environment as a result of investing in such programs but also the significant economic benefits. This is happening at the same time that the State Government is pushing increases in bulk water prices through the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. Some farmers, particularly those on short coastal river systems and those in the Bega Valley who are dependent on Brogo Dam, will experience a significant increase in on-farm costs if the Government is successful. This program seeks to harness on-farm effluent in a more environmentally sensitive way. That is worth recognising because it makes not only good environmental sense but also good economic sense.

The improvements made on farm affect the wider environment, be they adjoining wetlands or the marine environment. It irks me that all we hear from the Greens in the region and in Sydney is complaint after complaint about what needs to happen in the world. They are forever attacking farmers. This is an example of farmers being willing to invest in the environment at a ratio of three to four to one. If the Government puts up \$1, the farmers are willing to put up \$4 to improve the farm environment. That is worth celebrating. Bega Cheese deserves to be commended for the work it has done and I am pleased to have informed the House of its efforts today.

COMMUNITY GREENING

Mr GRANT McBRIDE (The Entrance) [11.47 a.m.]: Community greening is a Housing New South Wales and Botanic Gardens Trust partnership program to provide support and expertise to Housing New South Wales tenants wanting to participate in developing communal gardening. Prior to last Saturday, there were three similar projects in New South Wales conducted in association with the Government and now there are four with the establishment of this latest project—the first on the coast and in my electorate.

In Killarney-Berkley-Tumbi [KBT], one of the Department of Housing districts on the Central Coast, the community greening program will help to promote social cohesion and environmental stability through communal gardening in the Debra Anne Community Centre. Community greening is a joint initiative of the Royal Botanic Trust and the Department of Housing in conjunction with a range of stakeholders to develop the propagation of plants on unused public land. The program is run by the Botanic Gardens Trust education horticulturists, who provide advice, technical expertise, education and training and, together with sponsors and local businesses, supply plant and landscaping materials with the entire community to ensure motivation, involvement and commitment through the department's "We're working together to create a better future" program.

Community greening brings people together from many diverse backgrounds to share a common purpose. Through the process, participants are trained in, and encouraged to use, sustainable practices, including the reduction of waste, the re-use of resources, recycling techniques and the sharing of knowledge and produce. All this and more was introduced into the KBT area in the Debra Anne Drive community area on Saturday October 10 with the official opening of this very worthwhile venture. The dedication of the Community Greening area commenced at 10.00 a.m. with Debbie Coleman from the department of Housing introducing Central Coast Indigenous elder Jenny Smith, who welcomed everyone to the land of the Darkinjung, followed by Stephen Paul from the Royal Botanic Gardens. Stephen, who is the Community Greening coordinator, conducted a series of education classes for local volunteers a few weeks before the opening day to get the program up and running and to make sure that from the beginning the local program was one of the best prepared.

The work at the communal garden will be carried out by the hardworking and very popular Jo-Anne Allen, the community Development worker from the Building Stronger Communities KBT program, who organised the

volunteers and who not only went through all the ins and outs of the program but also put in time and effort to help construct the community nursery and the fabulous hothouse structures. The structures are unique. They are clever, low cost, low tech, simple and efficient. It is a structure that I have never seen before. Star pickets are lined up, 50-millimetre diameter agricultural plastic tubes are used to create the overhead arcs, the shell is connected using treated pine decking, and it is then covered with shade cloth. The whole thing can be built in about two hours. It is amazing. I understand that it has been done in the Northern Territory, where they always find smart ways to do things to avoid staying in the sun too long.

I extend many thanks to the hardworking volunteers: Dr Andrew Kerr, Marilyn Kerr, Margaret Crowley, Peter Lowe, Val Herbert, Leonie Wright, Sheree Dawson, Daniel Dawson and Katarzyna Sierota. Stephen went on to say that the Botanic Garden Trust would be carrying out a number of horticultural programs, especially for people from the KBT area, to help with various projects, including setting up native gardens, organising floral displays, commencing produce gardens with fruit trees, vegetables and herbs.

The area director from the Department of Housing, Donna Hinchcliff, said she was delighted that the Central Coast and in particular The Entrance electorate was selected as one of the first New South Wales regional districts where the Central Coast Department of Housing would be committed to making the program one of the most successful in the State. Another side of the program is the Youth Community Greening Program whose mission is to help young people find their identity in this uncertain and changing world. Young people are readily influenced by their surroundings, in both the built and natural environments, and their personal development is shaped by their experiences. Many young people are growing up today with few opportunities to connect with nature.

The Community Greening Program is an excellent and effective example of the many programs being established right across the State as part of the Building Stronger Communities policy of the New South Wales Government. The policies are working because of the dedication and hard work of the community workers in our community who are committed to making a difference. I congratulate and thank them personally for their ongoing efforts to ensure the effectiveness of the Building Stronger Communities Program in Killarney-Berkley-Tumbi on the Central Coast and right across our State.

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY RURAL ACHIEVER AWARD

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) [11.52 a.m.]: Every member of the House knows that our younger people are our future. I encourage ambitious and enthusiastic young achievers who represent all aspects of their local community life right throughout the State to apply for the 2010 Royal Agricultural Society Rural Achiever Award. The award is a statewide leadership program that is conducted by the Royal Agricultural Society to recognise future leaders who are working hard to make a significant contribution to their local community in rural areas of New South Wales and to Australia.

The award scheme is a unique opportunity for personal growth as well as for development of professional skills, knowledge and networks that are needed to enable people to be effective in regional, State, national and international arenas. The award is a chance for young people to challenge themselves. Many past recipients of the Rural Achiever Award now are employed in key agribusiness careers and work on successful properties, thanks to the networking opportunities, media attention and prizes they received in recognition of their success. Each of the eight Rural Achievers for 2010 will receive an all-expenses-paid, behind-the-scenes experience at the Sydney Royal Agricultural Society's Easter Show, invitations to official functions including a cocktail reception at Government House, an akubra hat, \$1,000 in prize money, and much more.

Currently the North Coast National Show is being held in Lismore. Sadly, I was not able to be present at the official opening last night or to attend today, and I am struggling to be able to attend tomorrow. Last night Louise Hayward was crowned the 2009 North Coast National Show Girl. Royal Agricultural Society shows are held throughout country areas and provide opportunities for young people to be involved in agricultural enterprise. They also provide districts with an opportunity to display local produce and are a focal point for interaction among the people of the region and for visitors. The Lismore show is part of the North Coast show circuit that includes the Nimbin, Kyogle and Casino shows. The Alstonville and Murwillumbah shows will be held next weekend.

Exhibitors at North Coast agricultural shows will display products that have been produced despite extreme climatic conditions. Earlier this year my electorate experienced widespread floods and currently is experiencing very dry weather conditions—probably the driest I have seen throughout the whole of the North

Coast area for some time. Notwithstanding that, for the first time the Woodenbong Central School on the far North Coast submitted a display to the Sydney Royal Agricultural Society show. That has prompted the society to include a schools District Exhibit competition for 2010. Everyone who attends Royal Agricultural Society shows is greatly impressed by the quality of exhibits that represent produce from various parts of the State. Woodenbong Central School entered a school's exhibit, and hopefully a formal schools competition will begin next year.

I congratulate the Woodenbong Central School's agricultural teacher, Stewart Grimmett, and the students who contributed the artwork for the exhibit. The school actively participates in agricultural shows and has entered exhibits at the Brisbane Royal Agricultural Society show. Stewart Grimmett and parents of students at the school play their part and work very hard to ensure that the Woodenbong Central School, which is at the far northern part of the State, continues to enter exhibits in agricultural society shows in Sydney and Brisbane.

I hope that the Royal Agricultural Society is able to arrange for a schools competition to become a permanent feature of future agricultural shows. As I have so often stated, the future not only of agriculture but also of politics and everything else in New South Wales belongs to our young people. Young people are our future: they are the leaders of tomorrow, and that behoves us to give young people every encouragement to achieve well. I encourage any young person in rural and regional districts of New South Wales who may wish to participate in the Rural Achiever Award to contact their local Royal Agricultural Society, which will provide them with the appropriate information.

CENTRAL COAST CENTRES FOR INDUSTRY TRAINING EXCELLENCE

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.57 a.m.]: The Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth, visited the Central Coast on 30 September to announce the establishment of six Centres for Industry Training Excellence (CITE) on the Central Coast to bolster quality vocational education in the region. The Member for The Entrance, Grant McBride, and I attended the launch of the initiative at the Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College, The Entrance. Teachers, principals, students and parents also attended the launch. In particular, I commend David Beattie for all of his hard work in relation to this initiative, the staff of the Central Coast office of the Department of Education and Training led by Maree Roberts, all secondary principals, and everyone else involved in putting this great initiative together.

The centres will bring together initiatives related to the Central Coast Australian Technical College, which is operated by the Department of Education and Training's program for delivering vocational education; the Trade Training Centres Program, which is a Federal Government initiative to improve facilities for delivering trade training; and Trade Schools, which is a State Government initiative to improve facilities for delivering vocational education and trade training. This is great news for the Central Coast's young people as it means that they can continue at a trade training school and get their Higher School Certificate [HSC], continue to work towards a Certificate III in their chosen trade, develop a wide range of skills and abilities to improve their employability, and develop the attitude and attendance that business tells us they want in young employees. This links closely with the Government's strategy of Learning and Earning, and provides extra options for those students who may have not stayed at school past year 10.

The model will establish Centres for Industry Training Excellence in schools across the Central Coast. Students will be able to enrol in a program that specialises in their chosen trade or that gives them a range of experiences to assist them in making decisions about career pathways. The centres will deliver formal education and training over three or four days a week, leaving one or two days a week for involvement in structured workplace learning. I was very impressed when I was informed that courses will be able to be adjusted to meet the needs of learners by particularly focusing on literacy, numeracy and communication. Trade training initially will be delivered by qualified teachers, with further involvement by TAFE staff. I will list the courses available at high schools in my electorate of Wyong. Wadalba Community School will offer construction, hospitality, aquaculture. Wyong High School will offer aged care, electro-technology, automotive skills, primary industries and information technology. Gorokan High School will offer metalwork and engineering, construction, hospitality, information technology, and the Northlakes High School will offer commercial cookery, metal and engineering, construction and dance.

I will also list other Central Coast high schools that will offer courses. Brisbane Water Secondary College will offer health services, commercial cookery, construction, entertainment, sport coaching and information technology. Erina High School will offer commercial cookery and construction. Henry Kendall High School will offer horticulture, construction and hospitality. Kariong High School will offer biodiversity.

Kincumber High School will offer commercial cookery, metalwork and engineering, construction and furniture making. Lake Munmorah High School will offer commercial cookery, electro-technology and construction. Lisarow High School will offer construction and hospitality. Narara Valley High School will offer entertainment and construction. Terrigal High School will offer entertainment and information technology, and the Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College will offer construction, furniture making, commercial cookery, metalwork and engineering and sport coaching.

Gosford and Wyong TAFEs will also be involved in this program. I have been very lucky to look at the trade school that Wyong TAFE has set up. One of the courses it offers is aged care nursing. It has set up a full working model of an aged care facility, including beds and bathrooms, and so on, so that young people can be trained. I have met some wonderful people involved in that course. The good news about this is that young people can complete their apprenticeship or traineeship with an employer, having already finished the first year of the course. They will also have earned their Higher School Certificate and have gained valuable, practical on-the-job skills that employers look for. This is a great opportunity for young people in the Wyong electorate and right across the Central Coast. I have met the first graduates from the Wyong trade school. Most of them have won awards. They are fine young people and I know they will go a long way in their future careers.

RELAY FOR LIFE AND NATIONAL BANDANNA DAY

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [12.02 p.m.]: Today I speak about cancer and the impact of cancer in the electorate of Hornsby, other electorates and across Australia. Last weekend we held the Relay for Life, a very successful event over 24 hours. I am an original charter member of the Relay for Life committee in the Hornsby-Ku-ring-gai area. Last weekend was by no means any less successful than any other year. In fact, the fundraising is going to prove to be more successful. Before I talk about the committee and other matters relating to the relay, I pay tribute to the Stanton family. Andrew Stanton died last weekend of leukaemia. His funeral is being held today at St Bernard's in Berowra. I pay tribute to him and send my condolences to his family. He has had a long battle with a tragic ending. My thoughts and the thoughts of the community are with the Stanton family.

The Relay for Life is a Cancer Council initiative. The Relay for Life is held in many areas across New South Wales and, indeed, the world. It is a most successful fundraising exercise and a lot of fun. In the Hornsby area it is held at Rofo Park in Hornsby Heights, which I would like to be known as the home of the Relay for Life. This is definitely a community event. It is enjoyable while dealing with a serious subject. I pay tribute to the committee. As I have stated in the House, the committee has worked tirelessly since March this year, and its members are to be commended for the effort and hard work that has gone into the production of such a wonderful event last weekend.

The relay commenced at 9.30 a.m. on 17 October, and all proceedings were completed by about 9.30 the next day. The event runs over 24 hours because cancer never sleeps. Rosemary Moore, the relationship coordinator for Northern Sydney for the Cancer Council, coordinated the hardworking committee. The co-chairs this year were Ben Power and Ray Brookes, who did a magnificent job in raising enthusiasm and getting together the ideas for this year's relay. Every year the relay is slightly different. Obviously it has different teams. There were about 60 teams this year, and \$95,000 was counted on the day. I congratulate them on raising that amount of money. Other committee members were Adam Streichler, Amy Read, Andrew Bronier, Andy Power, Ashlee Hunt, Belinda Clark, Karen Story, Laura Hough, Les Clayton, Michael de Beer, Michael Rosevear, Natasha Gatien, Rebecca Doig, Serene Place, Sheree Hanley and Tracey Donaldson. Other people came in and out of the committee and helped with various aspects, but these were the main people involved in the hard work, and I pay tribute to them.

I pay tribute in particular to Belinda Clark, the secretary, because her role was a difficult one. It is important in the operations of a committee to have an efficient secretary, and Belinda was a very efficient secretary. The money that is raised from the Relay for Life goes towards cancer services and research. A lot of the money raised in a local area goes back to the local area. Hornsby hospital provides a very strong cancer service, including cancer treatments—chemotherapy, clinical trials, counselling, nutrition and dietetics, occupational therapy, pathology, physiotherapy, psychiatry, speech pathology, specialist teams such as breast specialist teams, gynaecological, stoma care, and surgery.

Friday 30 October is National Bandanna Day. I encourage everyone to wear a bandanna on that day to show young people living with cancer that they are not alone. Bandanna Day is an important event in the cancer

calendar. Katrina, a young girl who used to work at one of the hairdressing salons in Hornsby, was diagnosed with bone cancer and died a couple of years ago. When she was alive she wore the bandanna to exemplify exactly what National Bandanna Day was about.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.07 p.m.]: I do not know the Stanton family but I join with the member for Hornsby in expressing my deepest sympathy to them for the loss of Andrew Stanton. I say that from the point of view of having lost my mother, aged 64, to leukaemia and my father to cancer when he was 60. I have a fair idea of what that family must have gone through. I also join with the member for Hornsby in her support for the Relay for Life. Sutherland has a Relay for Life every year at the Sylvania Waters athletics track, which raises money for cancer research. Everything we can do should be done to beat the scourge of cancer in all its forms, including leukaemia. I commend the member for Hornsby. I commend her community and my community for raising money through the Relay for Life to try to beat the terrible scourge of cancer.

CANCER FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN: 24 HOUR FIGHT AGAINST CANCER MACARTHUR

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.08 p.m.]: Last weekend, with Graham West, member for Campbelltown and Minister for Juvenile Justice, I was present for the opening of the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur. Sixty-seven teams, about 1,200 people, walked around the athletic track at Campbelltown sports ground. Amy Carr, 18, Charlotte Carr, 17, and Alison Carr, 9, whose mother, Heather, whom I spoke about last year, and father, David, both died of cancer, opened the day. I have proudly spoken of these amazing young women, and repeat my words that Heather and David have left our area a legacy of the finest daughters that anyone could ever meet. I also pay tribute to their aunt and uncle who have taken over care of these fine young people, and to their school, the wonderful William Carey Christian School, for its continued support.

About \$100,000 was raised for the Campbelltown Hospital's Macarthur Cancer Therapy Centre, the paediatric ambulatory care unit, and Camden Hospital's excellent palliative care unit. Prior to this year, the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur had raised nearly \$660,000 for cancer services in Macarthur, and to date has raised more than \$800,000 with the objective of raising \$1 million in the five years since the inception of the 24 Hour Fight against Cancer Macarthur in 2005. Everyone involved is a volunteer, so all the money raised goes directly to front-line services.

Speaking from personal experience, the help that the Campbelltown paediatric ambulatory care service [PACS] has received from the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur has been vital in providing outreach services for children with cancer. Its support has allowed PACS staff to be trained in administration of chemotherapy at Sydney Children's Hospital at Randwick. This is an ongoing training process, as treatments constantly change, and we need to meet the occupational health and safety requirements for the administration of chemotherapy. This training allows one of our staff from PACS to go to the Sydney Children's Hospital on a regular basis for training. This is expensive, and would not happen without the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur.

There is now also a dedicated cancer treatment isolation room in Campbelltown PACS. Much of the equipment has been paid for by the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur, including an excellent Australian mural. Portable suction, oxygen and infusion pumps are on order to help those children who will need palliative care. In the adult part of the hospital the complementary therapy room has just been opened. This allows for people with cancer to have complementary therapy such as meditation and massages. Again, the practitioners are volunteers. There will also be a gardener for the Camden palliative care unit to ensure that the garden is a place of beauty. I pay tribute to Campbelltown councillor and event chairman Fred Borg. As well as being a community leader, Fred is a true visionary, and none of this would happen without his get up and go. As he said, he "loves the area".

I also saw Kathy Wong, who is on the committee and who has been a member of the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer since it was formed. She works at Beverley Park School and joins in the 24-hour event each year with her work colleagues. Kathy's 13-year-old daughter, Rachel Hayden, one of the bravest people I have ever met, sadly passed away from cancer in 1997. During Rachel's treatment her family had long stays in hospital, sometimes at Campbelltown, only to have to go to Westmead Children's Hospital for ongoing care. The family also had to travel to Westmead for chemotherapy on a regular basis. Young people like Rachel can now often be treated closer to home thanks to the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur.

During Rachel's illness Kathy decided to administer chemotherapy to Rachel at home. We would now be able to help mothers such as Kathy much more than we could when Rachel was sick in 1997. Rachel needed to be with her family during this difficult time as her cancer was incurable. Kathy Wong looks forward to the day when all children with cancer in the Macarthur area can be treated safely closer to their home, and we are moving in that direction. Many hospital staff, such as Marilyn Bradley and Suzie Mazzotta, walked on the day. McDonald's had the largest team, and Peter Meadows from McDonald's was prominent on the day. I give special mention of 17-year-old Lauren Wallington, whose head shave raised more than \$2,000, and those who walked from Sydney the night before to start the day. As Jeff McGill from the *Macarthur Advertiser* said in his editorial:

There's nothing good about cancer ... but the way we respond to it can bring out our best.

I thank the *Macarthur Advertiser*, radio station C91.3, Clintons Toyota, Campbelltown Mall, McDonald's Macarthur, Bob Jane T-mart, Aquafit, ANZ, the Sleeping Giant, Campbelltown Council, Panjo and the Rotary clubs for their support. For those who wish to do more, the website www.24hrfight.org.au has all you need to join the fight. I commend everyone involved in the 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer Macarthur to the House.

AUTISM SPECTRUM AUSTRALIA

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [12.13 p.m.]: We all know that many challenges face parents and carers of children born with autistic disorders. Growing numbers of children are being diagnosed with the disorder. It is recognised that those with an autistic disorder have special educational needs. With no obvious physical disability, these children are usually highly intelligent but do not have the ability to integrate socially or at school without special therapy, training and education. They can become targets for bullying by those who do not understand them and they are often outcast at school. In New South Wales Autism Spectrum Australia [Aspect] has for many years been assisting in the education of children with autistic spectrum disorder [ASD]. Aspect has provided support from specially trained teachers and aides, with classroom and play areas very carefully designed or modified to cater for the sensory needs of all the children as much as possible.

In my electorate of Wagga Wagga, Aspect, formerly the Autism Association of New South Wales, provides a satellite class based in the grounds of the Sacred Heart Catholic school for 10 students from nine local families who depend on that education and support for their special children. Aspect schools and classes in New South Wales have been leaders in educating ASD children for many years, and are independent of the Department of Education and Training system and the Catholic system. However, they receive very limited funding from both State and Federal governments. According to Aspect, demand for its services has increased. It is regrettable that there has also been a decrease in funding and, therefore, an increase in school fees. For some of these parents, the increase is prohibitive.

One mother, who is a single parent and full-time carer not only for her young son with ASD but also for her elderly mother, depends on government benefits to manage. Previously, the fee for her son with ASD to attend kindergarten was \$2,700 annually; the fee has now risen to \$3,812 annually. For some parents it will mean moving their children from these special classes. Changing children with ASD midstream is unwise and can seriously disturb them. It tends to undo all the progress achieved. There is an urgent need for increased financial assistance so that organisations such as Aspect and the parents themselves can provide the best possible chance for these often highly talented children to flourish and find a place at school and in society. I have met many families that have children with autism. Indeed, I helped form the steering group that brought autism classes to Wagga Wagga, and I am proud of that achievement. But more needs to be done.

One problem relates to families with two children with autism. If a child does not fit the box the department places that child in mainstream classes but without support. That is what will happen if children are forced to change classes rather than receive a subsidy or assistance. Aspect classes are important to the region. They are a pilot scheme; they never existed before. There is an enormous amount of support for children from 0 to five years, but for children from five years to high-school age the Aspect classes are the only avenue of assistance to prepare them for integration into mainstream school, and then they need support. There is little support for children with autism during the high school years. I have spoken to the Minister for Disability Services about this matter. I ask him to intervene and ensure that Aspect can expand its classes so that children with autism who are entering high school will have the benefit of the Aspect environment. The Minister must also find a way to provide parents with some kind of subsidy.

One parent whom I have known for a very long time—she is a tireless advocate for kids with autism—has two children at this special school. The increased fees mean that the children will be split up. I have seen the

progress that these kids are making—wonderful progress of which the school and the parents can be proud. One must go to a special school; the other will have to go to mainstream classes with no support, because funding for these children is under stress. I ask the Minister to intervene, to take special note of the correspondence that I will send him, and to ensure that these classes are enhanced, that the kids who are entering high school receive the benefits of Aspect and that the families with kids aged five years and upwards who are entering the public school system or the private school system can access Aspect classes to enable them to transition smoothly into mainstream classes.

BATHURST ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr GERARD MARTIN (Bathurst) [12.18 p.m.]: Today I speak about small schools in my electorate. The Bathurst electorate has approximately 40 public schools. They range in size from larger high schools that have more than 1,000 pupils, such as Lithgow High School, to Kelso High School, Bathurst High School and Denison College, with campuses of 800 or 900 students each, to high schools in smaller towns such as Oberon, Blayney and Kandos, which have 500 or 600 students. Then there is a range of one-teacher schools in villages such as Burruga, Lagoon, Newbridge, Glen Alice and Trunkey Creek. One challenge facing these smaller schools is declining student numbers. I am pleased that the Department of Education and Training, through the New South Wales Labor Government, has a policy of not arbitrarily closing schools because student numbers fall below a magical number, whether it be 10 or 12.

Some schools in my electorate have had student enrolments as low as two, and there are issues around educational and social interaction with numbers like that. Tomorrow I am visiting Glen Alice Public School in the magnificent Capertee Valley, which is celebrating its 120th anniversary. About four or five years ago Glen Alice school had only two students. However, with a bit of hard work by the Department of Education and Training officials and the local parents and citizens, and with people moving into the valley, the enrolment number is now in the high teens. That demonstrates that it is worth keeping these schools open for a bit longer if there is a prospect of enrolment numbers picking up, because these schools are important to their communities.

There is no question that in places such as Glen Alice the school is the centre point not only for education but also for a range of social, cultural and recreational activities. Glen Alice is located on the edge of a wilderness and national park area. The school specialises in environmental programs, and a range of organisations, including universities, use the school as a base from which to go out and conduct various studies relating to native flora and fauna.

Lagoon Public School has been suspended, not closed, as it has only one student enrolled for next year. It is a fairly expensive option to run a school with one student and one teacher, and the student would have no chance of integration with other pupils to develop social skills. Lagoon Public School, which is only 20 minutes out of Bathurst, will be suspended until numbers pick up in the future. If the Turnbull clan of trotting fame start to breed in the next generation the school will have a good future because that family has been significant in the area. Last year Lagoon Public School also celebrated its 125th anniversary.

Newbridge Public School, between Bathurst and Blayney, has experienced a dramatic drop in numbers in recent years, and there are a number of reasons for this decline in enrolments. Kirkconnell Public School, a very small school between Lithgow and Bathurst, closed a couple of years ago and is only four or five kilometres from Meadow Flat Public School. Most of the parents in that area are working in Bathurst and choose to drive to Bathurst and take their children to larger schools. This involves the argument of whether one receives a better education in a bigger or smaller school, and as long as we have education that argument will rage.

That is what is happening in some of these smaller areas, such as Burruga, which is 70 kilometres south of Bathurst—basically on the road to nowhere. It is off the main road. To get to Burruga one deviates on the road back to Oberon. It is a remote area. The kindergarten children from Burruga travel from seven o'clock in the morning and arrive home after five o'clock in the afternoon. That is a pretty long day for little kids. A couple of years ago the school was suspended because only two or three students were enrolled. However, the Mayor of Oberon, Keith Sullivan, worked very hard with Department of Education and Training officials. As a result, two years later the school has reopened and is playing an important role in that remote community. The school's recreational facilities are vital. Indeed, the parents and citizens association is the social hub of the community and organises a range of activities.

I will continue to stress to the Minister for Education and Training and officials not to slip into an arbitrary policy of closing a school if enrolment numbers fall to 10 students. One must take into account

changing circumstances. Since the drought things have been picking up and families are moving back to some of these communities. The mere fact that one family moves back into a community can make a school viable. That thought will be with me tomorrow when I celebrate Glen Alice Public School's 125th anniversary with the school community. They are a great example that if one is patient things will come good again.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.23 p.m.]: I thank the member for Bathurst for drawing the attention of the House to issues that affect small schools, particularly throughout regional and remote areas of the State. There are 40 public schools in his electorate, with enrolments ranging from 1,000 down to one. As a former high school teacher I have nothing but admiration for teachers who work in schools on their own. They achieve marvellous results for their students. They are committed and dedicated, and that shows in the results.

I congratulate the Glen Alice Public School on its 125th anniversary. I congratulate also the parents and citizens association and the community, which have supported the school. It is interesting that the member talked about fluctuating populations. Even in my electorate, where there are large high schools with 1,200 pupils, the numbers at one school, Como Public School, declined fairly rapidly a few years ago. That school now is a reasonable size because the community, the local member and the education department all supported it.

As the member for Bathurst rightly stated, situations do change and it is important that education authorities take into account the fluctuating fortunes of a community and the fact that populations come and go, perhaps with the discovery of mineral deposits or the establishment of a new industry. Hundreds of these little schools throughout the State are part of our heritage. They are schools that supported our pioneers in the previous centuries. It is important we preserve that heritage and understand the commitment these schools have to their community. Schools are a focal point of the community; indeed, these schools can be described as family schools. As the member for Bathurst said, it is important that we do not make arbitrary decisions but allow for changing circumstances that may benefit these schools.

GUNNEDAH COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Mr PETER DRAPER (Tamworth) [12.25 p.m.], by leave: I am particularly proud to represent the Gunnedah community in the New South Wales Parliament. The Gunnedah community is proactive across a range of issues, and the people continually improve their district by getting in, having a go and delivering positive outcomes. Gunnedah has done it tough during periods over the past 10 years. The closure of the local abattoirs and a pet food company explosion, plus the closure of a coalmine, all had a devastating impact upon opportunities in the town. Many young people were forced to leave Gunnedah to search for employment but community spirit has helped to ride out the tough times and today we see a vibrant town, which vigorously promotes its terrific lifestyle, many opportunities and, most importantly, the community's support of young people. Today I alert the Parliament to the Gunnedah Community Scholarship Fund, which provides an opportunity for Gunnedah youth to succeed in their tertiary education. Benjamin Disraeli once said:

Upon the education of the people of this country, the fate of the country depends.

Gunnedah Mayor Adam Marshall, when commenting on the Gunnedah Community Scholarship Fund, said:

This rural community, by helping its own, hopefully engenders a strong feeling of hope, encouragement and a desire to achieve. Further, the investment in our children today will pay dividends in the future as they perhaps return one day to the bush that has so proudly supported their continuing education.

In 2003 the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of New England, Professor Ingrid Moses, stated that the local region had one of the lowest post-secondary education retention rates in the country and, as a result, the scholarship fund was established in Gunnedah as a constructive response to this alarming fact. The Gunnedah community collectively wants to promote higher educational endeavours, in the firm belief that in the longer term the rural sector, the Gunnedah community and the nation will all benefit. Many sectors of the community have provided donations ranging upwards from \$100 to ensure a successful first seven years. To date over \$130,000 has been disbursed in scholarships since the fund commenced.

Major sponsors have included the Gunnedah Saleyards, Komatsu, the RSL Gunnedah sub-branch, Gunnedah Services and Bowling Club, Gunnedah Rotary clubs, the Congregation of Sisters of Mercy in Gunnedah, Telstra Countrywide, TESA Group Pty Ltd, Namoi Flour Mills Pty Ltd, Gunnedah Golf Club and Gunnedah Shire Council. In addition, another 66 businesses and individuals have contributed towards this

terrific program. Sadly, the coal companies, which are reaping huge profits from their operations around the Gunnedah district, are conspicuously missing from the list of sponsors to this Fund. As State member of Parliament for the region I urge these massive businesses to contribute to this worthwhile project, as a few thousand dollars to them would be a mere drop in the ocean yet it would provide a wonderful investment in the young people of the district.

To date the Gunnedah Community Scholarship Fund has assisted students to study a range of disciplines including accounting, agriculture, allied health, architecture, arts-theatre, education, information technology, legal, medical, nursing and social work. Students from rural and regional communities who have to leave home to attend their courses often face financial hardship trying to gain an education. As such, the scholarships have been greatly appreciated by recipients. I would like to quote what a few have had to say. One recipient said:

It has meant that I was able to focus on my studies rather than worry about basic expenses, it certainly was very helpful and the amount was relevant to those expenses.

A second recipient commented:

I have used the scholarship fund towards the costs associated with my accommodation, not only on campus but those associated with attending clinical practical sessions at various hospitals, which is an integral component of the course requirements, this Scholarship was great to receive and I am very appreciative of the local committee for awarding it to me.

Another stated:

I have used the funds to purchase the required textbooks for the degree and pay some university costs. Thank you to the Committee, local community and the sponsors for this scholarship.

A fourth recipient said:

The Scholarship has assisted my continuing education endeavours at University, in that it has helped to lessen the burden of costs associated with this kind of study. Without the scholarship I received, I would have experienced higher worries about the cost of University-level study.

The Gunnedah Community Scholarship Fund has proven to be very successful, and even though most young people leave town to pursue further education the local community members are keen to encourage their youth to higher achievements. Thankfully, many are coming back, and bringing their young families, to the long-term benefit of the Gunnedah community. I congratulate the individuals and organisations with the vision to establish this fund, and also the many others who have financially supported it. I encourage more individuals and businesses, in particular the coal industry, to come on board with support, because local youth are our future. The proactive way in which the Gunnedah community has invested in its young people deserves the highest commendation.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.30 p.m.]: I am grateful to the member for Tamworth for bringing to the attention of the House the Gunnedah Community Scholarship Fund, which is a wonderful community initiative. I congratulate all those involved in it. As the member rightly said, youth are our future, and it is fabulous to give them a chance to achieve their goals and aspirations through the community coming together in this way. I ask the member to pass on the appreciation of this House to everybody involved in the Gunnedah Community Scholarship Fund. It is also important for me to reinforce what the member said: those who gain from work in the community should also give back to the community. I support the member for Tamworth in encouraging coalmining companies to get involved with the Gunnedah Community Scholarship Fund. They and the community will be the beneficiaries in the long run.

MAITLAND ELECTORATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mr FRANK TERENCE (Maitland) [12.31 p.m.], by leave: On 12 October 2009 I attended the Maitland train station, together with officers from CityRail, Maitland Community Care Centre, Hunter Valley buses and the station master at the launch of the new train timetable that finally came to fruition after many months of consultation. It was a historic event in Maitland. Many people have been used to the same travel times in morning and afternoon peak. After consultation the services were streamlined and made much better. One station stood to lose most of its peak services; however, after further consultation the services were restored and now all services run on time, which is a great success.

I also launched the Public Transport Training Project, which is about demystifying public transport in Maitland. The project involves a partnership between the Government, Maitland City Council and Maitland

Community Care Services. It shows how things can happen when government and non-government sectors work together. In this case the aim was to address transport disadvantage for a range of people or groups in the community. The project will provide travel training support and education for transport disadvantaged people in the Maitland local government area for 12 months staffed by a worker one to two days a week, develop specific Maitland-relevant resources to promote travel training project and the benefits of public transport, and develop partnerships with council and transport operators in the Maitland area to improve transport information and services.

Ms Christine Finish from Maitland Community Care Services has been appointed as project officer. Her job will be to speak to a range of individuals and organisations about their transport experiences and their concerns when using public transport in Maitland. She will also promote public transport initiatives, including the Transport info line and Hunter Valley Buses On-Call Bus. As a State member I did not know that if a person is out and wants to go home they can call for a bus to come and pick them up and take them to their destination via certain established routes in the Maitland area. She will also promote fares information, including the pensioner excursion ticket which provides unlimited travel on buses, trains and ferries all day for \$2.50 within a broad area of New South Wales. The target will be the well aged, people with disabilities, geographically isolated people and culturally or linguistically diverse communities and Aboriginal communities.

Things that will be looked at in more detail and education will be given on ticketing systems, safe travel, accessible transport options, boarding and egress, transport interchanges, how to read timetables, finding bus stops and using existing on call after-hours bus services. A directory has been published in which people can look up their suburb in the Maitland area and see a map with all the bus stops, train stations and pick-up points. That is a great initiative for people, especially those from disadvantaged, culturally disadvantaged and Aboriginal communities who are fearful of or apprehensive of using public transport but who may well be induced to take up public transport if they cannot get out and about in a motor vehicle.

It is fantastic initiative that will run for 12 months. The sum of \$20,000 has been allocated for the work of Ms Finch. The Department of Transport and Infrastructure is involved in this excellent initiative that demystifies what many people unnecessarily think is a complex issue. I thank Steven Warham from the Department of Transport and Infrastructure, and the staff at CityRail, and I congratulate and wish good luck to Christine over the next 12 months. I look forward to the results of this education program to see if we can work through issues that are raised to make public transport more accessible for nearly everyone in our community.

INDIGENOUS POLICE RECRUITMENT OUT WEST DELIVERY PROGRAM

Mrs DAWN FARDELL (Dubbo) [12.36 p.m.], by leave: It was a great privilege to attend the recent Dubbo graduation of students from Indigenous Police Recruitment Out West Delivery Program [IPROWD]. IPROWD is not just another course; it is designed to provide indigenous people from western New South Wales with the necessary academic and physical requirements to join the Police Force. We need no further evidence of IPROWD's life-changing capacity than the words of graduate Hayden Wood—a proud Kamilaroi man from Goodooga. Speaking at the graduation, Hayden said:

I stand before you today a changed man ... My goal is to become a NSW Police Officer, to serve and help the community, to better myself and future generations."

That is a noble aspiration. IPROWD is a certificate III course, which runs full-time over 18 weeks, and was launched in Dubbo in 2008. This year the course was run in both Dubbo and Tamworth. I am pleased that the member for Tamworth is in the Chamber. The course has a 100 per cent completion rate. Fifty-seven people inquired about joining the Dubbo course this year. Of the twelve selected, nine have applied for the January intake at the Goulburn Police Academy. The other three are planning to go into policing within the near future. A further two students from last year's Dubbo class have also applied for the next academy intake. A student from Tamworth has also applied. What does all this mean for the graduates? Zada Johnstone from Menindee—where 47 per cent of the population is indigenous—told the gathering, at which 200 people from Menindee attended:

I want to show everyone that it doesn't matter what or who you are, and it doesn't matter what colour, what age, what background and what community you come from, you can do anything that you want to do, you just have to want to do it.

IPROWD is the product of a visionary partnership between the Western Region New South Wales Police Team, Western Institute of TAFE Foundation Studies and Charles Sturt University [CSU]. All three institutions have done an exceptional job and I make special mention of the dedicated and inspirational work of Inspector Troy

Grant from Western Region Police; Anne Shortis, Cathy Jones and Kerry Perrin from TAFE; and CSU lecturer and Aboriginal mentor Paul Comino. Graduate Alydia Strike summed up their enormous contribution best when she said:

Never have I met such passionate and strong-willed teachers. They were there for us when we were struggling, having a bad day, disciplined us when we needed it, laughed with us, always had nice things to say and most importantly they never gave up on us.

The origins of this extraordinary course can be traced back to 2003-04 when a NSW Ombudsman audit of 14 police local area commands recommended specific strategies to attract Aboriginal recruits. IPROWD is making good on that goal. The successful applicants for the Dubbo class of 2009 hail from Menindee, Brewarrina, Condobolin, Goodooga, Narromine, Lightning Ridge, Bourke, Tamworth and Dubbo. The plan is to roll out IPROWD throughout New South Wales—across six centres over a two-year period—and I urge the State Government to lend continuous support. During the graduation each student gave a short address. I wish I had the time to read out their wise-beyond-their-years comments. Suffice it to say that every graduate expressed optimism about the road ahead. There was a deep sense of gratitude to those who had guided them thus far and an enormous and deserved sense of achievement.

Anthony Toomey—who some members may recall from the television program *The Recruits*—is a young man of exceptional promise. Despite some setbacks, Anthony enrolled in IPROWD and took his place among the recent graduates. We have high hopes for Anthony, as we do for all the graduates. A 2008 graduate, Jason Nolan, who left school in year 9 and is now an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer, credits IPROWD with turning his life around. I have known of Jason's journey, and his family and I are extremely proud of his achievements. Mark Prince carries on a proud family legacy that began with his great-great-grandfather, a sergeant blacktracker who was the first Aboriginal to be awarded an Imperial Service Medal. Sara McBride is a Kamilaroi woman whose goal is to become a police detective. Stacy Gordon is a 19-year-old Ngemba woman, once shy and reserved, who wants eventually to inspire indigenous women to pursue a career in policing.

Tiahna Paulson left a full-time job in a Tamworth gym and a career in her chosen sport to follow her childhood dream of becoming a police officer. William Boney credits IPROWD with giving him self-belief and an appreciation for hard work. Mervyn "Joe" Coe of Condobolin, who left school at 15 to work for his family and who now runs his own security business, credits IPROWD with improving his literacy so that he might enter the police force. Mark Kilby worked as a mentor at Narromine Primary School and now wants to serve the community through policing. Last but not least, Michael Lowcock wants to become a police officer and undertake his duties with "truth and integrity". Michael finished his speech with a quote from his favourite song:

On the day they lay me down, I want everyone to gather round, and say he was a father, brother, neighbour and a friend, he was a good man.

IPROWD has shown us that these graduates are indeed good men and women. Our communities are immensely proud of them, and we look forward to following their careers as they go from strength to strength.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.41 p.m.]: I thank the member for Dubbo for bringing the IPROWD program to the attention of the House. As the member said, her community—and, I am sure, that of the member for Tamworth—can be immensely proud of the achievements of this program and those of the indigenous men and women who have completed it. As a former teacher I can say that any program that has a 100 per cent completion rate is simply extraordinary, in anyone's language. Clearly, helping indigenous men and women achieve their goals of entering the police force is extremely worthwhile and important.

As a community—whether it is in Dubbo, Tamworth, or any other electorate in the State—we can all benefit from the input of the indigenous men and women who have completed this program and have spoken of their experience in doing so. Their achievements can only add to the quality of our lives and the safety of communities right across the State—and indeed perhaps across the nation. I congratulate the Western Region police, TAFE, and Charles Sturt University on their commitment and dedication to what is a truly fabulous program.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 12.43 p.m. until
Tuesday 27 October 2009 at 1.00 p.m.**
