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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 28 February 2013

The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of a performance audit report of the Auditor-General entitled, "Managing drug exhibits and other high profile goods: NSW Police Force", dated February 2013, received out of session and authorised to be printed on 28 February 2013.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

INTERPRETATION AMENDMENT (INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS) BILL 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 20 June 2012.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [10.06 a.m.]: The Government does not support the Interpretation Amendment (International Human Rights Obligations) Bill 2012. The object of the bill introduced by the member for Liverpool is to amend the Interpretation Act 1987 to provide that in the interpretation of a provision of an Act, statutory rule or other instrument consideration may, in certain circumstances, be given to Australia's obligations under the international human rights treaties to which Australia is a party. Australia signed up to a number of treaties and conventions that promote and protect human dignity. These treaties and conventions are referred to in the bill and include: the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

There is no doubt that we as a nation should support and promote the rights and values set out in those treaties and conventions. However, that does not mean we should legislate specifically for consideration to be given to those rights when interpreting legislation passed by this Parliament. There are many good reasons for that. The primary reason for not going down that path is the issue of sovereignty. The separation of powers between the judiciary, the legislature and the executive should be supported and maintained. The bill introduced by the member for Liverpool would in some way entrench the power of the executive over the power of the legislature. The executive, and not parliaments, enters into treaties and conventions. Therefore it is essential for parliaments to maintain their ability to legislate freely in the interests of the State, free from any interference that may come from the executive.

In opposing this bill we are ensuring that the power of the legislature is maintained. If parliaments make laws those laws should be respected free from any decision or any views held by the executive at the time. We would not want a situation that could potentially occur where, for example, at the Federal level, the executive did not have control of the Senate and might be not able to pass legislation through the legislature due to its political make-up at the time. Accepting the proposal put forward by the member for Liverpool could potentially create a situation where the executive could enter into a treaty or convention to bypass the legislature and achieve its aims. The system in play in New South Wales is a better way of approaching the issue. I note

that the Interpretation Act in its current form already provides for general consideration to be given to international agreements referred to in legislation. Section 34, part 2 of the Act, "Use of extrinsic material in the interpretation of Acts and statutory rules", states:

Without limiting the effect of subsection (1), the material that may be considered in the interpretation of a provision of an Act, or a statutory rule made under the Act, includes:

- ...
(d) any treaty or other international agreement that is referred to in the Act,

There is a general provision already and it could be argued—this is the Government's position—that there is no need specifically to amend the Act in the way proposed by the member for Liverpool. Further, there is a concern that the proposed amendment could mean that consideration could be given to treaties and conventions listed in the bill when interpreting provisions that are not referred to in the legislation or in the second reading debate in respect of a bill. This bill would enable courts to consider treaties and agreements when interpreting provisions when Parliament had no intention of giving effect to a treaty or agreement or potentially was not cognisant of a treaty or agreement when passing legislation. This could obviously lead to the risk of a provision being interpreted in a manner that is contrary to the intention of the Parliament when it made the legislation. I refer to my original point: it would create a situation that would erode the sovereignty of the Parliament.

The member for Liverpool pointed out that the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria have passed similar legislation and it could be argued that that has not had a substantial effect. However, it is the Government's view that in passing similar legislation those jurisdictions have eroded their sovereignty. Furthermore, there are provisions in place in this Parliament to ensure that the values that are promoted and subscribed to by the treaties and conventions that Australia has signed up to are maintained. We have a Legislation Review Committee, for example, which provides adequate and appropriate scrutiny of the effect that new legislation has on personal rights and liberties.

Finally, I make the point, and I think it is appropriate, that this issue was considered by the previous Government in 2001. The Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice recommended that the previous Government, of which the member for Liverpool was a part, pass similar legislation to that which is before the Parliament today. The previous Government, presumably on similar grounds to those I have stated, opposed taking such a course and did not support the recommendations set out in the report entitled "A New South Wales Bill of Rights" in October 2001. The previous Government was right in not supporting those recommendations and this Government is right in not supporting this bill.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [10.14 a.m.]: I support the Interpretation Amendment (International Human Rights Obligations) Bill 2012, which will increase protection of basic human rights in line with Australia's obligations under international human rights treaties. I understand courts already apply the law consistently with human rights obligations, but because there is no legislative framework for this it is done on an ad hoc basis. The bill would direct courts to apply human rights obligations with reference to the rights, covenants and conventions to which Australia is a party. I refer to these treaties which are as follows. The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment requires states to prevent torture on their soil, and forbids them to transport people to places where they will be tortured. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women requires states to enshrine gender equality in law and eliminate prejudices and customs based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of one sex or on stereotyped roles for men and women.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires parties to promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities and ensure that they enjoy full equality under the law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child requires states to act in the best interests of the child. It includes protecting children from abuse or exploitation and forbids capital punishment for children. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights commits parties to respect the civil and political rights of individuals, including the right to life, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, electoral rights and rights to due process and a fair trial. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights commits its parties to work toward the granting of economic, social, and cultural rights to individuals, including labour rights and the right to health, the right to education, and the right to an adequate standard of living. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination commits its members to eliminate racial discrimination and promote understanding among all races.

The treaties in the bill are a good place to start. I believe all members would agree that their aims and principles are supported by this Parliament and the people of New South Wales. The role of the Parliament is to

protect and promote the wider community's values, including the fundamental rights we believe all citizens should have. I support a charter of human rights for New South Wales based on the rights identified by the community through consultation. A charter would require all bills introduced in Parliament to be assessed for their compatibility with these rights, and where incompatibilities are found members of Parliament would be able to make an informed decision about whether they are justified. Laws can impact on human rights and as a representative of a diverse inner-city electorate I want to ensure all my constituents are treated fairly under the law.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities particularly are subject to discrimination that is condoned in State and Federal antidiscrimination laws. Someone can be fired for being gay if that person is a gardener at a Catholic school, and gay students at religious schools can be expelled purely for their sexuality. I share widespread community support for the elimination of the archaic and unfair exemptions in antidiscrimination legislation. While we are not a country or a State where there are overt impingements on human rights, complacency is dangerous. Rights are eroded slowly and we should determine which are fundamental. We have seen the loss of basic rights like freedom of association and a threat to remove the right to silence in the name of fighting crime. The bill before the House is a good step in the right direction to improving human rights in New South Wales, and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.18 a.m.]: I notice that members are very quiet this morning but this is a really important issue. I see the member for Liverpool and the member for Sydney sitting opposite but it is a pity that more of their colleagues are not here to debate a significant issue such as this. This bill is about fettering our Parliament. We want to ensure that when we pass legislation in this Chamber the intention reflected in that legislation is contemporaneous and that the Parliament and the courts are not fettered by things that the legislature is not considering at the time the law is passed. The member for Liverpool introduced the bill and its intention has been well articulated by my colleague the member for Castle Hill. What does it say? It provides that the courts may have regard to Australia's international human rights obligations in the interpretation of New South Wales legislation—those international human rights treaties to which Australia is currently a party. The Government strongly opposes the bill on the basis that my colleague has articulated, that it could erode the sovereignty of this Parliament.

The voice of the people that is contemporaneous in forming our views when we come to debate bills must be reflected in the law passed by Parliament. I respect the opinion of my colleague the member for Sydney; the importance of human rights should not be underestimated. The inherent value and dignity of all people should always be recognised and respected. Those rights are recognised by members of the United Nations, including our country, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948. Those rights are recognised also in more specific instruments that have been adopted since then by the international community and accepted by our country. Human rights are important. They are the same for everybody everywhere, whether someone is male or female, young or old, gay or heterosexual or transgender, rich or poor, regardless of one's background, where one lives, what one thinks or what one believes. It makes sense for those fundamental rights to be universal.

We have entered into a number of conventions and treaties, which are set out in proposed section 33A (1). A number of them have been mentioned. However, one of my concerns is that they have been articulated in this bill. What will happen, for example, if circumstances changed and we were no longer a party to one of these treaties to which the court can have regard? We cannot have a situation where the intention of this Parliament and the elected members of our community will be fettered by international treaties. Proposed section 33A (2) provides that consideration may be given to Australia's international human rights obligations in the interpretation of a provision of an Act or an instrument if the provision is obscure or ambiguous, if its ordinary meaning leads to a result that is manifestly unreasonable or absurd, or in any other case to confirm the ordinary meaning of the provision. It sets out the circumstances in which our international rights obligations could be taken into account in the interpretation of an Act or an instrument of this Parliament.

The Government opposes this bill. Although Australia has signed conventions and treaties that recognise rights that fall into those categories, those rights have effect under domestic law only if the relevant legislature enacts legislation for that specific purpose. I support that important principle. With the exception of Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, which I acknowledge have enacted legislation to recognise certain civil and political rights in their domestic laws, successive Australian governments at both a State and Federal level have been reluctant to enact legislation to comprehensively codify our international human rights obligations. Today I will articulate the reasons for that reluctance. The Government believes that Parliament

must be able to legislate freely in the interests of the State. This means that at the time a law is made the intention of our Parliament must be respected. There is no better indication of the intention than when it is clearly and contemporaneously articulated in a bill before the House.

As I asked earlier, what will happen if, for some reason, we step away from one of the treaties to which we should be given reference in the future? That is where there will be uncertainty, which is not wanted. This bill would enable courts to consider treaties and agreements when interpreting provisions even when the Parliament had no intention of giving effect to treaties or agreements, even when the Parliament might not have been aware of those treaties and agreements when passing legislation, or even when they are not referred to in legislation before this House or during second reading debates. The principle that the Government is defending today is the important discipline of this Parliament to ensure that the policy intention, including international law and rights that inform our legislation, is specifically identified at the time. Otherwise we could run the risk of interpreting a provision in a manner that was contrary or different to the intention of Parliament when the legislation was formulated.

The amendment brought about by this bill could erode the sovereignty of Parliament and fetter Parliament's power by allowing legislative provisions to be interpreted in a manner that was contrary to the intention of the Parliament when it formulated the legislation. The Interpretation Act 1987 already provides for consideration to be given to treaties or other international agreements referred in the legislation or in second reading debates when they are ambiguous or obscure, or when they are manifestly absurd or unreasonable. But that is only when they are mentioned in second reading debates or in the legislation. That is an appropriate protection for members of this Parliament and for the communities that we represent. A much better approach would be to allow the Parliament to explicitly include in our domestic legal system those international laws that we seek to have reflected in our legislation. I draw the attention of the House to the Succession Amendment (International Wills) Bill 2012 as an example of how we can do that. Last year I spoke in debate on that bill, which amended the Succession Act 2006 and which had as its long title:

An Act to amend the Succession Act 2006 to make provision for international wills to give effect to the Convention providing a Uniform Law on the Form of an International Will 1973.

The uniform law provides for an additional form of will—an international will—that will create greater certainty and clarity for testators when wills are made overseas or in the circumstances articulated in the bill that passed through both Houses of Parliament. This Parliament must embrace international laws and rights by specifically identifying its treaties and agreements to guide, interpret and inform legislation. Our legislative intention would then be beyond doubt—policies of commission rather than omission. That is a danger that we will face if this bill is adopted. The Government opposes this bill which could erode and fetter the important sovereignty of our Parliament.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [10.26 a.m.]: I thank the member for Liverpool for his concern for human rights and for introducing this interesting bill. The theory behind the bill, as exposed by his second reading speech, appears to be as follows. First, using language endorsed by the High Court in *Coco v The Queen*, unless the Parliament makes unmistakably clear its intention to abrogate or suspend the fundamental freedom or right, the courts already will not construe a statute as having that operation. Secondly, the member for Liverpool says that the Parliament should nominate those rights because, first, it would be more democratic and, second, it would result in greater certainty. In construing a New South Wales Act against the background of an international treaty that pre-dates that Act, the bill makes little difference. Chief Justice Mason and Justice Deane, in the *Minister of State for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs v Teoh*, said:

Where a statute or subordinate legislation is ambiguous, the courts should favour that construction which accords with Australia's obligations under a treaty or international convention to which Australia is a party, at least in those cases in which the legislation is enacted after, or in contemplation of, entry into, or ratification of, the relevant international instrument. That is because Parliament, *prima facie*, intends to give effect to Australia's obligations under international law.

Those comments apply equally to State legislation. However, as that is a rule of construing Parliament's intention, it is unlikely that an Act should be construed as giving effect to an international treaty that did not exist when that Act came into law. This is where the bill of the member for Liverpool has the potential to make a difference. It appears to contemplate that the new interpretative provision would apply with what could be categorised as three elements of retrospectivity: first, to interpreting existing legislation; second, and more problematically, to interpreting existing legislation against current treaties that did not exist when that legislation was enacted; and, third—taking note of section 68 of the Interpretation Act, although it is not directly in point—potentially to interpreting existing legislation against future versions of the treaties listed in the bill.

Paradoxically, these differences would result in the opposite of what the member for Liverpool intends—less democracy and more uncertainty. I therefore oppose the bill on those two grounds—there will be less democracy and more uncertainty—and on two further related grounds; namely, that head-on, explicit, specific debates about particular issues are a better way to deal with human rights issues than a backdoor method of interpretation, and that there is no mischief to be addressed by this bill. I will illustrate those propositions with the example of abortion, which arouses strong views and emotions. I do so not to advocate any particular stance on the legality of abortion but rather to highlight the deficiencies in this bill.

At the moment sections 82 to 84 of the Crimes Act 1900, in substance, make abortion a crime if done "unlawfully". That raises the question: The Crimes Act does not define when an abortion would be considered lawful or unlawful. In *Crown v Wald*, Judge Levine held that an abortion should be considered to be lawful if the doctor honestly believed on reasonable grounds that "the operation was necessary to preserve the woman involved from serious danger to her life or physical or mental health which the continuance of the pregnancy would entail", and that in regard to mental health the doctor may take into account "the effects of economic or social stress that may be pertaining to the time". That judgement has been affirmed in other New South Wales court cases and expanded to include a threat to the woman's mental health that may occur following birth if the pregnancy continues. The law on that issue in New South Wales has been settled for more than 40 years.

What would be the effect of the bill introduced by the member for Liverpool on this scenario? One of the conventions specified in his bill is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. That convention does not specifically refer to abortion. However, many opponents of United States ratification claim that while the word "abortion" does not appear, parts of the text could be interpreted in such a way that abortion would have to be completely decriminalised. The convention refers to taking all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care and access to healthcare services, including those relating to family planning. Another article refers to appropriate measures to ensure that women have the right to decide freely and responsibly about the number and spacing of their children. Another convention specified in the member's bill is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some anti-abortion groups claim that that convention would help them because it refers to a child's inherent right to life and that that precludes abortion.

If a member of this Parliament thinks the New South Wales law on abortion should be changed, either because it is too restrictive or it is too liberal, he or she could introduce a bill to deal with it. However, the bill introduced by the member for Liverpool opens the prospect that the law could change in either direction through a court challenge relying on one of the possibly inconsistent conventions that I have cited. That must be the opposite of what the member for Liverpool intends. Rather than being democratic, Parliament would have left it to the courts to decide what reform should be implemented. More uncertainty, not less, would be created. What would be the outcome of such a challenge? If we want to change the law on abortion the best way to do that is through vigorous, specific, head-on debate, not through an unintended backdoor mechanism.

What is the mischief that this bill addresses? Where are the examples of human rights being ignored in this State because of the absence of such a provision? Where is one example of where this bill would produce a superior outcome? It is all very well to talk about the theory of human rights and to embrace them—as I hope all members do—and to make motherhood statements and offer platitudes about them. How could this bill produce a superior outcome? If it is said that it will produce a different outcome and its superiority is contentious, why not have Parliament address that issue specifically? Why not have an explicit, head-on debate in this place? The member for Sydney gave a number of examples of what he said was discrimination against the gay and lesbian community in his electorate. However, those examples prove the opposite from what he contends. The interface of human rights and questions of discrimination against the gay and lesbian community is a controversy that will be debated in this place for some time. We will soon debate a private member's bill dealing with same-sex marriage.

The way to deal with those issues is to have an explicit, specific debate during which both sides of the argument put their case. We should not rely on a backdoor method that may, by accident, cause significant change in this State because of an obscure provision in an international statute. In many cases human rights are not absolute; they can be in conflict. The question of gays and lesbians is a classic example. On the one hand we have gays and lesbians saying that they have a right not to be discriminated against in employment, but on the other hand we have faith-based groups saying that they have a right to practise their faith and if they object on conscientious grounds to employing certain individuals they should have the freedom to do so. The best place to decide how that clash of rights is to be resolved is in this Parliament because we, its members, are accountable to the people of New South Wales. We should not rely on unpredictable and backdoor methods of interpretation.

The old adage is: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." There is no overarching, systemic failure of human rights protection in New South Wales. If you have a car and the wheel does not work you change the wheel. You do not rewrite all the definitions in the instruction manual. The same applies to this legislation: if there is some specific human rights problem in some area, let a member introduce a private member's bill and we will debate it. We should not be rewriting the definitions section in the parliamentary instruction manual. There is no deficiency in New South Wales that needs to be addressed by this bill. We already have the capacity to take international law into account in interpreting New South Wales statutes. To the extent the bill wants to go beyond that, it will create more uncertainty and it will undermine the sovereignty of Parliament. There is not one practical example of where it will produce a superior result. If it would produce a different result that is a matter for Parliament to decide, and we are accountable to the people of New South Wales at the next election.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.36 a.m.]: I acknowledge the effort that the member for Liverpool has put into developing the Interpretation Amendment (International Human Rights Obligation) Bill 2012. A consultation paper was distributed and extensive discussions were held with a range of legal organisations and individuals. That is a positive path for a private member's bill to follow and this debate is a result of that process. However, the broad-ranging debate occurring today seems to be about a proposal that is not before the House. In essence, this is an incredibly modest bill: it simply seeks to provide additional guidance when legislation is ambiguous. This is not a bill of rights. The Greens support the introduction of a bill of rights and I would love to be debating such a bill because it would be an important step forward and a solid contribution to protecting civil and political rights in this State.

This bill cannot lead to any outcomes that are inconsistent with Acts of Parliament. Members have said that it will undermine sovereignty and that it is a threat to democracy. It is not about inconsistencies between Acts of Parliament; it is simply about interpretation. As I said, this State does not have a bill of rights, so there is no democratic direction to the courts on what those rights should be. This bill simply seeks to address that issue. It is about setting parameters for and supporting courts rather than letting judges rely on their intuition, feelings or personal prejudices. It simply provides direction in the case of ambiguity. Members of the legal community expressed some concerns that the member for Liverpool mentioned in his second reading speech, and I will address them because they deserve further discussion and examination. The member referred to some points raised by the former President of the Law Society Mr Justin Dowd. Referring to the society's Human Rights Committee, he stated:

The Committee congratulates you on your proposal to amend the Interpretation Act 1987 to require courts to construe legislation in a manner that is consistent with human rights obligations, and strongly encourages you to introduce a private member's bill in this regard. The Committee supports the enactment of a human rights Act in New South Wales, but notes that if passed, this amendment would represent a significant advancement—

The important point is it simply requires courts to construe legislation in a manner that is consistent with human rights obligations. It is not contrary to the legislation that is being examined at the time; it is not in direct rebuttal to any Acts that have been agreed by Parliament but would simply assist the courts in that process. The Greens' view is that it is a worthwhile process and an obligation that would support and assist the democratic process to ensure that the decisions of this Parliament were enacted in a way that reflected the views of Parliament, subject to the interpretation of the Acts that have been laid out in the bill introduced by the member for Liverpool. It is also worthwhile to review further comments that were made in a letter from the President of the Law Society, who noted that State Parliament should observe international law. The country as a whole is bound by obligations. In the second reading speech the member for Liverpool quoted the society as saying:

Enacting legislation such as that which you suggest would see Australia moving towards complying with its international obligations.

The member for Liverpool said:

Likewise the Gilbert and Tobin Centre of Public Law wrote as follows:

We welcome the proposal to amend the Interpretation Act 1987 (NSW) to require courts to construe legislation in a manner that is consistent with human rights obligations, insofar as it is possible to do so consistently with Parliament's purpose in enacting the legislation ...

That is a key point. It seems to me that the debate we are having today is about a bill of rights. It is about a whole range of other matters. But this very modest bill introduced by the member for Liverpool restores Parliament to its proper place; it sets out a proper basis for human rights interpretation when there is uncertain or ambiguous legislation. As far as I understand it, they are the terms of the legislation that is proposed. The bill ensures that in areas of uncertainty there is a proper basis for interpretation using the treaties that are set out in

the bill. It does not leave the decisions exclusively to the unelected judiciary. Parliament sets the tone and the basis for interpretation and it is not up to the unelected judiciary to decide the interpretation. That is set out quite modestly and clearly in this bill. This bill builds on the common law tradition and codifies that tradition in relation to human rights in particular.

The member for Liverpool has consulted widely about the bill. There is a great deal of support in the Liberal fraternity for this issue. It does not threaten the basis of democracy as we know it. It does not undermine decisions of this Parliament. It provides reasonable and modest direction to the judiciary around matters where there is uncertainty or ambiguity. I encourage the debates that other members have raised. Let us debate those issues. Let us debate human rights but, where there is ambiguity, it is important that there be a clear set of treaties that the judiciary can use to decide on the interpretation. I think this is a very modest step forward. It is worthwhile. I hope that it will be the beginning of a debate in this House, the Australian Labor Party and the Coalition about a bill of rights and its importance. I do not intend taking the time of the House to discuss that in detail, because it is a separate matter. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [10.43 a.m.]: The Government will oppose the Interpretation Amendment (International Human Rights Obligations) Bill 2012 for the following reasons. The Interpretation Act 1987 already provides for consideration to be given to treaties or other international agreements referred to in legislation or during second reading debates when interpreting ambiguous or obscure provisions in that legislation, or provisions that would lead to manifestly absurd or unreasonable results. The amendments would have the effect that consideration could be given to the treaties and conventions listed in the bill when interpreting provisions even when they are not referred to in the legislation or during the second reading debates for that legislation. The amendments could erode the sovereignty of Parliament by allowing provisions of legislation to be interpreted in a manner that is contrary to the intention of Parliament when it made the legislation.

The Legislation Review Committee provides adequate and appropriate scrutiny on the effect that new legislation has on personal rights and liberties. Human rights is a general term that refers to various rights that promote and protect human dignity. A number of international conventions and treaties have been entered into by Australia and other countries that prescribe certain human rights. These conventions and treaties include: the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Human rights are often split into two categories. First, there are civil and political rights—those rights that are fundamental to a person's ability to participate in the civil and political life of the State. These include the right to vote and protections from discrimination. Secondly, there are economic, social and cultural rights. This is a broader category of rights that includes rights to education, to adequate housing, work rights and rights to protect the cultures of minorities. Although Australia has signed conventions and treaties that recognise rights that fall into both these categories, those rights only have effect under domestic law if the relevant legislature enacts legislation for this purpose. With the exception of Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, which have enacted legislation to recognise certain civil and political rights in their domestic laws, successive Australian governments, at both Federal and State levels, have been reluctant to enact legislation to codify comprehensively Australia's international human rights obligations.

Our laws are based on the British system—a system that is based on precedence. Precedence enables the laws of a jurisdiction to evolve over time to reflect the values and mores of that society. Precedence works; precedence lends itself to providing a stable democracy. This legislation seeks to interface our current system of precedence with a codified system. Although examples go back thousands of years, codification only really came to prominence in Napoleonic France. Although it is an entirely legitimate legal framework, I believe our system, based on precedence, has proved to be superior over the past two centuries. This Government believes the sovereignty of the New South Wales Parliament is paramount. This Government considers that the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the Australian Capital Territory Human Rights Act erode the sovereignty of the parliaments of those jurisdictions.

This Government further notes that its position on the proposed bill is the same as that of the former Government. The former Government refused to implement a recommendation of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Law and Justice report entitled "A New South Wales Bill of Rights", published in

October 2001, to amend the Interpretation Act 1987 to permit judges to consider international treaties and conventions to which Australia is a party when there is an ambiguity in New South Wales statute. There is some irony in the timing of this bill given the Federal Government's desire to change anti-discrimination laws. The draft Federal bill will create a shifting of the burden of proof.

It is proposed that once a *prima facie* case has been established it will have to be disproved by the respondent to the complaint. This violates the whole principle upon which our justice system has always operated. The Federal Government argues that satirical material, political commentary and informative programming on matters of historical or religious sensitivity might be offensive or insulting. Thought needs to be given to the fact that this proposed legislation may in fact stifle the national conversation that is essential for fostering robust social and political debate, and therefore to ensuring a healthy democracy. A joint submission made by several media outlets regarding the Federal legislation states:

Whilst these and similar topics may be offensive or insulting to some viewers, this does not make them discriminatory.

And further:

No other liberal democracy has a human rights or anti-discrimination statute proscribing conduct which merely offends or insults.

The Gillard Government proposes to consolidate five Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws into one Act to meet an election promise. Many of the nation's top legal minds and human rights bodies believe it could set the bar for discrimination too low, potentially undermining free speech. This law will overlap and create conflict with our State anti-discrimination laws. However, returning to the leave of this bill, I believe it is both unnecessary and could potentially erode the sovereignty of the New South Wales Parliament. The Opposition is therefore asking the Government to do what it would not do in government. The Government therefore opposes the bill.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [10.50 a.m.], in reply: I note the contributions by the member for Castle Hill, the member for Sydney, the member for Vacluse, the member for Cronulla, the member for Balmain and the member for Charlestown to debate on the Interpretation Amendment (International Human Rights Obligations) Bill 2012. I thank the member for Sydney and the member for Balmain for their support of the bill. This is an Opposition bill and the inevitable reality is that the Government will vote it down regardless of whether it is good, bad or indifferent. There is no pretence of intellectual engagement by the Government or its members on this topic. The Government has no interest in human rights—its proposed abolition of the 450-year-old principle of the right to silence is proof of that.

However, the Government's position is not shared by the large number of people and organisations—led by the Law Society of NSW—that I mentioned in my second reading speech. I have also been contacted by the New South Wales Bar Association. The chair of the relevant committee of the Bar Association indicated interest in this discussion—a view clearly inconsistent with that of the current Government. The bill follows the tradition in the past three to four decades of legislature in this country of telling courts how to interpret legislation. This is certainly not confined to Australia; it is a wide common law trend throughout the world. As a Judicial Commission monograph pointed out in 2007, for example, purposive interpretation of legislation was pursued in 1981 Federally by an amendment to the Federal Interpretation Act.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will come to order.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: That was by former Attorney-General Durack in a Federal Coalition Government. The current Government does not seem to have the breadth of vision of former Attorney-General Durack. Courts interpret legislation when it contains uncertainty and they must rely on something to guide that interpretation. At present, this Parliament is abdicating its responsibilities by allowing courts to use fundamental rights of their own determination. The determination of those rights should be done by this Parliament, not by unelected judges. It is no secret that that is what occurs at present. It is properly a legislative function, not a judicial one. Sir Gerard Brennan, a distinguished ex-Chief Justice of the High Court, in an article in 2004 entitled "Human rights, international standard and protection of minorities" said:

The common law's balance between freedom and restriction is presumed to be unaffected by statute unless the legislation has manifested a clear contrary intention.

That balance is revealed and expressed in *Coco v The Queen*. Sir Gerard has an altruistic view of how those fundamental rights are determined. He said a little later:

Judges do not purport to apply their idiosyncratic sense of values, but rather to give expression to those deep and enduring values of the community, which, in large measure, inform the common law.

Others have a far less benign view of judges' attitudes. In 2011 Jonathan Sumption, QC, delivered the FA Mann Lecture. He became a justice of the British Supreme Court last year. He is a quite significant intellectual figure and not a bad historian either. In his lecture, among other things, he pointed to the undesirable consequences of judges being able to determine our fundamental rights. He said:

It is not easy for a judge to decide what is strange or repellent, except by reference to his own assessment of the merits of the policy under review. Any process of statutory construction which is not purely literal is therefore likely to start with a judicial instinct about what Parliament should be assumed to have wanted. Inevitably, the question becomes: What ought a good and wise Parliament to have wanted to achieve, and what did it need to enact in order to achieve it? The search for an ideal parliamentary intention, to be applied in the absence of sufficient and admissible evidence of the actual one, is normally an exercise in interpretation. But it is in reality an inherently legislative exercise.

He also said, albeit related to the English rather than the Australian jurisdiction:

... There has been a noticeable tendency for the range of fundamental rights principles to expand over the years, so as to embrace some which seem a good deal less than fundamental. It has been held, for example, to include the right to fish in tidal waters ...

He then mentions a number of other rights acknowledged by English courts. One does not have to agree with the precise formulations of either Sir Gerard Brennan or Justice Jonathan Sumption to accept the broad general issue. Judges rely upon fundamental rights to interpret unclear legislation. Those rights are what judges say they are rather than what democratic Parliaments say they are. I turn now to the contributions of those members who opposed the bill. The member for Castle Hill said—and this appears to be the Government's mantra—that somehow or other the bill detracts from Parliament's sovereignty. First, there is the inherent absurdity of that proposition granted that this Parliament is deciding upon the bill.

I would have thought that maintains our sovereignty reasonably clearly. As I said earlier—and this may come as a shock to some members—judges are making decisions on interpretations all the time. Judges, and not us, are making the decisions. If one wants to call that a loss of sovereignty then we have already lost our sovereignty. I am trying to take that back by getting Parliament to indicate the basis upon which judges should exercise that discretion. I am trying to provide some certainty to the process of making determinations in court. The member for Castle Hill thought he had dealt the killer blow in the debate when he said that the previous Government had rejected this proposition.

The member for Castle Hill would have been well advised to do a little more research. If he had he would have found a letter from former Minister Egan, dated 21 October 2002, that was formally tabled in the upper House in response to a parliamentary committee's recommendation. The former Government did not adopt it on the substantive basis that nothing similar had been done in any other jurisdiction. As the member for Castle Hill and a number of other Government speakers pointed out, other jurisdictions have done this since then. So the substantive argument that the former Government used against this proposal no longer stands. If the member for Castle Hill had done his research he might have avoided making that fairly elementary blunder.

The member for Vacluse commenced her contribution by making the snide remark that only a few Opposition members were in the Chamber so therefore the Opposition was not taking this bill seriously. But I noticed the member for Vacluse scuttle out of the Chamber as soon as she had finished her speech. If the member for Vacluse wants to tar those on this side with that brush then she has tarred herself as well. The difficulty with taking cheap shots is that they rebound on you. She might understand that better when she has been here a little longer and has more expertise in the place.

Mr David Elliott: You little grub.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: That is the pot calling the kettle black. The substantive argument advanced by the member for Vacluse went to the nonsense that somehow or other this legislation is detracting from sovereignty.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Government members will come to order.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: As I have said, Parliament is being asked to pass this legislation. That hardly detracts from our sovereignty: it underlines it. Regardless of whether she or anyone else likes it, there is a process in our courts of interpreting uncertainties. So in that sense the sovereignty of Parliament has already been detracted from. The bill is trying to provide some certainty in context. The member for Cronulla was hard briefed and his contribution was well argued but entirely unpersuasive. He came up with some quite preposterous propositions—that is probably what happens when equity lawyers pretend they are common lawyers.

The member for Cronulla tried to persuade members of two preposterous propositions: first, it is less democratic for us to make a decision and pass the legislation; and, secondly, somehow or other the vagaries of litigation in allowing judges to make up fundamental rights as they go along is more certain than our specifying what they should be. What can I say about the contribution of the member for Charlestown? He spent most of his time talking about Federal legislation. That is an indication of what little substance he had to contribute to the debate, but he got terribly excited about things going on down in Canberra. He also used the sovereignty argument. As I have said, that argument is misconceived: It entirely misunderstands the nature of the legal system and what the bill is attempting to achieve.

The bill aims to fix the legislative deficit that I have talked about, whereby judges are able to interpret things to fit their prejudices rather than in a way that the Parliament democratically prescribes. The rights referred to in the various conventions are hardly unheard of in this country. Sir Gerard Brennan in the article to which I referred takes a number of international obligations and shows how the common law already reflects some of them. That is a similar point to the one made by James Spigelman in his work on the common law bill of rights to which I referred during my second reading speech. The bill is an honest and simple proposal to invest more democratic controls into the interpretation of legislation. It has significant support from a range of bodies. Opposition to the bill in this place is more a reflection of the inadequacy of the Government than the inadequacy of the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 23

Mr Barr	Ms Hornery	Mr Rees
Ms Burney	Mr Lynch	Mr Robertson
Ms Burton	Dr McDonald	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Daley	Ms Mihailuk	Ms Watson
Mr Furolo	Mr Park	Mr Zangari
Mr Greenwich	Mr Parker	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Hay	Mrs Perry	Mr Amery
Mr Hoenig	Mr Piper	Mr Lalich

Noes, 57

Mr Anderson	Mr Flowers	Mr Roberts
Mr Annesley	Mr Fraser	Mr Rohan
Mr Aplin	Mr Gee	Mr Rowell
Mr Ayres	Mr George	Mrs Sage
Mr Baird	Ms Gibbons	Mr Sidoti
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Smith
Mr Bassett	Mr Hartcher	Mr Souris
Mr Baumann	Mr Hazzard	Mr Speakman
Ms Berejiklian	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Stokes
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Toole
Mr Conolly	Mr Issa	Mr Torbay
Mr Constance	Mr Kean	Ms Upton
Mr Cornwell	Dr Lee	Mr Webber
Mr Coure	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr R. C. Williams
Mrs Davies	Mr O'Dea	Mrs Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Owen	
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	
Mr Edwards	Mr Patterson	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Elliott	Mr Perrottet	Mr Maguire
Mr Evans	Mr Provest	Mr J. D. Williams

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

Bill not read a second time.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES

Question—That the following motions given by the members as indicated pursuant to notice be formally agreed to—proposed.

KIAMA SHOWGIRL WINNER KATHRYN CULLEN

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kathryn Cullen, of Gerringong, on winning the 2013 Kiama Showgirl Competition.
- (2) Acknowledges Ms Cullen's role in the local community as an advocate for rural women.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT WENDY WOODWARD

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Wendy Woodward on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia for her service to the community.
- (2) Acknowledges Ms Woodward's involvement in a number of community groups, including Berry Meals on Wheels, the Look Good-Feel Better program supporting women with breast cancer, Shoalhaven Spring Festival, Shoalhaven Food Festival, Berry Chamber of Commerce, Scouts, Roo Theatre, the Linear Accelerator Fund-raising Committee and the Shoalhaven Local Emergency Management Committee.
- (3) Notes Ms Woodward's ongoing commitment to child protection through her work with the Bravehearts organisation in the Shoalhaven, having established the New South Wales branch in 2007.

COMMENDATION FOR EXCELLENCE RECIPIENT IAN STEWART

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Ian Stewart on receiving a Commendation for Excellence in Emergency Operations from the Fire Services Joint Standing Committee in 2008.
- (2) Acknowledges Mr Stewart's outstanding incident management skills and his appointment as incident controller at major fires across the State, including at the recent fires in the Shoalhaven.
- (3) Notes Mr Stewart's 32 years of involvement with the NSW Rural Fire Service.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT MALCOLM WEIR

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Malcolm Weir, of Gerringong, on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the Gerringong community.
- (2) Acknowledges Mr Weir's service to the local community, including with the Gerringong Rural Fire Brigade since 1962 where he has served as Captain for 25 years and with the Gerringong Public School Parents and Citizens Association where he has served as President for three years.
- (3) Notes Mr Weir's many years of commitment to supporting the Children's Medical Research Institute, Gerringong Committee.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT ARTIS MEDENIS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Artis Medenis on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to veterinary science and to the community.
- (2) Acknowledges Mr Medenis' 52 years as a veterinary surgeon, operating his own practice in Gerringong.
- (3) Notes Mr Medenis' involvement with the Rotary Club of Berry-Gerringong since 1965, including his personal donation of \$70,000 to a rural scholarship fund in 2005.

SHELLHARBOUR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR PETER LINDWALL

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Peter Lindwall on being named Shellharbour City Council's 2013 Citizen of the Year for his outstanding volunteer work with St Vincent de Paul over many years.
- (2) Acknowledges Mr Lindwall's dedication and volunteer spirit as a retired police officer who is a great credit to the Shellharbour community.

SHELLHARBOUR YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR ROWAN PARKINSON

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Rowan Parkinson, of Warilla, on being named Shellharbour City Council's 2013 Young Citizen of the Year.
- (2) Acknowledges that Rowan was recognised for his community involvement, including being the youngest member on the board of the Watershed Drug and Alcohol Recovery and Education Centre.

ALBION PARK SHOWGIRL WINNER SHEREE TROY

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Sheree Troy on winning the 2013 Albion Park Showgirl Competition.
- (2) Acknowledges her role in the local community as an advocate for rural women.

ALBION PARK SHOWGIRL RUNNER-UP JESSICA RUEDA

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jessica Rueda on being runner up in the 2013 Albion Park Showgirl Competition.
- (2) Acknowledges her role in the local community as an advocate for rural women.

HOMEBUSH BOYS HIGH SCHOOL HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Homebush Boys' High School on a fantastic result in the 2012 Higher School Certificate in which it ranked among the top 100 schools in NSW.
- (2) Recognises the following students for their individual results:
Aaron Park—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List,
Brendan Trinh—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List, and
Derek Hin Lam—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List.
- (3) Wishes the school every success for the 2013 academic year.

BURWOOD GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Burwood Girls High School on a fantastic result in the 2012 Higher School Certificate in which it ranked among the top 50 schools in New South Wales.
- (2) Recognises the following students for their individual results:
Meng Jie Sung—1st in New South Wales for Heritage Chinese (Mandarin),
Ruby Leahy Gatfield—Top Achievers List for Society and Culture,
Yeseul (Rachel) Yeon—Top Achievers List for Japanese Beginners,
Tianqing Zhang—Top Achievers List for Heritage Chinese (Mandarin) and Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List,
Learning Jay Lynn Saw—Top Achievers List for English as a Second Language, and
Yige (Joy) Wu, Charlotte Kim and Brighde-Rose Maher—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List.
- (3) Wishes the school every success for the 2013 academic year.

MERIDEN SCHOOL STRATHFIELD HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Meriden School, Strathfield on a fantastic result in the 2012 Higher School Certificate in which it ranked among the top 50 schools in New South Wales.

- (2) Recognises the following students for their individual results:
 Claire Ogle—1st in New South Wales for History Extension and Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List,
 Siqi (Alice) Wu—Top Achievers List for Mathematics, and
 Ying Luo, Louise Anne Tran, Emily Yoo, Shareen Dhillon, Melissa Haddad and Sarah Hanna—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List.
- (3) Wishes the school every success for the 2013 academic year.

MLC SCHOOL BURWOOD HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the MLC School, Burwood on a fantastic result in the 2012 Higher School Certificate in which it ranked among the top 50 schools in New South Wales.
- (2) Recognises the following students for their individual results:
 Mary Houg Thien Nguyen—1st in New South Wales for Mathematics and Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List, and
 Meta Barbara Cohen and Rimshi Jain—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List.
- (3) Wishes the school every success for the 2013 academic year.

PRESBYTERIAN LADIES COLLEGE SYDNEY HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Presbyterian Ladies College, Sydney on a fantastic result in the 2012 Higher School Certificate in which it ranked among the top 25 schools in New South Wales.
- (2) Recognises the following students for their individual results:
 Jessica Abi-Hanna—Top Achievers List for French Continuers, Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List,
 Vinessa Ruan—Top Achievers List for Japanese Continuers, Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List, and
 Anastasia Balis, Eloise Brewer, Phoebe Chen, Natassia Chrysanthos, Ruby Kerr, Rachel Khoury-Harb, Grace Kim, Caelin Kramer, Mey Ly Lay, Madison McIver, Georgia Moody, Alysha Nguyen, Cecile Pham, Emily Salanitro-Chafei, Mercy Saw, Katherine Shen, Rachel Simpson, Phillipa Specker, Isabella Townshend and Alexandra Wang—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List.
- (3) Wishes the school every success for the 2013 academic year.

SANTA SABINA COLLEGE STRATHFIELD HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Santa Sabina College, Strathfield on a fantastic result in the 2012 Higher School Certificate in which they ranked among the top 100 schools in New South Wales.
- (2) Recognises the following students for their individual results:
 Chiara Pomare—1st in New South Wales for French Beginners,
 Juliette Pasini—Top Achievers List for French Beginners,
 Jessica Hume—Top Achievers List for Biology, and
 Minna Boyle, Giselle Capacchione, Alexandra Devlin, Jacqueline Halloran, Jessica Iuliano, Alison Lewis, Lauren Rosillo and Kristina Wakim—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List.
- (3) Thanks the outgoing Principal, Kate Clancy, for her great service to the school.
- (4) Wishes the incoming Principal, Maree Herrett, every success in her new role.
- (5) Wishes the school every success for the 2013 academic year.

STRATHFIELD GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Strathfield Girls High School on a fantastic result in the 2012 Higher School Certificate in which they ranked among the top 100 schools in New South Wales.
- (2) Recognises the following students for their individual results:

Allison Yee—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List, and

Ngoc Thao Nguyen Truong—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List.
- (3) Wishes the school every success for the 2013 academic year.

ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE STRATHFIELD HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates St Patrick's College, Strathfield on a fantastic result in the 2012 Higher School Certificate in which they ranked among the top 100 schools in New South Wales.
- (2) Recognises the following students for their individual results:

Nicholas Roger Cerone—Top Achievers List for Drama,

Alexander Peter Cigana—Top Achievers List for Studies of Religion II, Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List, and

Matthew Bartholomew Costa, Matthew Jake Dal Cin, James Alan Hancock, Julian Joseph Leto, Christopher George Omeissah, Robert Ivan Rogulj, Matthew John Skinner, Glen Adrian Surjadinata and Joshua John Taylor—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List.
- (3) Wishes the school every success for the 2013 academic year.

TRINITY GRAMMAR SCHOOL SUMMER HILL HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Trinity Grammar School, Summer Hill on a fantastic result in the 2012 Higher School Certificate in which they ranked in the top 100 schools in New South Wales.
- (2) Recognises the following students for their individual results:

Grant Keith Knapman—1st in New South Wales for Classical Greek Extension, Top Achievers List for Classical Greek Continuers and Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List,

Kent Su—Top Achievers List for Chinese Continuers,

Liam Hugh Garman—Top Achievers List for Classical Greek Extension,

Evan George Karagiannis—Top Achievers List for Information Technology,

Mark Azer—Top Achievers List for Latin Continuers and Latin Extension, and

David William Lai, Kiran James Patel, Michael Yap, Owen Jyh-Horng Chou and Naemen Nathanael Goetz—Higher School Certificate All-round Achievers List.
- (3) Wishes the school every success for the 2013 academic year.

VOLUNTEER GRAHAM HARDY

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Graham Hardy on his work for the community as a voluntary greenkeeper.
- (2) Recognises the quality of effort required to maintain a bowling green in top condition to produce optimum playing conditions for its members.
- (3) Thanks Mr Hardy for his work and congratulates him on the award he received in 2012 for volunteering.

RIVERINA MOST IRREPLACEABLE VOLUNTEER KEN MARTIN

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the many years of community service undertaken by Ken Martin of Coleambally.
- (2) Honours Mr Martin's years of service to the Coleambally Lions Club, the Coleambally-Darlington Point Country Education Foundation, the Coleambally-Darlington Point RSL, Riverina Golf Club and the numerous fund raising activities that he has been involved in, including working to restore damaged homes and clean up Yenda in March 2012.
- (3) Thanks Mr Martin for his community service and congratulates him on being recognised as the Riverina's Most Irreplaceable Volunteer.

CASULA POWERHOUSE MINDFIELD PERFORMER GEMMA SUMMERHAYES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates former Holsworthy High School student Gemma Summerhayes on singing at the National Rugby League Grand Final in 2012 with the Casula Powerhouse Mindfield performers.
- (2) Commends Ms Summerhayes for also singing two songs individually at a National Rugby League semi-final game.

FRASER ENVIRONMENT AWARD RECIPIENT YOUNG ADULTS DISABLED ASSOCIATION

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Liverpool's Young Adults Disabled Association (YADA) on winning the Australia Day Fraser Environment Award.
- (2) Notes that the Young Adults Disabled Association recycled more than 430 tonnes of paper, 144 tonnes of metal and 22 tonnes of plastic in 2012.
- (3) Commends the work of the Young Adults Disabled Association founder John Eastwood and the organisation's 60 volunteers for their service for the community.

LIVERPOOL RURAL FIRE SERVICE COMMENDATIONS

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Liverpool firefighters Scott Hanley and Tanya Marshall on receiving Individual Commissioner's Commendations for Meritorious Service for their role in saving all three members of a family trapped in an intense unit fire in 2011.
- (2) Congratulates Greg Wright and John Strudwick, the station officers for the Liverpool D-Platoon and the Busby D-Platoon, and the many other firefighters who received Unit Commendations for Meritorious Service.
- (3) Commends the work of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and their volunteers.

LEGACY JUNIOR PUBLIC SPEAKING AWARD COMPETITION PARTICIPANT EMILY GRIFFIN

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Commends year nine Holsworthy High student Emily Griffin for her speech given at the Legacy Junior Public Speaking Award competition held at New South Wales Parliament House in 2012.
- (2) Notes that Emily was chosen among the top 26 speakers in the State to participate in this event.

MENAI PUBLIC SCHOOL BOYS INITIATIVES PROGRAM

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Menai Public School on establishing a Boys Initiatives Program, which has been designed to help children who would most benefit from having a male role model or are at risk of behavioural problems.
- (2) Notes that the Boys Initiatives Program's weekly workshops are successfully teaching the children how to ride a bike and how to fish.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT MALCOLM KERR

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Malcolm Kerr on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the Parliament of New South Wales.
- (2) Recognises Mr Kerr's dedicated representation of the local community as the member for Cronulla from 1984-2011.
- (3) Thanks Mr Kerr for his work with the Committee on the Police Integrity Commission and with the committees on the Independent Commission Against Corruption, Police Administration and Office of the Ombudsman.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT HERBERT MANGELSDORF

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Herbert Mangelsdorf on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to sport, particularly lawn bowls.
- (2) Recognises Mr Mangelsdorf's contribution to the lawn bowls community through his service in various positions, including as captain of bowling teams and as chairman of bowling clubs across New South Wales.
- (3) Thanks Mr Mangelsdorf for his service to the local community through the development of sport in the area.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT GEOFFREY GRIMISH

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Geoffrey Grimish on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community through fundraising activities.
- (2) Recognises Mr Grimish's charitable contributions to organisations, including the Children's Hospital at Westmead, the Hoc Mai Foundation for Vietnam and Kidney Health Australia.
- (3) Acknowledges the benefit of Mr Grimish's donations for people living in Australia and overseas.

SYDNEY SOUTH VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR MARK DAVIDSON

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mark Davidson on being named the 2012 New South Wales Sydney South Volunteer of the Year.
- (2) Recognises Mr Davidson's hard work in the development of an initiative to build relationships between police and young people in the Sutherland Shire area through Father Chris Riley's Youth Off The Streets program.
- (3) Thanks Mr Davidson for his commitment to community building through volunteering over four years to develop the local area.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT PATRICK DONNELLAN

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Patrick Donnellan, formerly a solicitor for Gosford Council, on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community.
- (2) Recognises Mr Donnellan's contribution to the Gosford Orchestral and Choral Society and the Central Coast Philharmonic where he served as President and Principal Conductor.
- (3) Applauds Mr Donnellan's contribution as co-chairman of the building committee for the Saint John the Baptist Church at Woy Woy, which he deems as one of his proudest contributions.

MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA AWARD RECIPIENT KENNETH TURNER

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kenneth Turner, of Booker Bay, on being made a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to tertiary education.
- (2) Recognises Mr Turner's contribution to the community as a teacher, initially at high school, then at teachers college and ultimately at university where he was an Associate Professor at the University of Sydney and where he focused on the political history of New South Wales.
- (3) Congratulates Mr Turner on his many other volunteering positions on a number of committees.

PRIDE OF AUSTRALIA FAIR GO MEDAL RECIPIENT STEVE PETRAS

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises Steve Petras for his selfless volunteer work in helping the homeless of The Peninsula in Woy Woy.
- (2) Congratulates Mr Petras on receiving The Fair Go Medal at the 2012 Pride of Australia Awards for his work at Mary Mac's Place in Woy Woy, where he volunteers two days a week, and at Meals on Wheels, where he also volunteers two days a week.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT JAMES LEE

Mr ROBERT FUROLO—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates James Lee on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia for his work with the Korean community.
- (2) Recognises Mr Lee's 20 years of volunteer work with the Korean community in Sydney and the Canterbury City Council, including with the Australia Day Organising Committee and the Canterbury Harmony Group Committee.
- (3) Commends Mr Lee for the significant contribution he has made to the Australian community.

CANTERBURY HARMONY GROUP AND RIVERWOOD CHINESE TWILIGHT ROUGE DANCE GROUP CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Mr ROBERT FUROLO—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Canterbury Harmony Group and the Riverwood Chinese Twilight Rouge Dance Group on hosting local celebrations for Chinese New Year.
- (2) Commends the Canterbury Harmony Group and the Riverwood Chinese Twilight Rouge Dance Group for enriching the life of the Canterbury community.

LAKEMBA STUDENT CITIZENSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mr ROBERT FUROLO—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the following students on receiving a Student Citizenship Award: Stefanie Breda of Holy Spirit College Lakemba, Harrison Breen of McCallums Hill Public School, Michael Chu of Wiley Park Public School and Marwan Dadoun of Belmore Boys High School.
- (2) Commends the students for the leadership they have shown in working for the common good of the school community, and for the care and support they have given to their fellow students.

LAKEMBA STUDENT CITIZENSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mr ROBERT FUROLO—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the following students on receiving a Student Citizenship Award: Fahim Faruq of Lakemba Public School, Kateline Goodwin of Riverwood Public School, Michael Henriques of Punchbowl Public School and Michele Janes of Kingsgrove North High School.
- (2) Commends the students for the leadership they have shown in working for the common good of the school community, and for the care and support they have given to their fellow students.

LAKEMBA STUDENT CITIZENSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mr ROBERT FUROLO—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the following students on receiving a Student Citizenship Award: Andrew Kennedy of Saint Joseph's Primary School Riverwood, Layla Mkhayber of Wiley Park Girls High School, Robert Najdanovic of Beverly Hills North Public School and Erica O'Brien of Peakhurst Public School.
- (2) Commends the students for the leadership they have shown in working for the common good of the school community, and for the care and support they have given to their fellow students.

LAKEMBA STUDENT CITIZENSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mr ROBERT FUROLO—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the following students on receiving a Student Citizenship Award: Xanthe Rallis of All Saints Grammar Belmore, William Simpson of Saint Jerome's Primary School Punchbowl and Angela Zhou of Belmore South Public School.
- (2) Commends the students for the leadership they have shown in working for the common good of the school community, and for the care and support they have given to their fellow students.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT XIII RUGBY LEAGUE SQUAD MEMBER SELECTIONS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Antonio Inzitari, Rhys Norman and Joe Stimson on their selection to the Australian Institute of Sport XIII rugby league squad.
- (2) Acknowledges that Antonio, Rhys and Joe attended Saint Gregory's College.

- (3) Notes that Antonio, Rhys and Joe are wonderful ambassadors and role models for their families, school, team and the local community.
- (4) Wishes Antonio, Rhys and Joe every success with their future rugby league endeavours.

HARRINGTON PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL JUMP ROPE FOR HEART PROGRAM

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the students from Harrington Park Public School on their participation in the Heart Foundation's Jump Rope for Heart Showcase.
- (2) Notes that the jump rope program aims to get children active and develop lifelong healthy habits.
- (3) Encourages the students from Harrington Park Public School to continue developing their jump rope skills, and wishes them every success for the future.

OMNIUM TRACK CYCLING CHAMPION JOSIE TALBOT

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulate Josie Talbot on winning the Under 19's omnium track cycling championship.
- (2) Notes that the omnium event consists of the following elements: a flying lap, points race, elimination race, individual pursuit, scratch race and time trial.
- (3) Acknowledges that Josie was selected to participate in the Australian Youth Olympic Festival.
- (4) Notes that Josie is a wonderful ambassador for her family, school and sport.
- (5) Wishes Josie every success for her future cycling endeavours.

MACARTHUR COLTS UNDER 12 BASEBALL TEAM STATE CUP CHAMPIONS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Macarthur Colts Under 12's baseball team on winning the Sydney Junior Championship State Cup.
- (2) Notes that this Macarthur Colts Under 12 team is the first Macarthur Under 12's team to win the State Cup.
- (3) Acknowledges each member of the winning team: Ryan Boyce, Michael Cherry, Josh Pearl, Hayden Blackburn, Ray Redman, Jackson Mannix, Blake Cavill, Lachlan Dean, Jack Lee, Maddison Heath, Harrison Bolton and Jayden King.
- (4) Acknowledges the coaches, parents and team officials who helped the team on the way to victory.

INTERNATIONAL STRONG WOMAN PLACEGETTERS SUSAN AND LEIGH-ANN HOLLAND-KEEN

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Susan Holland-Keen and Leigh-Ann Holland-Keen on their success at the International Strong Woman Competition in Scotland.
- (2) Acknowledges that Leigh-Ann placed third and Susan fifth.
- (3) Acknowledges that Susan and Leigh-Ann are members of the Mount Annan Strongman Club.
- (4) Notes that Susan and Leigh-Ann are the first mother and daughter to compete against each other in the history of the competition.
- (5) Wishes Susan and Leigh-Ann every success for their future.

MACARTHUR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION UNDER 13 GIRLS INDOOR STATE CHAMPIONS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Macarthur Girls Under 13's on winning the New South Wales Indoor Hockey State Championships.
- (2) Acknowledges the players, coaching, team support staff and parents.
- (3) Wishes the Under 13's every success for their future competitions.

LANDCOM CAROLS IN THE AUSTRALIAN BOTANIC GARDENS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates all the performers at the 2012 Landcom Carols in the Park, including performers from the Commotion School of Dance, Rebecca's Dance Studio, the Camden Community Band and Mount Annan Spectacular Carolers.
- (2) Acknowledges the staff at the Royal Botanical Gardens Mount Annan for their efforts to prepare the gardens and facilities for the event.
- (3) Acknowledges the efforts of the Rural Fire Service who provided traffic management on the evening.
- (4) Wishes every success for the 2013 Carols in the Park event.

AUSTRALIAN OZTAG WORLD CUP TEAM

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Craig Cawsey, Stephen Butler, Tegan Chandler, Kristy Sheldrick and Greg King on representing Australia at the OzTag World Cup in New Zealand.
- (2) Acknowledges that Australian teams won 14 of the 16 divisions of the World Cup.
- (3) Notes that Mr Cawsey, Mr Butler, Ms Chandler, Ms Sheldrick and Mr King are wonderful ambassadors for their sport, their families and the local community.
- (4) Wishes the Australian teams and their local representatives every success for future competitions and for the next World Cup.

CAMDEN DISTRICT CRICKET ASSOCIATION UNDER 13 GIRLS JOINT PREMIERS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Camden District Cricket Association Under 13's girls cricket team on their joint premiership.
- (2) Notes that the final match was cancelled due to rain, resulting in both finalists sharing the premiership.
- (3) Acknowledges that the team has made the finals series five times in six years.
- (4) Wishes the Under 13's team and the Camden District Cricket Association every success for 2013.

COROWA AND DISTRICT CITIZEN OF THE YEAR JIM WALLIS

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises Jim Wallis' commitment to the community and his achievements of over 35 years with the Corowa Rescue Squad and the State Emergency Service.
- (2) Congratulates Mr Wallis on being named Corowa and District Citizen of the Year.

ALBURY VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR ROBYN DALY

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the achievements of Robyn Daly and her service to the community with the Bravehearts organisation and with the Albury Wodonga Breast Cancer Support Group.
- (2) Congratulates Mrs Daly on being named Albury 2013 Volunteer of the Year.

TUMBARUMBA JOINT JUNIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR JORDAN DENNIS

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the involvement of Jordan Dennis in sport and student affairs on behalf of Tumbarumba High School.
- (2) Congratulates Jordan on being named Tumbarumba joint Junior Citizen of the Year.

TUMBARUMBA SENIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR GEOFFREY HULM

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the commitment to community service by Geoffrey Hulm on behalf of Tumbarumba Bowling Club.
- (2) Congratulates Mr Hulm on being named Tumbarumba Senior Citizen of the Year.

GREATER HUME SHIRE YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR JESSICA KOTZUR

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the achievements of Jessica Kotzur in sport and community events.
- (2) Congratulates Jessica on being named Greater Hume Shire Young Citizen of the Year.

GREATER HUME SHIRE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NANCY LEE

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the achievements of Nancy Lee on behalf of the Red Cross, Returned and Services League, Probus and Meals on Wheels in the Culcairn area.
- (2) Congratulates Ms Lee on being named Greater Hume Shire Citizen of the Year.

ALBURY CITIZEN OF THE YEAR DAVID RYAN

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the achievements of David Ryan on behalf of the Splitters Creek Fire Brigade and the Albury Wodonga Prostate Cancer Support Group.
- (2) Congratulates Mr Ryan on being named Albury Citizen of the Year.

GREATER HUME SHIRE SPORTS AWARD OF THE YEAR RECIPIENT ALYSSA SAVILL

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the achievements of Alyssa Savill in state and national tennis, athletics and cross country.
- (2) Congratulates Ms Savill on receiving the Greater Hume Shire Sports Award of the Year.

TUMBARUMBA JOINT CITIZENS OF THE YEAR MALCOLM AND BERNADETTE VOGAN

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the achievements of Malcolm and Bernadette Vogan of Tumbarumba for their enthusiastic and dedicated community service.
- (2) Congratulates Malcolm and Bernadette Vogan on being named Tumbarumba joint Citizens of the Year.

HUNTER HOSPITALS MEDICAL INTERNSHIPS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Hunter region has welcomed 100 new medical interns and that most of the group commenced their induction at John Hunter Hospital.
- (2) Recognises that for the first time all of the region's new interns chose the Hunter New England district as their first preference to complete their internships.
- (3) Acknowledges that the majority of the interns are female, including Wickham local and Newcastle graduate, Dr Bethany Croker.
- (4) Wishes Dr Croker and the other new Hunter interns every success in their future careers.

BLUE GUM HILLS MEN'S SHED

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Commends members of the newly established Blue Gum Hills Mens Shed, particularly the President, Paul Gow, the Public Relations Officer, Garry Rose and the newly appointed Secretary, Dennis Crooks.
- (2) Acknowledges the charitable role that this group plays in the Blue Gum Hills area, assisting the elderly and individuals in need with important building repairs.

CALLAGHAN COLLEGE JESMOND SENIOR CAMPUS SCHOOL LEADERS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mitchell Gatavicus, Lucy Stanley, Siahn Spiers and Malik Anne on their achievement in being chosen to be School Leaders at the Callaghan College Jesmond Senior Campus.

- (2) Acknowledges that, as the new School Leaders are chosen by their teachers and peers, it is evident that these students already possess leadership qualities.
- (3) Notes that this is the start of the students' path to success.
- (4) Wishes the students every success in their new roles and trusts that they prove to be great leaders for their peers.

CALLAGHAN COLLEGE WALLSEND CAMPUS SCHOOL LEADERS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Blake Kingdom, Annabelle Hungerford, Jordan Andres and Jeremy Bullen on their achievement in being chosen to be School Leaders at the Callaghan College Wallsend Campus.
- (2) Acknowledges that, as the new School Leaders are chosen by their teachers and peers, it is evident that these students already possess leadership qualities.
- (3) Notes that this is the start of the students' path to success.
- (4) Wishes the students every success in their new roles and trusts that they prove to be great leaders for their peers.

CARDIFF HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Captains Caitlin Waide and Callum Reedman and Vice Captains Abbey Mateer and Aden Blanch on their achievement in being chosen to be School Leaders at Cardiff High School.
- (2) Acknowledges that, as the new School Leaders are chosen by their teachers and peers, it is evident that these students already possess leadership qualities.
- (3) Notes that this is the start of the students' path to success.
- (4) Wishes the students every success in their new roles and trusts that they prove to be great leaders for their peers.

ELERMORE VALE MENS SHED

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Commends the Chair, Dave Corbett, and all the other members of the Elernmore Vale Mens Shed for the construction of the new gardens and deck at the Silveridge Community Cottage.
- (2) Acknowledges the charitable role that this group plays in the Elernmore Vale area helping others, particularly the elderly and infirm.

GLENDALE TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Captains Jorja Gow and Jaxson Ryner and Vice Captains Nicholas Della and Lauren Jeffrey on their achievement in being chosen to be School Leaders at Glendale Technology High School.
- (2) Acknowledges that, as the new School Leaders are chosen by their teachers and peers, it is evident that these students already possess leadership qualities.
- (3) Notes that this is the start of the students' path to success.
- (4) Wishes the students every success in their new roles and trusts that they prove to be great leaders for their peers.

LAMBTON HIGH SCHOOL LEADERS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Taylor Sansom, George Bland, Charlotte Mahony, Jonathan Hann, Lauren Bradney and Remy Rey Lescure on their achievement in being chosen to be School Leaders at Lambton High School.
- (2) Acknowledges that, as the new School Leaders are chosen by their teachers and peers, it is evident that these students already possess leadership qualities.
- (3) Notes that this is the start of the students' path to success.
- (4) Wishes the students every success in their new roles and trusts that they prove to be great leaders for their peers.

CALLAGHAN COLLEGE WARATAH TECHNOLOGY CAMPUS SCHOOL LEADERS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Lachlan Callen, Samantha Tuli, Jackson Myers and Tyeson Lalaga on their achievement in being chosen to be School Leaders at the Callaghan College Waratah Technology Campus.
- (2) Acknowledges that, as the new School Leaders are chosen by their teachers and peers, it is evident that these students already possess leadership qualities.
- (3) Notes that this is the start of the students' path to success.
- (4) Wishes the students every success in their new roles and trusts that they prove to be great leaders for their peers.

GREAT LAKES COUNCIL EMPLOYEES SERVICE PRESENTATION

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates John Cavanagh, Melinda Moran, Sharon McMeeken and Andrew Braybrook, employees Great Lakes Council, who together have given 115 years of service to the Council.
- (2) Notes that Ms Moran (Pay Officer) and Mr Braybrook (Community Services Manager) are celebrating 25 years of service, and Ms McMeeken (Information and Technology Manager) and Mr Cavanagh (Waste and Regulatory Services Manager) are each celebrating 35 years of service.
- (3) Notes that each of the four was recognised for their services at a presentation during the Council's meeting on 11 December 2012.

CANCER COUNCIL FUNDRAISER BRUCE KING

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Bruce King of Taree on raising more than \$1,200 for the Cancer Council through decorating his street with colourful Christmas lights.
- (2) Notes that people who came to view the large displays placed money in a wishing well to support the charity.
- (3) Notes that Mr King spent two months setting up the display of lights and decorations, complemented by a snow machine, a small motorcycle for children to sit on, Santa Claus and candy canes that brought smiles to the kids who received them.
- (4) Notes that Mr King chose the Cancer Council in honour of his brother Craig and friend Wayne who both succumbed to the disease.

GREAT LAKES SAILING CLUB OPEN BIC STATE SAILING TITLES

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the committee and members of the Great Lakes Sailing Club which successfully hosted round two of the Open Bic State Sailing Titles on Wallis Lakes on the Australia Day weekend.
- (2) Notes that five local junior sailors represented Great Lakes Sailing Club and each performed well against an experienced fleet of 40 boats.
- (3) Notes that Ethan White finished the regatta in third place, with Caleb White finishing ninth, Iggy Dunn eleventh, Kristian Fiebig fourteenth and Kyle Astorini in nineteenth place.
- (4) Notes that the young sailors will compete at the Combined High Schools Regatta on Lake Macquarie in April.

HOUSING INDUSTRY AWARD RECIPIENT MELINDA OIRBANS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Melinda Oirbans of Viison Kitchens in Taree on winning second place for her design of a kitchen at the Housing Industry Awards for the Hunter region in the \$20,000 to \$25,000 category.
- (2) Notes that Ms Oirbans has been designing kitchens for only three years and the award came for her first entry.
- (3) Notes that Viison Kitchens also manufactured and installed the award winning kitchen and have showrooms in Forster and Taree.

ALAN AND BARBARA MARTIN SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Alan and Barbara Martin of Wingham on celebrating their sixtieth wedding anniversary on 10 January 2013.
- (2) Notes that Mr and Mrs Martin met while they were attending Newcastle Teachers College and that they taught in numerous primary and high schools in the Manning Valley.
- (3) Notes that Mr Martin taught for 43 years before retiring in 1994 and Mrs Martin taught for 36 years and retired in 1989.
- (4) Notes that Mr Martin was a good cricketer and represented the Manning and captained the Mid North Coast team against Richie Benaud's New South Wales in Taree in 1962.
- (5) Notes that Mrs Martin also had great sporting ability and played A grade tennis and won sporting Blues for tennis and basketball at NSW Teachers College.
- (6) Notes that Mr and Mrs Martin have three children—Phillip, Catherine and Frances, fourteen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

GREAT LAKES LIBRARY CHAMPION JANINE WATSON

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Janine Watson, editor of the Great Lakes Advocate, on being named the 2012 Great Lakes Library Champion.
- (2) Notes that Ms Watson published a series of articles on the reading interests of local identities, including herself, as part of the National Year of Reading.
- (3) Notes that Ms Watson was a member of the panel that selected the library's Ten Greatest Australian Books of All Time.

COL AND MARGARET WORTH SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Col and Margaret Worth of Tuncurry on celebrating their sixtieth wedding anniversary on 20 December 2012.
- (2) Notes that both Mr and Mrs Worth were school teachers and moved around the state as Mr Worth was promoted in the teaching profession and Margaret cared for her family.
- (3) Notes that Mr and Mrs Worth have three children, Vicki, Peter and Mandy and seven grandchildren.
- (4) Notes that the couple built a house in Tuncurry when Col was appointed principal of Forster High School before retiring in the late 1980s.

NEIL AND SHIRLEY WINKLER SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Neil and Shirley Winkler of Tuncurry on celebrating their sixtieth wedding anniversary on 12 December 2012.
- (2) Notes that Mrs Winkler was born in Taree and the couple married in Grafton where Mr Winkler worked at the local sawmill.
- (3) Notes that Mr and Mrs Winkler have four children—Raymond, Robert, Geoffrey and Diane and have many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
- (4) Notes that Mr and Mrs Winkler retired in Tuncurry about five years ago.

LOWER NORTH COAST DISTRICT BOWLER OF THE YEAR EULA WEBSTER

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Eula Webster of Forster on being named the Lower North Coast District Bowler of the Year for 2012.
- (2) Notes that Ms Webster also won this prestigious award in 2007 and that she is an outstanding bowler and club supporter.

ASSYRIAN SPORTS AND CULTURAL CLUB FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution of the Assyrian Sports and Cultural Club in supporting the Assyrian community of New South Wales.
- (2) Congratulates the Assyrian Sports and Cultural Club on the celebration of its 40th anniversary.
- (3) Congratulates the Club's President Assur Jako and the committee of the Assyrian Sports and Cultural Club for their outstanding work.

BISHOP AD ABIKARAM GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution of Bishop Ad Abikaram in the Maronite community of Australia.
- (2) Congratulates Bishop Ad Abikaram on the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood.
- (3) Commends the organising committee of the Golden Jubilee celebrations held on 5 December 2012.
- (4) Extends its best wishes to Bishop Ad Abikaram in his future endeavours.

CHALDEAN AUSTRALIAN ACADEMIC SOCIETY GRADUATION CEREMONY

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Commends the Chaldean Australian Academic Society for recognising educational excellence.
- (2) Notes that the Third Annual Graduation Party held on 2 February 2013 was an important event promoting tertiary education and rewarding academic achievement among members of the Chaldean community.
- (3) Congratulates Bassam Frety, President of the Chaldean Australian Academic Society, and the organising committee on hosting a successful event.

UNITED INDIAN ASSOCIATION AWARDS PRESENTATION

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Commends the United Indian Association for recognising educational excellence.
- (2) Notes that the Association's Australia Day, Indian Republic Day and Higher School Certificate award presentation was held on 18 January 2013.
- (3) Acknowledges that the event celebrated Australian and Indian culture.
- (4) Commends the United Indian Association for promoting tertiary education and rewarding academic achievement among members of the Indian community.
- (5) Congratulates Amarinder Bajwa, President of the United Indian Association, and the organising committee on hosting a successful event.

INDIAN AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF NSW AUSTRALIA DAY AND INDIAN REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Commends the Indian Australian Association of NSW Inc. for promoting multiculturalism in New South Wales.
- (2) Notes that the Association's Australia Day and Indian Republic Day function was held on 27 January 2013.
- (3) Congratulates Dr Yadu Singh, President of the Indian Australian Association of NSW Inc., and the organising committee on hosting a successful event.

RAHMA ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA BIRTH OF MUHAMMAD CELEBRATION

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Rahma Islamic Association of Australia on hosting the celebration on the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, held on 25 January 2013.
- (2) Acknowledges the Rahma Islamic Association of Australia's efforts in promoting peace and harmony in the community.
- (3) Notes the prayerful and joyful atmosphere of the celebration led by the leaders and members of the Association.

SYDNEY MULTICULTURAL QURBAN EID FESTIVAL

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the FEZA Foundation on hosting the 18th Annual Sydney Multicultural Qurban Eid Festival, held on 4 November 2012.
- (2) Congratulates all participating singers, musicians and dancers in celebrating cultural diversity.
- (3) Commends the FEZA foundation for promoting interfaith dialogue in New South Wales.

VIETNAMESE AUSTRALIAN MUTUAL SUPPORT ASSOCIATION OF NSW EIGHTEENTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Notes the Vietnamese Australian Mutual Support Association of NSW's eighteenth anniversary function held on 14 December 2012.
- (2) Congratulates Dihn Khien Nguyen and the organising committee on hosting a successful celebration.
- (3) Wishes the Vietnamese Australian Mutual Support Association of NSW well in its future endeavours.

HELLENIC WOMEN OF SYDNEY

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the seven leading associations on combining to form the Hellenic Women of Sydney.
- (2) Wishes the Hellenic Women of Sydney well in their work in providing assistance to children and women in need of help in Greece.
- (3) Congratulates the Consul of Greece in Sydney, His Excellency Vassilios Tolios, and the Vice Consul Mrs Theodora Tolios on hosting a recognition function on 11 December 2012.

COOGEE CROQUET CLUB

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Coogee Croquet Club launched its 2013 season and opened its refurbished clubhouse on 9 February 2013.
- (2) Wishes all members and the club the best of luck for the 2013 season in their new clubhouse.

NSW COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT SUSAN MAPLE-BROWN

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Susan Maple-Brown, of Randwick, was the recent recipient of a New South Wales Government Community Service Award for her 45 years of service to Girl Guides Australia.
- (2) Notes that Mrs Maple-Brown has served Girl Guides NSW in many roles, and has significantly contributed to the organisation's success.
- (3) Congratulates Mrs Maple-Brown on her award and wishes her the best for the future.

MARDI GRAS FAIR DAY

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Mardi Gras Fair Day was held on 10 February 2013.
- (2) Notes that the Mardi Gras Fair Day marks the start of the Sydney Mardi Gras season and attracts almost 70,000 people.
- (3) Notes the contribution of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to the Sydney lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community, and the positive message of pride and acceptance it promotes.

PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL SCANNER PROJECT

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that a new combined Positron Emission Tomography (PET) and Computed Tomography (CT) scanner was opened at Randwick Hospital Campus.
- (2) Commends Campbell McMaster and Jayde Bell for their efforts to raise money for the machine, as well as for their advocacy for childhood cancer.

- (3) Notes the significant benefits the PET and CT scanner provides for patients of the Randwick Hospital Campus.
- (4) Congratulates all staff involved with the procurement, installation and operation of the machine.

ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN MIDWIFERY GRADUATES

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that 10 postgraduate student midwives at the Royal Hospital for Women graduated from the Hospital's midwifery program on 13 February 2013.
- (2) Congratulates the midwives on their graduation and wishes them the best for their careers ahead.

PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL MEDICAL INTERNSHIPS

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that 46 new medical interns started their orientation at Prince of Wales Hospital on 14 January 2013.
- (2) Notes that the interns were part of a record cohort of 925 interns across New South Wales.
- (3) Congratulates the interns on their graduation and wishes them well for their careers.

COOGEE AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that 26 residents of the Coogee electorate become new Australian citizens on Australia Day 2013.
- (2) Congratulates those residents on taking the oath of citizenship.

RANDWICK PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESENTATION DAY

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Randwick Public School held its annual presentation day on 18 December 2012.
- (2) Congratulates all those Randwick Public School students who received prizes.

CLOVELLY PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESENTATION DAY

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Clovelly Public School held its annual presentation day on 18 December 2012.
- (2) Congratulates all those Clovelly Public School students who received prizes.

WOLLONDILLY AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Commends the Wollondilly Australia Day award nominees for their work in the community.
- (2) Congratulates Graham (Lofty) Richardson on winning Wollondilly Citizen of the Year.
- (3) Congratulates the following local residents on winning their respective categories:
Sportsperson of the Year - Kim-Maree Teale,
Young Achiever of the Year - James Baker,
Achiever of the Year - Gary Picken,
Community Group/Organisation of the Year - Rotary Club of Wollondilly North,
Young Citizen of the Year - Clare Stace, and
Senior Citizen of the Year - Jim Whyte.

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEERS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Commends the volunteers of the NSW Rural Fire Service and other emergency services for their dedication and assistance during this fire season.

- (2) Notes the significant fire activity experienced across New South Wales and other states recently.
- (3) Notes the significant flooding experienced in parts of New South Wales and other states recently.
- (4) Commends the Wollondilly community for its vigilance in guarding against potential bushfire threats during this fire season.

MACARTHUR CYSTIC FIBROSIS SWIMATHON

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Commends the Wollondilly and Macarthur region for their recent support of the annual Cystic Fibrosis Swimathon.
- (2) Notes that over \$110,000 has been raised in the region in 2013.
- (3) Notes that over \$300,000 has been raised in total over recent years in Macarthur, in particular at the Picton Leisure Centre in Wollondilly.
- (4) Commends local woman Michelle Ng (née Fenech) for all of her efforts.
- (5) Commends the local event organising committee.

INTERNATIONAL BOXING FEDERATION SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPION DANIEL GEALE

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates local boxer Daniel Geale, of Harrington Park, on winning the International Boxing Federation Super Middleweight World Championship recently.
- (2) Notes that Mr Geale beat his Australian competitor Anthony Mundine on a points decision.
- (3) Commends Mr Geale for his work as a role model for the youth of Macarthur.

PORT STEPHENS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR FINALIST DAVID PEMBERTON

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Notes the valuable contribution that David Pemberton, of Medowie, has made to the community through his volunteering efforts.
- (2) Acknowledges Mr Pemberton's involvement with the Port Stephens Police Citizens Youth Club, particularly his commitment to develop leadership skills in young people.
- (3) Thanks Mr Pemberton for his volunteering efforts in the local community and congratulates him for being a finalist in the 2012 Port Stephens Volunteer of the Year Awards.

PORT STEPHENS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR FINALIST JOHN OLSEN

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Notes the valuable contribution that John Olsen, of Soldiers Point, has made to the community through his volunteering efforts.
- (2) Acknowledges his involvement with the Port Stephens unit of Marine Rescue NSW.
- (3) Thanks Mr Olsen for his volunteering efforts in the local community and congratulates him for being a finalist in the 2012 Port Stephens Volunteer of the Year Awards.

PORT STEPHENS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR FINALIST LOUISE MOORE

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Notes the valuable contribution that Louise Moore, of Soldiers Point, has made to the community through her volunteering efforts.
- (2) Acknowledges her involvement with the Port Stephens unit of Marine Rescue NSW.
- (3) Thanks Mrs Moore for her volunteering efforts in the local community and congratulates her for being a finalist in the 2012 Port Stephens Volunteer of the Year Awards.

PORT STEPHENS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR FINALIST MICHAEL PIERPOINT

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Notes the valuable contribution that Michael Pierpoint, of Corlette, has made to the community through his volunteering efforts.

- (2) Acknowledges his involvement with the Port Stephens unit of Marine Rescue NSW.
- (3) Thanks Mr Pierpoint for his volunteering efforts in the local community and congratulates him for being a finalist in the 2012 Port Stephens Volunteer of the Year Awards.

PORT STEPHENS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR FINALIST PETER PRITCHARD

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Notes the valuable contribution that Peter Pritchard, of Tea Gardens, has made to the community through his volunteering efforts.
- (2) Acknowledges his involvement with the Myall River Action Group, the Rural Fire Service and the Tea Gardens Hawks Nest Progress Association.
- (3) Thanks Mr Pritchard for his volunteering efforts in the local community and congratulates him for being a finalist in the 2012 Port Stephens Volunteer of the Year Awards.

TRIBUTE TO THERESE MURRAY

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the efforts of Therese Murray over twenty five years with the Hills Shire News and her involvement in many community events.
- (2) Wishes Ms Murray the best for all endeavours and particularly for her future work at the Central Coast Express Advocate.

NSW COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENT LARRY BOLITHO

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Larry Bolitho on his New South Wales Community Service Award which recognises his ongoing service to community groups around the Hills.
- (2) Notes the great qualities imbued by Mr Bolitho.

YOUTH OLYMPIC FESTIVAL SILVER MEDALLIST DOMINIC CLARKE

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Dominic Clarke on achieving a silver medal in the synchronised trampoline event at the Youth Olympic Festival.
- (2) Wishes Dominic luck in any future competitions.

YOUTH OLYMPIC FESTIVAL BRONZE MEDALLIST KIRA WARD

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kira Ward on achieving bronze at the Youth Olympic Festival.
- (2) Wishes Kira luck in any future competitions.

GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY GIANTS ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT SQUAD MEMBER ALEXANDER ORGAN

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Alexander Organ on being selected for the Giants Academy's Western Sydney Under 15 Development Squad.
- (2) Wishes Alexander all the best in his future endeavours with the Australian Football League.

BUDOKAN JUDO CLUB

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Castle Hill Budokan Judo Club on having three of its members Naomi De-Brune, Josh Katz and Cameron Leishman win medals at the 2013 Australian Youth Olympic Festival held in January 2013.
- (2) Recognises the efforts of the Castle Hill Budokan Judo Club in developing and helping young people in the area of judo.

KARATE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS SILVER MEDALLIST UDAY BAROOH

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Uday Barooh on receiving a silver medal in the 14-15s kumite freestyle sparring category at the Karate World Championships.
- (2) Wishes Uday all the best for all future events as he continues to better himself as an athlete.

NSW AGE SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS GOLD MEDALLIST SIENNA MCDONALD

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Sienna McDonald on winning gold in the 100 metres and 200 metres backstroke events at the New South Wales Age Swimming Championships.
- (2) Wishes Sienna every success at the national championships to be held later in 2013.

AUSTRALIAN HOCKEYROOS PLAYER EDWINA BONE

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Orange hockey player Edwina Bone on her selection for the Australian Hockeyroos.
- (2) Notes that the 24-year-old Orange Confederates player made her debut for the Australian team in November at the International Super Series Hockey 9s in Perth.
- (3) Notes that Ms Bone was a goal scorer for Australia against Malaysia at the tournament, which was won by the Hockeyroos.
- (4) Wishes Ms Bone a long and successful career as an international hockey player for Australia.

NSW TOURISM AWARDS BRONZE MEDALLIST LOWE WINES

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Lowe Wines on winning a bronze medal in the Tourism Wineries, Distilleries and Breweries category at the New South Wales Tourism Awards on 22 November 2012.
- (2) Notes that Lowe Wines principal David Lowe has been a driving force behind wine tourism in the Mudgee district for many years.
- (3) Recognises the importance of wine tourism to the Mudgee region and the economic benefit it brings to this picturesque region of New South Wales.

RETIREMENT OF JENNY SKINNER

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates former Mid-Western Regional Council receptionist Jenny Skinner on a job well done.
- (2) Notes that Ms Skinner, who is visually impaired, has been the friendly voice answering the telephone at the Mid-Western Regional Council and the former Mudgee Shire Council for 24 years.
- (3) Wishes Ms Skinner a happy retirement and trusts that her move to Brisbane allows her to access a larger network of services for people who are visually impaired.

TRIBUTE TO DR BRIAN HEBER

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the passing of former Mudgee general practitioner Dr Brian Heber on 19 October 2012.
- (2) Notes that Dr Heber served the Mudgee community for 39 years until he retired from practice in 2004.
- (3) Offers condolences to his wife Janice, children Penny, Angus and Wendy and his eight grandchildren.

QUEEN'S SCOUT AWARD RECIPIENT KENT HAYMAN

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kent Hayman, of Orange, on being presented with the Queen's Scout Award.

- (2) Notes that in qualifying for the Queen's Scout Award Kent set many goals, and planned how to achieve those goals by participating in a triathlon, getting his provisional motorcycle licence, bushwalking and assisting the Orange Blood Bank and Riding for the Disabled as a volunteer.
- (3) Wishes Kent future success for his travels in Australia and overseas during his upcoming two gap years before pursuing tertiary education.

MUDGEES CRICKETER SCOTT HENRY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mudgee born cricketer Scott Henry on the occasion of scoring his maiden century for the Chairman's XI against Sri Lanka at Manuka Oval, Canberra, on 6 December 2013.
- (2) Notes that Mr Henry has been in excellent for the NSW Blues in the Sheffield Shield competition scoring half centuries in both innings against Victoria prior to his 207 runs not out against Sri Lanka.
- (3) Further notes that Mr Henry was born in Mudgee and all his formative years were played in Mudgee District Cricket before he began playing in the Sydney Grade competition.
- (4) Wishes Mr Henry every success in his quest to play cricket at the highest level and trusts that one day he will wear the baggy green Australian cap.

CUDAL PHARMACIST MOHEB ELSOUBKY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates pharmacist Moheb Elsubky on the opening of his new pharmacy in the town of Cudal.
- (2) Notes that the town of Cudal has not had a pharmacy in the town for many years.
- (3) Recognises that the people of Cudal will benefit from Mr Elsubky's investment and commitment to the Cudal community and wishes him every success in this new venture.

TRIBUTE TO HARRY MEYER

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the passing of legendary horse breaker Harry Meyer on 15 December 2012 at the age of 87.
- (2) Notes that Mr Meyer educated horses for some of the most noted trainers in horse racing including the legendary Tommy Smith.
- (3) Recognises that Mr Meyer was also highly regarded as a teacher of the next generation of horse breakers including Max Crockett of Mudgee, who has been retained by the famous Gooree Park Stud at Mudgee for more than 20 years to educate their racehorses.
- (4) Offers condolences to Mr Meyer's wife Valda and his children Rory and Shaune.

TRIBUTE TO RAY GOOLEY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the passing of Mudgee veterinarian and equestrian enthusiast Ray Gooley.
- (2) Notes that in addition to being highly regarded in veterinary services, Mr Gooley was a former chairman, committeeman and supporter of the Mudgee Race Club and a strong supporter of the Mudgee Endurance Club and their rides.
- (3) Offers condolences to Mr Gooley's wife Kerry, his children and grandchildren and his mother Dot Gooley.

Question put and resolved in the affirmative.

Community recognition notices agreed to.

HUNTER POLICE STATIONS PROPOSED CLOSURES

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.08 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the report of the Parsons Review proposes the closure and sale of Charlestown, Cardiff and Boolaroo police stations; and
- (2) notes the community in the western suburbs of Newcastle and in Lake Macquarie has called on the Government to explain why these police stations are proposed to close and why there are no plans to build any new police stations in the area.

The recent decision of the New South Wales Minister for Police and Emergency Services to abandon his election commitment to build Glendale police station and, instead, use the funding to renovate stations in Liberal and Independent electorates is a hotly discussed subject locally. I intend to make four compelling points relating to this matter. In January this year reports emerged regarding the lodgement by the NSW Police Force of \$16 million to refurbish Hunter police stations in Belmont, Toronto and Morisset. This move will no doubt boost morale for police officers working in poor conditions. My first point is that, although I welcome this support for police in the Hunter, it appears that other stations nearby are neglected and consequently will be closed and sold.

Despite the grand financial announcement to invest in a select few facilities, little has been said regarding the future of police stations at Charlestown, Cardiff and Boolaroo. The Government's lack of action suggests that we should be awaiting an imminent announcement regarding their closure. I give notice to this House that the closure and the sale of these stations are profoundly concerning and will further compromise the safety and security of residents in the Hunter suburbs of, for example, Edgeworth, West Wallsend, Argenton and Cardiff. This action signals that people in my electorate will not be served by a police station in close proximity.

Building the Glendale station would have covered the suburbs mentioned very well, but this Government scrapped plans for Glendale. My second point is the evidence. With a quick flick through any Hunter newspaper, the community is bombarded with report after report covering recent senseless acts of crime. How are our hardworking police officers able to fight criminal behaviour without adequate resources at hand? Police Association of NSW President Scott Webber said there were dilapidated stations across the Hunter and Lake Macquarie requiring attention. He said:

You can't expect police to work in those kinds of conditions, but unfortunately it's happening right across the region.

The escalating spate of crime in the Hunter demands superior resources for our struggling officers. A recent example is that on 17 January Newcastle police dealt with three violent robberies occurring within three hours of each other. In one instance, a group of six people were threatened by two males and a female while waiting for a train at Warabrook railway station. Criminals are becoming more unrelenting and aggressive, and will offend at any opportune moment. Having ample resources and a high police presence is essential to combating crime. We cannot just ignore Charlestown, Cardiff and Boolaroo police stations and leave them dormant. These stations also need to be included in the current refurbishment program to allow the police to play a pivotal role in responding to community needs and reducing crime.

My third point is about decisions made without the benefit of facts. Once upon a time, the Government approved new regional police headquarters for Glendale. The rationale was that Glendale is projected to experience continual increases in population as well as economic development. Glendale residents received a slap in the face when Minister Mike Gallacher canned plans for the station. The distance between Glendale and Toronto is unacceptable, taking at least 20 minutes to commute on a good day, not in peak-hour traffic. As reported on 24 November 2010, shadow Minister for Police Mike Gallacher said the proposed police hub at Glendale was crucial due to the expected population growth in the region. That person is now the Minister who subsequently scrapped these plans.

The facts are that the Glendale interchange submission compiled by Lake Macquarie City Council for Infrastructure Australia says that the areas of Glendale and Cardiff are the largest employment zones in the region and are expected to experience a population boom with an additional 6,200 jobs and 4,000 homes by 2013. How will Toronto and Belmont police serve the fundamental needs of safety and security of a growing population when stations are located so far away? The proximity of Glendale and Cardiff to commercial, business, education, sporting and medical facilities demands adequate resources that will simply not be delivered once police stations in Charlestown, Cardiff and Boolaroo are sold. My final point is that the Parsons audit identified the necessity to increase police in the Hunter. Attention must be directed to this area. All evidence makes that clear. Almost two years ago, after Peter Parsons was tasked with reviewing the State's police force, and many months after the Minister for Police and Emergency Services received the report, deliberations continue.

Mr Parsons recommended that more officers be dispatched to country areas such as the Hunter as he found that "local patrolling, being seen on a regular basis ... is a rarity in the smaller towns through regional areas." The O'Farrell Government cancelled the September intake of 300 students at the Goulburn Police Academy, and it has not placed more recruits in regional areas. Instead, it has ensured that there are 300 less officers patrolling the streets to service the fundamental and basic needs of safety and security for people in the

Hunter. The escalating incidence of crime and feedback from community members reveal one key notion: the necessity to increase police numbers in the Hunter and ensure that the western suburbs of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie are adequately protected. Closing police stations and thus diminishing police resources is not the answer. I urge the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to reconsider any plans to sell Charlestown, Cardiff and Boolaroo police stations and ensure that the western suburbs of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie have ready access to police, and high visibility policing.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.15 a.m.]: I lead for the Government. I am at a bit of a loss in deciding whether to speak for or against the motion since the very premise of it is totally and utterly inaccurate. The member for Wallsend has got it wrong. It is obvious to everyone on this side of the House that she has not read the report because anyone who had read it would know that it does not propose the closure and sale of Charlestown police station, it does not propose the closure and sale of Cardiff police station, and it does not propose the closure and sale of Boolaroo police station. What it does provide is a list of proposed divestments drawn up when the Labor Party was in power. The former Labor Government closed police stations. It starved regional areas. I sat on the other side of the Chamber and begged the various police Ministers on the Government side for adequate resources. We appealed all the time, but we got absolutely nothing.

The political appointments and decisions of the former Labor Government were based on supporting itself and not the fine people of New South Wales, particularly those living in regional areas. It was the Labor Party's secret list. The very reason why this Government made a commitment to carry out the audit in the first place was so that we could uncover what the Labor Party had been hiding. I heard police Ministers in this very Chamber say that the perception in my electorate, on the North Coast and in other regional areas—I believe even in Kiama—was that there was no crime at all. That is what was in everyone's mind. When we went back to our electorates we saw the crime and we saw the victims. It was a disgrace. At that time I called on the former Minister for Police Michael Daley to resign for misleading the House and using political means to support Labor.

As members would be aware, the whole point of the audit was to give us and the community a clear picture of where our police are and where they should be. It is an essential exercise. After 16 years of fudged figures—and I really mean that—as well as increased bureaucracy and countless station closures, the neglectful manner in which the former Labor Government operated is no more apparent than the way in which it went about stripping communities of police. If the member for Wallsend had bothered to read the audit report properly, she would have noticed that the report recommends an urgent review of divestment plans put together under the former Labor Government. Nowhere in the Ministerial Audit of Police Resources does it propose the closure and sale of Charlestown, Cardiff or Boolaroo police stations. As the Member for Wallsend would be well aware, the Liberal-Nationals Government has done more for policing in the Hunter and Lake Macquarie area in a year and a half than those opposite managed in 16 years.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: It was 16 years of neglect. The former Labor Government and some of its police Ministers insulted our fine hardworking men and women on the front line. I was in this Chamber when we called on them to apologise. In less than half a term of government versus four terms in government for those opposite, we have done a lot more than they did. We have more police. Operational strength is up to 90 per cent across regional New South Wales. It was not that high under the former Labor Government. I suggest that the member for Wallsend take another look at the report, which I understand is available on the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services website. The Commissioner of Police has provided the formal response to the recommendations on behalf of the Police Force. The Police force is continuing to work hard to implement a number of reform proposals and to address areas of concern raised by the audit.

As the Minister for Police and Emergency Services advised in the other place, 11 of the audit recommendations have been either implemented or are in the process of being implemented. A further six recommendations have been endorsed in principle or referred to a separate review process. Key reforms arising from the audit have already been implemented, including the adoption of the 90 per cent operational strength goal for front-line commands. A new training program for police leaders commenced in March 2012. Recently the Police Force and the Government announced that over the next two years 20 local area commands in the Sydney metropolitan area will be merged into 10. This year it is proposed to merge eight commands into four. After the first stage is implemented and assessed it is proposed a further 12 commands will merge into six.

I know I speak for all those on this side of the Chamber when I congratulate the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Commissioner of Police on their ongoing commitment to the people of Lake

Macquarie and regional New South Wales. Today the Minister and the commissioner were here to thank the State Emergency Service volunteers for their dedication. I am a firm believer in allowing professionals to do their job without political interference. I sat on the other side of the Chamber for four years and saw the political interference and the changing of Ministers and Premiers to the detriment of the front-line services in New South Wales. That is why I am pleased to speak to this motion. I am even more pleased to stand behind the hardworking men and women of the NSW Police Force, whereas members opposite try to pull them down at every chance they get. It is a disgraceful attitude. I am proud to stand behind the police, as is every other member on this side of the Chamber.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [11.22 a.m.]: There is something predictable about the rhetoric that comes out of the mouth of the member for Tweed about members on this side not respecting the work of the police.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Tweed has had his opportunity to contribute to the debate. The member for Cessnock has the call.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: With regard to the concept—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The Clerk will restart the clock. The member for Cessnock has been rudely interrupted.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: With regard to the claim that those on this side do not respect the work of the Police Force, I can say that members on both sides of the Chamber respect the work of our police. The Independents in the Chamber respect the police as do The Greens. I can stand here today and say I am proud of the work being done by the police. The police themselves would say they are the best resourced, best equipped and largest Police Force in the history of New South Wales. I am proud that the former Labor Government appointed an extra 2,000 police and I am happy that the present Government is introducing another 550 new officers to the Police Force during its first term. That is all fantastic news.

There is a Hunter Region Development Strategy and we are talking about population growth in the western suburbs of Newcastle, the western suburbs of Lake Macquarie and right through the Hunter region. This population growth is highlighted at the edge of my electorate where Minmi is expecting another 2,500 houses to be developed. Cameron Park is a development of some 5,000 houses and is in its latter stages. There is also the recent Hammersmith development at West Wallsend of about 1,000 houses. All three of these new sites—villages, towns, whatever you want to call them—are within a five- to 10-kilometre area as the crow flies. It is quite a small and intensive housing and population area, and one worthy of consideration in our future policing needs. Meanwhile, the policing seems to be moving further and further away.

At the Beresfield end of the electorate there is increased population and housing through the Thornton region and there is an industrial estate at Beresfield on Wheatleys Drive that is also booming. There is potential for a further industrial estate around Black Hill. These are all areas to the west of what has long been the Newcastle-Lake Macquarie strip of high-density population. During this population boom and expansion into western Lake Macquarie and the western suburbs of Newcastle we need to be smart and plan for and build policing units that will service these communities. Just because people are second, third or fourth in the queue does not mean they are not entitled to the police stations they all deserve and require.

I appreciate that under the former Labor Government we moved towards local area commands, but that approach has failed in regional New South Wales. It just has not worked. Villages and towns are geographically dispersed and good policing relies on good local knowledge, which means that the police need to go into those towns and regions frequently. I know that we rely these days on something called "intelligent policing", which in turn relies on reports coming in from the community. The communities in the electorate of Cessnock, the villages that are dispersed and far away from an area command, have given up on reporting crime. They just do not see the police presence. We need to get the police back out into those villages and areas. They need to have local knowledge so that they can do their policing most effectively. I call for more resources, as we all do in this Chamber, within the budgetary constraints of New South Wales, but in particular for the western suburbs of Newcastle and those smaller villages throughout the electorate of Cessnock.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [11.26 a.m.]: I support the comments of my colleague the member for Tweed. The member for Wallsend has got this wrong. The audit does not propose the closure and sale of Charlestown, Cardiff or Boolaroo police stations. In fact, I cannot find where it proposes the closure

and sale of any police station. Certainly it reproduces a list of police stations that were scheduled to be closed and sold under the former Labor Government. And certainly it is a list that the former Labor Government was well aware of, something that some of those opposite could not deny without potentially misleading the House. As the Member for Tweed has already informed the House, the whole point of the ministerial audit was to help give us and the community a clear picture of where our police are and where they need to be.

The findings of the audit are a sad indictment on the way the Labor Party governed this State for 16 years. Let us look at some of its other findings. The audit, conducted by former Assistant Commissioner Peter Parsons found that most front-line commands were operating with significantly fewer staff than the last Government actually reported. This is much truer of regional New South Wales than it is of Sydney, where neighbouring resources and specialist squads are much closer by. It is been said in this House that this audit only told us what we already knew: communities in regional areas were crying out for more police. One of this Government's first acts in light of the audit was to see that the majority of students from the class that attested from the Police Academy in December 2011 went to rural and regional local area commands. Of course, this included local area commands that patrol the western suburbs of Newcastle.

In fact, since March 2011, 31 probationary constables have been allocated to Lake Macquarie Local Area Command; that is the figure as at 5 December 2012. Another 32 probationary constables have been allocated to Newcastle City Local Area Command over the same period. The member for Wallsend is scaremongering. The Parsons review is a great document, but it is missing one thing. The Parsons review was our opportunity to represent our communities and tell Mr Parsons what they needed. The Parsons review is missing a submission from the member for Wallsend. It was our opportunity to represent our communities and it was an opportunity that the member for Wallsend did not take. The member for Wallsend has raised the issue of policing regularly. I know she is passionate about it and I share her passion, but she had an opportunity to make a contribution to the review and chose not to do so.

The Liberal-Nationals Government is proud of what has been achieved in only a short time. It will continue to work hard to repair the damage caused by Labor Government neglect over the past 16 years. I take this opportunity to mention the fundraising walk taking place from Tuggerah Lakes Local Area Command to Tamworth Local Area Command in recognition of the first anniversary of the tragic death of David Rixon in Tamworth. Police officers currently are walking from Tuggerah Lakes to Tamworth in acknowledgement of their colleague. This is an opportunity to highlight the great work of our police who put their lives in danger every day to protect our communities. I commend them for their efforts. The motion of the member for Wallsend is scaremongering. There are no plans— [*Time expired.*]

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [11.30 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend and acknowledge the sincere efforts of the member for Charlestown in promoting the Tuggerah Lakes to Tamworth fundraising walk, which is for an excellent cause. The next time the member for Charlestown goes for a walk he should wander through Martin Place. Every day, as I wander from the station through Martin Place, I see people doing cartwheels. After making some inquiries I discovered that they were Treasury officials who were delighted at the latest dudding of their budget by a State Government Minister. Every day Treasury officials do cartwheels in Martin Place as they pull the wool over the eyes of yet another Government Minister. It is policy lunacy to be reducing police numbers when crime is on the increase across regional New South Wales and across our city. That is what is happening; police numbers are reducing. Earlier the member for Tweed said that it was this Government's intention to ensure that 90 per cent of authorised strength was employed at all times. Guess what? The previous Government ensured that authorised strength was employed at all times.

Mr Geoff Provost: You fudged the figures.

Mr NATHAN REES: There was no fudging of the figures. To cover those periods when police officers were off on annual leave, sick leave or personal leave, the previous Government overemployed police officers to ensure that the NSW Police Force remained the fourth largest police force in the world. Five out of 17 crime categories are on the increase in New South Wales. This Government entered office with 17 out of 17 of the most serious crime categories either stable or falling. Two years into its term five out of 17 categories are in an inferior condition. Those categories include cattle rustling, amphetamine production, amphetamine distribution and the 200-odd shootings that occurred in the last calendar year.

This Government's response is to shut police stations, reduce police numbers, reduce police resources, and relax gun control in New South Wales. Opposition members got cosy with their gun club mates in the upper House to get through a dodgy electricity bill. The safety of communities and its streets in New South Wales are

in peril as a result of policy paucity because this Government has no idea how to deal with organised crime as it manifests itself in drive-by shootings across western and south-western Sydney. I have said it before and I will say it again: If those shootings were occurring in leafy Ku-ring-gai, the home of the Premier, he would be pulling out all stops to resolve that issue. There has been no offer of a reward. Instead, the Attorney General, who wants to let criminals out of jail, was dragged kicking and screaming to reintroduce legislation.

Mr Bryan Doyle: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 73. The member is straying from the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I ask the member for Toongabbie to return to the motion as moved by the member for Wallsend.

Mr NATHAN REES: Clearly I have struck a nerve. In defence of my colleague the member for Wallsend, the member for Charlestown said that she did not make a submission to the Parsons inquiry. The Opposition did in fact make a submission. I made a submission on behalf of the Opposition after a closed consultation with the member for Wallsend and other interested and affected Opposition members. These closures and audit are in response to a non-issue concocted by the Government, namely, a budget issue. In response to this concocted budget issue we have seen police stations close, a reduction in funds for TAFE, a reduction in funds for schools, a reduction in funds for hospitals, and the list goes on. Treasury is the tail that wags on this sorry old dog.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [11.34 a.m.]: I contribute to debate on the motion moved by the member for Wallsend and note the fine contribution of the member for Toongabbie who entertained all members while speaking about this matter. The member for Toongabbie is well versed on this issue as a result of his experience in his ministerial portfolio. As the member for Lake Macquarie—an area that has been referred to extensively in this debate, in particular, by the member for Wallsend and the member for Cessnock—I need to address some issues. I agree with the member for Tweed, the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, on the need to separate political aspirations and political views from the operational needs of policing. I have advocated for additional police for the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command which incorporates the Lake Macquarie electorate and the electorates of the member for Cessnock, the member for Wallsend, the member for Charlestown and the member for Swansea. I sympathise with the member for Wallsend as there is no police station in her electorate. However, because of the growth in that area and in other remote areas policing issues must be addressed. Only a small area of the electorate of the member for Cessnock falls within the purview of the Lake Macquarie electorate. However, the arguments raised earlier by the member for Wallsend relate also to his electorate.

I support the recommendations in the Parsons review. Peter Parsons is an experienced senior police officer and was the northern region commander. I believe he was the appropriate person to carry out an audit and to make those recommendations. It has not all been wonderful news for Lake Macquarie which is losing its local area command and that will be relocated to Belmont. That would not have been my wish; it is nice to have a local area command within one's electorate. However, I support the recommendations because it is appropriate for police to make those decisions. I note that the member for Swansea is in the Chamber. He will be the beneficiary of a local area command at the upgraded Belmont station, which I support. Lake Macquarie's improvements include the upgrade of Toronto and Morisset stations. I am pleased that officers will have suitable premises to carry out their activities and better deploy their members. We should all continue to seek additional police officers for the local area commands in our electorates.

This morning the Premier and members of this Parliament thanked emergency service volunteers for the fine work that they have done recently in New South Wales. I took the opportunity to thank Shane Fitzsimmons for the work of the NSW Rural Fire Service and also referred the matter of employing additional police officers to Andrew Scipione. The Government and police should do more to address the issues that have been raised by the member for Wallsend as there is a policing deficit in her electorate.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.38 a.m.], by leave: I commend the member for Wallsend for moving this motion. She is well within her rights to raise concerns about the Parsons review and its potential impact on police commands in the Hunter region. It has been revealed in recent months that the Government intends to slash the police establishment from 80 officers to 50 officers. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has not refuted that claim; in fact, he has already started to merge some of the Sydney local area commands and we have already seen a backlash. The decision to merge the Botany Bay Local Area Command and the St George Local Area Command was quickly reversed in response to widespread opposition. The Minister has

now decided to merge the St George and Hurstville local area commands. I will be interested to see whether Coalition members in that area stick up for their communities. I made a submission to the Parsons review last year in which I raised my concerns about the Bankstown Local Area Command. The review recommended—

Mr Bryan Doyle: Point of order: As much as we love to hear about Bankstown, the member is straying from the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The motion does mention the Parsons review. However, I ask the member for Bankstown to be cognisant of the motion before the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: The member for Charlestown said that constituents in rural and regional areas are crying out for more police officers, and so they should. However, he did not say that instead of recruiting additional police officers and providing more resources this Government slashed the intake at the NSW Police Academy at Goulburn last September. The Government should not move police officers from Sydney local area commands to regional areas; it should be increasing police resources across the State. There have been 200 shootings in Sydney since the Coalition came to government in March 2011. The member for Toongabbie was right when he said that if those shootings had occurred in Ku-ring-gai—

Mr Bryan Doyle: Point of order: The member for Bankstown is again straying from the leave of the motion. The motion clearly refers to the Parsons review and the Charlestown, Cardiff and Boolaroo police stations.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Bankstown will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: A report published by the Auditor-General in December indicated that the NSW Police Force had a staffing shortfall of 943 full-time equivalents. What has the Government said about that? It has said absolutely nothing. There is no doubt that the Government intends to reduce the number of local area commands from 80 to 50. That is a serious issue across the State, including in the Hunter region. I again commend the member for Wallsend for moving this motion. Members opposite should support it because their constituents want to see more police officers— [*Time expired.*]

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.42 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Tweed, Cessnock, Charlestown, Toongabbie, Lake Macquarie and Bankstown for their contributions. I also thank the member for Campbelltown for his three spurious points of order. Neither the member for Charlestown nor the member for Tweed, who is the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, mentioned the poor residents of Charlestown, Argenton and the other areas that will be impacted because there will no longer be a police station at Glendale. They do not rate.

Mr Geoff Provest: That is rubbish.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: You did not mention them. Which poor ministerial staffer in Sydney wrote your speech? I suggest that next time, whoever it was who wrote a speech for you, you should deal with the motion. This motion refers to local police stations, local jobs and police station closures.

Mr Andrew Cornwell: You are scaremongering.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Do not call out. You are very rude.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Wallsend will direct her comments through the Chair.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Will you please ask your members not to call out?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member is well aware that I am in charge of the House.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Then do your job.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! It is working well at the moment. I do not need advice from the member for Wallsend. The member will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: The poor long-suffering residents obviously do not matter to the member for Charlestown or the member for Tweed because they did not bother to mention them. I am sorry that the minions

in Sydney who wrote their speeches know nothing about what is happening in the Hunter. It is my job to stick up for the people of the Hunter and I am proud that I was re-elected for doing so. I want the member for Tweed and the member for Charlestown to put on the record that the Charlestown, Cardiff and Boolaroo police stations will not be sold. They have claimed that they will not be, so it will be interesting to see what happens. The member for Charlestown said that I have it wrong, but the community disagrees.

People in the Glendale area believe the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has slapped them in the face. When he was the shadow Minister he promised that when the Coalition was elected he would ensure that a regional police command was established at Glendale. He is on the record as making that promise. Despite that, he has reneged and the people of Glendale have been abandoned. I agree with the member for Charlestown that the community is crying out for more police officers. Why did his Government cancel the intake of 300 students at the NSW Police Academy? The member for Toongabbie was right when he said that the police budget cuts are lunacy when crime is on the increase. Why are the statistics for 17 crime categories on the increase in Sydney and in the Hunter? There were more than 200 shootings last calendar year.

The member for Lake Macquarie is right in stating that I am referring to police stations in other areas. I must do that because there is no police station in my growing Wallsend electorate. There would have been a police station in Glendale but members opposite reneged on their election commitment. I have a growing population and no police station. My constituents live on the fringes of local area commands, which means that police officers must travel long distances to provide assistance to the long-suffering communities in my electorate that are facing increasing crime rates. I will continue to lobby for more police resources on behalf of my communities because someone must. I will lobby for greater police protection and security for my constituents. I urge all members to support this worthy motion.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 20

Mr Barr	Ms Hornery	Mr Robertson
Ms Burney	Mr Lynch	Ms Tebbutt
Ms Burton	Dr McDonald	Ms Watson
Mr Daley	Ms Mihailuk	Mr Zangari
Mr Furolo	Mr Park	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Hay	Mrs Perry	Mr Amery
Mr Hoenig	Mr Rees	Mr Lalich

Noes, 64

Mr Anderson	Mr Gee	Mr Piper
Mr Annesley	Mr George	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Ms Gibbons	Mr Roberts
Mr Ayres	Mr Grant	Mr Rohan
Mr Baird	Mr Greenwich	Mr Rowell
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mrs Sage
Mr Bassett	Mr Hartcher	Mr Sidoti
Mr Baumann	Mr Hazzard	Mr Smith
Ms Berejiklian	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Souris
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Speakman
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Issa	Mr Stokes
Mr Conolly	Mr Kean	Mr Stoner
Mr Constance	Dr Lee	Mr Toole
Mr Cornwell	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Torbay
Mr Coure	Mr O'Dea	Ms Upton
Mrs Davies	Mr O'Farrell	Mr Webber
Mr Dominello	Mr Owen	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
Mr Edwards	Mr Parker	
Mr Evans	Ms Parker	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Flowers	Mr Patterson	Mr Maguire
Mr Fraser	Mr Perrottet	Mr J. D. Williams

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

GOSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOL RELOCATION

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [11.56 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the decision to relocate Gosford Public School to the Henry Kendall High School site due to the small size of the school's current site and proposed loss of access to council playing fields;
- (2) notes the concern of parents and the community about the relocation and its impact on students; and
- (3) calls on the Minister for Education to meet with the concerned parents and community members and work with them to address the concerns about the relocation of the school.

Gosford Public School, which was established in 1855, is a school that has strong support from parents and the community.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Not on that site.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: That may well be the case; nonetheless it is a school with a long history of strong support from parents and the community. This is not the first time this matter has been discussed in the House. The challenges confronting the location of Gosford Public School and the rationale for its relocation to the Henry Kendall High School grounds have been well canvassed. With the revitalisation of the Gosford City Centre under the Gosford Challenge, playing fields that were frequently used by the school were no longer accessible, planned traffic changes were incompatible with the ongoing use of the Gosford Public School site and the opening of Kariong Mountains High School will mean that the student population at Henry Kendall High School will decline over the next few years.

This matter is not straightforward or easy. However, it is well known that parents and the parents and citizens association are unhappy with the decision to relocate that school. Initially that decision was made by the former Labor Government. I congratulate the community on its passionate advocacy of the school. It is wonderful to have a group of parents and community members who feel so strongly about their children's education. When the Coalition was in opposition it agreed that it would review the decision to relocate the school and made enormous political mileage out of it.

I have met with representatives of the parents and citizens association who raised their concerns about the relocation of the school. Those concerns include that the Henry Kendall site is too small and will be overcrowded; students at the two schools will be forced to share buildings and playground space; the management of shared facilities and playground space on one site, while maintaining two separate schools, presents a range of difficulties that they do not believe have been adequately resolved; future enrolments will outpace available vacancies at the school by 2015; the special education unit at Henry Kendall High School will need to be relocated to what they believe to be a less suitable site at the school; and surrounding streets will need to be upgraded. However, that is yet to be determined by council to account for new traffic and parking needs.

The greatest concern of the parents I met was that the review promised by the Coalition and undertaken by the Minister was a Clayton's review—namely, a review conducted without community consultation, without speaking with parents and students, and without proper consideration of alternative sites. Parents in the community had their expectations raised by Coalition members who campaigned endlessly on this issue in the lead-up to the last election—a number of them are now members of the Government—that a genuine review would be conducted. However—as we have seen happen on many issues under this Government—after the election an underwhelming process confirmed the relocation.

As I said earlier, I well know that issues around school relocations can be difficult and balancing the competing, complex factors can be challenging. But at the end of the day it is the Government's responsibility to manage these issues—it is not easy, but it has to be done. It is the Government's responsibility to talk with the community and to find ways to allay parents' very real and legitimate concerns about how their children will get the best possible education. That is one of the most important issues for any parent. Parents want to be confident that when they send their children to the local public school they will receive the best possible education and that all their concerns are being considered and addressed properly. My motion calls on the Minister to sit down with parents in the community and find a way to address their concerns and to reassure them about the future of their children's education.

I acknowledge that some time has elapsed since this motion was placed on the *Business Paper* and that a lot of water has passed under the bridge. I also acknowledge that there has been significant progress with the relocation and that the building work is well underway on the Henry Kendall site—though I note the work is behind schedule given that we were assured it would be completed by the end of 2012. Although the Government has a limited range of available siting options, it should still reassure parents that the management of this site—which is complicated by two schools being located there—will be addressed properly. The Government also needs to assure parents, for example, that the shared facilities and the playground space issues will be addressed, that there will be suitable capacity for enrolments into the future, and that the special education unit at Henry Kendall High School will be accommodated properly. Surely it is not too much to expect the Minister to sit down with the parents and find a way to resolve these issues. I urge members to support the motion, which I commend to the House.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [12.02 p.m.]: With the utmost respect to the member for Marrickville, this motion has been superseded by a series of events and, indeed, time. The member spoke about a review but there has been ongoing assessment of this project as it has developed. The debate on 29 March 2012 in this House on a petition signed by 10,000 or more persons protesting the relocation of Gosford Public School occurred after the member's motion had been placed on the *Business Paper*. The motion has been superseded by the demolition of the antiquated, old section of the then Henry Kendall High School. It has been superseded by the release of tenders and the construction that is underway for Gosford Public School. It has been superseded by the development application processed by the joint review panel in September, the development application dealt with by Gosford council in October, and the refurbishment of various classrooms and staff facilities, which were completed in January.

Indeed, many additions and improvements have been made as a consequence of the ongoing assessment process regarding the former Government's original proposal. The special education unit has been relocated. I have toured the site, and I inform the House that the staff and students are very pleased with their new location. The member for Marrickville also commented on the school's adjoining residential roads. As late as last week Gosford City Council gave a briefing and a budgetary commitment concerning the road improvement works that are to take place in Faunce Street West. Those works are expected to cost in the vicinity of \$1 million. So come 2014, the issue of traffic in the streets adjoining the school will be addressed.

The motion also refers to the size of the school. The old Gosford Primary School was situated on 1.6 hectares and had access to Ray Maher Field. The relocation of the school is part of a plan supported by the former Government promoting the revitalisation of Gosford and linking Gosford's greatest natural asset: the waterfront. The new school will comprise 20 new classrooms; four special program rooms, including space for an out-of-school-hours facility; the Chapman Community Room; a library—the old school library was a demountable for 23 or 24 years—a hall; a canteen; a covered outdoor learning area; administration; storage; and a games court. Teachers should be delighted to hear that car parking will be provided on the new school site.

The students will be moving from classrooms of around 47 square metres or 51 square metres to 92 square metres—almost double—which will include a wet preparation area, a withdrawal area and a storeroom. The main site of Henry Kendall High School will cover 2.81 hectares, which will include 1.67 hectares of play space and a 2.75-hectare agriculture area. The new Gosford Public School will be 1.8 hectares—which is larger than its original area. It will include 1.2 hectares of play space and have a negotiable area—the only negotiable area at the school—of 0.8 hectares of playing fields.

I will now touch briefly on the history of the school. The school was originally touted in the 1800s but not in its current site—it has had several moves. Around 1865 the school was in a shed that was shared with one of the local churches. In 1877 it relocated to Georgiana Terrace, and that building remains at the very top of the hill—I encourage members to visit this wonderful architectural site. In 1954 the school moved to its current site but it is not the heritage site that some would lead us to believe. The member for Marrickville spoke of concerns about having a joint-use site. There are 67 central schools in New South Wales that cater to students from kindergarten to year 12 and have excellent student welfare records. Many non-government schools also cater for primary to secondary students. That argument is a furphy.

As for consultation, I have it on good authority that consultation began with Gosford Public School in early 2008 and has been ongoing ever since. This is not a new agenda item. Henry Kendall High School originally drew from nine primary schools but—in line with the fine decision of the previous Government to build the Kariong Mountains High School—it will now draw from three primary schools. Whereas enrolments reached capacity at around 1,500 in any given year, enrolments are expected to decrease to 650 in the upcoming

2014 school year. There has been ongoing consultation. Adjustments have been made with regard to the outcomes for the school, and they are evident. I refer to a letter sent to the Gosford Public School parents, friends and citizens association in December 2010, which states:

I am writing to you to let you know that after careful and lengthy consideration the approval of Gosford Public School to the Henry Kendall adjoining site ...

The letter is signed by the Hon. Very Firth, the then Minister for Education and Training. There has been lengthy consultation.

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyong) [12.09 p.m.]: In speaking on this motion, I will respond to the comments of the member for Marrickville about the review that was undertaken. In opposition, the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals had committed to reviewing the decision by Verity Firth regarding Gosford Public School, and we have delivered on that commitment. On 27 June 2011 the current education Minister visited Gosford and, with the member for Gosford, announced that he had undertaken a review of the decision to relocate Gosford Public School. That review has been completed. After reviewing the information provided by the Department of Education and Communities, the Government resolved to support the original decision made by former Minister Verity Firth to relocate Gosford Public School to the Henry Kendall High School site.

As a result of that review, and based on community feedback provided by the member for Gosford, the plan has been improved. If a review is conducted and there is a foregone conclusion, as the member for Marrickville suggested, the plan is not amended as a result of the review. Obviously the review was sincere and better results and outcomes for our local students will be achieved as a result. One outcome is a larger communal hall. Also, there are two additional special program rooms for Gosford Public School and four upgraded science laboratories. As the member for Gosford said, there will be a new covered outdoor learning area. As a result of all these improvements, we believe the plan will deliver the best educational outcomes for the students at Gosford Public School on the new site.

In 2011 the education Minister met with parents from the school, the New South Wales Teachers Federation, including the local representative, the principal of Henry Kendall High School—the member for Gosford also attended—and visited the site. Local parents are concerned because of scaremongering by, among others, the Teachers Federation—the Teachers Federation that was silent on this issue, funnily enough, until 27 March 2011. Prior to the State election, the federation was silent. It is only when there is a Liberal-Nationals Government that the Teachers Federation has decided that there is an issue with the relocation of Gosford Public School and potentially the way we came to that outcome.

It is a shame that the people who should talk to the parents and alleviate their concerns are from the Teachers Federation, because it is the federation's concerns that the parents are concerned about. The Minister has addressed those concerns, as has the Department of Education and Communities. No-one on the Central Coast is more highly respected in education than Frank Potter from the Department of Education and Communities, and he has worked tirelessly to try to get at the truth relating to the relocation decision. It is unfortunate that the member for Canterbury, upper House member Greg Donnelly and other members have regularly visited the Central Coast—not only the Gosford electorate but also the Wyong electorate—to scaremonger on all kinds of education issues.

Parents obviously believe them when they know the members come from the New South Wales Parliament. Why would members of Parliament visit their electorates and lie? But that is the case. That is the issue. We are debating paragraphs (2) and (3) of the motion because of parents' concerns. It is all because of Labor members of Parliament and the Teachers Federation. I dispel the suggestion by the member for Marrickville that there has not been community consultation. I inform her that the parents are concerned because of comments made by members of her party and the Labor-affiliated Teachers Federation. We wholeheartedly support the outcome. We look forward to the outcomes of students at the new unified site. We will always put the students first.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [12.13 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Wyong and the member for Gosford for their contributions to this debate. I am still none the wiser as to whether they support the motion, but I cannot see how anyone could not support a simple request that the House note the decision to relocate the school and the parents' concerns. Surely the member for Wyong and the member for Gosford cannot deny that parents have expressed their concerns vociferously. I cannot see how the members could not support a motion that notes those concerns—surely that is one of our primary roles—and calls on the Minister to meet with the concerned parents and community members. Again, how can the Coalition not support

that? Does the Coalition think the Minister for Education should not meet with parents when they have concerns? Does it think the parents of Gosford Public School are not entitled to that level of access? Do they support the parents of Gosford Public School students having their concerns addressed?

I cannot see how the Coalition could not support this motion. It is straightforward and moderately worded deliberately to try to get support across the House. I would be amazed if the member for Wyong, the member for Gosford and other members representing Central Coast electorates did not support the motion. I note with interest the comments of the member for Gosford, and I appreciate the advice that the traffic issues will be addressed. I note also his extensive outline of the new facilities at the relocated school—new classrooms, a new library, a canteen and many other facilities. I am sure the students and parents will appreciate those new facilities. I note that the member for Gosford made no mention of the fact that many of those facilities are possible because of Building the Education Revolution funding. Members opposite pilloried the Building the Education Revolution program up hill and down dale. Nonetheless, in their electorates they are always grateful for the new facilities that the Building the Education Revolution funding has provided to their local schools. We know what Government members do locally, compared with what they say in this Chamber.

Many of the beautiful facilities that the member for Gosford spoke about are due to Building the Education Revolution funding. I understand that consultation began in 2008 and has been ongoing. But that simply misses the point. The Coalition tried to play politics with this issue prior to the election by campaigning with the parents and promising them the world. But once the election was out of the way they put in place a Clayton's review. It did not satisfy the community or the parents. Even the member for Gosford in his contribution did not try to defend the Clayton's review that was undertaken. He did not try to defend it because he knows that he will get his community offside if he pretends that the review was anything more than a cursory nod to the promise that was made.

Mr Darren Webber: I did.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: They are not the constituents of the member for Wyong so it is a little different. Instead, the member for Wyong took a different tack: He said that it was all about doing the bidding for the Teachers Federation. I point out to the member that perhaps the real issue to note is how far the Coalition Government, and particularly the Minister for Education, go to distance themselves from the Teachers Federation when they were very close before the election. I commend the motion to the House and I call on members to support it. [*Time expired.*]

Mr Richard Amery: Point of clarification: In the event of a division being called by the Government, I wish to clarify that Opposition members voting no will sit on the Opposition benches and to the right of the Serjeant-at-Arms. Opposition members voting aye will sit on the Government benches and on the crossbench to the left of the Serjeant-at-Arms. There has been some confusion as to where members voting should be sitting in the House.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I thank the member for Mount Druitt for his clarification. I am sure the three members who were sitting there during the previous division have also been counselled by their whips.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 23

Mr Barr	Mr Lynch	Ms Tebbutt
Ms Burney	Dr McDonald	Ms Watson
Ms Burton	Ms Mihailuk	Mr Zangari
Mr Daley	Mr Park	
Mr Furolo	Mr Parker	
Mr Greenwich	Mrs Perry	
Ms Hay	Mr Piper	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Hoenig	Mr Rees	Mr Amery
Ms Hornery	Mr Robertson	Mr Lalich

Noes, 61

Mr Anderson	Mr Flowers	Mr Provest
Mr Annesley	Mr Gee	Mr Roberts
Mr Aplin	Mr George	Mr Rohan
Mr Ayres	Ms Gibbons	Mr Rowell
Mr Baird	Ms Goward	Mrs Sage
Mr Barilaro	Mr Grant	Mr Sidoti
Mr Bassett	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mr Hartcher	Mr Souris
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Hazzard	Mr Speakman
Mr Bromhead	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Stokes
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Holstein	Mr Toole
Mr Conolly	Mr Humphries	Mr Torbay
Mr Constance	Mr Kean	Ms Upton
Mr Cornwell	Dr Lee	Mr Ward
Mr Coure	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Webber
Mrs Davies	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Owen	Mrs Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	
Mr Edwards	Ms Parker	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Elliott	Mr Patterson	Mr Maguire
Mr Evans	Mr Perrottet	Mr J. D. Williams

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

DISABLED SCHOOL STUDENTS ASSISTED SCHOOL TRAVEL PROGRAM

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.29 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) condemns the Government and the Minister for Education for their handling of the recent disabled student transport scheme dispute that disrupted disabled children's means of getting to and from school;
- (2) notes the negative impact the disruption had on the lives of disabled students and their families; and
- (3) calls on the Premier and the Government to explain why the dispute occurred.

On 7 March 2012 I gave notice of this motion following an outrageous situation that occurred and affected some of the most vulnerable members of my community. Scores of children with disabilities in Wollongong were cruelly stranded at home, unable to go to school with their classmates because the O'Farrell Government failed to issue contracts to transport providers on time. Parents from around Wollongong and across the State were ringing my office distraught because their lives had been thrown into complete disarray. The O'Farrell Government had neglected hundreds of children with autism, cerebral palsy, physical impairments and other disabilities, leaving them unable to get to school. It was an utter disgrace.

Minister Piccoli and Minister Berejiklian should have been hauled into the Premier's office immediately and forced to explain why basic transport arrangements for disabled children were not sorted out weeks, even months in advance. Bus drivers contacted my office saying they were told contracts would be finalised by December but at the twelfth hour the Government was disputing rates of pay to private bus operators. This was a shocking failure by the Government and a gross dereliction of duty by the Ministers responsible. I received reports of children being confused and disorientated because their usual bus driver did not arrive. I received reports of children with cerebral palsy being told to catch a taxi and of a child in an electric wheelchair being told to push himself to school, as if having a child with a disability does not present parents and carers with enough day-to-day difficulties.

Many of these children have behavioural problems and routine is vital to their ability to feel safe and secure. Parents were frustrated that their well-oiled routines were thrown into chaos. Some had to take the day off work because they were unable to find an alternative means of getting their child to school at such short

notice. My heart went out to the parents, who persevere because they love their children dearly and want them to have the same opportunities as their classmates regardless of their disability. The O'Farrell Government sent a message loud and clear to those families that their children are not as important as every other child that started back at school that term.

In the end, apologies were issued, first by an embarrassed Premier and then by the Minister for Education. They were nothing but lip-service from a government that continues to bungle its way through the governance of New South Wales and to ignore the needs of the people of Wollongong, the Illawarra and across the State. I call on the Government to put measures in place to ensure that such disruptions to vulnerable members of our community for the sake of a dollar never happen again. That is one of the reasons, although this motion refers to a matter that is now a year old and the dispute has clearly been resolved, I am concerned to ensure that this type of situation never happens again. The delays in signing those contracts and determining the bus routes, the delays in ensuring that children with a disability were able to recognise and have the comfort of regular bus drivers and carers as part of their routine, and the delays in ensuring that they were ready, willing and able to perform on their first day back at school are unacceptable and should never be tolerated.

I refer now to an article by Mario Christodoulou which appeared in the *Illawarra Mercury* on 31 January last year and which referred to a child who was "left stranded by the State Government this week after an administrative bungle left her without transport to and from school on her first day". The article said this 14-year-old "was one of hundreds of disabled students whose bus to and from school did not run on the first days of school, leaving parents to make other arrangements. Bus operators said that the New South Wales Education Department was slow to approve bus routes...". An operator went on to say that the Government was slow in approving her bus route. "We were told the bus runs were going to be handed out by December ... that did not happen," she said. "All I could do was keep checking my emails and ringing the Department." Another article by Kate McIlwain and AAP said,

An investigation into the debacle that left hundreds of disabled students without school transport has blamed senior bureaucrats at the NSW Department of Education but cleared Education Minister Adrian Piccoli.

However, it does not alter the fact that 740 students were stranded on the first day of school after transport operators pulled out of some runs at the last minute because of complaints over a new pay system. Those are the kinds of hiccups that negotiations should resolve prior to the return to school. I am sure your office, Mr Acting-Speaker, would have had calls. My office was inundated with calls. I received a call from one parent who was beside himself about his daughter, Bailey McGee, who was picked up by bus— [*Time expired.*]

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [12.36 p.m.]: I start by reiterating the apology that the Minister has put on record for the completely unacceptable mismanagement of the Assisted School Travel Program by the Department of Education and Communities that left so many of our disabled students without transport to school and left their families in distress. I know what it was like because I also had families who faced those problems. But members opposite appear to have no memory at all. This was also a huge problem under the former Labor Government and the systemic issues were never addressed.

On 31 January 2012, Dr Ken Boston was commissioned by the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet to conduct the review inquiring into and reporting on the circumstances under which transportation under the Assisted School Travel Program was not available to some eligible students on and from the first day of the 2012 school year. The Government took this action so that it could look into the problem and fix it. The report made a number of recommendations and the New South Wales Government accepted all of them. The Government has implemented and completed all recommendations of the Boston report. A lot of work has been progressed since 2012 and the preparation for the 2013 school year has gone smoothly. I have received no complaints and I believe no-one else has either.

Since the disruption at the beginning of the 2012 school year, the Government has substantially increased total annual funding for the Assisted School Travel Program by nearly 57 per cent. The new rates are a significant increase on the previous rates. They firmly establish a 30-kilometre minimum payment for all runs, and that minimum payment has been substantially increased. They establish increases for all vehicle classes ranging from approximately 18 per cent to 36 per cent. In addition to the increases I have outlined, on all runs where a travel support officer is required an additional 15 per cent loading is being paid. I will inform the House of how the Government has acted on the recommendations of the Boston review.

Recommendations 1 and 2 were that the Director General of the Department of Education and Communities prepare a proposal for a revised set of rates, to be considered at a meeting with the heads of

NSW Treasury and Transport for NSW, chaired by the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and submitted to Cabinet for implementation at the beginning of term 2, on 23 April 2012, and that the revised rates be market tested with a small group of providers before implementation. These have all been implemented. A revised set of rates was developed and market tested with a range of operators via a series of focus groups. As I advised the House previously, the Government substantially increased total annual funding for the Assisted Student Travel Program, by nearly 57 per cent. Some 100 per cent of current operators accepted these new rates.

Recommendation 3 was that a thorough and systematic risk management process involving fortnightly appraisal of the likelihood and severity of all potential risks associated with the implementation of the Assisted School Travel Program be implemented. Implementation of this recommendation has been completed. A comprehensive risk register has been established and is revised on a regular basis for amendment as the program progresses.

Recommendation 4 was that the director general consider disciplinary action against the Deputy Director General, Finance and Infrastructure and the Director, Finance Shared Services. The implementation of this recommendation has been completed. The NSW Government's Internal Audit Bureau, engaged by the department to investigate the matter, provided its investigation report to the department's director general on 17 April 2012 for consideration. After careful review, the director general considered there was nothing in the report that made it unsuitable for the Director General, Finance and Infrastructure to resume his duties. The director general met with the Deputy Director General, Finance and Infrastructure when he returned to work on 7 May 2012 and discussed matters arising from the investigation report. The Director, Finance and Shared Services resigned in June 2012.

Recommendation 5 was that the department investigate and implement a capacity-building program throughout the department to improve communication skills and customer service. This is well underway. The department engaged a customer service training provider to develop a program to enhance the customer service and communication skills of staff in the assisted school travel unit. A model for customer service and communication is being finalised for other corporate staff and will be rolled out across the department using a staged and targeted approach to ensure optimal effectiveness of the program. The staff of the assisted school travel unit undertook the new customer service training package over two days: 31 July and 1 August. Following this training, a guiding team, along with on-the-job coaching has been established at the assisted school travel unit to further embed a culture of customer service. This will commence from early 2013.

Recommendation 6 was that by early the next week—which was the beginning of the school year last year—the Department of Education and Communities should advise parents and carers of students, and principals, of the possible consequences of the defect in the Student Transport Management System, which is that drivers and travel support officers might not be aware of the health and welfare needs of the children in their care. Parents should contact their transport operator directly to advise of any special requirements that might not have been communicated through the Student Transport Management System. This has been implemented. All schools with students accessing assisted school travel services were contacted. Schools confirmed that communication had taken place with parents, drivers and travel support officers to ensure the health and welfare needs of students in their care was understood. The other recommendations have also been implemented. Everything possible was done and continues to be done to rectify this issue. As can be seen from the start of the 2013 school year, the problem was not, and will not, be repeated.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.43 p.m.]: I support the motion. I thank the member for Wollongong for ensuring that this incident remains as a reminder to the Government of its responsibilities to the most vulnerable members of our community, particularly children with a disability. Like every other child in New South Wales, these children attend school to get an education in the hope of becoming productive members of our community. According to the NSW Department of Education and Communities, in 2012, 12 per cent or 90,000 students in New South Wales public schools were diagnosed with a disability or required additional care. Of those, 35,000 students had a confirmed physical or intellectual disability, including hearing and vision impairment, autism and diagnosed mental health impairments.

As a former teacher in south west Sydney, I have witnessed the struggles in schools and classrooms that many students with a disability face on a daily basis. Whilst many children and teenagers take for granted their ability to move about uninhibited or without requiring any physical aides, they have the ability to see, hear and understand the lessons being taught to them without any special equipment or management plan. Students with a disability have no choice but to overcome obstacles before they go about the business of learning.

According to the NSW Department of Education and Communities 2012 report *Every Student, Every School*, these obstacles help explain why people with a significant disability have poor outcomes on every indicator of community participation and wellbeing.

People with a disability have a labour participation rate of only 31 per cent, which is less than half of the general population that has a participation rate of 83 per cent. Two-thirds of people with a significant disability earn less than \$320 per week. These statistics point out the need for this Government to ensure that people with a disability, specifically children and adolescents at school, are given every chance to succeed. I was shocked and horrified in January last year when I heard that on the first day of the school year approximately 700 students with a recognised disability were left stranded at the side of the road without a means of transport. The Minister for Education had bungled a contract with service providers. The Minister has been hobbling about on crutches, but I am sure that on the first sitting day he was not left on the side of the road. It is a shameful indictment on this Government that last year 700 students with disabilities were left on the side of the road. The people of New South Wales are still owed an explanation as to how the Minister and this Government allowed those matters to escalate to create such a fiasco.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [12.46 p.m.]: I join with the member for Blue Mountains to put the apology from the Minister on record for the unacceptable mismanagement of the Assisted School Travel Program. When I found out what had happened, I rang Grace's father at the Autism Advisory Support Service and made an attempt to ascertain how the people who attend her service were coping with the situation. I spoke to some families that were affected by the incident. They were incredibly distressed and inconvenienced by that service failure. The start of the school year is a busy time for schools and families as they endeavour to ensure that all students, especially those with a disability, start the year smoothly. The priority of the Assisted School Travel Program is to provide transport for students with a disability in a safe and comfortable environment that meets their individual needs.

Last year's Assisted School Travel Program incident was taken extremely seriously by this Government. All of the recommendations in the report by Dr Ken Boston, AO, were implemented. In addition, the Department of Education and Communities has worked hard to further improve the assisted transport service for students and their families. To avoid a similar situation occurring, a number of measures have been put in place, including an improved communication system with a greater capacity to allow inquiries from parents, operators and schools to be handled more quickly and easily; upgrading information technology and quality control systems to better manage high volumes of information relevant to schools and operators involved in the program; working collaboratively with other New South Wales government agencies such as Roads and Maritime Services to reduce red tape and to enhance the quality of the vehicles used in the program; improving customer relations with stakeholders through telephone and written communication for new allocations; and allocating transport runs.

The Assisted School Travel Program is a large and highly complex program of support for our most vulnerable school students in New South Wales. This program should run smoothly without disruption for both students and their families. In 2013 more than 10,500 students with a disability in government and non-government schools will benefit from assisted school transport services. During 2013, the program will cater for more than 17,000 different variations to the daily transport needs of students that will address issues such as shared care arrangements and respite care. Providing transport for each one of these students requires great care because of the specific needs of each individual student with a disability and their families. Each new application must be assessed in relation to the student's disability support needs, where the student lives and the location of the school, and the needs of other students with a disability already using the transport service. Planning and coordination takes place to ensure that travel time is minimised and that routes do not cause undue stress.

In 2013, there will be 900 new students accessing the service. On any one day, students accessing a service run under the program will be transported on more than 2,300 separate runs across the State involving more than 600 transport operators and about 5,600 drivers, supported by more than 880 assisted school travel officers. We must ensure that each student has a safe and satisfying experience while travelling to and from school. Importantly, parents and carergivers must also feel confident that their son or daughter is being cared for in a safe and kind environment when they travel. I am pleased to note that the Government has allocated an extra \$45 million in the 2012-13 financial year for the Assisted School Travel Program, bringing the total commitment to \$132 million. I am also pleased that the situation that occurred last year has not been repeated. However, we must remember that that was not the first indication of a problem. The Labor Minister had met with those concerned and the then Premier knew about the situation, but they did nothing to fix it. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [12.50 p.m.]: I thank the member for Wollongong for moving this motion. One would have expected a Government member to move such a motion because this has been a debacle and an embarrassment. I believe that if the Minister for Disability Services had been in control of this area this debacle would not have happened. The member for Wollongong referred to the concerns raised in her electorate by parents of severely disabled children. They experienced great trauma as a result of this debacle. They already have enough to contend with on a daily basis without confronting this sort of thing. I heard about people who were left behind, taken to different areas and dropped off in the middle of runs. It was an absolute debacle. The so-called investigation is also an embarrassment. What did the investigation find? It found that there had to be a fall guy. Of course, the fall guy under this Government is never anyone on the frontbench. No, the fall guy is a public servant who has unfortunately hit the wall. I raise this issue because this is starting to become a pattern. Yesterday and the day before the Minister for Health said that she could not do anything about the health service. She is only the Minister for Health, why would she have anything—

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The member for Keira must address the motion before the House. While his insights as a former deputy director general in the Roads and Traffic Authority in the two years leading up to this event would be interesting, he should return to the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Keira will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr RYAN PARK: This investigation into the bungle that the member for Wollongong has raised reflects a pattern of behaviour in this Government.

Mr Andrew Constance: Not on my part.

Mr RYAN PARK: It is not something that the Minister does; he would not do that. However, some of his colleagues are—

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: Mr Acting-Speaker, the member for Keira is flouting your ruling. You told him to return to the leave of the motion but he is refusing to do so. If he wants to go further, we will talk about his time as deputy director general.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. The member's time has expired.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.53 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions from the members for Blue Mountains, Fairfield, Keira and Menai. I was a member of the former Government and I cannot recall disabled children ever being left unattended. Members opposite talked about how arrangements are negotiated. They do not know the purpose of negotiations so it was obvious that they would experience a hiccup. The normal practice is for negotiations to be conducted and if there is a dispute it can be taken to the appropriate authority to resolve so that services can be provided. Government members are trying to defend the indefensible. Saying sorry is not always enough. We must ensure that these things never happen again. We should look after children like Bailey McGee.

The Minister for Disability Services may not understand that children with disabilities find it difficult to deal with disruptions to their routines. He should know better. He may not want to hear about parents of disabled children having to deal with them kicking, screaming, biting and doing things they would not normally do because their routine has been disrupted. Finding a fall guy is not good enough. The Government is not taking responsibility for this situation and for the fact that the negotiations broke down. Members opposite are in government and it is their Minister who dropped the ball. The Government is trying to mislead the public by suggesting that the former Government is responsible. Members opposite should take responsibility for their own actions. The Minister for Disability Services should acknowledge that these children need certainty and special assistance. Anything that disrupts that must be resolved well before the first day of school. I do not know how long the contract will run.

Mr Andrew Constance: It is a two-year contract.

Ms NOREEN HAY: That is why it ran smoothly this year. However, it will not run so smoothly when members opposite have to renegotiate it. They do not understand how to negotiate or to deliver

outcomes. They clearly do not understand how to take responsibility for themselves. They should not take their lead from the Minister for Health. The Minister for Disability Services must understand that he has certain responsibilities and he should take them seriously. If he is taking the money, he should take responsibility. [Time expired.]

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 21

Mr Barr	Ms Hornery	Mr Robertson
Ms Burney	Mr Lynch	Ms Tebbutt
Ms Burton	Dr McDonald	Ms Watson
Mr Daley	Ms Mihailuk	Mr Zangari
Mr Furolo	Mr Park	
Ms Hay	Mr Parker	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Hoenig	Mrs Perry	Mr Amery
Ms Hornery	Mr Rees	Mr Lalich

Noes, 60

Mr Anderson	Mr Gee	Mr Piper
Mr Annesley	Mr George	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Ms Gibbons	Mr Roberts
Mr Ayres	Mr Grant	Mr Rohan
Mr Baird	Mr Greenwich	Mr Rowell
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mrs Sage
Mr Bassett	Mr Hartcher	Mr Sidoti
Mr Baumann	Mr Hazzard	Mr Souris
Mr Bromhead	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Speakman
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Holstein	Mr Stokes
Mr Conolly	Mr Humphries	Mr Toole
Mr Constance	Mr Issa	Mr Torbay
Mr Cornwell	Mr Kean	Ms Upton
Mr Coure	Dr Lee	Mr Webber
Mrs Davies	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mrs Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr O'Farrell	
Mr Edwards	Mr Owen	
Mr Elliott	Mr Page	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Flowers	Ms Parker	Mr Maguire
Mr Fraser	Mr Perrottet	Mr J. D. Williams

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Report: Amendments to Standing and Sessional Orders

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

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.10 p.m.]: I begin by remarking that all members of the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee endeavour to work cooperatively so that this House works better. I wish to make a quick comment on the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee meeting that was held in November 2012. At that meeting there was a dispute about limiting the number of General Business (General Notices of Motion) by Labor committee members. That matter was deferred until a meeting earlier this week and has now been successfully resolved. Another matter discussed was the trialling of the lodgement of

community recognition notices introduced under this Government. Each member is permitted to lodge three community recognition notices per week via email. I have no problem with that, but I am concerned that motions lodged by email and not spoken in the Parliament are recorded as *Hansard*.

It is my view, and I think the view shared by all Parliaments, that *Hansard* is a record of the spoken word. I am pleased that the committee decided also to stand that matter over for further discussion. That matter was successfully resolved at a committee meeting earlier this week. Future meetings of this committee will discuss in more detail the new procedures to replace the emailing of community recognition notices with member's making one-minute speeches, which will be appropriately recorded in *Hansard*. In closing, all committee members, the Presiding Officers, the Clerks and the committee secretariat work in the spirit of trying to resolve any conflict between members and the different parties involved to make the Parliament work better and at the same time give members an appropriate avenue to raise issues and grievances, as well as to recognise those in their constituencies who have performed good public service.

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

Report noted.

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Report: Utilisation of rail corridors

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

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [1.13 p.m.]: I speak to the report of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure, which was tabled on 22 November 2012. It is clear that over recent years demand for housing that is close to public transport, community centres and workplaces has grown throughout New South Wales, especially in Sydney. This demand has been accompanied by increased stress on our roads and public transport systems as more people have been attracted to live in the major cities of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Mixed-use development in the airspace above and the land adjacent to rail corridors could present a possible solution to the housing and public transport issues that metropolitan areas have faced for decades.

The committee's terms of reference for this inquiry sought to examine whether transit-oriented developments, taken by the committee as referring to high-density, mixed-use developments specifically designed and centred around public transport nodes, could reasonably be pursued above and around rail corridors in the greater metropolitan area of Sydney and major regional centres. The committee considered whether an increase in the use of airspace above and land around rail corridors could contribute to sustainable urban development, connect communities around rail lines and generate income for future transport infrastructure projects. The committee heard evidence regarding the benefits that development specifically oriented around public transport nodes can bring to communities and local economies. The committee heard that transit-oriented development could have multiple positive effects, including increasing use of public transport and lowering greenhouse gas emissions as a result of a reduction in private car usage.

The committee also heard that development around rail corridors could revitalise neighbourhoods and breathe new life into areas that have, perhaps, been overlooked by urban planners in the past. The committee also heard that transit-oriented developments could help to provide funding for future public transport projects through value-capture mechanisms. These mechanisms could enable the value accruing to private property owners from publicly funded infrastructure projects to be captured and used to contribute to funding for future infrastructure. Witnesses to the inquiry suggested reforms to the planning framework to facilitate development at rail corridor sites. We concluded that reforms to the planning system are vital if rail corridors in New South Wales are to be effectively utilised through development.

I note that the Government's review of the New South Wales planning system was in progress during the inquiry. The committee recommended that, through this review, a standard, comprehensive State planning instrument for major transport corridors be developed. The committee also recommended that consideration be given to shortening approval timeframes for priority developments along the rail corridor and to providing for early community consultation. The committee is aware that there are complex technical aspects to building over rail corridors and around railway stations, particularly with regard to ensuring that train services continue operating efficiently. However, engineering challenges associated with building along and above rail corridors have largely diminished over time. Evidence provided to the committee during the

inquiry suggested that the major obstructions to development along rail corridors include a lack of flexibility on the part of government agencies, land ownership and zoning, high construction costs and a protracted and complex approval process.

The committee heard that there has been a complex web of legislation and State Government and local government policy regarding rail corridors, and that this has reduced their commercial viability as development sites. It is the view of the committee that the Government's approach to transit-oriented development should be coordinated through a single agency, and that development of appropriate rail corridor sites could benefit local communities in a number of ways. The decision by the Government to integrate Landcom and the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority into a new organisation—UrbanGrowth NSW—is commendable and shows a commitment to urban renewal in our State. The committee concluded that UrbanGrowth NSW is in a unique position to champion transit-oriented development in New South Wales and to promote specific opportunities where such development could take place. Therefore the committee has recommended that UrbanGrowth take the lead in working with developers, investors and local councils to achieve development that balances commercial opportunities and community benefits.

The nature of transit-oriented development requires special capabilities and extraordinary vision. For this reason the committee recommended a specialised unit be set up within UrbanGrowth NSW to promote transit-oriented development. By encouraging transit-oriented development, we have an exciting opportunity to take a different approach to urban planning and to create liveable, walkable and enjoyable neighbourhoods that meet the needs of twenty-first century city dwellers. The social and environmental benefits of development along or above rail corridors, as well as the potential income that could be generated as a result of the utilisation of lazy government assets, mean that transit-oriented development is a necessary aspect of future urban planning and urban renewal in New South Wales.

In closing, I wish to thank all those who took part in the inquiry. The committee was extremely grateful to hear the views of a wide range of inquiry participants about a complex issue that could affect the future of urban and transport planning in New South Wales. Again, I would like to stress that now is the time for transit-oriented development to become a key component in our approach to urban planning and renewal because of the clear benefits such development can provide. I thank my fellow committee members for their contributions and dedication to the task. I also thank the committee staff for their support.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.17 p.m.]: I speak in the take-note debate on the report of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure entitled "Utilisation of Rail Corridors". I am delighted to have the opportunity to address the House about the outcomes of this inquiry. I start by acknowledging the chairman of the committee, the member for Strathfield, who spearheaded the inquiry. I commend him for his laudable contribution to transport and infrastructure. I acknowledge our colleagues the member for Bathurst, the member for Lake Macquarie and the member for Newcastle. In particular, I thank the chairman for his consultative approach to the setting of meeting times. He endeavoured to ensure that as many members as possible were able to attend meetings, and tried to find a meeting time that suited all members, regardless of their political persuasion. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the committee staff for the great work they did in supporting the committee and in drafting and amending this report.

As the member for Strathfield said, the committee received many submissions. We had the opportunity to hear firsthand from department heads, agencies and representatives from the private sector and local government, who gave us tremendous insight into the opportunities and challenges that are posed with the utilisation of rail corridors. The utilisation of rail corridors provides an important opportunity for policy makers to reconsider the use of land above and adjacent to railways. As with any area of development, this matter is certain to be subject to intense debate, as it should be. However, existing developments at Chatswood and Parramatta demonstrate the potential for transport hubs which integrate directly into their surrounding community. As always, it is important that we balance the economic considerations, such as freeing much-needed land in Sydney, with the social considerations, including the impact that development of land corridors might have on existing communities. During the committee's consideration of the report I was a dissenting voice on one of the eight recommendations—I supported the other seven recommendations. I mention the matter to draw it to the attention of members. I am concerned about recommendation 4, which states:

"That, as part of the current review of the New South Wales Planning system, the New South Wales Government develop a standard, comprehensive state planning instrument for major transport corridors."

While I agree with the sentiment of the recommendation, I have some concerns about its implementation. It is important that any proposal to utilise land corridors occur with not only the support but also the complete

cooperation of local government. Indeed, councils should be at the forefront of developing train stations. During my time as mayor of Bankstown I managed to secure funding for several improvements to Bankstown train station. Previously there was difficulty when travelling from one side of the train line to the other. In order to address these issues Bankstown Council, along with the then Labor Government, invested \$10 million in the Bankstown bus corridor and interchange. The improvements included connecting the bus corridor between the northern and southern ends of Bankstown city plaza via an underpass and building a new bus interchange on the south side of the plaza.

I put on record that I believe councils have a positive role to play in any planned development of rail corridors. The last thing I would want to arise from this inquiry is a process that in any way excludes the local government sector. I encourage all members to review this report. Railways form an important part of our transport system; indeed, train stations are often at the heart of our local communities. Train stations and rail lines should not be impediments to development. Indeed, planning proposals can benefit by directly integrating train stations and rail lines into relevant designs. I commend the report to the House.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [1.21 p.m.]: I will make a short contribution to the take-note debate. I congratulate the committee chair, who ran an outstanding, inclusive committee. We received input from many sources, from local government, agencies and private citizens. They were all taken into account. I think the report and the excellent recommendations reflect the broad approach that was adopted. I mention UrbanGrowth NSW, as did the chair of the committee. A small agency within UrbanGrowth NSW to look directly at the use of air space and transit-oriented corridors gives a great opportunity for the State Government and for New South Wales generally to have a dedicated department to look critically at the future of what will be one of the best opportunities for high-density population growth in New South Wales, not only in Sydney but also in the major regional centres. As we step through the Newcastle urban renewal strategy, where we will be doing a lot of work in terms of rail lines, I encourage UrbanGrowth NSW to look closely at air space and the use of transit-oriented developments.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [1.24 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the take-note debate stemming from the inquiry of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure into the utilisation of rail corridors. Along with other committee members, I acknowledge the chairman, the member for Strathfield, and the way he managed the committee. We had good representatives on the committee. I think the committee members would agree that there was a cooperative approach across the board. I note that the member for Bankstown provided a dissenting voice on recommendation 4, but it was a qualified dissent. Generally speaking, she raised valid concerns about the need to include local government. I think that sentiment is accepted. There is primacy around the need to include local government in planning issues.

The concept and the recommendations are logical. Making better use of existing infrastructure will be beneficial for the community as a whole. These things should not be replicated and opportunities should not be lost. The committee heard from many individuals and organisations, and it identified impediments to the logical and beneficial extension of the use of lands occupied by rail and transport corridors. I support the recommendation that an organisation be given the authority to take the lead role in that, and that that be forwarded to UrbanGrowth NSW. I join with the other committee members in thanking the contributors to the inquiry. I thank the committee members, the member for Strathfield, the member for Newcastle, the member for Bankstown, the member for Bathurst, and the staff, who made the inquiry process as seamless as possible. I support the committee's recommendations relating to the utilisation of rail corridors.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.28 p.m.]: I will make a short contribution to the take-note debate on the report of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure. I commend the chairman of the committee, the member for Strathfield, for his commitment and his effort in ensuring that the committee members worked well together. We provided some positive outcomes that can be considered by the Government in relation to rail corridors. I thank the other committee members—the member for Bankstown, the member for Lake Macquarie and the member for Newcastle—for their commitment, and the staff, who did a terrific job. The report shows a direct link between public transport and demand for housing. When people build or buy a house they want access to public transport close by and the opportunity to get to shops and medical appointments. All of those matters are critical in terms of utilisation of corridors.

The committee chairman has an extensive background. He was a senior executive of public transport with the former Roads and Traffic Authority and brought a lot of expertise and knowledge to the committee, which was also important. The positive effects of transit-orientated development, including public transport development along railway corridors, can revitalise our neighbourhoods and communities. It is a new approach

and it is an exciting thing that can be used to push us ahead in planning for New South Wales. There were obviously obstacles in relation to government agencies: one of the committee's key findings was that they need to be more flexible in the way they look at planning and rezoning. Land above and adjacent to railway corridors needs to be explored. It can create vibrant neighbourhoods that we can be proud of in the twenty-first century and make big improvements to social, economic and environmental outcomes in those communities.

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

Report noted.

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

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I advise the House that the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales will answer questions addressed to the Minister for Health, who is absent from Parliament today.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.19 p.m.]

PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL WARD CLOSURE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Given that a report today shows that 15,900 people missed out on treatment in New South Wales emergency departments within the benchmark time last year, will the Premier reverse his \$3 billion cut to the health system and the closure of an entire ward and 26 beds at Prince of Wales Hospital?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: One of the reasons, as I have previously explained to this House, including a day or two ago, that we are seeking to redirect resources from back offices, senior management, middle management—the member for Maroubra's friends—to the front line is to enable an additional 50,000 patients to be treated in emergency departments across the State. I would have thought that is sensible at a time when more and more people are fronting up to emergency departments across the State. Whether it is because of those 50,000 additional patients who can be treated, the 30,000 extra patients who will end up being admitted to public hospitals as a result of this redirection of resources, or the additional elective surgery that can be undertaken as a result, I would have thought it is the sensible way to go. Only those opposite would stand in this place and argue that it is better to build a bureaucracy than to deliver better services in a hospital. It was that sort of lack of touch with the needs of communities across the State that saw those opposite punished two years ago. It is clear from this question that they have learned nothing over 22 months. I ask again: What does the Leader of the Opposition do with the extra \$118,000 a year that he gets for occupying that position?

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129; relevance.

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

Mr John Robertson: I know that the Deputy Premier is feeling very sensitive because he cannot justify his money. I would be very happy to justify my salary. The question relates specifically to cuts and whether the Premier will reverse those cuts—not a lecture or the same old story that we get about this, that and the other. Will the Premier reverse those cuts given that 15,900 people will not be seen within the benchmark time?

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not a time for the Leader of the Opposition to enter into a debate. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier has the call. There is no point of order. The Premier is being relevant.

[Interruption]

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I would urge the member for Auburn not to interject because it simply draws attention to a fact that the Minister for Disability Services highlighted yesterday: Labor thinks so little about people with disabilities and is concerned so little about the National Disability Insurance Scheme that it has relegated its Disability Services spokesperson to its backbench.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: It relates to Standing Order 129; relevance. This is not a question about disability services, as the Premier well knows. He should answer the question he has been asked about the blow-out in emergency department waiting times.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Marrickville will resume her seat. I am sure the Premier will return to the leave of the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: What an interesting insight from the member for Marrickville, that people with disabilities are not concerned about what happens within our hospitals. How out of touch can the member for Marrickville be?

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! This had better be a point of order and not an argument.

Mr John Robertson: It relates to Standing Order 129; relevance. The member for Marrickville took a point of order and the Premier immediately attacked the member for Marrickville, which again has absolutely nothing to do—

The SPEAKER: Order! I am not sure that that was the case. There was not an attack as I heard it. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier has the call. I will hear further from the Premier. I have asked the Premier to return to the leave of the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: There is a record Health budget this year of \$18.3 billion. We are determined that as many of those dollars as possible will not end up in a bureaucracy, as they would under those opposite, but in the front line to treat people in hospitals and clinics across the State.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: It is relevance. He has closed a hospital ward at Prince of Wales—

The SPEAKER: Order! As usual the member for Macquarie Fields is on his feet to argue at the microphone. The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat. The Premier has returned to the leave of the question as I asked him to do and is being relevant. I advise the member for Macquarie Fields not to try that again today.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As a result of the redirection of dollars from bureaucracy, as much as those who represent the public sector unions in this place protest, we are ensuring more resources go to the front line. I have been thinking in recent days about the Leader of the Opposition because I could not work out why he would have accepted hospitality from Eddie Obeid, but it is clear he prefers—

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. What the Premier is saying now has nothing to do with the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is now straying from the question. The point of order is upheld. I ask the Premier to conclude his answer.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is clear he prefers ski poles to opinion polls.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS SUPPORT

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is directed to the Premier. What is the Government doing to protect victims of domestic violence?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Menai for her question and her clear interest in this matter. There is no more cowardly act in any society than the assault of women, especially in their home.

Whether physical or emotional, domestic violence can leave scars that last a lifetime, and in almost every case it is a woman who is the victim at the hands of a male partner. There is no tolerance in the community for men who beat their wives or their girlfriends. Today the Attorney General has announced important reforms that will make it easier for women to obtain apprehended domestic violence orders against their partners in such circumstances. Legislation will be introduced to give senior police the power to issue provisional apprehended domestic violence orders to protect victims of domestic violence in emergency situations. Domestic violence is not restricted to office hours. Four out of every five apprehended domestic violence order applications are made outside court hours, causing potential delays in getting an order to protect the victim from the alleged perpetrator.

These reforms will ensure that senior police can issue provisional apprehended domestic violence orders on the spot, at any time of the day or night, and so seek to give immediate protection to victims. Police will be able to detain a defendant for up to two hours for the purpose of making and serving such an order if they refuse a direction to cooperate. This means perpetrators can immediately be removed from a potentially volatile situation whilst victims and any children can remain in the home. The member for Dubbo, who is a former policeman, reminded me and a number of my colleagues earlier this week that too often in country areas, under the current arrangements, police have to travel for some time to get to the site of a domestic violence incident that occurs in a remote village or on a property.

They then have to go back to town to get the apprehended domestic violence order and then return to the site, knowing full well that the hours it can take for them to do that can see more harm, and sometimes lethal harm, inflicted upon the victim. The fact that under these changes perpetrators will be immediately removed from a volatile situation while women and children will be allowed to remain in the home will send a very strong message to defendants, when they are detained and taken to a police station, about how seriously the legal system takes these matters. There are safeguards in the proposal including that the provisional apprehended domestic violence order will be subject to an appeal at the Local Court. I also remind the House that the power to make long-lasting interim and final domestic violence orders remains with the courts.

Victims groups have long asked for this reform and so have police who all too often see and have to deal with the consequences of domestic violence firsthand. I am pleased to say that this initiative builds on the great work that the Minister for Women has been doing in this area, including her decision to expand the important and successful Staying Home Leaving Violence program, ensuring that more women are able to get access under that program. Today's announcement acts on a recommendation of the upper House inquiry into Domestic Violence Trends and Issues and follows inquiries by the New South Wales and Australian Law Reform Commissions. Senior police of the rank of sergeant or above already have the power to make bail decisions. Extending to those police the power to issue apprehended domestic violence orders is a commonsense measure that offers significantly greater protection to women at risk.

Whilst on the issue of police I congratulate Commissioner Scipione and New South Wales police on their involvement in the largest seizure of the drug ice in our history—585 kilograms of ice intercepted in a customs inspection two days ago. In addition to New South Wales police, the New South Wales Crime Commission and Federal authorities were also involved. I am in awe of the New South Wales police and the work they do. This is just another example. We are determined to give police the powers they need. The changes to apprehended domestic violence orders not only protect the victims of domestic violence; they make it easier for the police to provide the protection those victims deserve.

COMMUNITY SERVICES BUDGET

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. Given the recent reports about the tragic death of a Wollongong toddler known to Family and Community Services in August 2012 and reports that staff shortages—

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order so that I can hear the question.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I will start again. Given the recent reports about the tragic death of a Wollongong toddler known to Family and Community Services in 2012 and reports that staff shortages at Wollongong Community Service Centre have reached chronic levels, will the Minister reverse her \$500 million cuts to the Community Services budget?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Another legacy question. This Government has the lowest vacancy rate in New South Wales amongst community services in 10 years. The Auditor-General found—

[*Interruption*]

Members opposite should just listen: they might learn something. The Auditor-General found that the vacancy rates had dropped from 20 per cent at 30 June 2010 under the watch of the former failed Minister and the member for Canterbury—who only Labor could promote to the position of deputy leader—to 7 per cent at 30 June 2012.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: The Minister is misleading the House. There are reports, and the Minister knows it. She has given the numbers for community service staff at Wollongong, and she knows it, no matter what she says.

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

Ms Linda Burney: It is here in the Minister's own report.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time. I remind members that once a question has been asked it is not an opportunity for another member to get up and argue at the microphone.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: She shouldn't be so rude.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Community Services has the call. There is no point of order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: A vacancy rate of 7 per cent, which the Auditor-General says is the lowest in years, is a reflection of the commitment of staff and the fact that they are now working for a government that is intent on reform. They actually like being at work. The number of case workers of course has not changed, and that is a point I have made repeatedly to the House. The number of workers is about the same or may have gone up a little, but that does not explain why the vacancy rates have been reduced. It is explained, however, by the fact that we have reduced so much red tape and bureaucracy from the workload of case workers that they actually want to turn up for work. A couple of weeks ago I went with the member for Bathurst to the Bathurst Community Service Centre—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is already on two calls to order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: The member for Canterbury could not do any of this because she was too interested in football.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will also come to order. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: Under Standing Order 129. The question was about the death of a toddler in Wollongong, and whether or not the Minister would reverse—

The SPEAKER: Order! I am aware of the question. The Minister is being relevant to the question asked.

Ms PRU GOWARD: For those members opposite, let us get to child deaths. Every child death is a tragedy. This year to the end of February there have been six deaths. Last year the number of tragedies was 78. On the Opposition's watch, it was more than 130. I do not remember a case worker, a union official, or a member of the then Government blaming that number on the vacancy rate in any office.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: You did.

Ms PRU GOWARD: No. The death of a child is a random and difficult experience. The shadow Minister opposite knows full well that one can never ascribe the death of a child to one factor. It is a terrible coincidence of circumstance. I remind the House that a number of factors need to be considered when there are child deaths and tragic assaults that end in the death of a child. I reiterate that the vacancy rate is the lowest it has ever been. It is not correct to blame it on a fatuous claim about a vacancy rate. As I have explained, that those opposite should try to do so is yet a further example of their moral bankruptcy. They need to accept that a system cannot be changed until someone drives reform, until there is commitment to reform, and until change is

made to the way caseworkers work. We have removed 70 administrative fields from the system and every caseworker I speak to tells me that they now see more children than ever before because they are no longer locked in front of desks filling in fields. That was the legacy left by the previous Government.

VOLUNTEER AGENCIES SUPPORT

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business. How is the Government supporting volunteer agencies to help farmers and landholders recover from the January fires?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: This summer, communities across New South Wales faced damaging bushfires, floods and storms. To date, New South Wales has seen disaster declarations made for 71 local government areas affected by bushfires and 19 local government areas affected by flooding. In January there was a haze of smoke across my electorate. As fire rampaged its way along the Murrumbidgee and through the Burrinjuck area, approximately 12,500 prized merino stud sheep were lost. There were genetics lost in beef cattle. It caused a lot of distress and concern for the many landowners in that particular area. Throughout the State, almost 200 properties between Coonabarabran, the Warrumbungles, Harden, the Yass Valley, and Cooma were devastated. Landholders in those areas are now faced with the overwhelming job of rebuilding damaged infrastructure and fencing.

Despite this, natural disasters bring out the best in Australians. Communities band together, strangers travel long distances to offer their assistance and neighbours offer accommodation, food—a cup of tea—a shoulder to cry on or a sympathetic ear. I acknowledge and thank those who have given their time, effort and services to the people affected by this summer's fires. The Rural Fire Service is to be applauded for its heroic efforts to save livestock, properties and, indeed, lives. The Rural Fire Service staff and volunteers make huge sacrifices to help our communities. Last Saturday the Premier joined the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister for Western New South Wales at the Coonabarabran Racecourse for a barbecue to thank all those who fought the bushfires in the Warrumbungles. This morning the Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services hosted a reception at Parliament House to thank the emergency service workers who responded to this summer's bushfires, storms and floods. I attended the morning tea together with members of Parliament from both Houses.

Also deserving of recognition are the staff from the Department of Primary Industries and the Livestock Health and Pesticide Authority teams who worked tirelessly to help farmers with their livestock in desperate and trying circumstances. It is not easy to be faced with sheep that have burnt ears, noses and feet, knowing they have to be destroyed. So many staff were involved that I cannot name them all. However, I do mention Scott Schlunke and Chris Harris, who had to destroy many sheep on Tony Armour's property. It was a painful experience, but you have to get on and do the job. In January the Department of Primary Industries joined with the New South Wales Farmers Association to set up a fodder donation register to help farmers who have been left without a blade of grass. The register has extended beyond offering hay and grain. It now offers accommodation, vet services, agistment and working dogs.

Earlier this week I announced that three catchment management authorities have joined together to offer free aerial property maps to fire-affected landholders. They are an essential tool in the recovery process because they assist in determining how much fencing has been lost and so on. While it is impossible to name everyone who has assisted in the recovery effort, I make special mention of BlazeAid. BlazeAid is a volunteer-based organisation that works with rural property owners by helping to rebuild fences and the community. Volunteers came from everywhere to repair fencing and to do other essential farm recovery work. I have been told that grey nomads and backpackers from as far away as Japan and the United Kingdom, including pilots, doctors and magistrates, donated their time and energy in the Coonabarabran area. Fences are among the most important on-farm infrastructure for graziers because without them they cannot confine their stock. That is where BlazeAid comes into its own.

I am proud to announce that the New South Wales Government has provided \$162,000 to support volunteer agencies such as BlazeAid so that they can get on with their work. Local councils in fire-affected areas have established temporary camp sites so that BlazeAid volunteers can be central to the fire ground. That has involved costs associated with site preparation, the provision of power and plumbing for showers and toilets and water supplies. The new funds will assist councils to cover the costs associated with that work. The work carried out by BlazeAid volunteers is tough and dirty and they return to camp exhausted. They are working in billygoat country in the Burrinjuck and Coonabarabran areas. Many of them are supposed to be enjoying their

retirement, but they are working day in and day out. Without them there is no doubt that the recovery process would be far longer and more onerous for our farmers. I am proud to be a member of a New South Wales Government that is providing this assistance.

CHILD PROTECTION CASEWORKERS

Ms NOREEN HAY: I direct my question to the Minister for Family and Community Services. Given that child protection workers discussed the situation of a Wollongong toddler known to the Department of Family and Community Services only a day before his death but did not allocate his case because of staff shortages—

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member is asking the question and I would like to hear the rest of it.

Ms NOREEN HAY: —why has the Minister allowed staff shortages at Wollongong to worsen, with reports that the vacancy rate has now grown to an alarming 28 per cent?

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Opposition never learns. Members cannot ask questions without providing the facts; they cannot base their questions on the latest rumour from the Public Service Association. They must have some figures and data. They do not have any data, but I will provide it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollongong and the member for Auburn will come to order. The Minister is answering the question.

Ms PRU GOWARD: The data is the same as it was in the answer to the last question. Caseworker vacancies go up and down as they always have, and as they did when members opposite were in government. The total number of caseworkers across the State has not changed. Indeed, the number has gone up slightly. The vacancy rate across this State is the lowest it has been in a decade.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order—

Mr Daryl Maguire: The Minister is answering the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollongong is entitled to take a point of order.

Ms Noreen Hay: My point of order relates to relevance. My question was specifically about the 28 per cent vacancy rate in Wollongong.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant. She is talking generally about vacancy rates.

Ms PRU GOWARD: The alleged 28 per cent vacancy rate in Wollongong cannot be substantiated.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. He should not shout out questions.

Ms PRU GOWARD: As I said, vacancy rates go up and down day in and day out because people take recreation leave, extended leave and so on. They are the lowest they have been in years. Recruitment in country areas is always a challenge, but not in Wollongong.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The question goes to the fact—

The SPEAKER: Order! I heard the question.

Ms Linda Burney: Vacancy rates have increased since that toddler's death and the Minister knows that.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not an opportunity for the member for Canterbury to argue. The member will resume her seat. I have warned her about this previously. There is no point of order because the Minister is being entirely relevant to the question.

Ms PRU GOWARD: We could stop every child death if it were simply a matter of the vacancy rate because there would be no vacancies. What nonsense from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the former failed Minister. She knows that vacancy rates were a huge problem under her watch, but she never blamed them for a child's death. Members opposite had 16 years to fix this problem but they did not. We now have a department that is working to a reform agenda and it is seeing more children than ever before. In fact, as the Ombudsman observed, the number of children at risk of significant harm who are now seen by a caseworker has gone up from 21 per cent to 27 per cent in 12 months.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will cease arguing.

Ms PRU GOWARD: That is another reflection on what happens when reforms are introduced. There is no need to play emotional games with the death of a child.

SYDNEY AND NSW EVENTS CALENDAR

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I address my question to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. How is the Government promoting major events in Sydney and New South Wales over the coming months?

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I cannot think of a better member than the member for Hawkesbury to ask that question. The "Sydney and NSW Events Calendar" gives visitors and locals a wide range of entertainment from which to choose next month, given that according to Destination NSW it will be the busiest March of all time. The highlights include the Australian premiere season of *The Addams Family—The Musical*, a spectacular production of *Carmen* at Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour and the annual Archibald Prize exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Exciting competitions lead the line-up of sporting events next month with Australia's F1 driver, Mark Webber, leading the Top Gear Festival at Sydney Motorsport Park and the world's best rowers competing in the Sydney International Rowing Regatta at Penrith. Horseracing takes centre stage with the BMW Sydney carnival being held from 23 March to 27 April. We will see world-class racing, stunning fashions and great entertainment at Royal Randwick and Rosehill Gardens—Australia's home of thoroughbred racing.

[Interruption]

Did the member say that that is not sport? The carnival will see the best horses in the land compete for more than \$20 million in prize money and it will attract thousands of visitors to Sydney. Next Sunday sees the very best of Australian and New Zealand harness racing with the Inter Dominion Championship Grand Final at Tabcorp Park, Menangle. It is the first of three Sydney Inter Dominions that were secured by this Government. The greyhounds have their major race series over three weeks culminating in the Group 1 Golden Easter Egg on 16 March.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: We have a mammoth events line-up this March. We are offering music, sport, arts and loads of family entertainment. In addition, we will also be welcoming United States talk show queen Ellen DeGeneres. Regional New South Wales also has not been forgotten.

[Interruption]

That is not a major event. The worst major events program in the history of New South Wales was overseen by the member for Toongabbie. Regional New South Wales will be host to events such as the Byron Bay International Film Festival and Blues Festival, CMC Rocks the Hunter, June Rhythm 'n' Rail Festival, the Commercial Club Albury Gold Cup Carnival, Australian Longboard Surfing Open at Kingscliff, X-Blades National Touch League at Coffs Harbour, Bathurst Autofest, and I could go on. The March events calendar is a prime example of the ongoing success of this Government's efforts to establish a robust events program for both Sydney and regional New South Wales. After we recover from a blockbuster program of events in March, we look forward to a further range of high-profile events. For example, events over the winter period will include Vivid Sydney—A Festival of Light, Music and Ideas, which last year delivered record crowds of more than 500,000 people and generated global media coverage in more than 150 countries. Would the British and Irish Lions interest members of the Opposition?

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

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: The British and Irish Lions tour will be one of the most significant sporting events in Australia this year. It is the 125th anniversary of the first British and Irish Lions tour and the first time since 2001 that the Lions will play in Australia.

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

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: This most anticipated tour will bring approximately \$50 million in new money to New South Wales and an army of at least 20,000 international visitors. These visitors will make trips to regional New South Wales and take in many tourist experiences and attractions on offer. Newcastle will also see the Lions who will play a combined country New South Wales and Queensland side in June. Manchester United, the world's most famous football club, will be playing exclusively in Sydney on 20 July against an Australian All-Stars team. It will also generate more than 20,000 overnight international and interstate visitors to Sydney and contribute an estimated \$16 million to the New South Wales economy. Whenever anything good is said about our economy members of the Opposition are utterly disinterested—a pattern we have noticed over a number of years. [*Extension of time granted.*]

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

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I refer next to Rugby League State of Origin. New South Wales will host two matches in 2013—a major coup for New South Wales rugby league fans delivered by this Government, and a great opportunity to regain the crown.

Mr Ryan Park: They needed one when you were around.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I thank Opposition members for that accolade.

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

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: The New South Wales Government did not bring about Easter or the conclave. It is estimated that the State of Origin games between 2013 and 2017 will generate more than 80,000 interstate and overseas visitors and will contribute more than \$65 million to the economy. We also look forward to the Bledisloe Cup Festival and the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifier matches with the Qantas Socceroos playing Oman and Iraq. These are the kinds of events that will attract many visitors to Sydney and to regional New South Wales. We are set for a spectacular autumn and winter period and our city and regions will be showcased to worldwide audiences. This exceptional winter program reinforces why Sydney is Australia's premier sporting and major events destination.

CHILD PROTECTION CASEWORKERS

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. Will the Minister provide an iron-clad guarantee today that her department is employing additional caseworkers to replace every existing caseworker who goes on maternity leave?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I welcome back the member for Auburn. It is nice that she continues to have an interest in this area. I hope she has a more informed interest than the current Labor shadow Minister. Staff management arrangements in any large government organisation—we have 4,000 staff—are a matter for the executive.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is answering the question. Members will come to order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Staff management arrangements have always been a matter for the executive. This is another example of a fatuous question that fails to reflect any understanding of public administration. The truth is that vacancy rates go up and down all the time, and they always have. I have said that on many occasions and it is getting somewhat boring.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The question was very direct: Is the Minister replacing caseworkers who go on maternity leave?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has answered the question and continues to be relevant.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Arrangements are always put in place, as I hope the member for Canterbury and former Minister will recall. When she was not on the Mick Young Trust or going to the football she might have had an occasion to find out about how public administration worked. Arrangements are put in place when people have to act for others and when vacancies occur for extended periods. That has not changed and it will not change. What has changed is the commitment of the department and the way in which caseworkers are now working. Earlier I was informing members, before I was rudely interrupted, that the member for Bathurst and I visited the Bathurst office where we introduced Practice First. We met a group of caseworkers who were so excited about what they did that they never took sick leave and the sick leave rates have fallen through the floor.

Those caseworkers liked turning up for work. They got rid of 70 fields of administration and were no longer sitting in front of their computers. As the senior psychiatric specialist said, they had reached a point where they were trying to hang on to their skills as they were no longer seeing such large numbers of children. I am sure that the member for Bathurst will attest to the fact that that is no longer the case in Bathurst. Caseworkers in our community services centres are now doing what they were taught to do and what they are committed to doing. That is a reflection of our commitment all over New South Wales and it helps to explain why the percentage of children at risk of significant harm who are being seen has gone from 21 per cent to 27 per cent under our watch.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being entirely relevant to the question.

Ms Linda Burney: I beg to differ. The question, which was very specific, related to whether people who went on maternity leave were being replaced.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question. There is no point of order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Public administration does not work on cheap debating tricks.

GAME COUNCIL NSW REVIEW

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: My question is addressed to the Premier. What action is the Government taking to ensure appropriate governance in the Game Council?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Members will recall that on 23 January the media reported allegations of illegal hunting by two senior Game Council employees. The Minister for Primary Industries has requested that those individuals allegedly involved be stood aside pending an investigation into this matter. Two days later, one of the employees was reinstated following advice from the Independent Audit Bureau that he was not involved in the incident. Last Thursday the Government received the full Independent Audit Bureau report into this matter. The report details alleged illegal activities by the Game Council employee and another person, a Game Council volunteer. As is known, the NSW Police Force has been undertaking investigations into this matter and, given the information contained in the Independent Audit Bureau report, a copy was provided to police on Monday.

In light of the ongoing police investigation and the possibility of charges being laid, the Director General of the Department of Trade, Investment and Regional Services has advised that the Independent Audit Bureau report should not be released. The Game Council employee will remain suspended from work until police have completed their investigation, when appropriate action will be taken. Of equal concern is the fact that the Independent Audit Bureau report also identified possible breaches of Game Council policies and procedures—information that raises questions about governance arrangements within the Game Council. I advise the House that as a result of this information, and following my meeting this morning with the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Primary Industries, Steve Dunn, a former chief executive of the NSW Maritime Authority and Director General of NSW Fisheries, is being formally engaged to undertake a review of the governance of the Game Council. I seek leave to table the terms of reference for the review.

Leave granted.

Document tabled.

As can be seen, the six-point terms of reference put together by the public service are comprehensive. They seek recommendations by the end of May in respect of "any aspect of the Game Council's governance, management, administration, organisation and operation" that will enhance its service delivery and capacity to fulfil its statutory obligations. Given the Game Council's role in the supplementary pest control program in national parks, I can advise the House that this program will not commence until Mr Dunn's review has been completed and a government response announced. Contrary to the claims of those opposite, the Government's actions in initiating this governance review again confirm the paramountcy of safety as the Government implements in this State the type of pest eradication program that has been successfully conducted for many years in South Australia and Victoria. I can advise the House also that prior to question time today I advised members of the Fishers and Shooters Party of the Government's intentions in this respect.

GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: I direct my question to the Premier. Will the Premier inform the House of the Government's commitment to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex community in relation to health initiatives, community services and major events? I take this opportunity to wish all members, especially the member for Coogee, a very happy Mardi Gras.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Those members who attended Tuesday's parliamentary briefing on HIV, hosted by the AIDS Council of NSW, a great community organisation, know that the New South Wales Government is leading the fight against HIV transmission. This month we saw the launch of the "Ending HIV" campaign, which is being jointly funded by the Government and ACON. This campaign targets the population group most at risk of contracting HIV in New South Wales—gay men. On 1 December last year, World AIDS Day, the Minister for Health launched an HIV strategy aimed at driving down new infection rates and making testing and treatment easier to access. The key targets of the strategy include reducing sexual transmission of HIV among homosexual men by 60 per cent by 2015 and by 80 per cent by 2020; decreasing rates of HIV infection in other populations, such as Aboriginal people, and heterosexuals by 50 per cent; reducing the average time between infection and diagnosis from 4½ years to 1½ years; and increasing the number of people with HIV on antiretroviral treatment to 90 per cent.

NSW Health is moving to increase access to HIV testing by offering one-visit testing, with patients able to receive their results by phone or SMS. NSW Health is also trialling point-of-care testing—better known as rapid HIV testing—in partnership with the Kirby Institute at the University of New South Wales. The member's question also related to major events. This weekend the largest event for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex community will occur in Sydney. The State Government—current and former—provides support to help stage this event. The Sydney Mardi Gras is internationally known and each year it attracts in excess of 20,000 overseas and interstate visitors to our city—great news for the city's economy. Those visitors stay in our hotels, eat in our restaurants, drink in our bars, shop in our stores and visit our tourist attractions.

[Interruption]

"They" is a plural for people. Destination NSW advises that this investment has produced a return of over \$100 million in net economic impact for this State, and that means jobs for New South Wales. I can remember watching last year's Mardi Gras from the balcony at Kinselas, together with a number of members from this House and the other House—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier might remember that I was down at the street level.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —Magda Szubanski and that other gay icon—not the member for North Shore—Kylie Minogue. It was fantastic to watch that great and popular parade with Rosemary. That was the first time I had been in the VIP area, to which I was invited. I am told that I am the first Premier to ever go and watch the Mardi Gras—there are 100 million reasons why Premiers ought to go. I would like to take this opportunity to wish those visitors to Sydney and all members of this House, not only the member for Coogee, happy Mardi Gras. I wish all those who will be taking part in Sydney's parade well, including, this year for the first time, members of the Australian Defence Force who will be marching in uniform.

Finally, given that it has been in the news, I wish to put in a word for the road safety experts at Roads and Maritime Services. I am absolutely happy for the City of Sydney to determine how it wants to celebrate the

contribution that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people have made, and continue to make, to this city in so many different ways, but we need to balance some requests with the ongoing effort in every community across the State to ensure that motorists in particular understand what a crossing is, how to identify a crossing and how to behave at a crossing. Here is a cheap idea for my former friend, or should I say, my friend, the former member for Sydney—

Mr John Williams: Former friend.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Probably the first time was right as well. Instead of messing up road safety rules with what is an appropriate acknowledgement of the contribution, and frankly the sacrifice and hardship, that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people have gone through, why not after all these years rename Taylor Square after Michael Kirby, a great individual who epitomises that good community?

WESTERN SYDNEY INFRASTRUCTURE AND JOBS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: I address my question to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How is the Government delivering jobs and infrastructure to boost the western Sydney economy?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for her question. The member for Mulgoa is a good example of a member from this side of the House who is working very hard in western Sydney. Across western Sydney the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is striving to improve services and build infrastructure. The Prime Minister is going on a summer camp to western Sydney but those opposite should not forget that the Government has great local members who work day in and day out on the ground in western Sydney. Those members are doing a wonderful job representing their communities. This Government is delivering more jobs, more nurses, police and teachers and more infrastructure for the people of western Sydney, and the Prime Minister will find things are a little different from the last time she visited.

Under the O'Farrell-Stoner Government we have seen 7,650 more jobs on the ground in western Sydney. We now have more infrastructure in western Sydney. The Richmond Road upgrade and the Erskine Park Link Road are underway. Thousands of new homes are being set up, including up to 5,000 new dwellings at First Ponds Creek as part of the Building the State package. We have more funds for local hospitals, including funding of \$324 million for the upgrade of Blacktown Hospital. Those opposite promised it but the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is delivering it.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In addition, there are 350 more nurses in hospitals in western Sydney, and 415 additional probationary police constables have been assigned to western Sydney since the O'Farrell-Stoner Government came to power. I note that the member for Maroubra is not listening. He is not listening because he is plotting for middle managers across the State. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is all about front-line services while the member for Maroubra is supporting middle managers. Do members remember my list of favourite CDs?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The Treasurer has been talking about middle managers and he is now going to move to CDs. The Treasurer was asked a question about jobs in western Sydney.

The SPEAKER: Order! For the most part the Treasurer has been directly answering the question he was asked.

Dr Andrew McDonald: No, the question was about jobs in western Sydney.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has strayed a little from the question but he has been generally relevant. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Dr McDonald loves *Jump (For My Love)* by the Pointer Sisters. He cannot get enough of it. For the member for Maroubra the global anthem for middle managers across the world is *Nine to Five* by Dolly Parton.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129, relevance. Perhaps the Treasurer's song could be *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: One can imagine the member for Maroubra cuddling up to Dolly Parton and talking about middle management. The lines of the song are telling:

*you would think that I would deserve a fair promotion
want to move ahead but the boss won't seem to let me
I swear sometimes that man is out to get me*

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: The Treasurer should be listening to the questions asked by members, including the member for Mulgoa.

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

Mr Guy Zangari: Standing Order 129, relevance. The Treasurer's answer has nothing to do with western Sydney.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The Treasurer will return to the leave of the question. Members will come to order. The member for Maroubra will cease interjecting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The O'Farrell Government is putting more services in the front line: more nurses, more police and more teachers in schools.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Go back to Dolly Parton. The Prime Minister will also find a changed landscape in western Sydney. In this House she will find new members who are listening to and working with their communities: the members representing the electorates of Granville, Blue Mountains, Londonderry, Smithfield, Mulgoa, Penrith, Parramatta and Riverstone. Why are they here? It is because they understand their communities. They live in their communities, they are working for their communities, and they are delivering for their communities. That is what the O'Farrell Government is doing in western Sydney. [*Extension of time granted.*]

The O'Farrell-Stoner Government understands what the community wants: It wants a government to do what it says it will do.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mount Druitt will come to order. The member for Maroubra will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is pretty simple, and it is exactly what we have done across greater western Sydney. We said we would build the infrastructure; we are doing exactly that in western Sydney. We said we would put more jobs into western Sydney; that is exactly what we are doing. We said we would improve services; that is exactly what we are doing. Members opposite say that we are not excited about the Prime Minister's visit to western Sydney. Of course, we are excited about the Prime Minister's visit. It is great that she has finally found western Sydney. In terms of hospitality, during the Prime Minister's visit the O'Farrell Government wants to give her the gift of a new *Gregory's* so that she can find her way around western Sydney.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not know whether a *Gregory's* is a prop. Does the member's point of order relate to using props in the Chamber?

Mr John Robertson: It does. If we opened a *Gregory's* belonging to the Treasurer I am sure we would find that it had never been opened at western Sydney either.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: How long has the Leader of the Opposition lived in his electorate? That is a good question. We are proud to be delivering for western Sydney. Forget about the summer camp—the Government will continue to deliver for western Sydney.

Question time concluded at 3.13 p.m.

PETITIONS

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

Albion Park Aeromedical Services

Petition requesting the retention of aeromedical services at Albion Park, received from **Mr Gareth Ward**.

Education Funding

Petition calling on the Government to stop cuts to education, TAFE and school funding, received from **Mr Richard Amery**.

Sydney Electorate Public High School

Petition requesting the establishment of a public high school in the Sydney electorate, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Rooty Hill Railway Station Access

Petition requesting the installation of elevators at Rooty Hill railway station, received from **Mr Richard Amery**.

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

Petition requesting improved bus services for the Walsh Bay precinct, and ferry services for the new wharf at pier 2/3, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Inner-City Social Housing

Petition requesting the retention and proper maintenance of inner-city public housing stock, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

Petition requesting the banning of pig-dog hunting in New South Wales, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

Petition opposing the sale of animals in pet shops, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Duck Hunting

Petition requesting retention of the longstanding ban on duck hunting, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Aged Care Industry

Petition requesting a review of changes to the Aged Care Funding Instrument so as to prevent any further staffing cuts across the aged care industry, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

Container Deposit Levy

Petition requesting the Government introduce a container deposit levy to reduce litter and increase recycling rates of drink containers, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

ROYAL COMMISSIONS AMENDMENT BILL 2013

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry O'Farrell, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.15 p.m.]:
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Royal Commissions Amendment Bill 2013 is to facilitate the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. As we know, the royal commission was established by the Commonwealth Governor-General on 11 January 2013. On 25 January 2013 the New South Wales Governor issued the New South Wales Letters Patent in support of the royal commission, which mirror the Commonwealth Letters Patent and appoint the same six commissioners, led by the Hon. Justice Peter McClellan of the New South Wales Court of Appeal. The New South Wales Government strongly supports the work of the royal commission, which will be based in Sydney.

Only a national inquiry can gather all the relevant information about institutions that operate across State and Territory borders. I commend the member for Dubbo for his early initiative in calling for a national inquiry. Only a national inquiry can hear from those affected by child sexual abuse from all around the country. The terms of reference of the royal commission require the commissioners to inquire into institutional responses to allegations and incidents of child sexual abuse and related matters. This is to include, in particular, what institutions and governments should do to better protect children against sexual abuse in institutional contexts in the future, and what institutions and governments should do to address or alleviate the impacts of past and future child sexual abuse in that institutional context.

The terms of reference recognise the seriousness of child sexual abuse and provide the royal commission with the scope to look at any public, private or non-government organisation involved with children, including those that are no longer operating. I have told the Prime Minister that the royal commission will have the full support and cooperation of New South Wales government agencies. The bill will provide further support to the work of the royal commission. The Commonwealth Government has introduced amendments to its legislation to allow one or more of the six royal commissioners to hold separate hearings. This will enable the royal commission to conduct hearings and collect information more efficiently.

The bill, like the Commonwealth amendments, will allow the chairperson of a multiple-member royal commission to authorise one or more individual commissioners to sit and hold separate hearings. The amendments will ensure that the powers of the national royal commission under the amended Commonwealth legislation will also be available to it should it need to rely on its powers under the New South Wales Letters Patent. Currently under the New South Wales Royal Commissions Act 1923, certain powers and functions can be exercised only by the chairperson or a sole commissioner. Those powers include the power to grant rights of appearance at the inquiry, the power to issue a summons to a witness to attend and give evidence or to provide documents to the inquiry, and the power to excuse or release a person from attendance at the inquiry.

There are also other special powers that can only be exercised by a chairperson or sole commissioner if they have prescribed legal qualifications. These special powers, contained in division 2 of part 2 of the Royal Commissions Act 1923, include the power to issue a warrant to apprehend a witness who failed to answer a summons, powers relating to holding a person in contempt of a royal commission and the power to override privileges, such as a witness's privilege against self-incrimination and legal professional privilege. The bill will allow the chairperson to authorise the other commissioners to exercise the chairperson's powers. However, only a commissioner with the required legal qualifications will be able to exercise the special powers. The bill will also amend the legal qualifications that a commissioner is required to hold before being able to exercise the special powers.

In order to exercise the special powers, a commissioner must be a current judge of the High Court, the Supreme Court or the Federal Court, or a legal practitioner of at least seven years standing. The bill will change the legal qualifications so that they are consistent with those that apply to a person who can be appointed as a commissioner for a special commission of inquiry or for the standing commissions, including the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The amendments will enable both current and former judges to exercise the

special powers if appointed a royal commissioner. In addition, senior lawyers who are eligible to be appointed as a judge will also be able to exercise the special powers if the letters patent declare that the person may exercise those powers.

Finally, the bill will amend the Royal Commissions Act 1923 and the Special Commissions of Inquiry Act 1983 to clarify that persons who voluntarily provide documents, records or other things to a royal commission or special commission of inquiry have the same protections as a witness appearing before a commission. In particular, the person will have the same protection and be subject to the same liabilities in any civil or criminal proceeding as a witness in any case tried in the Supreme Court. The Australian Law Reform Commission, in its 2009 report, considered the protections available to those who supply information to Commonwealth inquiries, including royal commissioners. The commission stated in its report that it is:

... desirable to extend protection from legal liability to all those who supply information to inquiries, whether they are required to attend a hearing or otherwise. There is no reason to distinguish between the protection of witnesses summoned to a hearing, and others providing information in less formal ways. Both need to be able to provide information fully and frankly to an inquiry, without fear of legal action in relation to the information provided. Further, the extension of such protection will enable inquiries to proceed more informally ...

The bill will ensure that the protections for persons providing information to a New South Wales commission are the same whether the person provides the information in person, in writing, voluntarily or in response to a summons. The New South Wales Government consulted closely with the royal commission on this bill. The separate New South Wales Special Commission of Inquiry concerning the investigation of certain child sexual abuse allegations in the Hunter region has been underway since November last year and will continue in its important work, notwithstanding the establishment of the national royal commission. The commissioner, Ms Margaret Cunneen, SC, will be able to enter into arrangements with the national royal commission to share relevant information. Ms Cunneen is due to report her findings on or before 30 September 2013. The national royal commission is due to provide an interim report by 30 June next year and its final report by 31 December 2015. I encourage anyone with relevant information to contact the national royal commission or the New South Wales special commission of inquiry so that their voices may be heard. I commend the bill to the House.

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

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT (DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS) BILL 2013

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry O'Farrell, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.25 p.m.]:
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Disciplinary Proceedings) Bill 2013 is a further step in a series of measures that the Government is taking to improve confidence in public administration in New South Wales. The reforms in this bill—which stem from a previous request from the Independent Commission Against Corruption—will strengthen both the commission and the integrity of the public service by facilitating the removal of public officials who have engaged in corrupt conduct. This bill will amend the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 to enable employers of public officials to take disciplinary proceedings against public officials on the basis of corruption findings made by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. It will also make self-incriminating evidence given to the Independent Commission Against Corruption by any such public officials admissible for the purpose of those disciplinary proceedings. As a result of these reforms, there will be no need for the employer to conduct a separate investigation into the conduct of the public official if that official is found by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, in its report to Parliament following an investigation, to have engaged in corrupt conduct.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption is an investigative body. Its role is to investigate and expose corrupt conduct in the New South Wales public sector. It is also tasked with actively preventing corruption through advice and assistance, and educating the New South Wales community and public sector

about corruption and its effects. Following a public inquiry, the Independent Commission Against Corruption publishes a report to Parliament of its investigation. The report will generally include, where applicable, recommendations for changes to systems and procedures to prevent future corrupt conduct, findings of corrupt conduct against the people investigated, recommendations that consideration be given to the taking of disciplinary or dismissal action, and recommendations that the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions be sought on prosecution of the people investigated. Parliament's Presiding Officers will generally make this report available to the public.

Once a report is handed down, the Independent Commission Against Corruption monitors the implementation of any corruption prevention recommendations. It will also assist the Director of Public Prosecutions in preparing for any prosecutions. Because the commission conducts the investigation, it is part of our legal system that it should not also be responsible for deciding criminal and civil liability. That is a matter for the court, not the investigators. The evidence is laid before a court before any criminal or civil liability is imposed for the conduct exposed by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. For public officials found by the commission to have engaged in corrupt conduct, currently the next step is that the employer conducts a separate investigation of its own to ascertain whether, on the balance of probabilities, there has been misconduct. It is my view that this is a duplication of the effort of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and a waste of resources. There is no need for two investigations into misconduct.

The amendments to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act in this bill will allow the employer of a public official to rely on the commission's investigation and not have to start again from scratch. The employer will be able to choose from the range of disciplinary and remedial actions currently available to them to decide the appropriate response to the public official's wrongdoing. The concept of "employer" is expanded in the bill to include, for example, the department that engages a consultant under a contract. The amendments will require the employer to give the public official an opportunity to make a submission in relation to any proposed action before the disciplinary or remedial action is taken. Importantly, the evidence gathered by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, including, for example, an admission of guilt that may have been made under compulsion before the commission, will be able to be relied on by the employer in making his or her decision. The use of this evidence in the disciplinary proceedings will not make the evidence admissible in any other proceedings.

There will be no change to the protections currently given to witnesses before the Independent Commission Against Corruption that prevent any self-incriminating evidence they have given under compulsion being used in criminal or civil proceedings. These amendments will not apply to evidence given by a public official or a finding of corrupt conduct made by the Independent Commission Against Corruption before the commencement of the amendments. The Government is committed to improving accountability and ethical standards in public administration. The reforms contained in the bill will strengthen and support our integrity and law enforcement agencies. I commend the bill to the House.

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

SESSIONAL ORDERS

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.27 p.m.], by leave: I move:

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND ADOPTION OF SESSIONAL ORDERS

That, on and from 12 March 2013, this House:

- (1) rescinds the sessional order adopted on 14 February 2012 relating to the giving of more than one notice of motion; and
- (2) agrees to the following sessional orders adopted on 14 February 2012 and 4 April 2012, as amended, and to new sessional orders:

RESTRICTION ON QUORUM CALLS

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 45 shall read as follows:

45. Members shall not be permitted to call attention to the want of a quorum:

- (1) During Private Members' Statements or Community Recognition Statements;
- (2) During Matters of Public Importance or the Discussion on a Petition signed by 10,000 or more persons;
- (3) During the establishment of and debate on a Motion Accorded Priority; or
- (4) Before 10.30 a.m. on any sitting day.

MAXIMUM TIME LIMITS FOR DEBATES AND SPEECHES

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 85 be amended in part as follows:

Bill be now read a third time after consideration in detail (SO 218)

All Members	- 10 minutes†
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Consideration in detail of a bill or other matter (SO 240-242)

Minister	- unspecified number of periods limited to 15 minutes each;
Leader of the Opposition or one Member deputed	- unspecified number of periods limited to 15 minutes each;
Any other Member	- three periods each on any one question not exceeding 5 minutes each.

Community Recognition Statements (SO 108A)

Member making statement	- 1 minute each.
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ROUTINE OF BUSINESS

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 97 shall read as follows:

Tuesdays

1. At 12.00 noon the Speaker takes the Chair
2. Giving of General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices)
3. Private Members' Statements
4. At 1.30 p.m. the Speaker leaves the Chair
5. At 2.15 p.m. the Speaker resumes the Chair
6. Ministerial Statements
7. Giving of Notices of Motions (Government Business, bills, Business with Precedence)
8. Giving of Notices of Motions to be Accorded Priority
9. Question Time
10. Ministerial Statements
11. Papers
12. Committees—Tabling of reports and notification of inquiries
13. Petitions
14. Announcement of Matter of Public Importance
15. Placing or Disposal of Business
16. Motion Accorded Priority
17. Business with Precedence
18. At 4.00 p.m. Business before the House is interrupted for Government Business. Any interrupted business lapses except when the House is considering Business with Precedence which shall stand as an order of the day for tomorrow.
19. At 7.00 p.m. Business before the House is interrupted for Private Members' Statements. Any interrupted item of Government Business shall stand as an order of the day for tomorrow. If at the time of interruption a division is in progress, that division shall be completed.
20. Matter of Public Importance
21. Adjournment at 7.45 p.m. or at the conclusion of the Matter of Public Importance, if concluded before 7.45 p.m.

Wednesdays

1. At 10.00 a.m. the Speaker takes the Chair
2. Giving of Notices of Motions (General Notices)
3. Government Business concluding at 1.15 p.m. Any interrupted item of Government Business shall stand as an order of the day for a later hour of the day. If at the time of interruption a division is in progress, that division shall be completed.
4. Community Recognition Statements concluding at 1.30 p.m.
5. At 2.15 p.m. the Speaker resumes the Chair
6. Ministerial Statements
7. Giving of Notices of Motions (Government Business, bills, Business with Precedence, and notices to be the subject of a motion to re-order later in the sitting)
8. Giving of Notices of Motions to be Accorded Priority
9. Question Time
10. Ministerial Statements
11. Papers
12. Committees—Tabling of reports and notification of inquiries
13. Petitions
14. Announcement of Matter of Public Importance
15. Re-ordering of General Business Orders of the Day (for bills) and General Business (Notices of Motions)
16. Placing or Disposal of Business
17. Motion Accorded Priority
18. Business with Precedence
19. At 4.00 p.m. business before the House is interrupted for Government Business. Any interrupted business lapses except when the House is considering Business with Precedence which shall stand as an order of the day for tomorrow.
20. At 6.30 p.m. the Speaker leaves the Chair. Any interrupted item of Government Business shall stand as an order of the day for a later time. If at the time of interruption a division is in progress, that division shall be completed.
21. At 7.00 p.m. the Speaker resumes the Chair.

22. Private Members' Statements.
23. Government Business concluding at 9.45 pm. Any interrupted item of Government Business shall stand as an order of the day for tomorrow. If at the time of interruption a division is in progress, that division shall be completed.
24. Matter of Public Importance.
25. Adjournment at 10.00 p.m. or at the conclusion of the Matter of Public Importance if concluded before 10.00 p.m.

Thursdays

1. At 10.00 a.m. the Speaker takes the Chair
2. Giving of General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices)
3. General Business Notices of Motions for bills (concluding not later than 10.30 a.m.) Any interrupted item of Business shall be set down as an order of the day for tomorrow with precedence of other General Business Notices of Motions for bills.
4. General Business Orders of the Day for bills (concluding not later than 11.30 a.m. or after the expiry of 60 minutes from the commencement of General Business Orders of the Day for bills if commenced earlier than 10.30 a.m.) Any interrupted item of business shall stand as an order of the day for tomorrow. If at the time of interruption, a division is in progress, that division shall be completed.
5. General Business Notices of Motions or Orders of the Day (not being bills) concluding at 1.00 p.m. Any interrupted business shall stand as an order of the day for tomorrow with precedence of other General Business (not being bills). If at the time of interruption a division is in progress that division and any other division(s) to determine the matter shall be completed.
6. At 1.00 p.m. consideration of committee reports presented concluding at 1.30 p.m. Any interrupted item of business shall stand as an Order of the Day for tomorrow.
7. At 2.15 p.m. the Speaker resumes the Chair.
8. Ministerial Statements
9. Giving of Notices of Motions (Government Business, bills, Business with Precedence)
10. Question Time
11. Ministerial Statements
12. Papers
13. Committees—Tabling of reports and notification of inquiries
14. Petitions
15. Placing or Disposal of Business
16. Business with Precedence
17. Government Business
18. At 4.30 p.m. business before the House is interrupted for Business of the House—Petitions. Any interrupted item of Business with Precedence or Government Business shall stand as an order of the day for tomorrow. If at the time of interruption a division is in progress, that division shall be completed.
19. Community Recognition Statements
20. Private Members' Statements after which the House shall adjourn without motion until the next sitting day.

GENERAL BUSINESS

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 105 shall read as follows:

105.

- (1) General Business Notices of Motions and Orders of the Day shall retain their relative places on the Business Paper and be considered in the order in which they are given or set down.
- (2) General Business interrupted by the operation of the routine of business shall stand adjourned and be set down as an order of the day for tomorrow with precedence of all other notices and orders, except any General Business Order of the Day or Notice of Motion accorded precedence for that day in accordance with Standing Order 106.
- (3) General Business Notices of Motions and Orders of the Day not commenced or completed 6 months from the date given shall lapse.

DEBATE ON GENERAL BUSINESS NOTICES OF MOTIONS OR ORDERS OF THE DAY (NOT BEING BILLS)

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 107 shall read as follows:

107.

- (1) At the time listed in the routine of business, the House will consider General Business Notices of Motions or Orders of the Day (not being bills).
- (2) In each debate the following time limits shall apply:

Mover	- 7 minutes
Member next speaking	- 7 minutes
Four Members	- 4 minutes each
Reply	- 4 minutes.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, the following sessional order be adopted:

108A. The procedure for community recognition statements is as follows:

- (1) In accordance with the routine of business, the Speaker will ask if there are any community recognition statements.
- (2) Within the time allocated in the routine of business, Members may give community recognition statements for up to 1 minute each, for a total of 15 minutes.
- (3) Members may not give consecutive community recognition statements.

- (4) Community recognition statements may be taken between items of business with the leave of the House for a specified period or a specified number of Members or until certain business is to be conducted as notified by the Minister in charge of the House at that time.
- (5) Community recognition statements must not contain:
 - (a) Matters of policy;
 - (b) Requests for the Government or the House, or another body to take some form of action or not; or
 - (c) Criticisms or negative reflections on any person, including Members, Office Holders, the Government, the Opposition or a third party.
- (6) A division on any question or quorum call shall not be permitted during community recognition statements.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 133 shall read as follows:

133.

- (1) A notice of motion for:
 - (a) A bill;
 - (b) Government Business;
 - (c) No confidence in the Government, Minister or Speaker, or censure of member or Speaker;
 - (d) Business with precedence (SO 118) with the exception of motions of condolence and the printing of papers; and
 - (e) A General Notice to be the subject of a motion for re-ordering must be given verbally at the time prescribed in the routine of business.
- (2) General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices):
 - (a) May only be given when called for at the time prescribed in the routine of business each day;
 - (b) The period for giving General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) is limited to a maximum of 10 minutes. The Speaker has discretion to allow the giving of notices to exceed this 10 minutes period.

POSTPONEMENT OR WITHDRAWAL OF NOTICES OF MOTIONS

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 141 shall read as follows:

141.

- (1) A notice of motion shall be postponed or withdrawn at the direction of the Member who gave the notice, or by another Member with the written authority of that Member, during the placing or disposal of business or when called on.
- (2) On any day when General Business is being considered by the House the Speaker has discretion to postpone any notice of motion if the Member is absent from the Chamber.

PREVIOUS QUESTION

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing orders 149 and 150 shall be suspended.

RESTRICTIONS ON DIVISIONS

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 187 shall read as follows:

187. The House shall not conduct a division on any question before 10.30 a.m. on days when the House meets at an earlier time, during Private Members' Statements, Community Recognition Statements, Matters of Public Importance or the discussion on a petition signed by 10,000 or more persons. If a division is called prior to 10.30 a.m. on such days, the division shall be deferred and conducted at 10.30 a.m. and any business then before the House shall be interrupted and recommenced after the division(s).

PROCEEDINGS AFTER THE SECOND READING

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 203 shall read as follows:

203. After the second reading, the Member in charge of the bill shall move forthwith, without debate or amendment, "**That this bill be now read a third time**" unless:

- (1) A Member requests consideration of the bill in detail; or
- (2) The Member in charge of the bill:
 - (a) moves a motion for consideration in detail pro forma; or
 - (b) requests the Speaker to set down consideration of the bill in detail as an Order of the Day for a later time.

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 282 shall read as follows:

282.

- (1) At the first meeting of a committee, or if a vacancy occurs, a Chair and Deputy Chair shall be elected.
- (2) The Speaker, upon being advised, shall report the appointments of a committee Chair and a Deputy Chair to the House.

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing order 366 be amended in part with the removal of 251(1) Suspension of Member.

The amendment to sessional orders has arisen as a result of deliberations by members of the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee.

Mr Paul Lynch: The learned members.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: As the member for Liverpool has pointed out, they are learned members, including the member for Liverpool, the member for Wagga Wagga, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Maroubra and me. Each of those members, on behalf of the broader college of members, has considered the standing and sessional orders and determined that it is appropriate to make some changes. For the sake of members who are not involved in the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee, the main change is that there will be a new sessional order regarding community recognition notices. As honourable members will recall, some changes were made on a trial basis, which facilitated community recognition notices being given not necessarily in the House but more informally. The committee has deliberated and we have listened to the words of wisdom, particularly from the member for Mount Druitt who is keen to ensure that appropriate parliamentary process is undertaken. It was agreed by the committee that it would be more appropriate to give community recognition notices in the House—in other words, bring the business back to the House—and enable members to make short statements of up to one minute on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The second item relates to the routine of business. The amendments will provide time for community recognition statements on Wednesdays from 1.15 p.m. until 1.30 p.m. and for 15 minutes on Thursdays at the conclusion of the discussion on the petition and prior to the taking of private members' statements. Another small change is that the matter of public importance will now be the last item of business on Tuesdays and Wednesdays rather than private members' statements. I remind members that the current arrangement is that on Wednesday night there are usually about six private members' statements between 7.00 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. and then the matter of public importance is debated. That is usually followed by two or three private members' statements later in the evening. It is sensible to make a small change to ensure that private members' statements are dealt with in globo and up front. Once these changes are adopted, which I believe will be in the week after next, private members' statements will be taken on Wednesday nights at 7.00 p.m. and conclude before the matter of public importance.

The third major item is general business. Following discussions by the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee about the timeliness of debate for general business notices of motions it was agreed that general business should lapse earlier. Currently the list of general business notices of motions can become quite long but it lapses at the end of 12 months. We considered that aspect and determined it was more appropriate that general business notices of motions lapse after six months. Accordingly, the sessional orders will provide for that change. Provision is also made for the chair to have discretion to postpone items of business if an item of business is called on and a member is absent from the House. Members will be familiar with the unfortunate situation when a member is ill or is held up with an earlier commitment and finds that they have lost the opportunity to move their motion because it has been called on. Fairness and equity suggest that that should not necessarily be the case so the Chair has been given discretion to postpone those items of business. This will ensure that in situations where general business is called on earlier than expected and members are not in the Chamber and ready to proceed with their motions, a domino effect of motions lapsing does not occur.

The fourth item is the time limits for consideration in detail. The time limits for members speaking during the consideration in detail stage have been brought into line with previous changes regarding speaking times for the second reading debate on bills. Ministers and the lead speaker for the Opposition will continue to have an unlimited number of opportunities to speak but will be limited to 15 minutes on each occasion. Members will be aware that there are multiple opportunities for all members to speak during consideration in detail. The person who is leading for either the Government or the Opposition will now be limited to 15 minutes but will still have an unlimited number of opportunities to speak. Other members will continue to have three opportunities to speak but each time will be restricted to a maximum of five minutes.

There are some miscellaneous changes. A number of changes are made through these sessional orders to tidy up some issues in the standing orders, such as allowing for the election of a chair of a committee whenever a vacancy occurs and not just at the first meeting of the committee. Some procedures that are no longer used in most Parliaments are being removed. One of them relates to the issue of what is termed "the previous question". At its meeting of 22 November 2012 the committee adopted the following proposed sessional order:

That, during the current session, unless otherwise ordered, standing orders 149 and 150 shall be suspended.

I recollect speaking about this at the time, but I say again that the concept of the "previous question" is an old form of procedure used to supersede a motion before the House. The motion, "That the question be not now put", can be moved when no other member is speaking. If this motion is carried in the affirmative, the next item of business is called on. If it is negatived, the question shall be put immediately with no reply from the mover. While there are theoretical usages for the concept of the previous question, the purpose of the procedure is to curtail debate immediately. The United Kingdom House of Commons Select Committee on the Modernisation of the House of Commons criticised the motion as nonsensical. The last time it was used in this Chamber was in 1986. Perhaps the member for Mount Druitt remembers that.

Mr Richard Amery: Very well.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Most of us, even those who have been here quite a while, do not remember it. All other Australian jurisdictions have done away with the previous question. In modern times other procedures such as the closure and the suspension of standing orders are utilised more regularly to achieve this end. Accordingly, it is proposed to suspend the operation of the standing orders regarding the previous question for the rest of the session. A review of the intended purpose and function of the procedure can then be undertaken. At the most recent meeting of the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee these matters were considered in a manner devoid of partisanship or politics. I congratulate and thank the committee members who properly represent the members in this place to ensure that the working of this House proceeds in a way that should be exemplary for all Parliaments across Australia.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [3.37 p.m.]: I thank the Leader of the House for bringing on this motion today. The sessional orders will apply from the next sitting week after next week's recess. In relation to some of the matters that are of a non-controversial nature, the Opposition is certainly encouraged by the informal comments of the Leader of the House that if anything is not working well the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee can always revisit those matters. Normally we would not trust the Coalition Government in relation to those sorts of comments but the performance of Government members so far on the committee gives us some encouragement that any genuine concerns about the standing orders will be addressed in a most objective fashion.

I will say something about an issue that some members may have picked up on in the comments by the Leader of the House. I refer to the community recognition notices, which are sent to the Clerks by email and are then recorded in the *Hansard* as a contribution by the member. That situation will now cease and instead, twice a week, members will be able to make a one-minute statement in Parliament to recognise a person or community organisation in their electorate. When members have spoken the words in Parliament they will be recorded appropriately by Hansard and reported under the member's name. I think that is the way Hansard has operated historically and that is the way it should work. I am pleased that will happen because that anomaly, perhaps an unintended consequence, whereby an email message can be counted as a speech to be recorded in *Hansard*, was quite absurd. The Leader of the House summed up another issue accurately when he said the arrangement between the Government and Opposition members of the committee was not along party lines. I think all members made genuine attempts to come to a solution.

One of the issues I raise is that 15 one-minute speeches will be made. I was concerned that the process this Government has adopted would give Opposition members an opportunity to make those speeches on a pro rata basis only, as is the case for private members' statements. However, I am pleased that the committee and the Government were supportive of following the process adopted for the giving of notices of motions at the start of each day. Those 15 speeches, if there are that many, will be made alternately by a member from each side of the House until one side or the other has completed their speeches. That is a fair process. Opposition members would be encouraged by that process. We will not be restricted by the numbers that apply to private members' statements. As members would know, a notice of motion that has been dropped in the *Business Paper* disappears from the *Business Paper* if it does not come on for debate within 12 months. That period has been reduced to six months.

It is a process worthy of trialling. It has been highlighted that other States and jurisdictions provide less than a 12-month period. Members who are concerned that their motion will not be heard within six months can go through the process of having the motion reinstated. They can also bring on motions to reorder business on the day. It is not a contentious issue whether private members' statements or matters of public importance are at the end of the daily program. Government members of the committee resolved the Opposition's concerns. I did not mention the proposition that members be limited to the number of notices of motions they could give each week; the status quo will remain. Overall, this matter was resolved to the

satisfaction of both sides of the House. Both sides were represented on the committee, which focused on ensuring that members have an opportunity to air grievances, and to recognise appropriate people or organisations in their electorates.

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

Motion agreed to.

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AMENDMENT (COURT COSTS LEVY) BILL 2013

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Smith, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [3.42 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Section 215 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 provides the Local Court of New South Wales with the power to make an order that the defendant pay court costs, generally in the amount of the filing fee, if the defendant is convicted. The bill will amend the Criminal Procedure Act to replace this existing discretion with a statutory court costs levy, which would apply to most defendants found guilty of an offence in summary proceedings before the Local Court. The levy would attach to most convictions in the Local Court as well as some orders under section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 where the defendant is found guilty but the court does not proceed to conviction. The levy would align with the filing fee in the Local Court, which is currently \$83. At present, court costs orders made under section 215 are being applied inconsistently. The proposed amendment is intended to achieve greater consistency in the application of court costs. In addition, the Government believes that a proportion of the costs of conducting criminal proceedings should be borne by those found guilty of an offence.

It is important that offenders take responsibility for the impact of their actions on the community, including the costs of bringing them to justice. The Productivity Commission's 2013 report on government services estimates that the average cost to Government of finalising a criminal matter in the Local Court is \$750 per matter. The payment of a levy would therefore represent a modest contribution by the offender towards the community's costs in bringing that person to justice. However, the proposed levy will contain certain exceptions, recognising that there are some special circumstances in which the levy should not apply. For example, the levy will not apply in the Children's Court, which will retain its existing discretion to make Local Court costs orders. It will also not apply to findings of guilt recorded in the Local Court regarding traffic offences involving children where the court has chosen to deal with the defendant under the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act rather than at law. If the levy would otherwise apply to a defendant in the Local Court who is under the age of 18 years, the Local Court will have a discretion to exempt that person from payment.

The levy will also not apply to convictions resulting in a sentence of imprisonment, other than a suspended sentence, as prisoners have little opportunity to pay off such debts while in prison, and the accumulation of debts could have a negative effect on rehabilitation. Similarly, the levy will not attach to convictions or other orders recorded in the Drug Court of New South Wales. At present, the judges of that court use their discretionary power and do not impose court costs on offenders in the Drug Court. The rationale is that the Drug Court is a therapeutic court and the imposition of further monetary penalties on this group of offenders at the time of the completion of the program may act as a barrier to them remaining crime free and drug free. Application of the levy may hamper rehabilitation of these individuals and counteract the benefits of the Drug Court program.

Finally, the levy will not apply to orders made under subsection 1 (a) of section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act, where a court finds a person guilty of an offence but, because of extenuating circumstances, directs that the charge be dismissed, except where the offence is punishable by imprisonment. This same exception applies in respect of the victims compensation levy. Importantly, the bill also contains an amendment to the Fines Act 1996 to ensure that individuals who cannot pay the levy in full will have access to a range of alternative payment options available through the court and the State Debt Recovery Office.

These include: applying to pay by instalment; seeking an extension of time within which to pay; having the debt written off due to serious medical, domestic or financial problems; and participating in the Work and Development Order scheme, which allows disadvantaged individuals to satisfy fine debts by non-monetary

means through unpaid work with an organisation or by undertaking certain courses or treatment. Steps will be taken prior to implementation of the levy to enhance the availability of information about court costs and other fees that may apply if a defendant goes to court, so that people are advised of such costs before they are incurred. The bill also requires that the levy scheme be reviewed after 12 months of operation. I commend the bill to the House.

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

LIQUOR AMENDMENT (SMALL BARS) BILL 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 20 February 2013.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [3.50 p.m.]: I support the Liquor Amendment (Small Bars) Bill 2013. This is this important legislation. We all remember, only too sadly, the tragic night in July last year when Thomas Kelly was king hit in Kings Cross on a Saturday night and later died as a result of his injuries. This tragedy highlighted the growing culture of violence and alcohol that has become a trademark of the area. At the time, the incident prompted the Government to review existing liquor licences around the precinct and to investigate ways of better managing the large numbers of people that congregate in the area every weekend. Last September the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, the Hon. George Souris, announced that a new class of small bars would be introduced in the area.

The term "small bar" applies to those premises that have a maximum capacity of 60 patrons. It is part of the Kings Cross Plan of Management that was passed by this Parliament last year. The Liquor Amendment (Small Bars) Bill is part of the Government's solution to the violence and antisocial behaviour that has characterised Kings Cross. The Kings Cross Plan of Management encourages investment and diversity for the operators of small bars in the area. In September last year the Premier announced a raft of measures designed to clean up Kings Cross. They included the issue of liquor licences and the Government has worked with the Australian Hotels Association and other stakeholders in developing the small bars amendments.

The Government also looked at improving transport in and out of Kings Cross as well as public awareness programs designed to educate the public about the dangers of excessive alcohol and drug use. It has been found that excessive use of one or both of these will contribute to the violence and antisocial behaviour that was highlighted by the Thomas Kelly incident. The Liquor Amendment (Kings Cross Plan of Management) Act 2012 provided for a category of small venue liquor licences in the Kings Cross area. It exempted these venues from the liquor freeze in Kings Cross and Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, to encourage the take up of these licences. Small bars are becoming increasingly popular for people who want to relax and have a quiet night out. It is in the larger venues that alcohol consumption is difficult to monitor and they are usually the scenes of late-night violence.

This bill is not limited to the Kings Cross area; it will apply across the State. The current law requires small bars to operate under a general bar hotel licence. As the Minister pointed out in his second reading speech, as at 15 February this year there were 89 such licences. He also said that many of these general bar licences apply to smaller venues catering for fewer than 120 people. The problem is that limits to the number of people inside the premises at one time is a matter for the local council with particular regard to building code requirements and fire safety. It places no obligation on the operator of the premises to reveal the nature of the business, whether it be a nightclub or other form of licensed venue.

However, the Government believes that putting the criteria of small bar into legislation will place stricter controls on operators as to the type of bar they have planned. It will prevent the venue from changing later into something very different. Other provisions contained in the bill provide for requirements with which operators must comply to be granted a small bar licence. Apart from the limit of 60 people, the bar will be allowed to serve alcohol only on those premises. Gaming machines will not be permitted. An important requirement is that food be served, and minors will not be allowed into the premises during trading hours. The temporary freeze on licences will not apply to venues seeking a small bar licence. Bars currently outside the liquor freeze areas will be granted a licence to trade between 12.00 p.m. and 2.00 a.m.

The freeze on new liquor licences in the southern part of the Sydney central business district was lifted in January this year. That means that new clubs, hotels and bars in the area from Town Hall to Haymarket will

be able to apply for a new licence. The current freeze will remain applicable in the Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, area until the end of this year and in the Kings Cross area until 2015. The small bars in those areas will have to apply for an extended licence to trade after midnight under this legislation. The amendments include attractive incentives for operators to open a small bar. These include a reduction in the application fee; that is, the fee will be 50 per cent less than for an on-premise licence. Charges applying to small bars for extended trading authorisation will also be reduced considerably.

Moreover, applicants will not be required to prepare a community impact statement. These will continue to be required for larger licensed premises. This makes sense and reduces red tape. Small bars pose little threat to the disruption of neighbourhoods. However, there will still be the requirement for them to go through local police, the Director General of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services as part of the development application process at the local council. The local government development application process for a small bar will require community consultation and notification by the applicant of the type of business. A further provision requires the applicant to notify the director general and the police within 48 hours of lodging the development application. This is another reason that the community impact statement would be superfluous.

Under the proposed legislation, this process will be strengthened with the Government stipulating the requirements that local councils will need to provide to applicants. These include the police and liquor regulators becoming involved. Importantly, applicants must comply with requirements under section 42 of the Liquor Act. In 2016 the Minister will be in a position to review the success of the legislation and there will be scope for the regulations to be changed if that is necessary. Over the past few years there has been enormous growth in the number of small bars, not only around the city but also in the suburbs. Patrons love them and I am often told that long queues form outside the premises. I congratulate the Minister on introducing this legislation. I also commend the Government for its determination to reduce the incidence of alcohol-fuelled violence and antisocial behaviour. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [3.58 p.m.]: The aim of the Liquor Amendment (Small Bars) Bill 2013 is to provide for a new type of liquor licence for small bars. The legislation provides that a small bar licence will authorise the licensee to sell liquor by retail on the licensed premises in accordance with the following conditions:

- (a) Liquor must be consumed on the licensed premises (that is, bottle shop or take-away sales are prohibited).
- (b) Liquor can be sold only if there are no more than 60 people on the premises.
- (c) The small bar must be open to the general public.
- (d) Food must be available at the small bar.

In addition, gaming machines will not be permitted to operate on the premises.

The introduction of this bill has been partly in response to a desire to promote small venues across New South Wales while fitting in with the introduction of a number of strategies to help curb alcohol-related violence in Kings Cross. This bill will create the first legal definition of a small bar in New South Wales. Holders of this licence will be limited to a maximum of 60 patrons for on-premises consumption of alcohol and food, and no gaming machines will be allowed on the premises. Within the freeze zone, which consists of Kings Cross, Oxford Street and Darlinghurst precincts, a small bar operator will still be able to apply for a small bar licence, although the bar will still be restricted to a midnight closing time. Should the operator wish to trade until 2.00 a.m. he or she must first receive authorisation from the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority [ILGA] to extend the trading hours. The midnight curfew will apply only to the aforementioned areas within the freeze zone. For all other areas, the closing time will be 2.00 a.m.

It is projected that patrons who are interested in a smaller and more intimate setting will be drawn to a venue that has a small bar licence, and create a business boom for the holder of that licence. Hopefully smaller entertainment venues, which are associated with lower risks than large-scale venues, will become more common and cater to the needs of consumers by providing diversity for those who may yearn for alternative entertainment venues. Small bar licence holders must make their venue open to the public, although minors will not be permitted within the small bars during the liquor trading hours. If development consent to utilise premises has been granted and the appropriate bodies have been notified of the application, applicants for these licences will not be required to prepare a community impact statement as they are deemed to be low risk. Provisions will be made to allow any existing general bar licence holder to easily convert his or her licence to a small bar licence.

Small bar licences will be approved automatically upon application to any existing general licence holder who remains in the same premises. Should a general licence holder convert to a small bar licence, that licence holder will be subject to the same conditions and compliance history that he or she was subject to under the previous licence. I hope the Minister will ensure that these small bar licensed premises are not taken over by unruly and undesirable people. Poker machines will not be on site and therefore the cost of a bar will not be very expensive. I hope they do not attract the wrong type of people, as tattoo parlours have, and be taken over by certain organisations. We do not want them to be used for anything other than for venues in which families and friends can enjoy an evening. I am sure the Minister will have that in mind. The introduction of this bill will usher in a range of benefits to the people of New South Wales such as the anticipated emergence of a new range of smaller, intimate entertainment venues to cater for the needs of patrons as well as new business prospects for potential small bar licence holders. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [4.03 p.m.], in reply: I am pleased to speak in reply to the Liquor Amendment (Small Bars) Bill 2013. I thank all members for their contributions to this debate, particularly the member for Liverpool, the shadow Minister, who indicated that the Australian Labor Party would not be opposing this bill. I also thank members representing the electorates of Camden and Parramatta, the Independent member for Sydney, the member for Vacluse, The Greens member for Balmain, who also indicated The Greens support in this Chamber and in the Legislative Council, the member for Pittwater and today the members for Granville and Cabramatta for their contributions to the debate. I acknowledge their support for the bill.

Addressing alcohol-related harm in Kings Cross and across New South Wales requires innovative approaches. While licensing restrictions are important, we cannot rely totally upon those controls to change drinking behaviour and create a more manageable environment. Developing more intimate drinking spaces that are easier to supervise while providing greater variety and choice for consumers must also be part of our approach. This bill does that by focusing on small bars as a way to reduce the pressure on night-time precincts that can result from large venues attracting significant numbers of patrons. The reforms in this bill will benefit the whole State by providing an alternative business model to these larger venues.

The Government appreciates that many larger licensed venues are well operated and provide valued service to their customers and the local community. Those venues also make a substantial contribution to the economy and are a vital component of the business environment in New South Wales. For many patrons larger venues provide the atmosphere and services they want and that option will continue to be available under the liquor laws. This bill will help business operators provide a choice for consumers. It will reduce red tape and cut costs for businesses so that they can focus on providing a safe environment that promotes responsible service and consumption of alcohol.

In their contribution to the debate a number of members queried whether a 60 patron limit is the right one to ensure small bars are viable. The bill recognises that a small bar with a maximum of 60 patrons is likely to have less of an impact on the local community in terms of alcohol-related harm and this is reflected in the application process and reduced fee. The small bar limit of 60 patrons will also address issues with the current liquor laws. There are concerns about venues morphing from a bar into another type of venue that poses a higher risk of harm, such as a nightclub. There are also concerns about bars growing in size over time and therefore contributing to greater levels of harm in high-density precincts like Kings Cross. The lack of a patron limit for bars in the liquor laws contributes to these problems.

The Government's view is that a 60 patron limit is appropriate to ensure the low-risk nature of small bars. It is also consistent with the privileges that will come with a small bar licence such as the exemption in some circumstances from the community impact statement process and the availability of trading until 2.00 a.m., which reduce costs and ensure flexibility for small bar operators. The operation of the 60 patron limit will be monitored by the Government. The bill allows that limit to be reconsidered if necessary. As noted by a number of members the bill also provides for a review of the small bar legislation in 2016 to ensure the policy objectives and the terms of the legislation remain valid. Key issues for this review will be the patron capacity limit for small bars and the operation of small bars until 2.00 a.m.

Members, notably the member for Camden, raised the importance of small bars adhering to responsible service of alcohol requirements of the liquor laws, including the need for appropriate training of staff and supervision of liquor consumption. I also wish to reinforce this point. Small bars will be subject to the same responsible service of alcohol standards that apply to other licensed venues. Given the privileges attached to a small bar licence the Government expects small bar operators to lead the way in providing a safe and

well-supervised environment that encourages responsible consumption of alcohol, and does not tolerate intoxication, antisocial behaviour or violence. In this way small bars will play an important role in helping to change the culture of irresponsible alcohol use in the community and the very significant harm associated with that.

A number of members also spoke about the importance of an individual's responsibility to control his or her behaviour and be a responsible citizen when consuming alcohol. This is a critical issue for our community. People need to set an example by having a responsible attitude towards their drinking and be respectful of others. Small bars will help to provide an alternative environment that promotes these standards. I acknowledge the contribution to the debate and support for the bill from the member for Balmain. I can assure him that as foreshadowed in my second reading speech it is the Government's intention that the development application process is to be strengthened as it relates to applications where the purpose of land use includes the sale of liquor.

The intention is to issue planning guidelines that require the development application process to include submissions from the police and the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing prior to a decision on the application by local government. I note the member for Balmain has acknowledged that there is ongoing consultation as part of the existing process. This will continue and be enhanced by the new guidelines to ensure that there is proper consideration of the issues. Similarly I also acknowledge the contribution and support from the member for Sydney. While he expressed a concern that the development application process may not cover certain areas, I can assure him that the intention is to enhance the existing process with planning guidelines to ensure that all the appropriate information is available to the decision-makers during the consideration of the development application.

This is a part of the wider reform of the State's planning system being undertaken by my colleague the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. This is the standard of information that will be a prerequisite to the consideration of a small bar liquor licence application. The fundamental principle is that there must be consultation about proposed liquor use at the development application level before a liquor licence can be issued. It is also noted that the liquor laws require a community impact statement to be prepared in respect of high-impact licensing proposals, including applications to operate a hotel, registered club or a liquor store.

A number of low-impact liquor licence applications, including those relating to restaurants, vessels and function centres, are not subject to community impact statement requirements. Given the low-risk nature of a small bar and the proposed enhancements to the planning process, the Government believes a community impact statement is not necessary for small bar licence applications in specific circumstances. These circumstances are limited to where development consent has been obtained to use the premises as a small bar or to sell liquor. This is supported by provisions in the bill that require small bar applicants to provide notification of their application for development approval to local police and the Director General of NSW Trade and Investment within two working days. A community impact statement will be required if this notification is not provided. This will ensure that the views of stakeholders and regulators are considered as part of the decision-making process.

I am advised that the City of Sydney's development control plan for late trading premises includes consideration of the nature and size of the proposed licensed premises, its impact on the locality, the need for a plan of management, and measures to ensure safety and prevent crime. These are clearly issues that councils can examine in the development approval process. Approval of a small bar licence and the sale of liquor in a small bar will also be subject to the extensive requirements of the liquor laws. These include disciplinary provisions should a licensee operate a small bar in a manner that is contrary to the public interest. As with all other licence applications, arrangements will be made for police to be notified of small bar licence applications. The liquor laws include provisions for stakeholders such as police and the Director General of NSW Trade and Investment to make submissions to the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority. All submissions are required to be considered by the authority when determining a liquor licence application. The authority is also required to consider alcohol-related harm issues in the licensing process.

The member for Sydney also referred to the potential for a clustering of small bars and how that may impact local amenity. On that issue, I advise that small bar licence applications for venues in the City of Sydney local government area will be assessed as part of the trial of the Environment and Venue Assessment Tool [EVAT] through 2013. This assessment tool has been developed as an outcome of liquor licence density research undertaken in 2012 to guide liquor licensing decisions. It will consider a number of venue risk factors relevant to small bars, including patron capacity, licence type and liquor accord membership.

A number of location and market risk factors that are also relevant to small bars will also be considered as part of the assessment, including alcohol-related assault rates, availability of late-night transport and liquor outlet density.

The member for Cabramatta referred to applications for a small bar liquor licence that will be subject to the same probity requirements as other liquor licences. The Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority will need to be satisfied that applicants for a small bar licence are fit and proper before a licence is approved. Finally, I thank Liz Tidd and Peter Cox of the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing—Peter is in the gallery this afternoon—and Frank Marzic and Jinesh Patel from my office, for the considerable work involved in preparing the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr George Souris agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

LOCAL COURT AMENDMENT (COMPANY TITLE HOME UNIT DISPUTES) BILL 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 19 February 2013.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.14 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Local Court Amendment (Company Title Home Unit Disputes) Bill 2013. The Opposition does not oppose the bill. The object of the bill is to confer jurisdiction on the Local Court to hear and determine proceedings involving certain company title home unit disputes. "Company title" is a situation where a person becomes entitled to live in a home unit building by owning shares in a company that, in turn, owns the building. Strata title effectively superseded this type of ownership structure in 1961 but those then existing company titles continued. In 2007 the New South Wales Law Reform Commission, in report No. 115, estimated that there were about 820 company title buildings in the State, as opposed to 63,686 strata schemes.

At present, disputes between residents, corporations, shareholders and other parties in relation to this type of title are heard in the Supreme Court—most often in the Equity Division. In May 2006 then Attorney General Debus asked the New South Wales Law Reform Commission to investigate the limited dispute resolution options available to residents of company title home units. The result of that request was the 2007 report, which, as I understand it, is the genesis of this bill. The impetus for the referral came from judicial comments about the lack of accessible fora for such disputes—I think those comments came from Justice Dennis Cowdroy, then of the Land and Environment Court and subsequently of the Federal Court. The current option is only the Supreme Court and costs in that jurisdiction render such proceedings prohibitive, especially for elderly residents on fixed incomes.

The Law Reform Commission noted that the companies involved are small private companies and minority shareholders could easily be prone to the oppressive conduct of the majority. There may also be what others would regard as "trivial" disputes, which in strata unit instances may be dealt with in the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal, but which in company title instances must be dealt with in the Supreme Court. The expense of Supreme Court proceedings and the complexity of the law surrounding "oppression" mean, in the words of the Law Reform Commission:

It would seem that residents in company title home units are often disempowered without any effective means of holding the board of directors accountable for their decisions or actions.

As I have said, this bill flows largely from the Law Reform Commission report, although it is not entirely consistent with it. The Law Reform Commission recommended transfer of jurisdiction to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal. This bill proposes transferring jurisdictions to the Local Court. This will still mean that the forum for such disputes is split between the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal for strata unit disputes, and the Local Court for company title. The Government said it adopted this approach because it was not clear that a tribunal could be vested with a power to determine disputes arising under a Commonwealth law—and that is not a proposition from which I dissent. I suspect, whilst not being privy to the decision-making process behind the provisions in the bill, that the Law Reform Commission recommendations predated a High Court decision called *Kirk*, which perhaps concentrated people's minds on that point.

Consistent with the Law Reform Commission recommendation, a number of more serious disputes are still reserved for the Supreme Court, although not—despite the Law Reform Commission recommendation—disputes relating to the lease of a unit. The bill, in accordance with the Law Reform Commission recommendation, prevents the exclusion of the court's jurisdiction by the constitution of a company title building. The bill does not adopt the Law Reform Commission recommendation that all disputes be referred to mediation unless the registrar decides otherwise. This is partly because the Local Court does not have the same type of infrastructure as the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal, but it could certainly make that recommendation.

I suspect that this provision also reflects the Government's reluctance to embrace alternative dispute resolution—a course adopted by the Government in relation to retail leases in another bill that will be debated in this House in due course. It is unfortunate that there is not a greater emphasis upon alternative dispute resolution. Certainly the Law Reform Commission—I think quite appropriately—attached great significance to the role of mediation in disputes relating to communal living arrangements. Despite that, the Opposition does not oppose the bill.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [4.18 p.m.]: I support the Local Court Amendment (Company Title Home Unit Disputes) Bill 2013. The bill will confer jurisdiction on the Local Court to hear and determine a range of company title home unit disputes between a company title corporation, a shareholder or former shareholder of a company title corporation and/or a resident or a former resident of premises on land owned by a company title corporation. For the purposes of the bill and the new legislation, a company title corporation is a company registered under the Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001—that is, the owner of land, if ownership of a share or shares in that company entitles the owner of the share or shares to the exclusive use and occupation of residential premises on that land. The bill states that a company title home unit dispute is a dispute between the interested parties I have named about any of the following matters:

- (a) the health, safety and security of persons occupying or visiting the land owned by a company title corporation or residential premises located on that land (including, for example, safety of children on the premises and waste disposal),
- (b) the common property on the land owned by a company title corporation (including, for example, parking and vehicle access, repair and maintenance, design and appearance),
- (c) the use of residential premises located on the land owned by a company title corporation occupied by a shareholder of the corporation (including, for example, external appearance of premises or the keeping of pets),
- (d) the behaviour of persons occupying or visiting the land owned by a company title corporation or residential premises located on the land (including, for example, noise),
- (e) the refusal by a company title corporation to allow a shareholder of the corporation to grant a lease or licence to use or occupy premises located on the land owned by the corporation,
- (f) administrative matters relating to the running of a company title corporation (including, for example, levies).

In determining proceedings involving a company title home unit dispute, the court will be empowered to make various orders, including requiring a person to do, or refrain from doing, any act; payment of damages or other money; and in relation to the interpretation of the constitution of a company title corporation or other contract or agreement. In 2007 the New South Wales Law Reform Commission delivered report 115 entitled, "Disputes in company title home units." Although this bill proposes something different to the recommendation of the Law Reform Commission, in substance it addresses the commission's concerns and provides a solution to those concerns. In 2006 the then Attorney General, the Hon. R. J. Debus, asked the commission to investigate, as part of its Community Law Reform Program, the limited dispute resolution options available to residents in company title home units.

Concerns expressed to the commission by Justice Dennis Cowdroy, then of the Land and Environment Court, were that disputes over the use and occupancy of company title home unit buildings could not be resolved in an accessible forum—the suggested forum being the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal [CTTT]. At present, New South Wales has no statutory provision that directs the resolution of company title home unit disputes to any particular forum. Therefore, the Law Reform Commission noted that the forum for resolving these disputes is a court of general jurisdiction. The commission noted the Supreme Court, in particular the equity division, was the place to which such disputes generally were referred even though they may be "trivial". However, the cost of Supreme Court litigation seems to have deterred company title home unit residents from litigating all but the most serious disputes. The Law Reform Commission noted:

Indeed, even in serious disputes, company title home unit residents may hesitate to resort to litigation in the Supreme Court. The most common remedy sought in such disputes is relief against oppression. Yet the law surrounding the oppression remedy and establishing its existence in a particular company is extremely complex, hinging on the facts of the case. The risk of not succeeding in the Supreme Court must often deter even the most eager, but well advised, litigant from pursuing the remedy, especially in view of the cost of so doing.

That is to be contrasted to the relevant ease with which strata title disputes are heard and determined. The Law Reform Commission noted that, bearing in mind that company title home unit disputes were similar to those for strata title units, the statistics seemed to demonstrate that company title home unit disputes are not being resolved. The Law Reform Commission provided the following:

In 2004-5 the CTTT received 1,090 Strata and Community Schemes Division applications covering the broad area of the disputes to which communal living gives rise.

In contrast, no more than a handful of company title disputes were litigated in the Supreme Court since the 1960s. Even allowing for the vast difference in the number of strata units and company title units does not explain the difference in the incidence of litigation between company title home unit disputes and strata unit disputes. Further, the Law Reform Commission noted that although the Australian Securities and Investment Commission [ASIC] has power to investigate and pursue alleged breaches by the board of directors of a company title building, including breaches relating to financial accountability and transparency, it does not seem to have been particularly concerned with that part of its wide and busy jurisdiction. The Law Reform Commission identified the need for a new, cheap and accessible forum in which to resolve company title home unit disputes and said it was sufficient to warrant the intervention of this Parliament.

The commission noted that New South Wales had about 820 home unit companies compared with almost 64,000 strata schemes and 500 registered community title schemes. The Law Reform Commission recommended the Consumer, Tenancy and Trader Tribunal as an appropriate forum in which most company title home unit disputes can be resolved. This bill addresses the lack of accessibility and the high cost of resolving these disputes and refers them to the Local Court, rather than the Consumer, Tenancy and Trader Tribunal because of doubts as to whether disputes under the Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001 can be referred to a tribunal as distinct from a court. It may be that a tribunal, such as the Consumer, Tenancy and Trader Tribunal, cannot be vested with the power to determine disputes under Commonwealth law. That is why the Government proposes that the Local Court rather than the Consumer, Tenancy and Trader Tribunal be the appropriate place to resolve company title home unit disputes.

This will be achieved by giving the general and small claims division of the Local Court the ability to make appropriate orders. Not all company title home unit disputes in a colloquial sense will be referred to the Local Court. The Law Reform Commission found that some disputes would be more appropriately dealt with in another forum. Some disputes may be particularly complex or result in a shareholder being deprived of his or her home. The Law Reform Commission recommended that jurisdiction not extend to disputes relating to the sale or transfer of shares in the company in which relief is claimed against oppression, under part 2F.1 of the Corporations Act 2001, relating to the forfeiture of shares of the company or the winding up of the company. Therefore, the bill excludes these types of disputes.

The bill excludes also other matters that the Corporations Act 2001 reserves for superior courts, such as the Supreme Court. However, the bill does not adopt the Law Reform Commission's recommendation to exclude disputes relating to the lease of a shareholder's unit. The fact that people buying into company title home units should be aware of leasing restrictions does not mean that a cheap, quick and accessible means of resolving those disputes should not be available. The small claims division of the Local Court deals with a broad range of disputes and is well placed to determine disputes regarding the leasing of company title home units. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The bill adopts the recommendation of the Law Reform Commission that the constitution of a company title home unit building should not be able to exclude the jurisdiction, for example, through an arbitration clause. It adopts also recommendation 4:

The legislation should state that, to the extent necessary, its provisions are Corporations legislation displacement provisions.

Overall, this bill allows for disputes over the use and occupancy of company title home unit buildings to be resolved in an accessible forum, that is, the Local Court, which is much cheaper than Supreme Court. It delivers on the aims that the Law Reform Commission sought to be fulfilled in a different way and form because of the issue with a tribunal dealing with disputes under Commonwealth law. But it is a way to ensure that the sorts of disputes that strata title holders can resolve easily, quickly and cheaply can also be done in a similar way with company titles. I commend the bill to the House.

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

CHINA HUMAN RIGHTS

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.30 p.m.]: I address the petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly take certain actions to stop the persecution of Falun Gong and discourage cooperation between New South Wales and China in relation to organ transplants. First, I acknowledge the members in the House and the members in their offices who are watching this debate. I acknowledge also the people in the public gallery, many of whom contributed to collecting the 10,000 signatures on the petition. I have been privileged to work with these activists, including many members from the Falun Dafa community, on a number of important issues, and I am inspired by their dedication and ability to harness such strong and passionate support. Today we discuss the issue of forced organ harvesting and the potential responsibilities of New South Wales in discouraging organ transplants, surgical training and organ transplant exchanges with China.

Most countries have laws prohibiting the sale and forced removal of human organs. However, the practice continues to be widespread in a number of countries. This includes a number of countries in our region, including the People's Republic of China. There were reports from international advocates that forcible organ harvesting has been ongoing in China for decades, particularly targeting vulnerable people such as prisoners and minority ethnic and religious groups. This means that people are able to visit countries where forced organ harvesting occurs in order to receive their transplant. It creates a shocking and unacceptable global trade in human organs, resulting in appalling and ongoing human rights abuses. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, Dr Manfred Nowak, found that the majority of inmates in China's forced labour camps were Falun Gong practitioners who also comprised two-thirds of the reported torture cases. His 2007 United Nations submission lists hospitals, transplant centres, detention centres and courts in China that have been involved in either the removal of organs from live Falun Gong practitioners or administering the use of these organs.

This practice needs to stop. One way of addressing this brutal trade is for countries such as Australia to impose a prohibition on its citizens and residents from receiving trafficked organs wherever this transplant occurs. The Greens are currently considering law reform to create specific offences of receiving harvested or trafficked organs within New South Wales or overseas. This law reform would highlight the injustice of the global trade while reducing the likelihood of Australians overseas participating in it. We hope that such a prohibition would also serve to emphasise the need to improve organ donation rates in New South Wales. We have consulted broadly with the public, members of the medical community and other stakeholders in relation to this matter. It is important to recognise that the New South Wales Government cannot do everything.

The bill currently being discussed among the medical fraternity is the draft Human Tissue Amendment (Trafficking in Human Organs) Bill, which is based partly on draft Canadian legislation, known as BILL C-500. It seeks to undertake a range of steps that the New South Wales Parliament can take: first, increase the penalty for commercial trading in tissues or organs; second, create offences for the use of human organs and tissues taken without consent; third, create an aggravated offence where the removed, traded or trafficked organ is a vital organ, with increased penalties; and, finally, extend the law to offences that occur outside New South Wales where the person engaging in this conduct is ordinarily a resident of New South Wales. It is clear that there are issues in New South Wales in terms of being able to make laws that cover people's activity

internationally. It is important to note that, while it cannot prevent persons generally established and domiciled in another State, for example, or another country, it can introduce limitations by criminalising the conduct, and it can achieve its goal of reducing the number of New South Wales residents willing to undertake this activity.

It is important to recognise that organ donation is a critical part of ensuring the health and wellbeing of the people of this State. We need to improve ethical ways of delivering healthy organs to people in New South Wales. But we know, as the petition has put forward, that that is not the case in China. We should be doing everything we can to try to ensure that this situation is eradicated permanently. I note that China's Deputy Minister of Health stated that inmates are not a proper source for human organs. We need to do what we can to ensure that that is carried through. This discussion is important. It is on the parliamentary record, *Hansard*, where it will stay. It is also important that this matter is brought to the attention of the Government and other members because of the suffering—the suffering of those brave practitioners, Christians, and minority ethnic groups and others in China who are subject to torture and persecution. The illegal harvesting of their organs must stop. We must do everything we can in New South Wales to ensure that we do not take part in that activity and ensure that we protect civil and human rights around the world.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! I know that this is an important issue, but I remind people in the gallery that clapping, applauding and cheering are not allowed in the House. I would ask that they remember that.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [4.35 p.m.]: In leading for the Government, I remind members of those often quoted words of Voltaire:

I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.

Such an eloquent statement seems particularly pertinent in relation to this petition. We on this side of the House firmly believe in the principles of traditional liberalism. Indeed, the Liberal Party's first objective is to promote and support the cause of political liberty and individual freedom. There can be little doubt that the time-tested principles of traditional liberalism are the bedrock of any free and prosperous society. Basic concepts such as the rule of law and freedom of worship define who we are as a people in the modern era. As a graduate of Asian studies, I am in awe of China's rapid transformation. In 50 short years China shifted from Third World poverty to become a world super power. There is no historical comparison to the rapid and massive development that continues in China. This is a credit to the work ethic of the Chinese people.

In all of our international relations Australia's policy has consistently been to follow a path of transparency and honesty in order to create a dialogue of mutual understanding. It is because of this very principle that I feel obliged to be leading the Government in response to this petition. The petition raises serious concerns about the question of human rights abuses in China. In stating this, I acknowledge that Australia is not pure. John Howard's need for an intervention in central Australia to reverse child neglect in our Indigenous community was proof positive of that. Naturally, the New South Wales Government takes the issues raised in the petition very seriously. It should, however, be noted that it is the prerogative of the Commonwealth to pursue such issues with the Chinese Government. Illegal organ harvesting and trafficking is a global issue and a matter of grave concern to the international community.

Further, there has been a sustained global push to eradicate organ trafficking, transplant tourism and commercialism around the world, as exemplified in the Istanbul Declaration. It is pleasing to note that there is some data out of the University of Peking to indicate that some improvements in the volume of illegally procured deceased donor transplants have occurred. Further, China's New South Wales trained Vice-Minister for Health has made moves to make it illegal to procure organs from executed prisoners. These developments are encouraging and an indication that such transplants may become less prevalent in the future. The Transplantation Society continues to argue that interaction with clinicians from China and elsewhere should promote the development of high ethical and clinical standards of practice. To that end, the society argues that clinical and pre-clinical trainees should be accepted in order to educate Chinese trainees as to the alternatives to the use of organs from executed prisoners.

The issue of transplant tourism from New South Wales is not particularly prevalent, with only one or two cases annually. Such people are advised against engaging in transplant tourism by their doctors, but they cannot be compelled to heed this advice. We on this side of the House are mindful of the serious potential issues that the petition raises about organ harvesting practices in China. However, again, interacting with China about some potential concerns is a matter for the Commonwealth Government to pursue. But it would be remiss of us

as a legislative body promoting our place on the world stage to ignore this petition. I therefore appeal to the House to acknowledge this petition as an important matter for our ongoing dialogue with the Chinese Government.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.39 p.m.]: This petition raises serious concerns about the possibility of significant human rights abuses in China. In 2008 the International Society of Nephrology released the Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism 2008. It seeks to eradicate organ trafficking and transplant tourism and commercialism around the world. Encouragingly, transplantation data presented by Peking University to a recent delegation of Australian transplant clinicians to China showed a dramatic decrease in the past three years in the number of illegally procured deceased donor liver transplants. The Chinese Vice Minister of Health, Dr Jiefu Huang, is leading a legislative program that makes it illegal to transplant an organ from an executed prisoner. I am hopeful that, with his continued commitment as Minister for the next five years, the incidence of such transplants will continue to decrease. Dr Huang trained in New South Wales between 1984 and 1987, and holds an honorary professorship with the Sydney University medical school.

Certainly any medical practitioner who is trained in New South Wales, particularly at a leading institution such as the Sydney University medical school, has the code of ethics for doctors drummed into them. It is very much a part of the training and professionalism that comes from doctors who graduate from that institution and from medicine in Australia. Since 2006 the peak international body for transplantation, the Transplantation Society, has argued that the overall goal of interaction with countries such as China should be to promote the development of high ethical and clinical standards of practice. Dr Huang has certainly been trained in those ethical and clinical standards of practice. The Transplantation Society continues to advise members to accept clinical or preclinical trainees from such transplant programs as this will promote better dialogue and educate Chinese trainees in appropriate and effective alternatives to the use of organs or tissues from executed prisoners. The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons has a policy of not accepting papers for publication that are based on transplantation surgery or surgical data using organs from executed prisoners or prisoners of conscience.

Containing living donor transplant tourism from Australia is, nonetheless, difficult. Anecdotally, a very small number of individuals in New South Wales requiring transplantation—possibly one or two cases per year—travel to countries such as China to access organs, typically kidneys. Such individuals are advised against this by their treating clinician but are not compelled to heed the advice. This petition raises serious concerns about human rights abuses, and the New South Wales Government takes this matter very seriously. However, interaction with China over suspected human rights abuses is a matter for the Australian Government to pursue.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SEVEN HILLS LAND REZONING

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [4.43 p.m.]: I alert the House to a matter that is of deep concern in my electorate of Toongabbie for residents of a series of streets—namely, Jeanette Street, Jean Street and Rowley Street—in Seven Hills. About 10 days ago I attended a community meeting held at the Isin household. I congratulate Durcin on her hospitality on that occasion and her son Dirk on organising the meeting. The meeting was attended by approximately 60 residents of those streets. The issue of concern relates to the draft Blacktown local environmental plan. The residents live in a spot adjacent to International Peace Park, which is a large tract of land that is occasionally used for sports events such as netball and soccer. The draft local environmental plan proposes that their homes, which are contiguous with International Peace Park, be compulsory acquired after the area has been rezoned as green space. The rationale for that is obvious: With population in the Blacktown City Council area set to increase over the next few decades, more green space will be required.

The locals have made a number of representations to me, and I take this opportunity to put them on the record. First, residents are unclear as to whether the council will forcibly acquire homes or whether this will be done at a time of mutual convenience. Second, they want to know over what time frame any acquisition may take place. Third, they want to know the status of any proposed modifications or improvements they may seek to make to their homes—for example, an extension or adding another storey to a home. The council's treatment of such applications is at the front of their minds. They also make the point that the existing park is

under-utilised. That is a statement of fact: I see the area almost every day and there is rarely any activity in or around the park. It seems to me and to the residents that in the circumstances rezoning it for green space is premature, to say the least.

These residents are deeply concerned about this proposal. It remains in draft form—which I emphasised at the meeting. I also emphasised that they should approach the council and their local councillors directly, both face-to-face and in writing, and raise their concerns. As many in this place will know, when change is proposed it often causes a great deal of consternation, much of which is due to a lack of information or information that is poorly conveyed. Blacktown City Council has gone out of its way to provide information but in some cases it appears that residents have been told different things about the same issue. So when they compare notes and impressions of the council's policy position vis-a-vis the legislative capacity they reveal conflicting answers, which in turn raises concern.

The residents want to continue living in the area. They like the area. It is a genuine community—and it is a community of interest now because the residents oppose this element of the draft local environmental plan. There is a proposal to increase housing densities in the precinct across the road from the area to be rezoned to green space that is of concern to residents. The question then arises: Is council seeking to create more green space in order to provide additional on-street parking for the up-zoned part of the precinct? It is a legitimate concern, and is just one of a large number of concerns that I have taken the opportunity to convey to the council.

I have written to the council about this matter. These residents are entitled to be heard; the concerns they raise are legitimate. I was deliberate about confirming with the residents at the meeting that they wish to oppose the inclusion of this rezoning in the final local environmental plan when it is approved by the department of planning. On that basis, I have written to the council outlining the residents' concerns and indicating it is my view, and that of the residents, that the proposal in the draft Blacktown local environmental plan to rezone the area—Jeanette Street, Jean Street and Rowley Street—as green space should be excised from the existing draft plan and not included in the final plan.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.48 p.m.]: In April 2011, delivering very promptly on an election commitment, the New South Wales Government established the School Bus Safety Community Committee to investigate and report on issues relating to the safe transportation of children in rural and regional New South Wales. The inquiry's terms of reference required the committee to assess the status of bus safety in rural and regional New South Wales, consider the full range of school bus safety measures, with reference to national and international experience, and recommend the most effective ways to make school bus travel as safe as possible.

In June 2011 I was pleased to hear the Minister for Transport announce that highly accomplished transport safety expert Carolyn Walsh had been employed to chair the independent panel. Ms Walsh led the committee comprised of road safety experts, transport operators, parents and school representatives, including a member of the South Coast based Belt Up for Safety (B.U.S.) Action Group, Glenda Staniford. The committee discussed a range of safety measures concerning the transportation of children, including the installation of seatbelts on buses. The School Bus Safety Community Committee sought feedback from the community and industry experts, and examined infrastructure and school routes, design—including seatbelts—scheduling, driver training, and performance and safety issues off the bus, such as activities around bus stops.

Seatbelts on school buses is of particular importance to residents of the South Coast—and I am sure every other electorate—following a tragic accident that occurred on the Princes Highway in 2001 and resulted in the death of a student. I acknowledge the work of his parents and members of the community who established the Belt Up for Safety (B.U.S.) Action Group—a group that raises awareness of the importance of improving the safety of our children travelling on buses, especially on rural and regional roads. I particularly acknowledge the work of the action group's founding members, Jan Shalhoub and Glenda Staniford, who played a vital role in guaranteeing that the New South Wales Government finally took the matter seriously. Glenda served on the Government's independent committee and, like me, was very pleased that last month the committee finalised its report and handed it to the Government.

At the heart of the committee's report are four core reforms. These are: rolling out a phased program to provide buses fitted with lap and sash seatbelts for all rural and regional school bus routes outside lower-speed urban environments, to be completed within 10 years; preventing school students from standing on buses when

the route includes travelling on unsealed roads or on roads with a speed limit of 80 kilometres an hour or more that are outside urban areas, to be implemented no later than day one of term three of the 2013 school year; updating the school student code of conduct to place obligations on parents and students to comply with wearing seatbelts, along with other programs to educate and develop safety awareness among stakeholders, particularly motorists who share roads with school buses; and prioritisation of school bus routes and bus stops when infrastructure spending is being allocated.

The Minister for Transport, the Minister for Roads and Ports, and the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads have worked with this committee very closely. I thank them for their commitment to improving safety for children travelling on public transport in rural and regional areas—and I have to include urban roads from time to time also. The Ministers and the Government have welcomed the report and are currently considering its recommendations. More than 60,000 students across regional and rural New South Wales travel on a fleet of 1,485 dedicated school buses each day. Those buses travel more than 250,000 kilometres daily, or more than 50 million kilometres per year. The desire to ensure our children are safe when travelling to and from school is a longstanding issue in the South Coast community and across New South Wales. Too often we hear of incidents involving children on school buses—most recently on 10 September last year when nine-year-old Harry Dunn was killed following a tragic school bus crash in Singleton.

I am pleased that our extremely hardworking Minister, Gladys Berejiklian, and the Liberal-Nationals Government have recognised the need to examine the issue of school bus safety. Before the last election I made numerous representations to the former Government, all of which remained unanswered. There was no response—much to my absolute and utter frustration—on this safety issue. This should be a priority for any government. This afternoon I welcome the School Bus Safety Community Committee's report. The committee worked very hard over 12 months, met regularly and listened to a number of experts. I look forward to the Government's response so that we can finally prioritise the safety of our students when they are travelling in country, rural or regional areas.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.53 p.m.]: I thank the member for South Coast and the Speaker of the House for bringing the School Bus Safety Community Committee report to the House. As a former schoolteacher, the member is aware of the importance of student safety—especially in regional and rural communities. As a former teacher, I have been on many excursions and seen the distance that these schoolchildren must travel. It is imperative that we consider their safety. It is good that the Government and the Ministers are considering the report, which contained 35 recommendations. We are looking for a whole-of-government response, which will come at a later date. In the meantime, we are taking necessary steps in the right direction for children in rural and regional communities regarding seatbelts on school buses, children standing on school buses and appropriate behavioural codes of conduct. I congratulate the member on her persistence in this matter.

MONARO COMMITTEE FOR CANCER RESEARCH

QUEANBEYAN RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [4.54 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House two local organisations in the Monaro electorate that are making a big difference in the fight against cancer. The first is the Monaro Committee for Cancer Research, which recently won a Canberra Area Theatre Award for the Dancing with the Cooma Stars fundraiser. The Canberra Area Theatre Awards have been part of the theatre, dance and musical scene in Canberra and the surrounding districts since 1994. They recognise the enormous contribution made by non-professional groups to the artistic life of Australia—particularly in Canberra and the surrounding region—and encourage individuals in the performing arts. I congratulate Coralie Woods and her fantastic team on their hard work and commitment to these awards. Their passion and dedication are very much noted.

This year a new category, In the Spirit of the Community award, was presented to the Monaro Committee for Cancer Research for raising \$185,000 for cancer research through the Dancing with the Cooma Stars fundraiser. Dancing with the Cooma Stars saw 11 local stars rehearse dance routines with a professional dancer and perform them in front of huge crowds over four nights in little old Cooma, raising more than \$185,000 for cancer research. I am enormously proud of the contribution that the Monaro Committee for Cancer Research makes to the region for the benefit of cancer patients and their families. The committee is truly deserving of the In the Spirit of the Community award, which I had the pleasure of presenting.

The committee's efforts in fundraising surpassed expectations and hundreds of people were involved in making Dancing with the Cooma Stars such a success. This great event is testimony to the fantastic Monaro community and the incredible dedication of the 35 members of the Monaro Committee for Cancer Research. The committee is a not-for-profit organisation that is run entirely by Monaro volunteers. Since its inception it has raised money to build an oncology ward and purchase a navigator probe and an iPad for the clinic so that Skype can be used for long-distance consultations and, most importantly, provide support to patients and their families.

The committee has many members whom I acknowledge. They include president Sandy Schofield, vice president Dale Coyte, secretary Lorraine Blencowe and treasurer Pat Nichols. The management committee members are: Bronnie Taylor, Sue Litchfield, Carolyn Ewart, Sarah Allen, Liz Litchfield and Sue Eccleston. The general committee members are: Carolyn Allen, Robbie Boyce, Wendy Chapman, Jacky Dixon, Gail Eastaway, Peige Eber, Marie Hampson, Vicki Haylock, Joey Herbert, Pam Johnson, Gaye Kable, Penny Larritt, Liz Litchfield, Angie Manthey, Karen McGufficke, Michelle McGufficke, Annie Reynolds, Jane Redmond, Jacqui Schofield, Lilibet Stephens, Rowena Trappitt, Mary Walters, Tania Ward and Denham Williams. The patron is Barbara Litchfield.

Another local organisation and event equally deserving of recognition is the Queanbeyan Relay for Life, which I once again participated in with my dedicated team. The relay is more than just a fundraiser; it is a life-changing experience that gives every person in the community a chance to celebrate, remember and fight back. Every person who participates joins others around the globe as part of this worldwide movement to end cancer. Some 35 teams and almost 400 people participated in this year's Queanbeyan relay, raising more than \$90,000 for cancer research. It was encouraging to see a last-minute surge of support that saw 50 relayers register on the day. The event's patron was ABC journalist Chris Kimball, who shared his and his family's experience with non-Hodgkin lymphoma cancer.

Everyone's reason to relay is as unique as their personal story. You have a chance to meet people in the community who are equally as passionate about finding an end to cancer in our lifetime. You can thank all the people who have done so much to support you through your personal cancer experience or you can gather together with friends, family and colleagues to laugh, cry, and create lasting memories. The event was an amazing experience and served as a timely reminder to me and my family of how passionate rural and regional communities can be when they come together in support of others. Congratulations to the Queanbeyan Relay for Life committee and to all the relayers, who put in an incredible effort walking around Seiffert Oval for 24 hours in support of such a great cause. I am proud to represent communities such as Cooma and Queanbeyan, and many more, and to share the message that those lost to cancer will never be forgotten and the hope that those who face cancer will be supported and that one day cancer will be eliminated.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.58 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Monaro on the hard work that he does for his electorate. Cancer is a dreaded disease; it impacts on many families and individuals. We all know many people who have had this dreaded disease or have had it touch their lives in some way. I commend the member for Monaro for being a member who gets in there and supports those who ran a very worthwhile ball that night. There were 11 stars. I know that this time round the member was not one of the stars that danced on the night, but he is one of the stars and shining lights in the Monaro area. He was there to present the awards; and it was great that he showed his commitment for that area. To raise \$185,000 was a fantastic effort by all those involved. The member was instrumental in the fundraising efforts of the Queanbeyan Relay for Life. He does not just talk about this event: he was involved in it personally; he had a team and was part of it. I congratulate the member for Monaro for raising those much-needed funds.

TWEED ELECTORATE FLOODS

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.59 p.m.]: I, as do many members on both sides of the House, rise to support local emergency services in my area. I was pleased to be with the Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services at the thank-you morning tea here in Parliament House today. Since the beginning of this year my electorate of Tweed has been hit with three severe weather events. In the Australia Day event some areas received up to 1,000 millimetres of rain over 36 hours. Once again members of the State Emergency Service, in combination with the Rural Fire Service, were on standby. We had assistance from Sydney in the provision of flood boats. I had the pleasure of being with the crews on a number of occasions. Last week's event resulted in more than 650 requests for assistance, most of which were dealt with in the first 24 hours.

That is to the great credit of our fine local State Emergency Service volunteers. I make mention also of the Essential Energy line and pole workers who strived tirelessly to restore energy supply to houses that were in blackout. On a more sobering note, during the Australia Day floods in the Tweed there were more than 20 whitewater or rapid-water rescues, 19 of the emergencies arising because people tried to drive through flooded rivers and creeks—despite significant advertising getting the message across "If it's flooded, forget it". It is a great slogan. It is concerning that people take their lives into their own hands by trying to cross flooded waterways, but it is all the more concerning because they put the lives of emergency workers at risk.

I pay tribute to my Liberal and National Party colleagues across the border. I note that Jann Stuckey, the member for Currumbin, is a great worker. Parts of Queensland, but particularly the Gold Coast, suffered significant beach erosion. As I speak, it is raining heavily on the Gold Coast and across the Tweed. It is a bit like groundhog day: here we go again; it is all happening. Water tables are saturated and trees are falling over as we speak in this debate. I would like to mention also Kaylene Jones, the Richmond-Tweed State Emergency Service Acting Regional Controller; Ian Anderson, the Tweed Heads State Emergency Service Unit Controller; Brian Sheehan, the Tweed District State Emergency Service Controller; and Chris Chrisostomos, the Murwillumbah State Emergency Service Unit Controller. All worked tirelessly. We followed up with various meetings with them.

I also make mention of all the workers from the Tweed Shire Council, led by David Kiernan, and mayor Barry Longland. Those council people were out there next day filling in potholes, removing debris and so on. They demonstrated a fine community spirit. I heard it said in the House today that natural disasters bring out the best in the Australian people. I firmly believe that, and it was confirmed by what I saw in the Tweed. My colleagues Thomas George of Lismore, Chris Gulaptis of Clarence and Andrew Fraser of Coffs Harbour were deeply affected by the floods, which caused significant damage that resulted in significant cost. I am sure members on both sides of the House are proud to be associated with our emergency services. Rural Fire Service people worked side-by-side with their colleagues in the State Emergency Service. They deserve full credit and our total support. I know the local community stands well and truly behind them.

About 10 days before that I represented the Minister at Cooma and, along with you, Mr Acting-Speaker, in the fine electorate of Monaro, saw the devastation of the massive bushfires there. I applaud you in the way you supported your emergency services, particularly the Rural Fire Service. To fly back and within 24 hours to be out in my gumboots with the State Emergency Service in areas of significant flooding was amazing. This is an amazing country that we live in. We are blessed that we have strong volunteers, particularly in the emergency services. I am 100 per cent committed to our emergency services.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.04 p.m.]: I commend the member for Tweed, the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services. He is doing a sterling job. At the moment New South Wales is experiencing unprecedented disasters, whether through floods or fires. As the member said, the volunteers do an incredible job for each and every one of us across the State. Our local State Emergency Service, even in areas around Grafton and the Tweed, were not all local residents; many volunteers from my area hopped on a plane to go to the north of the State to lend a hand and give assistance. That goes to show the true commitment, camaraderie and support of the volunteers throughout New South Wales. These people come from all walks of life and backgrounds. We are lucky to live in New South Wales and to have people such as these lending their assistance in this manner.

SERBIAN COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.05 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge the role played by the Serbian community within south-west Sydney, and particularly within my electorate. I would especially seek to advise the House of a number of recent events involving constituents of mine that have been arranged and attended by members of the Serbian community. On the weekend of 9 and 10 February this year the first annual Serbian Festival in Sydney was held at Tumbalong Park at Darling Harbour. The opening of the festival featured contributions from Serbian Orthodox Bishop, His Grace Bishop Irinej; the Serbian Ambassador to Australia, Her Excellency Ms Neda Maletic; and the Serbian Consul-General, based in Sydney, His Excellency Branko Radosevic. As well, there was a representative of Serbia, from Serbia, Mr Aleksandar Vlajkovic, Deputy Director of the Office for Cooperation with the Diaspora, who is based in Belgrade. It was a pleasure to welcome him to Sydney.

The event was designed to showcase Serbian culture and the Serbian community in New South Wales to the rest of the State—and it seems to have done that very well. It was notable for a number of other reasons. It

was the first such event in Sydney, and it is hoped to be the first of many. I am sure it will be. Another interesting, and I think optimistic, aspect of the festival is that it was organised by the community's youth, the Serbian Orthodox Youth Association, known as SOYA. They did, as far as I could determine, an excellent job. It is, I think, very clear that ongoing success of events such as this in the maintenance of traditional culture can happen only if younger members of the community are committed to it over a period of time. There was significant support for this event from the community generally, with sponsorship from a wide range of organisations including, I note, the BEO Group Australia, which is based in my electorate. All reports are that the festival was very successful.

Another significant event was held on 15 February. This was the celebration of the National Day of the Republic of Serbia, 15 February being the national day. The celebration was held at the Serbian Consulate in Woollahra. The event was hosted by Serbian Consul General Branko Radosevic, and was attended by His Grace Bishop Irinej and other significant community figures, as well as the community's media. Other Consular representatives were present, including appropriately a representative of the Turkish Consulate. The National Day of the Republic of Serbia is celebrated on 15 February. As I understand it, 15 February was the date in 1835 on which the first Serbian Constitution was adopted. Serbia, in the words of historian John Lampe, spent much of the nineteenth century building the framework of a modern nation state. The adoption of a constitution clearly is an essential part of that.

Serbia doubled in size between 1830 and 1900, from a population of half a million to 2.3 million. It became the region's first constitutional monarchy. It was one of the first nations in the Balkans to abolish feudalism. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Serbia was occupied by Habsburgs and Ottomans. By the mid sixteenth century the entire territory of modern-day Serbia was occupied by the Ottoman Empire. The first Serbian uprising against Ottoman rule lasted from 1804 to 1813. The second uprising commenced in 1814. As anyone who knows anything about Serbian history, or indeed the Serbian community, knows, the struggle to achieve Serbian independence from the Ottoman Empire is one of the defining elements of modern Serbia.

Several years ago a constituent of mine gave me copies of several of the works of Nobel Prize winning author Ivo Andric. His novel *The Bridge on the Drina* tells much about that struggle for independence. The second uprising was led, as I read the history, by Milos Obrenovic, who subsequently became the ruling prince, wielding executive power. In 1831 he won recognition of the Serbian Orthodox Church's autonomy from the Greek Patriarchate. In 1835 he accepted a constitution to appease his opponents. As historian Dennis Hupchick notes, he subsequently found this constitution too democratic for his liking. Despite, or perhaps because of, this the adoption of that constitution marks Serbian National Day. It was that event we celebrated recently at the consulate.

The Serbian community has significant infrastructure in my electorate with St Luke's Orthodox Church in Flowerdale Road and a number of clubs, most notably at Bonnyrigg where they have an annual folkloric festival that I have had the pleasure of attending for a number of years. The Serbian community adds a great deal that is positive to Liverpool. They are a good example of that great Australian story of people being born somewhere else, coming to this land and making this land their country, but remembering their history and culture while making a positive contribution to the local community. They add significantly to the diversity, strength and attraction of areas such as Liverpool. Liverpool is a great area in which to live. One of the reasons for that is its extraordinary diversity, and that is added to significantly and positively by the Serbian community.

MENAI HIGH SCHOOL TRAFFIC ZONE

MENAI COMMUNITY SERVICES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [5.10 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a recent traffic accident near Menai High School. A 12-year-old girl who was leaving school with her friends attempted, like many other students do each day, to cross Old Illawarra Road to get on a red Metrobus. I believe this young girl was running for the bus, missed it, turned to go back and was struck by an oncoming vehicle. She ended up in hospital with a broken leg. Considering what could have happened she was incredibly lucky and I am glad to hear that she is recovering well.

The problem is that this section of road is not a designated crossing and can be quite a busy stretch. Motorists already have to slow down for the school zone closer to the school, but at this section cars are still travelling at 60 kilometres per hour. Students have been running across the busy road, walking down the centre

lane line markings among traffic and crossing in large groups. Obviously something needs to be done. Since the accident I have had a number of concerned parents and community members contact my office after they heard or even witnessed this terrible accident, asking for something to be done.

I am pleased to advise that Sutherland Shire Council sprang quickly into action and with Roads and Maritime Services we have been able to extend the school zone, with work scheduled for early March. In the meantime, amongst other measures, variable message boards have been put in place to remind motorists to watch for pedestrians. While it will be difficult to stop every teenager from crossing at a non-designated spot, by slowing the traffic down we can hopefully avoid any other accidents. I have been told that the problem has been occurring since the State Metrobus service was introduced in 2011. While it is a popular service for students it is the only bus service that does not stop outside the school.

Obviously we need to find a better solution to allow students crossing Old Illawarra Road to reach the other side safely without disrupting traffic. Ongoing discussions are taking place between council, Roads and Maritime Services, Veolia and Transport for NSW to examine a range of options to improve safety along the road. Some of the suggestions include a pedestrian crossing and an indented bus bay. While the extended school zone will not solve the problem completely, I hope that it will be a good step forward in making this section of road safer. It is always awful to hear of such accidents, especially to someone so young. I thank my community for voicing their concerns to ensure that this issue is resolved. I remain committed to this matter until a suitable outcome is reached.

While I am talking about school aged children, recent figures show that we have a unique age spread in the suburb of Menai. We have more under 14s and more over 85s than any other area of the Sutherland shire. We have a growing number of both young and old people. These figures come from a recent study by Menai Community Services to determine areas of greatest need and, therefore, which programs would be most beneficial. They found that Menai over 55s have grown from 15.4 per cent in 2006 to 22.7 per cent in 2011. The data also revealed that while Menai has a strong sense of community, a lack of public transport and its geographical and social isolation make it hard for older people to get out and about in the community.

The wonderful team at Menai Community Services, led by Karen Howell, is always looking for new ways to reach out to members of the community. Recently I had the pleasure of showing the Minister for Ageing and Disability Services, Andrew Constance, the Menai Community Services premises. The Minister, who also met Menai Community Services at the Community Cabinet at Sutherland in 2011, announced that Menai Community Services will receive an extra \$91,000 to help it get a bus to assist people with disabilities, establish a community hub drop-in centre and do some much-needed kitchen refurbishments. It already has a bus in operation but it was finding that the demand for transport services was growing. A community hub will be established to meet the growing need for a social space or drop-in centre, particularly for those who have difficulty accessing other activities.

The current kitchen at Menai Community Centre is in need of a facelift and these funds will help bring it up to current service standards and incorporate measures to improve accessibility for clients. This funding boost will enable Menai Community Services to better reach those who are now less able due to ageing and will make it easier for people with disabilities and isolated members of the community to get out of the house. I thank the Minister for taking the time to visit the centre and to meet the staff. I know they will continue to work to assist the growing number of people experiencing early-onset dementia and other disabilities, such as autism, in Sydney's south and south-west. There are a growing number of people with autism or early-onset dementia. They are two very important areas of concern and we will be spending a lot of time looking at how they can be assisted.

BLACKTOWN HOSPITAL

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [5.15 p.m.]: I speak about a recent event in my family life and how it was impacted on by my experiences and those of my family in engaging with our health system. This took place over several years as a result of the declining health of my mother, Maria Caterina Casuscelli. My mum's history of contact with Blacktown Hospital was quite protracted. Some of the nurses knew her very well. She spent time in several of the medical care units over several years, but her condition changed dramatically almost overnight in February and sadly she passed away. Over the past few months I experienced firsthand some of the challenges that face our hospitals. I appreciate some of the health reform initiatives being progressed by our Government. On one Friday night, for example, I observed firsthand the demands placed on our hospitals by our ageing population. Blacktown Hospital has a large emergency department.

I arrived there late one Friday evening and noticed that every emergency bed was occupied by a frail and elderly patient. The waiting room was full of other patients waiting to be attended to. The place buzzed with activity. I know the staff must have been stressed but it was hardly noticeable. I congratulate the hospital staff who were on duty that night for their professionalism, which is replicated almost every night in a hospital the size of Blacktown Hospital. I must admit that I was more than annoyed at the parking situation. The arrangements penalise families that spend lengthy periods supporting and caring for their loved ones in hospital and therefore taking some of the pressure off nursing staff. My mum became quite demanding at times, as is sometimes the case with an Italian mum who brought up five children. However, having family members present made it so much easier on her as a patient and helped the staff who attended to her needs.

I cannot understand why we need to charge for parking at critical facilities such as our public hospitals. I do understand the need to fund and manage car parking at hospitals, but I was singularly unimpressed at having to fork out \$20 day after day after spending a day looking after my mum in hospital. I can afford it; that is not the issue. Many others would struggle. It is unfair and we should be able to do better. Some days before my mum passed away I noticed that the car park was being ripped up and I understand a new multilevel car park costing more than \$27 million and accommodating 600 spaces will be built. I trust that the operation of the car park will be designed to lessen the financial burden on families that need to use Blacktown Hospital more often than they would like.

My mum passed away in the early hours of Saturday 16 February. Her story is that of Italian migrant women. Over 25 million emigrated from Italy over a period of a century from 1860. She lived for her family and was totally devoted to them. She was a community-minded person. I often went to her home only to find Indian, Sudanese or Sri Lankan families enjoying her company and invariably being fed by her. This afternoon I acknowledge the contribution of all migrant mothers—all those who have passed away but who contributed in amazing ways to our community, and the many others still living, still loving and supporting their families, and nurturing grandchildren and great grandchildren. Secondly, I acknowledge the wonderful support and affection from nursing and medical staff at Blacktown Hospital, particularly Rachael McGwire, occupational therapist; Kirstie Kwiatkowski from the stroke and aged care unit; Ms Lauren Gray, who went out of her way to help arrange equipment for my mum at home; and Ms Cheryl Findlay, a great patient advocate.

I also acknowledge many others on the team that provided palliative care for my mum in the surgical assessment and review area of Blacktown Hospital, particularly Surinder Uppal, Veronica Alcantara, Yap-Ing Foo, Maria Gedalanga, Irene Gomez, Chandra Jegatheeswaran, Leeanne Jones, Kalpani Karunaweera, Gatri Patel, Glenda Rodil, Cecilia Sanqui, Wenji Tan, Dolores Estabays, Fely Legarde, Chona Dominguez, Hannival Duncan, Sheila Avila, Debra Chalmers, Lovel Oreas, Jessica Cannaro, Jessie Cube and Lee-ann Mitchell. Some of those surnames are a representation of the make-up of our community. Many migrant communities contribute significantly to the overall community that we know as New South Wales. I congratulate each and every one of them. I also thank the administrators and all the nursing staff and medical professionals at Blacktown Hospital for the fine job they did looking after my mum.

WESTERN SYDNEY PRIME MINISTERIAL VISIT

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [5.20 p.m.]: I speak as a member for the great region of western Sydney, and I do not mind admitting that I am a proud product of western Sydney. I was born in Bankstown Hospital, I was educated at Regents Park, I was a student at and graduated from the University of Western Sydney, I married in Parramatta, and my wife and I have spent our entire married life in western Sydney. Over my life I have seen western Sydney change a great deal. Western Sydney has changed from being on the fringe of the great metropolitan gathering of the city of Sydney to a wonderful community in its own right.

With that in mind, I am certain that most members, like me, particularly the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Mulgoa and probably even the member for Macquarie Fields, were very much amused to hear that the Prime Minister has finally taken an interest in the concerns of western Sydney. Having done nothing for the interests of western Sydney, the Labor Party must be delusional if it thinks it can win the hearts and minds of the people of western Sydney with a five-day visit from Julia Gillard. After 16 years of State Labor neglect western Sydney has had enough of this kind of last-minute, self-serving action from another failed Labor leader. But I am happy she is coming. In fact, if she really wants to do something for the Liberal Party and western Sydney she should bring Wayne Swan with her.

It is particularly interesting that the Prime Minister will be staying at Rooty Hill RSL, not just because it is a snub to the tens of thousands of Sydney commuters who catch the train to and from the city—the trip is

too long for her; she is using taxpayers' money to stay there—but because the last time she was there she said that it was not the centre of metropolitan Sydney. How could anyone forget that sensational community forum where Ms Gillard put the people of western Sydney's minds at rest by guaranteeing right there in Rooty Hill that she would not introduce a carbon tax. Not only did she give us that gem of public honesty but she also told us that Australia's public accounts would be in surplus by 2013 and that she would finally finish the Epping to Parramatta rail link.

Given this track record I am sure all the residents of western Sydney will be on the edge of their seats waiting for the Prime Minister's next iron-clad guarantee. At least the Prime Minister clearly has a sense of humour. It goes without saying that this has to be one of the more astounding debacles that we in western Sydney have had to tolerate under this Federal Labor Government. It is astounding to think that Labor can be so out of touch as to think that a visit from Julia Gillard to Rooty Hill will convince the millions of people in western Sydney of the virtues of her horrendous Government. The rolling national circus that is the Federal Government conceals real neglect that is not remotely amusing. Western Sydney has suffered as a result of the economic mismanagement and political manoeuvring that have been the hallmarks of Federal Labor. If Julia Gillard wishes to win over western Sydney—a place Labor considers its heartland—all she needs to do is one thing: listen. Not that the cries of the people of western Sydney are hard to hear.

The people of western Sydney are not interested in Labor's policies. Western Sydney is tired of Labor's inertia and mismanagement and it is sick of press release governance and unfulfilled promises. What western Sydney craves is for the Federal Government to join the New South Wales Government in investing in western Sydney's infrastructure, particularly the North West Rail Link. The Prime Minister has neglected the people of my region time and time again. If the Prime Minister was fair dinkum about giving western Sydney better economic management she would bring forward the Federal election and let Tony Abbott conclude the year. Few regions in the country have been as neglected by Labor as western Sydney. The Prime Minister should get serious, stop playing games and place the interests of western Sydney ahead of her narrow political interests.

CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL ACTION PLAN

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [5.25 p.m.]: On Friday 8 May this year I joined the fine Minister for the Central Coast and my Central Coast colleagues to launch the Central Coast Regional Action Plan. Since this Government's election in March 2011 we have been working hard to provide strong and effective representation for the residents of the Central Coast—something that had been sadly lacking for 16 years under the former Labor Government, and in the case of the Wyong electorate, up until my election, for its entire existence. The Central Coast Regional Action Plan outlines how the Central Coast region will contribute to the Government's plans to make New South Wales number one again. Primarily it will be through four key long-term strategies: rebuilding the economy; returning quality services; renovating infrastructure and, in most cases on the Central Coast, building infrastructure; and protecting the local environment and our community.

The Central Coast continues to grow rapidly and is now home to a population of more than 321,000 residents—the equivalent population of the Australian Capital Territory or the Northern Territory—all living between this State's two biggest cities. By 2031 the population of the Central Coast is projected to increase by more than 100,000 people to a total of 422,000. Current housing statistics show that we have 139,300 homes, and that figure is projected to grow to 202,300 in the next 20 years. Not only is the Central Coast a great place to live, work and raise a family, it is also an important tourist destination. It is renowned for its 81 kilometres of coastline and its magnificent surfing beaches as well as its beautiful national parks, native bushland and, of course, the expansive Tuggerah Lakes and Brisbane Water. The O'Farrell Government is serious about the Central Coast and is delivering much-needed improvements to infrastructure, health care, education and the local economy.

Over the past two years this Government has been delivering on our election commitments. This means that the residents in my electorate of Wyong have benefited from many increases in services and infrastructure. Currently the Central Coast can boast record numbers of police, nurses, medical interns and train carriages. The Central Coast continues to be a commuting region, with more than 40,000 people travelling from the Central Coast to either Sydney or Newcastle on a daily basis for work. The Government is delivering improved transport connectivity and upgrades to our regional roads to ensure that commuters have fewer delays and shorter travel times so that they can spend longer at home with their families. We are in the process of undertaking a review of the CityRail and Central Coast bus timetables to achieve more consistent and reliable timetables. These will be implemented by late 2013, fulfilling another election commitment. Growing the economy and providing jobs close to where people live is a key priority for the O'Farrell Government.

As I stated previously, the Central Coast population is expected to grow by an additional 100,000 people in the next 20 years, requiring more than 45,000 new local jobs. The O'Farrell Government remains strongly focused on growing the economy of the Central Coast to provide sustainable local employment while enhancing skills development and educational outcomes. In my opening comments I highlighted the beautiful natural environment of the Central Coast. It is important that we strike balanced outcomes between development and conservation. That is why we have listened to the concerns of coastal residents and have implemented stage one of a coastal reform package that makes it easier for private landowners to construct temporary coastal protection works.

We are also preparing new guidelines for councils in relation to the impact of projected sea level rise. The Central Coast Regional Action Plan is an important document that highlights the progress made to date in returning front-line services and improving local infrastructure, while setting out a detailed future agenda for the benefit of all Central Coast residents, commonly known as "coasties". They can have faith that this Government plans for the future openly and transparently, not behind closed doors at ski lodges. I look forward to working with my parliamentary colleagues in delivering this important Central Coast Regional Action Plan. It outlines a positive future for what has been my family's home for more than 70 years. I thank all those who have participated in the community forums to outline the plan and put it in place. I particularly thank Alan Blackman from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Central Coast. It is also a timely tribute to Leonie Baldwin who previously occupied his position. We look forward to the positive future of the Central Coast under Liberal representation.

MACARTHUR LEGAL CENTRE FUNDING

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [5.30 p.m.]: I raise my concerns about the reduction in funding for legal centres and the effect this will have on the community of the electorate of Macquarie Fields. Macarthur Legal Centre at Campbelltown is a community legal centre that assists people with legal needs and issues in the Macarthur area. Its aim is to ensure that legal representation is available for socially and economically disadvantaged citizens. It does great work in the community but also has an important teaching, mentoring and modelling role for local law students in the Macarthur area. They not only provide on-the-ground experience in the practice of law but also valuable role modelling for future lawyers about social justice and the law. The advice provided by the Macarthur Legal Centre is varied. It includes providing information to individuals about their rights and responsibilities as tenants, options available to victims of domestic violence, discrimination employment law, and compensation for victims of crime.

The Macarthur Legal Centre also represents some groups or arranges representation for them. The centre also organises legal training and educational seminars for community workers and the public at minimal cost. On 20 December 2012, the office of the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice issued a media release that set out new funding guidelines for community legal centres. This media release confirms that there will be a significant effect on the work that the centre does and the way it is done. The Macarthur Legal Centre accepts that funding guidelines may help them better manage their resources. However, there is a concern that the flexibility to offer legal assistance to the constituents of the electorate of Macquarie Fields will be compromised by these guidelines.

In particular, there is a concern about the guideline that legal representation should be subject to a means and merit test. This guideline will result in many people who currently receive legal assistance being denied this assistance. Macarthur Legal Centre always applies a merit test to casework and representation. However, in past years it has been able to use considerable flexibility when that person's means is being assessed. The centre has found that people on moderate incomes—for example, a household income between \$30,000 and \$60,000—do not have the financial resources to instruct solicitors. For these people, assistance is given in respect of preparation of court documents and, in some cases, representation. In future, if assistance to these citizens is denied, these clients will self-represent, which would increase the length of hearings and will do nothing to remedy any legal wrongs.

The centre is also concerned about the guideline that funding may not be used for lobbying activities, public campaigning and providing legal advice to activists and lobby groups. The Macarthur Legal Centre is concerned that this guideline may result in groups of people being unable to receive appropriate legal information or advice. For example, recently the centre was approached to assist and advocate for the victims of institutional sexual abuse. If this guideline is applied in the future it would prohibit such legal assistance and advocacy being given. The centre was also contacted by a group of parents of children with intellectual disabilities. The parents wanted to know how to structure their estates so that the children would be cared for after they died.

The parents were on low to moderate incomes and could not afford the legal fees to instruct specialist solicitors. The centre arranged for solicitors from large city firms to spend two days at the community hall in Minto to take instructions from these parents and draft their wills on site. Such an activity would no longer be possible under the new guidelines. The recent victory in the coal seam gas debate in south-west Sydney would not have happened without the availability of similar pro bono legal advice for the Macarthur local community. A right to a fair representation before the law is a right for every citizen and one that this Government has put at risk. There is one rule for the rich and one rule for the poor. The Attorney General needs to ensure that the funding for the Macarthur Legal Centre is maintained at levels to enable it to continue its vital work.

ROCKDALE ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.35 p.m.]: I acknowledge the recipients of the Australia Day awards in my electorate of Rockdale. It was a privilege to attend the Australia Day citizenship ceremonies and presentations at Peter Depena Reserve, Dolls Point. These prestigious awards are an opportunity to recognise the individuals who have contributed so much to our community. The recipients of these awards set a fine example for others in my electorate and I congratulate them on their dedication and the hard work that goes into achieving success in all of their chosen fields. They deserve the community recognition awards bestowed upon them. Citizen of the Year awards are presented all over New South Wales on Australia Day. This reflects the appreciation that our society has for outstanding achievement.

On Australia Day we celebrate our national day, our unique way of life, and the national unity that has brought us prosperity and security. We celebrate Australia's history, our rich and diverse culture, the rule of law, our national achievements and our constitutional arrangements. There is no more fitting site to hold the Australia Day awards ceremony than on the shores of historic Botany Bay where Captain Cook landed in 1770 aboard HMAS *Endeavour*. Eighteen years later, in 1788, Governor Arthur Phillip and the *First Fleet* sailed into Botany Bay before settling in Port Jackson on 26 January. Botany Bay is steeped in history. It is the birthplace of our modern nation. It is commendable that recipients of these awards take the time out of their lives to assist others and, in so doing, help make Australia a better place. It is people such as these who, over the history of our nation, have contributed to New South Wales and Australia's many achievements and have helped develop our social fabric.

In my electorate of Rockdale, Michael Price was awarded the prestigious Citizen of the Year award. Michael has been outstanding in his efforts to help people with disabilities. In addition to his achievements with the Intellectual Disability Foundation of St George, Michael has taken every opportunity to contribute to the Rockdale community. The role that people such as Michael Price play in our local community cannot be underestimated. The Young Citizen of the Year award went to Kazimir Boskovic. Kazimir is a gifted scholar and swimming coach who has devoted a considerable amount of his time to bring out the best in the younger team members.

Kazimir's team spirit, dedication and academic achievements made him an ideal role model for our youth. The Sportsperson of the Year award went to 15-year-old Jarrod Cullen. Jarrod has achieved at a high level as a sportsperson and has won many awards in athletics, surf lifesaving, cross-country running and rugby league. Jarrod is an outstanding and worthy recipient of this award. The recipients of the Australia Day awards do not work for recognition or financial gain. They dedicate their time out of a commitment to our local community. I thank them for their efforts. I extend to them my warmest congratulations and acknowledge their service in this place.

TRIBUTE TO HEATHER MCKENZIE

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [5.40 p.m.]: This evening I acknowledge a remarkable woman from my electorate who recently passed away. Her name was Heather McKenzie. She was born on 5 November 1919 and passed away on 1 February 2013 at 93 years of age. With the exception of the last three years of her life she was a very active member of our community. I knew Heather for just over two decades. She was a community activist and a volunteer campaigner, who was affectionately known as the "Mayor of Woy Woy". I first heard of Heather in 1990 when I started my civic life by arguing about flooding issues with the local council. I got to meet lots of people, including Dave Abbott from the local progress association and local politicians such as Councillor Robert Bell, Tony Doyle, who was the State member for Peats at that stage, and Frank Walker, the Federal member for Robertson.

They told me about this wonderful lady who was very active in the community. They said she was a firebrand, an advocate for social reform, a council watcher, and a volunteer for any good cause. It was only later

that year that I was stopped in the street at Woy Woy by a demure, slightly built elderly lady who grabbed my hand and introduced herself as Heather McKenzie. She was not a fire-breathing Amazonian wonder woman but a sweet, quietly spoken little lady of 71 years of age. But at that moment I did not know the *modus operandi* of Heather McKenzie—to hold your hand and continue to hold it for the next two hours while she proceeded to tell you what was wrong in your community and what you as a civic leader needed to fix.

As I said, when I first met Heather McKenzie she was 71 years of age, but she did not just talk the talk; she walked the walk. I will list some of the organisations that this remarkable woman was involved in during the more than 20 years that I knew her. She was actively involved with the St Vincent de Paul Society, the South Woy Woy Progress Association and the Royal Blind Society. She was active on the committee for the Australia Day celebrations at Woy Woy. She was a board member of the Umina PCYC. She commenced and chaired the Older Women's Network. She was involved in the council's Sister City Committee, Coastline Respite Care and at the Woy Woy Environmental Centre. She actively participated in Meals on Wheels. She was also involved in Woy Woy Community Aged Care, the Woy Woy Town Centre Committee, the Courier Bay Improvement Committee and the Light Up Woy Woy Committee.

Heather was an active member of the Labor Party branch at Woy Woy. She was involved in the Little Theatre and in numerous craft groups from pottery to knitting and from painting to sewing. Heather McKenzie assisted many causes and she was especially committed to anything to do with youth on the peninsula. Oh, and she was also an avid gardener. The achievements I have listed are all things that this lady in her seventies was actively involved in when I met her. It is not hard to see why in 2004 at the age of 84 this sprightly woman was named Gosford Citizen of the Year. For the past five decades Heather McKenzie has been known by every local, State and Federal politician on the coast and by every senior council officer. She was known to them not because they had heard about her from someone else or had read about her; she sought them out.

Heather sought them out and deployed her *modus operandi*. She grabbed them by the hand, held it tightly and then proceeded for however long—if they were lucky it was half an hour, if they were unlucky it was two hours—to explain to them why they had to do something different in their community and how they needed to make a difference. I know that Tony Doyle, Frank Walker, ex-mayor Robert Bell and every other councillor and senior officer at Gosford City Council at that time was sought out by Heather McKenzie and asked to make a difference in her community. Few people pass our way in this life who leave a lasting impression. Heather McKenzie was one of those people. May God bless her and may she rest in peace. Heather McKenzie, forever the Mayor of Woy Woy.

LITTLE WINGS CHARITY ORGANISATION

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [5.45 p.m.]: An amazing new organisation called Little Wings has been founded by Mr Kevin Robinson from Glenmore Park. Little Wings is a not-for-profit organisation supporting the oncology unit at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. It was incorporated in 2011 as a registered charity and is funded completely by business and private donations. In New South Wales approximately 143 children and young adolescents are diagnosed with cancer each year. Of those diagnosed, more than 39 per cent reside in rural and regional areas. These children and their families might travel several hours or even days to receive specialised medical treatment. Treatments can take as long as 18 months, which is a difficult experience for all patients. Unfortunately for some, treatment may also need to be repeated several times over many years.

The Little Wings service makes a significant and tangible difference to the journeys of these patients and families by providing a free flight service to children and their families who require oncology treatment at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. Children requiring lengthy, ongoing chemotherapy or radiation treatment are flown home for short breaks so that they can be with their families and be cared for in a familiar environment. Little Wings also provide urgent short-notice transport services for family members to support a sick child and fly specialist nurses to regional centres to support local medical services in caring for children at all stages of their cancer treatment.

Each year in Australia more than 600 children are diagnosed with cancer. The long-term goal of Little Wings is to provide a national service for these children and their families. Benefits of the Little Wings service are: improved treatment outcomes because patients are not travel fatigued; potential to reduce length of treatment due to reduced patient stress; reduced demand on hospital resources as patients can return home sooner and release hospital beds for other patients; significant reduction in financial stresses on families; and

significant reduction in family stress during long periods of separation. Long-term treatment often requires parents to be separated from each other and their other children for extensive periods, increasing the incidence of family breakdowns or divorce and stress on the sick child.

Little Wings' first flight was to help out 13-year-old Noah Fitler from Armidale. Noah has been undergoing treatment at Westmead Children's Hospital for a brain tumour. Unfortunately, like many other children, Noah had to spend Christmas Day in hospital. In early January the Fitlers were told that Noah would not be having any treatment for a period of 10 days; however, this was determined at such short notice that they were not able to organise a trip home to Armidale for him. On short notice Little Wings was able to fly Noah and his parents home for the 10 days and then return them to Westmead. Rather than a long drive or a commercial flight which would have left Noah fatigued, the private flight took only 75 minutes.

Another example of how Little Wings can help people in rural and regional New South Wales is the story of Argyll from Tamworth. Argyll is undergoing an experimental treatment in an effort to cure him. The treatment is very aggressive and requires him to be pre-treated with a radioactive isotope before his main treatment, and this means he is unable to use public transport or commercial flights. His mother, April, is currently 38 weeks pregnant and their drive to Sydney takes two days. Argyll then requires three to four days to recover so that he is strong enough for his main cancer treatment, which takes three to four days. He then requires four to five days to build his strength and immunity to travel home, where he needs another three to four days to recover from the drive. This is a monthly cycle for the family and it is not difficult to see how the travel has a significant impact on patients and their families.

Little Wings is able to fly this family on the morning of Argyll's treatment. It is a one-hour flight followed by a 20-minute ground transport, which Little Wings also provides. Typically, Argyll and his mum leave Tamworth at 8.00 a.m., arrive at Westmead by 9.30 a.m. for his 10.00 a.m. treatment and then return home that night or the next day. Little Wings is currently funded completely by private donations and as such the service is limited to the resources that are available at the time. Kevin Robinson has approached me and is soon to approach the Minister for Health regarding the possibility of funding from the Department of Health to make this service more widely available. Kevin has worked tirelessly to set up Little Wings and has donated a substantial amount of his own finances to the organisation. He has gathered a number of semi-retired and retired pilots who offer their own planes to fly patients and only require that their fuel costs be covered.

I take this opportunity to publicly thank and congratulate Mr Robinson on all his hard work in getting the service to the point it is now at. I encourage the Minister for Health to explore every possible way to make this service available to as many children as possible in rural and regional New South Wales. This will bring greater savings to the NSW Health budget, improve patient outcomes and be of significant benefit to the families who will no longer be separated so much by treatment and travel times. Recommendations from Dr Graeme Doig in Tamworth have been provided. Also, Mr Robinson states that the outreach service currently provided at the Children's Hospital at Westmead is further enhanced because they can fly a clinical nurse consultant in one morning, she can conduct her training and treatments and fly home that night so what would normally take four days now only takes one day.

SOUTH COAST RAIL FACILITIES

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.50 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to stand in this place and talk about the importance of public transport in New South Wales. I am delighted that my friend and colleague the Minister for Transport could be in the Chamber today. When I was a young boy I enjoyed playing with trains. I had a Lego train set, I also had a model train set and I always looked forward to train journeys on the South Coast. Without a doubt train journeys between Sydney and Wollongong, Nowra, and Bomaderry are some of the best in the country. Today I wish to draw the attention of the House to some of the advances in public transport that have occurred in my electorate. I am delighted that the Minister for Transport has listened to my calls and has supported the establishment of a new train station at Shell Cove. The member for Shellharbour complained last week that the Government has changed the name of Flinders railway station to Shell Cove railway station.

The Labor Government announced that proposal in 2001 and 10 years later nothing had happened. I do not mind what it is called; I simply want to see it delivered. This Minister for Transport will deliver that fantastic new facility for the residents of Shell Cove, who include young families, people with disabilities and people who need to get to medical appointments. I am delighted that that new station will be established. There is a good case for it; in fact, it was supported by Brian Longbottom, the Chairman of the South Coast Regional Tourism Organisation. Given the proximity of the new Shell Cove marina and other developments, it makes

sense to create a marketing synergy with the Shell Cove station. I am not ignoring the people of Flinders; they and the people of Shell Cove simply want better access to public transport. They are not hung up about what it is called.

I was delighted recently to open the upgrades at Gerrington station, which will make that station more accessible. Again, the Minister heard the calls for station improvements from my community. The news keeps coming. The Minister last year announced 40 new parking spaces at Kiama station and 50 new parking spaces at Moss Vale station. I am delighted to advise members that the Minister has invested more than \$5 million in Oaks Flat station to ensure that the parking spaces that became necessary following the Labor Party's establishment of a police station without car parking are being delivered. Construction will commence in the middle of this year. I thank the Minister for that project. I was recently able to announce with the Minister an additional 7,000 seats on South Coast train lines on weekends. Of course, that is a great relief to those holidaymakers who use rail services to visit our part of the world. I thank the Minister most sincerely for that assistance.

I remember hearing the Minister talk about quiet carriages during a question time last year. She announced triumphantly that the Central Coast would be the trial site. Not long after that I went to the Minister's office and said, "Minister, I think we need a trial on the South Coast as well." Quick as a whip the Minister approved the trial. It was a huge success and quiet carriages should remain a feature of our rail system. It means that rail passengers who want to read a book and who do not want to be interrupted by mobile phone calls—such as the phone calls I would make on a train trip—will be able to enjoy a quiet journey. It was a great initiative and I thank the Minister for implementing it. I also commend the Minister for ensuring better security and safety on our trains. Police officers have replaced many of the transit officers on the South Coast line. I appreciate the fact that we now have officers who have real powers to tackle rail crime on the South Coast.

I will raise a couple of issues that I want the Minister to consider. When the Endeavour series trains pull in on one side of the Kiama platform there is an enormous gap between the carriage and the platform. I would like that situation investigated so that elderly people, in particular, are not required to step over such a wide gap. The platform is on an angle and we must ensure that no-one literally falls through the gap. Country passengers arriving at and leaving Central Station must now use platforms 24 and 25 rather than platform 16, which was much more spacious. I would like the Minister to consider that situation when amendments are being made to the timetables. I would also like the Minister to consider the feasibility of extending rail services further south when the Shoalhaven River Bridge is upgraded. Public transport is a great asset to the people of New South Wales. We have a great Minister for Transport and a good Government that is doing wonderful things for the Illawarra. I thank the Minister for her investment in our region and I look forward to seeing more reforms and more investments that will make public transport in this State the greatest anywhere in Australia.

AUSTRALIANA PIONEER VILLAGE

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.55 p.m.]: I recently mentioned in this House a unique historical facility at Wilberforce in my electorate, the Australian Pioneer Village. I visited the village again on Australia Day along with many hundreds of local people to celebrate the occasion surrounded by wonderful Australian heritage. The Australian Pioneer Village is a heritage listed open-air museum that has buildings from the 1800s and 1900s. The heritage buildings have been donated by various families and organisations from across the Sydney metropolitan area, but particularly from the Hawkesbury and surrounding areas. The village was founded by Bill and Marie McLachlan, who were inspired by Knotts Berry Farm in Los Angeles, which has a similar collection of heritage buildings and which they both visited in 1961.

Buildings on the site include Mitchell Cottage, which was built in 1835 and which was owned by Mr Ern Mitchell. Mr Mitchell was famous in the area for his work on the Wilberforce and Richmond roads with his bullock team. The Bank of Australia building, which was constructed in 1826, houses a fine collection of early banking items. One of my favourite buildings is the old Riverstone police station, which was built in 1891. This tiny building was still operational until 1964, and my wife Wendy can recall it from when she was a young girl growing up in the area. The Perry's Cottage building was built in 1857 and was originally a bank, then a tailor shop, barber shop and finally a saddlery. The Wagon Shed, which is situated behind Perry's Cottage, contains antique and engine-powered vehicles. Case Cottage was built in 1870 and once a month the centre wall was removed and it became a dance hall for the local community. Cartwright Cottage was built in 1845 and is a classic example of an early slab construction dwelling with canvas-like material lining the ceiling.

The Atkins blacksmith shop was built in 1862 and is still operated each weekend. The stables of the Blackhorse Inn were built in 1819 and adjoining the stables is the jockeys room, where jockeys would spend

their time before races to prevent outside interference. The Bowd's sulky shed was built in 1874 by Edward Bowd. It is now called the Damper Camp and is located towards the end of the street near the church. The Aiken hut, which was built in 1875, was the last remaining slab hut in Pennant Hills. Aiken Road, Pennant Hills, takes its name from the Aiken family. Saint Phillip's Church, which was built in the 1890s, played an important role in pioneer life as a place to worship and to hear the colony news. The Kurrajong railway goods station was transported to the village following the closure of the railway line in 1953. The train has been recently restored and will be operational soon to provide train rides through the village. The shearing shed contains a wool sorting table, a hand-operated wool press and some cooper's hand shearing equipment that is still operational. The shearing shed is still being used and many functions have been held there.

Mangold Cottage was built in 1880 by Gottlieb Mangold for his family in Garfield Road, Riverstone, and is of ironbark slab construction. I went to high school with a descendent, Stephen Mangold, who sadly lost his life in a car accident in the late 1970s. Kenso Cottage, which was built in 1880, was the home of Jack Griffiths, a local dentist. The home, which was built in Kensington, was moved to Freemans Reach in 1900 and is now located in the pioneer village. The Bee Hive Shop was built in 1848 on Windsor Road on the site of the Bee Hive Inn. The North Sackville Post Office was built in the 1890s. The postmaster lived at one end of the building and conducted post office business in the other. Riverstone General Store was built in the 1860s and was operated for many years by the Blair family. The Oxboro Inn was typical of an early country inn. Marsden Park Public School houses an interesting collection and is a very popular building for school excursions. Quilty stables were constructed for a 100-mile endurance race and now contain a collection of early farm vehicles. Salters barn was built in 1850 and it is one of the few remaining barns in the area.

Hawkesbury City Council recently committed more than \$100,000 to assist with the restoration of the Australian Pioneer Village, which is being undertaken with the support of a dedicated group of volunteers known as the "friends" of the village. It is hoped that that funding will ensure the longevity of this heritage site. I acknowledge the McLachlan family and, in particular, Chris McLachlan. I also point out that the *Wild Boys* was recently filmed at the village. It is a wonderful Australian heritage site and I encourage everyone to visit to see the many buildings that have been preserved there.

TRIBUTE TO FRANCES HARDING

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [6.00 p.m.]: I pay tribute to the life of Frances Harding, who passed away on 18 December 2012. I first met Frances approximately five years ago through our mutual connection to the Liberal Party. Whilst only having known her for a relatively short period, numerous discussions and debates over countless afternoon teas made me feel as though I had known her for a lifetime. Frances was born in Penguin, Tasmania, on 12 September 1925. She attended primary school in Tasmania along with her sister, Shirley. Upon moving to New South Wales, she moved to the Sutherland shire where she met the love of her life, Ian Harding—an accountant who saw the light and became a lawyer.

It was always going to be difficult for Frances to avoid the Liberal Party, with her father-in-law being Neville Harding, who was a former Mayor of Sydney and one of the founders of the Liberal Party in 1944. Neville served as the temporary chairman of the Provisional State Executive of the Liberal Party in 1945. Not long after they met, Frances and Ian married. They purchased some farmland on New Line Road, West Pennant Hills, in 1956. At that time the land was a far cry from the current suburban landscape of the Hills district. They had two children, Kate and Alex. Frances' husband, Ian, was a captain in the Army, who served with distinction in both the Second World War and the Korean War.

Ian sustained liver damage during his war service, and that resulted in him suffering from high blood pressure. Unfortunately that led to a stroke and to his passing in 1983. Despite Frances' long affiliation with the Liberal Party, it was not until 1986 that she became a card-carrying member. She joined the West Pennant Hills branch and subsequently the Hills Valley branch. Frances was a devout and loyal member of our great political party. Whilst she may not have held any formal positions, in the branches she certainly held the Liberal Party together. I understand that in the eighties and nineties, Frances often would bake birthday cakes and make the most finely cut sandwiches at Liberal Party meetings—something that I am able to say is certainly lacking in current Liberal Party branch meetings.

Frances was an absolute Liberal stalwart. At the most recent State election, despite her frailty, she was handing out how-to-vote material to all her friends in the Anglican Retirement Village in Castle Hill. She ensured that no-one in the village even considered voting for the Labor Party. Without her, I await a significant swing against me in the retirement village at the next election. Frances served our local Hills community with

utmost distinction. In the Hills, we have the highest rate of volunteerism in the country. This strong sense of spirit and service did not just simply appear. No: This spirit was created, nurtured and handed down to our community today by the likes of Frances Harding. She volunteered for Meals on Wheels, she organised meetings of the Hills View Club, which brought many local women together to work on a range of projects throughout the Hills, and she volunteered many hours in the electorate office for Alan Cadman when he was the Federal member for Mitchell. She continued that work for Alan Cadman at home by cutting out local press clippings. I felt very privileged that she continued to do that for me following my election to Parliament.

Frances also had a love for animals. She donated her time and money to both the RSPCA and the Animal Welfare League. Frances was a highly opinionated lady who was guided by a deep concern for the direction of the Liberal Party and most importantly our country. She had a strong appreciation of Australia's history and traditions. She was a member of the West Pennant Hills branch of Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy and was an active member of both the Dural and Castle Hill historical societies. Our afternoon teas or morning teas generally revolved around vigorous debates on topics ranging from our nation's immigration policy to deficiencies in sentencing procedures or to her most recent bugbear, coal seam gas—an issue she would not let go of. Despite any argument to the contrary, she held her ground. I treasure a clear image of Frances last year when she sat in the front row of our Castle Hill Liberal Conference and had the most disapproving look on her face during a presentation by the Minister for Resources and Energy. Fortunately she did not need to be restrained.

Frances had a great sense of humour, which remained with her right up to her death. I was fortunate to receive a call from her good friend, Barbara Delbridge, following Frances' fall and visited her in hospital the Friday before she died. Despite her weakness, as I approached her she quipped, "Oh, God has sent you. I was about to quit the Liberal Party and join The Nationals." Fortunately, God made sure He took her before she could. Frances was a woman of the utmost integrity. She was loved by all those who crossed her path. Importantly, she was a woman of strong faith and a devout Christian. Sadly, the Liberal Party has lost one of its daughters, the Hills district has lost one of its faithful servants, and Australia has lost one of its greatest treasures. May Frances rest in peace.

SYDNEY SECOND AIRPORT SITE

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.05 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House matters concerning the Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport and policies related to selection of a site for a second Sydney airport. This matter will have an impact not only on my electorate but also on the whole of the State. I grew up in the shadows of aircraft landing and taking off from the east-west runway at a time when only propeller-driven aircraft flew into or out of Sydney airport. I witnessed the arrival of jets, particularly 707 jets, that roared overhead and basically ensured that it was impossible to speak on the telephone or listen to television. The house shook as they flew above us. I witnessed construction of the second north-south runway and the dredging of historic Botany Bay. I witnessed the second Sydney airport site selection study during the term of the Fraser Government. When Malcolm Fraser's Government tried to build a third runway at Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport, it was blocked by the New South Wales Wran Government.

I witnessed the election of the Hawke Government and its promise to build a second airport for Sydney. That promise was made approximately 10 years after the Whitlam Government announced that Galston would be the site of Sydney's second airport. I witnessed the Hawke Government acquiring land and preparing for a second Sydney airport. I witnessed many separate site selection studies and every report indicating a desperate need for Sydney to have a second airport within the Sydney Basin because nowhere in the world is there an airport the size of Sydney airport that is so constrained by a shortage of land vis-à-vis the volume of aircraft using it, let alone an airport that is blocked into a corner by Port Botany, thereby making land transportation of freight almost impossible. That is something that the Minister for Roads and Ports is about to discover when he attempts to use limited funds—approximately \$10 billion—to resolve an unsolvable problem.

I witnessed the Hawke Government rat on its promise and build a third runway at Sydney airport. I was among the 10,000 people who blockaded the Sydney airport as a result of aircraft noise that was impacting upon the people of the Heffron electorate. I sat with Sir Maurice Byers in the High Court of Australia to try to stop construction of the third runway because I knew it would impact adversely upon so many people. The reason that construction of a second Sydney airport did not proceed in the eighties, and that every government prior to the Hawke Government backed out of this important initiative for Sydney, is that vested interests, who actually were in charge of this country, were not on board. I witnessed Sir Peter Abeles influence the Prime Minister's office and influence a Labor Prime Minister. I saw Qantas being able to stop any type of aviation policy

development in this country for the short-term benefit of ensuring that Qantas did not have to compete in a newly deregulated market. I witnessed the Department of Aviation ensuring that new entrants, such as Compass, effectively were sent broke as they tried to compete with major airlines.

A very significant stage now has been reached in the history of aviation. For the first time ever—I emphasise "the first time ever"—vested interests are actually on board: for example, the head of Infrastructure NSW will tell anyone who will listen about the need for a second Sydney airport. The Chief Executive of Qantas—where was Qantas 20 years ago?—is desperate for a second Sydney airport. Even the chief executive officer of Sydney airport recognises the need for a second Sydney airport. The people of western Sydney know that approximately 240,000 jobs will be associated with a new airport. They know that governments do not really have the funds to develop the required infrastructure to service the area without construction of a massive infrastructure project, such as a second Sydney airport, in western Sydney. New South Wales is in a position to benefit from a unique opportunity.

I do not know whether the Badgerys Creek site is right. I do not know what development has occurred around Badgerys Creek. I do not know whether or not the site will be Wilton, which is being advocated by the Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, or whether that is the right site. But I do know that a second Sydney airport has been required for more than 40 years. I also know that the New South Wales Government alone will never be able to fund the necessary infrastructure to provide for the ever-increasing population density of western Sydney. But what will have a significant effect and bring benefit to the western Sydney population will be the right decision being made in respect of the location of the second Sydney airport. I urge the O'Farrell Government to cooperate with the Federal Government. It is too late to play politics. If that occurs this State's aviation needs will be in crisis. We are in a unique position to achieve something for New South Wales.

WESTERN SYDNEY PRIME MINISTERIAL VISIT

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [6.10 p.m.]: This week the Mount Druitt electorate has been in the news because of the Prime Minister's imminent visit. I am proud to represent the Mount Druitt electorate. The Prime Minister will stay at the Novotel in Rooty Hill for a number of days, subsequently attend an event on Sunday evening and meet a large number of individuals and businesses. I am extremely disappointed in the way in which some media outlets have handled this visit by one of Australia's highest officeholders. Members of the media have scoured my electorate trying to find people who are prepared to say that she is not welcome in western Sydney. Some cheap shots were made in this House to the effect that she might need a street directory to find her way around western Sydney.

As a State member of Parliament I attended a number of events in western Sydney, in particular, at Rooty Hill, which were attended also by Julia Gillard when she was Deputy Prime Minister where she spoke to large groups of people. This is by no means her first visit to Rooty Hill or indeed to western Sydney. Some members asked whether she would bring her chequebook and what promises she would have to make to be accepted by those members of the media who have written such negative articles about her intended visit. Within walking distance of the Novotel are various facilities that have been funded by the Federal Government. For example, the allocation of funds by the Federal Government, in conjunction with Blacktown City Council, resulted in a fantastic expansion of the Mount Druitt Hub, which incorporates a library, meeting rooms and a café in which unemployed people are trained in the service industry.

The facility to which I refer would not have been built without funding assistance from the Federal Government—something about which the Prime Minister should be proud. Rooty Hill High School was provided with a new library as a result of joint funding by the former State Government and the Federal Government. Building the Education Revolution funding for schools in my electorate has often been acknowledged by Mr Ed Husic, the Federal member for Chifley. Those projects have been scoffed at by conservatives in the community—politicians and some people in the media—but all the private and public schools in the Mount Druitt and Chifley electorates are pleased with them.

Despite the knockers from the Coalition, who even spoke this week about the Building the Education Revolution, not one school, parents and citizens association, teacher or parent said that those projects were not welcome. Private and public schools in the Mount Druitt electorate really appreciate the funding that has been made available to them. The Federal and State governments and local councils have provided funding for many other facilities. The Mount Druitt electorate, which includes the Federal electorate of Chifley, is proud of the fact that the Prime Minister of Australia, the iron lady of Australian politics who has achieved so much, will be staying for a number of days. I welcome the Prime Minister to western Sydney.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [6.15 p.m.], by leave: Tonight I speak about the important matter of marriage equality, recognising that this weekend the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras will celebrate its thirty-fifth anniversary festival "Sydney Mardi Gras 2013—Generations of Love." As a strong supporter of marriage equality I have joined my Greens colleagues in calling on the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia to amend the Commonwealth Marriage Act 1961 to provide for marriage equality, that is, to remove discrimination and allow people to marry regardless of sex, sexual orientation and gender. I highlight in particular the impact that discrimination in this area has had on our community—on our friends, our sisters, our brothers, our mothers and fathers, our teachers and our colleagues and leaders.

It places restrictions on something that should be our most basic freedom—the freedom to marry the person we love. I ask the people of Australia this simple question: Do we want to live in a society that discriminates against people based on who they love? When the former Howard Government amended the Marriage Act in 2004 in a political manoeuvre to wedge the Australian Labor Party, a renewed campaign for full equality was ignited. At that time a new definition was inserted into the Act specifically to exclude same-sex couples and to forbid Australia to recognise any same-sex marriage solemnised overseas. History now shows society's steady progress towards a more tolerant, fair and fully equal society with women securing the vote, the civil rights movement, with the first Australians being given the vote and the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Marriage equality has already been supported in countries such as Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, Norway, Spain, South Africa, Argentina, Mexico and a number of States in the United States of America. Marriage discrimination is simply institutional homophobia and it is all the more damaging because it engenders other, more insidious homophobia in our society. It feeds family rejection, social isolation, violence, homelessness and some of the most severe discrimination imaginable. This institutional homophobia cultivates the fear and self-doubt that same-sex attracted people can experience every day. How can we expect our children in the playground and our colleagues in the workplace to challenge homophobia when the laws governing and recognising families and love sanction transparent discrimination? What chance do we have of improving the lives of vulnerable young people when our leaders and parliaments fail to take a stand against such discrimination? Recently, when the Hon. Michael Kirby spoke to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, he stated:

I have never had a satisfactory explanation of how my loving relationship with my partner in any way damaged the institution of marriage, or would, if marriage were available to us.

The institution of marriage is indeed an important institution and it will be strengthened by accepting diversity within the community, removing discrimination and allowing access to people who want it. The institution of marriage has always been changing and it has changed significantly in the past 20 years. The Australian Bureau of Statistics states that 31 per cent of registered marriages in 2010 were religious ceremonies, down from 58 per cent in 1990. In other words, in 2010, 69 per cent of marriage ceremonies were conducted by civil celebrants, up from 42 per cent in 1990. In the 20 years from 1990 to 2010, the proportion of babies born outside registered marriages rose from just over one-fifth, or 22 per cent, to just over one-third, or 34 per cent, of all births. Those statistics, the moral imperative and the need to end discrimination tells us that it is time for full marriage equality for all, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

I particularly recognise the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, Community Action Against Homophobia, ACON, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, the Gender Centre and all the other groups, activists and community members who have come out in support of marriage equality. I also recognise the work of my colleague the Hon. Cate Faehrmann in the upper House and that of my Federal Greens colleagues, who are all committed to achieving marriage equality. I also note members from different parties in the Chamber and in other places who have stood up against discrimination and supported the concept of, and argued and voted for, marriage equality to be legislated.

Many of these campaigners I have mentioned have sacrificed a great deal as part of the struggle for equal rights. To them I say thank you and congratulations on what they have achieved so far. I will continue to work and fight alongside those organisations for the most basic freedom of all: for every individual to be able to marry the one he or she loves, free of discrimination and free of any aspect that does not allow the full nourishment and fruition of those relationships. As we have heard in the House today, and following the motion I moved this morning, I say happy Mardi Gras and congratulations to all those who will help to make it a great event. I appreciate the time of the House in order to make this contribution.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.20 p.m. until
Tuesday 12 March 2013 at 12 noon.**
