

AMBULANCE SERVICE OF NSW	2742,
2753	
ASSENT TO BILLS	2742
ASSYRIAN GENOCIDE 100TH ANNIVERSARY	2779
BANKSTOWN DISTRICT AMATEUR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION GRAND FINALS	2732
BATTLE OF LONG TAN 100TH ANNIVERSARY	2730
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	2728,
2742	
CAMPBELLTOWN ELECTORATE SERVICE CENTRE	2737
CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR	2741
COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	2756
CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY	2757
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	2738,
2753	
EASTERN CREEK ELECTRICITY GENERATION FACILITY	2734
EASTERN SUBURBS LOCAL AREA COMMAND MASQUERADE BALL	2735
GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY	2782
HEATHCOTE ROAD UPGRADE	2728
ILLAWARRA AND SOUTH COAST ROADS	2743
INGLEBURN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISCOVERY CENTRE	2731
LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE	2756
LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILLOR CONDUCT	2751
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS	2745,
2748	
LOOSE-FILL ASBESTOS INSULATED HOMES	2736
MOUNT KEIRA TOURISM PRECINCT	2729
MUDGEE HOSPITAL	2738
MURRUMBIDGEE PROSTATE CANCER CARE COORDINATOR	2778
OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS	2756
PETITIONS	2756
PORT KEMBLA MEALS ON WHEELS	2781
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	2728,
2778	
QUESTION TIME	2742
REGIONAL HEALTH	2749
ROYAL COMMISSIONER JOHN DYSON HEYDON, AC, QC	2780
RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (BUSH FIRE PREVENTION) BILL 2015	2761
SCHOOL ETHICS CLASSES	2732
SPORT AND RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE	2746
STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE	2756
STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS	2758
STATE INFRASTRUCTURE	2754
SUTHERLAND SHIRE NETBALL ASSOCIATION	2740
TRIBUTE TO GAIL TANG-DEMETRIOU	2730
TRIBUTE TO UNCLE RAY JACKSON	2739
VISITORS	2741
WESTERN	HOUSING
SYDNEY	
JOBS	
AND	

## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Tuesday 25 August 2015

---

**The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock)** took the chair at 12 noon.

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

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Notices of Motions**

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

**Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.**

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

---

#### **HEATHCOTE ROAD UPGRADE**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [12.11 p.m.]: I speak today about a very tragic event that happened two weeks ago on one of our notorious roads—in fact, one-third of all fatalities in the Sutherland shire happen on this very road. An off-duty firefighter, 39-year-old Drew Cullen, was killed when his car collided with a truck and another vehicle on a narrow bridge on Heathcote Road. This latest fatal incident was tragic, and I send my deepest condolences to Mr Cullen's family and friends on their sad and sudden loss. The road was closed for more than 10 hours as emergency services personnel worked to remove Mr Cullen from his car and crash investigators tried to piece together what had happened. The driver of the truck, a 42-year-old Yagoona man, suffered a broken leg in the crash, while, luckily, his passenger, a 38-year-old Sefton man, was uninjured. A 28-year-old woman from the Wollongong suburb of Cordeaux Heights was transported to Bankstown Hospital as a precaution. The NSW Police Force is still investigating the cause of the crash.

We already know that this particular stretch of road is narrow and hazardous for passing traffic; unfortunately, this is not the first time Heathcote Road has taken a life and this is not the first time I have had to make a speech about this road in this Parliament. This road is long overdue for an upgrade. The electorates of Heathcote and Holsworthy share this notorious stretch of road. Both the member for Heathcote and I have long advocated for upgrades to improve safety and to reduce the incidence of crashes like the one which occurred last Tuesday. I am regularly contacted by concerned constituents who travel along Heathcote Road each and every day, like I do, and who have witnessed or been involved in near misses. The Holsworthy electorate has a number of small communities dotted along Heathcote Road, the residents of which have no choice but to enter and exit onto Heathcote Road. Far too regularly we hear of extensive delays along this arterial road due to major and minor accidents that close down lanes in one or both directions for hours at a time. The community is rightfully frustrated that this roadway is still hazardous.

The section of this road closest to my electorate office is busiest during peak times, as it passes by the local train station at Holsworthy and the army barracks. This means that a lot of cars travelling in both directions are funnelled into one lane and then the road expands back to two lanes. When the Premier joined me to announce that the New South Wales Government would be providing \$4 million this

year to progress plans to widen Heathcote Road between Infantry Parade at Holsworthy and The Avenue at Voyager Point I was overjoyed. The upgrade includes providing two lanes from Infantry Parade all the way to The Avenue. A new four-lane divided road will help to improve travel times and road safety, which is of particular importance, as well upgrading The Avenue and Macarthur Drive intersections.

One of my first wins as the local member was securing funding to replace the narrow Deadmans Creek Bridge near Sandy Point. The construction works are now in their final stages and the new bridge is on track to be open to traffic in 2016—the asphalt was laid just last week. The duplication of Heathcote Road also requires two other bridges to be widened at Harris Creek and at Williams Creek, which is where traffic currently builds up as it must return to a single lane in each direction. The railway bridge will also be duplicated, and a pedestrian and cyclist path will be installed along the upgraded road. I know many residents have requested a pathway to connect these suburbs to Holsworthy station, and I am pleased to see this included as part of the upgrades. The section of the road where Mr Cullen was tragically killed will also be upgraded. This upgrade was already planned but we are now looking at ways to hasten it because the road needs to be fixed as soon as possible.

As local members we often talk about what we are doing to help our community but obviously it would not be possible without the help of our staff. I particularly thank Natalie Peterson for all her help. Natalie has announced her resignation and will soon be leaving my office to move onto bigger and better things. I know she will be fabulous in her next career move. I have worked with Natalie for nearly eight years, starting in our former workplace as a technical aide to the disabled. She makes me look good. She is brilliant at answering the phone. She is brilliant at looking after constituents. She is brilliant at making sure our promises are kept. She is dedicated. She is selfless. I have loved having her work in my office since the 2011 election. Indeed, I have loved working with her throughout our whole time together. I have also loved seeing her become a mum to little Ruby and having little Ruby visit our office. She certainly brightens up the day. I know that her kind and helpful manner will be particularly appreciated in her new career.

**Mr Jai Rowell:** Three cheers for Natalie.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** The member for Wollondilly is right—Natalie does deserve three cheers. She is a rare talent and I wish her all the best in her future career.

### **MOUNT KEIRA TOURISM PRECINCT**

**Mr RYAN PARK** (Keira) [12.16 p.m.]: Today I discuss a very important issue in my electorate, one that I have been working on with the Government in a bipartisan way and will continue to do so—that is, the development of the Mount Keira precinct. As someone from the area, Madam Speaker would know, as would many, that this is a tourism precinct that, unfortunately, has been largely neglected. It has suffered, as many of these precincts do, from bureaucracies pointing the finger at each other rather than working together to get things done. I thank the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Mark Speakman, and the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast, Mr Gareth Ward, for working with me on this, along with the local council and Destination Wollongong. The general manager of Destination Wollongong, Mr Mark Sleight, is a hardworking and passionate advocate for our region. Together we are starting to make some serious progress in developing Mount Keira as a tourism precinct.

It is important that this be done in a bipartisan way because currently the Illawarra is facing some very strong economic headwinds. The member for Shellharbour gave notice today of a motion about the issues around Bluescope Steel. The member for Wollongong has raised the same issue in this place, as have I and other members from the region. We are facing some difficult times in employment, particularly in our major industries. That is why tourism, and the great economic activity it can bring by supporting jobs, is critical. The Mount Keira precinct is about exactly that. The first stage is to make sure that those engaging in recreational pursuits such as mountain biking can access this area. These types of activities will bring people to the area. Nowadays mountain biking is something engaged in by not only young

people and teenage daredevils but also—I do hope that not too many members will slip on the lycra—many men and women in New South Wales as a hobby.

The bipartisan efforts will ensure that mountain bike riding will be one of the first pursuits allowed after the mountain is opened up. A particular focus of those efforts is development of the kiosk or tourist precinct on top of the mountain to attract people to the area and showcase how great it is to live in the Illawarra region. Most importantly, the tourist precinct will create a destination point for those wishing to spend some time in the Illawarra and on the South Coast. The bipartisan group recognises the challenges associated with infrastructure, water and energy supply. The community expects us to work in a bipartisan manner to address the issues around sensitive tourism precincts. The community does not want finger-pointing and backstabbing; rather, they want their local leaders to work through the process, drive the requisite change and ensure that the majority of the people, instead of the silent minority, are being heard in relation to the sensible and sensitive development of the area. I make no apologies for being a very strong advocate for some years about the future of Mount Keira. I regard the area as having huge potential to attract and retain people in our region. It has potential to drive the visitor economy in the region.

The State Government should commit to financial and resources investment to develop tourism potential. The National Parks and Wildlife Service clearly understands that the bipartisan working group expects that government agency to come on board and facilitate opening up the area. We do not want government agencies to shut the gate and throw away the key; rather, we want an area that tourists and local people can enjoy. I look forward to continuing to work with the Government, the council and the local community to ensure that reform takes place and we are able to make the changes needed to develop this magnificent tourism precinct.

### **BATTLE OF LONG TAN 100TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [12.21 p.m.]: On Tuesday 18 August, along with other members of this House, I attended a commemoration of the Battle of Long Tan to honour those Australians who served during the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War was the longest war that Australia was ever involved in. One of the best known Australian engagements in the Vietnam War was the Battle of Long Tan, which occurred on 18 August 1966. A number of years ago I had the privilege of visiting the famous rubber plantation and participating in a memorial service to remember the soldiers on both sides of the conflict who lost their lives during the battle. It was very moving to see where the artillery had been fired from.

The Battle of Long Tan involved 108 Anzacs against a Vietcong force that was estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,500 strong. During the battle 18 Australian soldiers were killed but it remains one of the few battles in recorded history to have been won against such odds. The statistics themselves represent a tribute to the tenacity, commitment and dedication of Australian soldiers, past and present. Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War was marked by controversy, significant levels of public opposition to conscription and concern about the casualties. Australians became increasingly concerned about casualties and death during a war in which 500 service personnel were killed and 3,129 Australians were injured. Servicemen who had done their duty bravely often were vilified and treated appallingly as anti-war peace protests were televised along with live reports from the war zone showing death and destruction. A veteran who lives in the Tweed electorate, Bob Corban, served in Nui Dat and recalls returning to Australia only to be met by placard-waving women—some of whom spat at servicemen and servicewomen as they passed by. In those days, even the RSL was not as supportive as it could have been.

This year marks the forty-ninth anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan and we remember those who served in Vietnam with respect and appreciation. The Vietnam Veterans Tweed Heads South Memorial Club has established a small memorial garden in the grounds of the South Tweed Sports Club. This year the service was attended by approximately 50 veterans, who were supported by three times that number of family members and friends. I had the honour of laying a wreath at the memorial, in

company with a number of other community leaders such as Mike Fraser, chairman of the Town Services Club. It was a moving experience to speak to the veterans and gain an understanding of the hardships they endured. It is particularly difficult to understand how the Australian public could turn against the service personnel when they came home from the Vietnam War. After all, those brave men and women were simply doing as they were told and to the best of their ability. It must have been horrifying for them to return to Australia and be spat upon and to feel ashamed of having served their country. Fortunately, public opinion has changed. On many occasions in this Chamber members have applauded those who have sacrificed so much in the service of their country.

The Tweed electorate is no different from any other electorate in the State. We already have lost two members of our community in the war in Afghanistan. I was privileged to attend the funeral of Sapper Rowan Robinson in company with former Prime Minister Julia Gillard and then Federal Leader of the Opposition Tony Abbott and to represent the Tweed electorate. The sight of that young boy lying in his coffin evoked a great deal of emotion in local residents and his colleagues. The joint presidents of the Vietnam Veterans Tweed Heads South Memorial Club, Vic Slockee and Bob Corban, organised a very moving service that gave us pause to remember the young men who so bravely served in such an unpopular war. I also pay tribute to the previous president, "Davey" Crockett, who has passed away. It was Davey's persistence and dedication that resulted in the establishment of the club to provide support and social fellowship for local veterans. Davey was a dynamic presence in the club who never wavered from his objective of creating a memorial to the sacrifices made so valiantly. We owe a great debt of gratitude to our veterans of the Vietnam War.

#### **TRIBUTE TO GAIL TANG-DEMETRIOU**

**Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE** (Epping) [12.26 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to recognise the contribution of Gail Tang-Demetriou of Cherrybrook for her outstanding work in supporting people with a disability. Recently I had the pleasure of presenting Gail with the Premier's Volunteer Recognition award for more than 25 years of service to others. Gail has worked as a social worker and policy officer in various disability services and programs. She has been a board member of Disabled People's International in New South Wales and a member of People with Disability Australia in New South Wales. She also has taught welfare, disability and community work courses at TAFE. She has been a board member of TAD Disability Services in New South Wales since 1990.

TAD Disability Services designs and builds custom equipment to enable people with disabilities to lead more independent lives. More than 250 skilled volunteers donate thousands of hours to designing, building and modifying more than 1,000 diverse items in New South Wales every year. It takes a special type of person to work with disadvantaged people; those volunteers have the right balance of strength and compassion. The work can be both rewarding and confronting, but always worthwhile. It is easy to discount the contribution that people with a disability are able to make in our society. We are all susceptible to this kind of thinking—if not actively, then passively through not being inclusive enough. But through the leadership and example of volunteers like Gail we are reminded that people with a disability are capable of so much more than most people give them credit for. Not only will they surprise those who doubt them but they may also even surprise themselves if given the encouragement and opportunity to thrive.

Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, more often than not people will be what others tell them they can be. That is to say, if you tell someone they cannot do something often enough they will start to believe it themselves. Fortunately, charities such as TAD highlight what people can do and show them that, with a little bit of assistance, they can often do the things they want. I am always inspired by the charitable works of others—works that exemplify the Christian message of loving your neighbour, which is succinctly summarised by Saint Matthew, who said:

So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do ... to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they [already] have received their reward ... But when you

give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.

That sums up the true nature of a volunteer: the virtue of humility and selflessness. We have many unsung heroes in our community because, so often, people devote their time and energy to helping others without giving a thought to how they might be repaid or rewarded. In fact, if people's only motivation for giving was recognition and reward these things alone would not be enough to sustain them and keep them motivated for any meaningful length of time. When an award is given to volunteers such as Gayle they will say that they are not special, that lots of people deserve the award and that they are just doing what they love. That is how one knows one has found the right person to recognise. I congratulate Gayle on more than 25 years of outstanding service to people with disabilities. I hope she realises what a difference she has made to so many people's lives. Gayle is truly one of the community's unsung heroes.

### **INGLEBURN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISCOVERY CENTRE**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG** (Macquarie Fields) [12.30 p.m.]: From Spiderman to SpongeBob, pirates to princesses Elsa and Anna, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to Tinkerbell and wizards to Wonder Woman, these magical characters were everywhere. Where is this magical place at which more than 500 young kids and many adults, all dressed in their favourite book characters, came together for a day filled with sounds of laughter and rounds of clapping? It is Ingleburn Public School, where students, teachers and parents came together to celebrate the opening of the school's new innovative learning Discovery Centre. I am told also that amongst the many other Marvel superhero characters was the boys' school captain, who some would say, in Sir Humphrey Appleby's words, courageously "dressed up as a blue butterfly". I get the feeling that in about 15 years time his closest family and friends will remind him of that moment with much friendly banter.

Reading, writing and arithmetic are foundations of an education system but they have to take place in a learning environment which engages its students, provides enjoyment in how they learn and encourages participation and interaction amongst teachers, parents, students and the wider school community. That is leadership and innovation in education the Ingleburn Public School way. Officially launched on Monday 24 August, Ingleburn Public School's new Discovery Centre shows how innovation is the key to better learning. This journey began 12 months ago, with the school taking the initial innovative step to transform the traditional library building into a new open learning centre. The innovative team had the task of delivering the inspiring and unique learning space that is fast becoming a hub of learning. The aptly named Discovery Centre houses a maker room, a reading jungle and a research retreat, as well as breakout study spaces, comfortable reading nooks, a tiered learning space and an inviting entrance.

The innovative use of space allows students to learn in an environment where they are continually doing practical exercises, using the latest technology and engaging with other students. The new Discovery Centre provides an inviting, creative and interactive space for students to engage in self-led learning. This has made learning more fun and more students are enjoying school activities and in the process learning new skills and gaining knowledge for the future. This type of learning environment is also having a positive impact on students who were previously proving difficult to engage but who are now very much enjoying learning amongst their classmates and from their dedicated teachers. One of the walls of the Discovery Centre is adorned with quotes by Walt Disney. That is fitting, given that one could easily mistake this new learning centre for something straight out of Disneyland, with its bright and engaging design and endless possibilities for the imagination. One of Walt's quotes on the wall states:

All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them.

Perhaps it should add, "and an innovative Discovery Centre to help ignite the passion". When we look back on our schooling years, it is not the mark we got on our reading and maths test that we remember

but days like Ingleburn Public School's new Discovery Centre opening— days when the schoolyard was turned into a mixture of Disneyland and Marvel mania and countless many more days of learning in a fun and enjoyable environment with endless practical exercises and engaging skills activities. Ingleburn Public School is certainly living up to its slogan as an "innovative and collaborative learning environment that empowers students to become 21st century global citizens". I am confident that the students at this public school will be a testament to the power of innovation and lifelong learning as it dictates their future career paths.

In addition to this event, I was invited to attend the school's recent NAIDOC Week celebrations. The students sang the national anthem in traditional Indigenous language. As the local member I was proud to see our younger students honouring our Indigenous history and culture. All of this could not have been achieved without the leadership, dedication and commitment of the principal, Graeme Green, and his fellow teachers. They are the ones who painted the steps and walls and decorated the Discovery Centre, and they are the ones who have made it their priority to make sure that their kids at Ingleburn Public School learn in an innovative and fun school environment. I wish the school many more happy learning days to come and look forward to sharing in its educational success.

### **BANKSTOWN DISTRICT AMATEUR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION GRAND FINALS**

**Mr GLENN BROOKES** (East Hills) [12.35 p.m.]: Last weekend marked the end of the season for many sporting codes across my electorate. On Saturday night I ventured into the Bankstown electorate to support my local teams in the local premier league soccer grand finals. The event was held at Walshaw Park and was well organised. It was a real credit to the Bankstown District Amateur Football Association, or BDAFA, that it was able to pull off such an enjoyable night. The first match of the evening was the premier league reserves match between Panania RSL Soccer Club from my electorate and the Yagoona Lions from the Bankstown electorate. Not much separated the two teams, with the match ending at nil all at the end of normal time. Extra time was required to try to get a result, but still nothing separated the teams. As a result the dreaded penalty shootout was required. The whole crowd was on edge, but at the end of the day, due to some brilliant keeping from Panania's John Radman, Panania RSL was crowned 2015 premiers for that grade.

Still on a high from that win, the first grade boys took the field for a local derby between Panania RSL and Padstow United, two great community clubs from my electorate. Again this game was extremely close with scores locked up at full time of normal play. Extra time followed, with Panania being lucky enough to score a match winner to end the game 2-1. Overall it was a great night and Panania players should be proud of themselves for bringing home both titles. It is worth noting that Panania RSL Soccer Club was also represented the following day in the top grade of the women's competition, the all age ladies 1s. Although unlucky on that occasion against Revesby Workers Club, it was a great achievement for the club to be represented in the grand finals for those top grades. In fact, I have been informed that out of 38 competitive teams, 16 or 42 per cent have made the grand final, which is a great achievement for the club president, Bob Bell. Whilst congratulating the premiers in each grade, I congratulate also all those who competed in the Bankstown football competition this year and acknowledge Trevor Le Bretton and his committee for continuing to promote this great sport across my electorate.

### **SCHOOL ETHICS CLASSES**

**Ms JENNY LEONG** (Newtown) [12.38 p.m.]: People in the Newtown electorate are extremely passionate about education, particularly public education, and want to ensure that their children's education aligns with their values. A joke in the *Daily Telegraph* is that the Newtown electorate is a "godless lot". It is correct as we have the highest proportion in the census of people who marked the box "no religion". That is why it is so important in the Newtown electorate that many parents who choose to send their children to our public schools and nominate to have their children participate in ethics classes, rather than be taught Christianity via special religious education, have that choice. Recently, a number of concerned parents have contacted my office about reports of a deal done between Fred Nile's Christian

Democratic Party and the Baird Government to remove from primary school enrolment forms information about the option for children to opt out of special religious education classes and instead attend ethics classes. One parent wrote:

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to support the parents and children in your own electorate and act against this shocking deal ... all parents have a right to know about all options that are available for their children at school: SRE (special religious education), ethics classes and supervised activities. Without this information, parents cannot make an informed decision about where to send their children during this time.

That parent really gets to the heart of the matter. Freedom of religion, expression and association means that people are able to make an informed choice. This deal potentially removes transparency and removes that choice for parents with children at public schools. The rules currently say that special religious education in New South Wales may include any religion, but in practice that is not the case. In practice, the classes favour a certain Christian agenda. An example of this open-door access to children and young people has been brought to light by parents involved in an excellent campaign via the Fairness in Religions in School website. The site gives examples of the types of lessons to which children are exposed. One lesson involves children being provided with coloured beads on a bracelet. I have an example of the lesson plan here. The beads remind children of values by which to live their lives. The lesson plan explains the symbolism of the black bead as follows:

Mankind disobeyed God, which is sin. Darkness entered the world and things weren't perfect anymore.

This is a lesson being taught in our public education system. The red bead teaches children that God fixes all problems. In the electorate of Newtown, coloured beads or rainbow flags usually have a different meaning—that is, the celebration of diversity and acceptance of difference. Unfortunately, that is not what is delivered in religious education lessons. Last week in Victoria the Government took a strong and positive step to remove religious education from the public school curriculum. There is a place in our community to teach people about religion and religious beliefs, but it is not in the curriculum. The curriculum should teach the importance of understanding various religions rather than proselytising a certain religious belief.

In a world where one woman a week is killed by domestic violence, where one in three women have experienced sexual or physical violence at the hands of a partner and where suicide is the leading cause of death among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] people aged between 10 and 24, we should learn a lesson from the curriculum change in Victoria. We should use the time that was previously allotted to special religious education to teach children about domestic violence and creating healthy relationships. We in New South Wales should take inspiration from the Victorian example to ensure that public education teaches children and young people about respectful relationships and about the intersections between history, culture, religion, faith and ethics.

We need to recognise the damaging effect that poorly conceived education can have on young people who are questioning their gender. We should not limit the rights of parents to determine how their children are taught in the public education system by hiding behind closed doors any deals done on religious education. As one teacher recently said at the National Safe Schools Symposium held at the University of Sydney:

We want our school to reflect the world we want to live in. We want a world that accepts the diversity amongst us.

## **WESTERN SYDNEY JOBS AND HOUSING**

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.43 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the

House the greatest challenges faced by the people of Western Sydney: the need for growth in employment and an increase in the supply of affordable housing. As a Government we have two choices: We can ignore the important issues or we can plan for the future. I support doing something for the community, planning not just for the next 10 or 20 years but for the next 50 years.

Over the next 20 years the Government will create 100,000 jobs in Parramatta and 300,000 jobs in greater Western Sydney. We need to build homes for the people who work in those jobs so that they can work close to home. We need to create lifestyle options to ensure that people choose to live in Western Sydney. That is why I am a strong advocate for the Camellia precinct. I was delighted to see the recent release of the land-use and infrastructure strategy that outlines the potential of the Camellia precinct. I have pushed for the implementation of the project since being elected, and I am glad to see that the plans are progressing.

The precinct will contribute significantly to the planned 100,000 jobs growth for Parramatta over the next 20 years. The Government has created around 50,000 jobs in the area so far. I have been talking about the precinct since 2011. In 2012 Shell closed its Clyde refinery, and the use of that land will now change. In the future the former Shell refinery site will incorporate wetlands, a light industrial area and housing. In 2013 good sense prevailed in that the Remondis application for a proposed waste disposal plant on the site, processing up to 150,000 tonnes of garbage each year, was withdrawn. That was great news because the waterfront site has much greater potential than to become a processing plant for Sydney's garbage in the backyard of Parramatta. We need to create cleaner technologies and knowledge-intensive jobs.

The Camellia precinct makes sense. It is an opportunity to transform an industrial wasteland into waterfront living. The site has a large footprint, covering 320 hectares. It is conveniently located two kilometres from the Parramatta central business district, with the Westmead medical precinct only a short distance away. Together the Parramatta central business district, the Westmead medical precinct, the Camellia precinct, the Silverwater precinct and the Olympic Park precinct form a perfectly positioned economic corridor that will provide jobs. The first stage of the north-western corner of the Camellia precinct will accommodate 10,000 homes and form a new community centre. With Rosehill Gardens, that will contribute to addressing the need for homes and more jobs.

We need the infrastructure to get it right. We need roads, bridges and transport interchanges. We need to get the planning right in the beginning so that we can open up a boulevard to connect Silverwater, the Camellia precinct and Rydalmere. Rydalmere, with the University of Western Sydney campus, is an important new technology hub. We also have the opportunity to focus on the clean-up of the Parramatta River and Duck Creek to make the water drinkable in the next few decades. We need to open up the precinct along the waterfront and create a new town centre, with shops, cafes, restaurants and plazas. The revitalisation of the riverfront will make it available for everybody to enjoy. I recognise the Minister for Planning, Mr Rob Stokes, for delivering the first stage of this plan for the future. I thank the former Minister for Planning, Ms Pru Goward, and Parramatta City Council for recognising the precinct's potential and supporting its transition from industrial wasteland to riverfront living.

#### **EASTERN CREEK ELECTRICITY GENERATION FACILITY**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA** (Mount Druitt) [12.48 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a proposed major development which will have a direct impact on the residential properties at Minchinbury within my electorate. The development includes the construction and operation of a multi-fuel power station, an energy-from-waste facility [EFW] that thermally treats unrecoverable recyclable waste that can only be sent for landfill—also known as a waste incinerator. The application has been lodged by The Next Generation (NSW) Pty Limited [TNG]. The application is considered to be of State significance and the Minister for Planning is the consent authority for this development. The development site is located at Eastern Creek and is accessed off Honeycomb Drive. The residential suburb of Minchinbury is located approximately one kilometre from the site. Numerous community members have contacted my office to

raise their concerns about the health implications this development will have on the surrounding population.

The proposal involves non-recyclable waste being fed into a furnace where it will be incinerated. To assess the impact of this development on the residents and city, Blacktown City Council engaged an independent environmental consultant company, Jacobs Group (Australia) Pty Limited, to review the environmental impact statement [EIS] submitted with the development application. Jacobs has concluded that the facility as currently proposed does not meet relevant environmental criteria and standards. The facility will have the capacity to incinerate up to 1.35 million tonnes of residual waste per annum. Of the 1.35 million tonnes, 45 per cent of the waste will be sourced from the neighbouring Genesis Xero waste facility plant. The remaining 55 per cent of waste will be sourced from third parties or unknown sources and will be delivered to the incinerator by road—that is, 745,000 tonnes of waste will be delivered by road per annum, generating up to 168 trucks delivering waste per day.

The consultant has raised many concerns with the submitted EIS, including the risk of the unknown materials being unsuitable for the EFW facility—for example, it may contain hazardous material such as asbestos—which should continue to be sent to landfill as incineration will create an environmental and health disaster. The applicant has advised that there is reliance on the third parties delivering the waste to carry out their own screening and therefore there are no further screenings done of the waste by the developer before it is incinerated. This arrangement will no doubt create the potential for hazardous materials to be concealed within the waste loads. In relation to the EIS, the overall concept design has assumed that the Australian planning and consenting regime is similar to that of the United Kingdom. On this one assumption the whole design has been based on meeting United Kingdom regulatory requirements and therefore falls short of the requirements to meet local Australian regulations.

The EIS has numerous deficiencies and non-clarity of information. The air quality and greenhouse gas assessment is incomplete. The odour assessment report is incomplete. The soil and water assessment report is incomplete. Site contamination investigations have not been undertaken in accordance with the Environment Protection Authority guidelines. The development fails to consider the use of cooling towers. The proposed cooling system has a high electrical consumption, a large visible profile and generates excessive noise from the fans. An assessment of how water will be used and reused has not been undertaken. The EIS provides misleading information about the reuse of residual ash and it is likely that it will be sent to landfill.

The EFW plant will generate around 45,000 tonnes per annum of air pollution residues—that is, ash. The ash classification results have not been consistently reported throughout the EIS. The EIS suggests that the ash residues will require trucking to a hazardous waste facility, but there are no details regarding the long-term disposal location. The proposed development is located within 40 metres of the bank of a watercourse—that is, Ropes Creek. The closeness of this watercourse would typically constitute the development as an "integrated development" under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. The EIS is silent on whether the development is an "integrated development".

The development is inconsistent with the Broader Western Sydney Employment Area Draft Structure Plan 2013. This plan implies that developments should achieve an employment target of around 21 jobs per hectare, whereas the proposed development generates around six jobs per hectare and is therefore well under the employment target. Given the concerns raised by council's consultant and the community regarding the potential health impacts this facility may have on the surrounding neighbourhood, I call on the Minister for Planning to refuse this application as it is not in the best interests of the community.

#### **EASTERN SUBURBS LOCAL AREA COMMAND MASQUERADE BALL**

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [12.53 p.m.]: I congratulate members of the Eastern Suburbs Local Area Command and Detective Superintendent Gavin Dengate in particular on organising

and hosting a masquerade ball on 15 August. Along with 350 members of the local community, I attended the ball. The purpose of the ball was to raise money for the Eastern Suburbs Police Citizens Youth Club to purchase a new bus and for the esteemed charity Police Legacy. The ball was held at the Australian Turf Club at Randwick racecourse and raised \$85,000. It was a fun night hosted by Mike Whitney, a famous former cricketer, and attended by many sportsmen of note, particularly Simon Poidevin, who was a guest auctioneer. Many members of the community supported these charities and the Eastern Suburbs Local Area Command, which does sterling work not only protecting our community but also engaging with our community in promoting worthwhile causes throughout the eastern suburbs.

Detective Superintendent Gavin Dengate is well known locally. He is a driving force behind the hugely successful annual White Ribbon Walk from High Cross Park in Randwick to Coogee Beach, which attracts thousands of people. Many former Ministers have accompanied me on the walk. When I was Mayor of Randwick I regularly met with the local area command to discuss what could be done to make the eastern suburbs safer. Detective Superintendent Dengate's leadership of the Eastern Suburbs Local Area Command is inspirational. Yesterday I welcomed new recruits appointed to his command by saying policing is not just about locking up people to prevent crime; it also requires a deep and strong engagement with the local community.

People want to feel their police are approachable and friendly, and that they will help when the chips are down. At the induction Detective Superintendent Dengate summed up policing by saying members of the NSW Police Force need to get out into the community and talk to people so as not only to solve crime but also to prevent it. The recruits were told to keep their eyes open and to talk to people to get intelligence, having won their trust and affection, because police cannot eradicate crime by themselves. It takes a combination of the police, the community and the Government working together to make our cities and our State safer.

Deputy Commissioner Nick Kaldas attended the masquerade ball and spoke in tribute to Detective Superintendent Gavin Dengate on his tireless work for the local community through his management of the Eastern Suburbs Local Area Command. I also thank him for his work, along with members of the organising committee of the masquerade ball: Stacey Maloney, Sharon Frawley, Lauren Kelly, Cindy Northam, Brad Ross and Rob Townsend. They did a sterling job in organising a fabulous evening that raised \$85,000 that will be truly valued by Police Legacy and the youth of the eastern suburbs.

## **LOOSE-FILL ASBESTOS INSULATED HOMES**

**Mr JOHN BARILARO** (Monaro—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business) [12.58 p.m.]: This afternoon I speak about the Mr Fluffy loose-fill asbestos crisis that engulfed the Australian Capital Territory, leaving more than 1,040 homes destined for demolition. This issue arose following the forensic demolition of a house in the Australian Capital Territory that had had the bulk of its asbestos insulation removed in the early 1990s. It was clear from the forensic demolition of that house that despite there being no insulation left in the ceiling cavity, minute fibres of asbestos had penetrated all the other cavities of the house—the walls, the sub-floor terrain and even the soil below it. It was found that despite houses being cleaned of loose-fill asbestos, the presence of asbestos fibres remained a threat not only to home owners but also to visitors to the house, neighbours and the environment. As a result, late last year the Australian Capital Territory Government announced the introduction of a compulsory demolition program.

In the 1990s New South Wales home owners were unable to take part in the \$100 million Federal government scheme, as it applied to loose-fill asbestos affected homes within the borders of the Australian Capital Territory. In Queanbeyan 66 homes were identified as having loose-fill asbestos but, unfortunately, the home owners did not receive any Federal funding and were unable to access the clean-up program. Three decades on, this Government has acted on this issue—an issue that has been kicked along by governments for a decision to be made in the future because moving people out of their

homes is a tough decision.

Following an upper House inquiry last year, Minister Perrottet announced the establishment of a task force. That led to fantastic outcomes for those affected in New South Wales, with owners of homes insulated with loose-fill asbestos, predominately Mr Fluffy insulation, now having access to financial support. Mr Fluffy was a small business in the Australian Capital Territory that had very little reach beyond the territory's boundaries but, because of the proximity of Queanbeyan to the Australian Capital Territory, many Queanbeyan home owners had their homes insulated by Mr Fluffy.

Earlier this year the New South Wales Government announced it had put aside \$250 million in a voluntary buy-back demolition scheme. Under the Australian Capital Territory scheme, it is compulsory for home owners to move from their homes so that the homes can be demolished and the sites cleaned. The land is then sold on the open market. The New South Wales Government considered that was a bit harsh. People live in specific areas for a number of reasons—family connections, proximity to schools, sense of community. This Government decided to go down the path of a voluntary purchase and demolition scheme that allowed home owners two options.

Under the first option the New South Wales Government will purchase the house, demolish it and clean the site of any asbestos fibre, but the home owner will continue to own the land and can receive funding to rebuild on the land. Under the second option home owners who have lived with the anguish and pain of this issue for a long time, with no sight of any support from government and who have had enough, will be able to sell their house and land to the State Government as a package. They then can start a new life in a new home elsewhere in their community. These are very good options and it is up to the individual home owners to determine which one best suits their needs and the needs of their family.

I compliment Minister Perrottet, his office and his department for taking politics out of the issue and putting together a scheme that acknowledges its impact on home owners. I met with many home owners in the Monaro electorate, especially in Queanbeyan. It is the dream of all young people to buy their first home, but many young families have found themselves in a financial trap: not only is their property not worth anything but it could also have an impact on the health of their family. I was touched by the plight of the home owners who have been affected by this crisis and that is why I, along with my community—too many individuals to name—conducted a campaign to achieve this good outcome.

There is now light at the end of the tunnel for people in New South Wales, for the communities of Queanbeyan and Palerang and other local government areas that have been affected. I encourage home owners in New South Wales to contact the Loose-Fill Asbestos Implementation Taskforce and have their homes tested. This support package is about ensuring that no-one else has to suffer the emotional pain that many others have endured over many decades.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON** (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.03 p.m.]: I compliment the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business for raising this issue in the House once more. The Mr Fluffy asbestos crisis has had a significant impact on Queanbeyan in the Monaro electorate and on Yass, which is in the surrounding area. It has been a very trying time for residents, who have seen what has happened under the Australian Capital Territory Government's demolition program. It is excellent news that the work of Minister Perrottet and his task force has led to the New South Wales Government's \$250 million voluntary buy-back scheme, which has two options: either the State Government will purchase the home, demolish it and clear the land and the owner will receive funding to rebuild; or the owner will sell the land to the government and relocate. It is a fantastic outcome. I again compliment Minister Barilaro for his strong stand on this issue and I compliment Minister Perrottet on an excellent outcome.

#### **CAMPBELLTOWN ELECTORATE SERVICE CENTRE**

**Mr GREG WARREN** (Campbelltown) [1.04 p.m.]: Today I speak on the disappointing element of

contempt shown for the Campbelltown community in this Government's decision to close the Campbelltown Roads and Maritime Services registry and to centralise services outside Campbelltown. I commend the member for Wollondilly for standing up for his community and raising his concerns on this issue. Campbelltown people are good people. They do not get upset about too many things very often but this decision, understandably, has them, and me, very concerned.

The one-stop services shop will see the closure of motor registries in Campbelltown, Narellan and Ingleburn, forcing residents in Campbelltown to drive out of their way just to access the Roads and Maritime Services. Prior to the last election the Government stated in its "A Plan for Growing Sydney" that Campbelltown is an important regional city and worthy of solid investment. I wholeheartedly support and agree with that statement. So it is absolutely outrageous for the Government to now rip away vital services from the area. This move is an act of pure contempt for the people of Campbelltown by a Government that before the election said one thing and after the election did the opposite.

Back in 2014 my predecessor in the seat of Campbelltown told the *Macarthur Advertiser* and the mayor of Campbelltown, Councillor Paul Lake, that the Minister for Finance, Services and Property had advised him that the Macarthur Service Centre would be built in Campbelltown so that Campbelltown residents would not be forced to go outside the area to access these services. Even as far back as 2013, when the idea was first floated by the Government, it appears that my predecessor was given assurances that this service centre would be built in Campbelltown. It clearly does not add up and none of this sits well with me. I am honoured to represent the people of Campbelltown and I express the concerns of many people in my community. I am particularly concerned about people with mobility issues—the elderly and people with a disability—accessing these services.

I accept that the purpose of centralising services is to achieve efficiencies but it must be remembered that some people require face-to-face services. I can go online and do all my day-to-day business on a computer but those who are unable to do that require additional services and support. In an article in the *Macarthur Advertiser* on 23 June this year my predecessor stated that he first found out about the centre being built in the Camden electorate, instead of in Campbelltown, when he read it in the local paper. He further stated that he was "absolutely shocked"—as was I—by the news because the Minister had indicated to him that the centre would be located in Campbelltown. It appears that the Government misled not only my predecessor but also the people of Campbelltown. Given the representations of politicians in matters of this kind, it is no wonder that people in our electorates often find the standards of politicians inadequate.

It beggars belief that this Government in one breath says that Campbelltown is an important regional city and then in the next attempts to justify service cuts in the area. During the time that this Government has taken to make this decision, not once has it consulted with the people of Campbelltown. This plan has been in the works since 2013. It is disturbing that in the past two years not once have people in my electorate been given a chance to have a say on this matter. As I have stated, moving these services will adversely impact people with mobility issues in the Campbelltown region. Some will be forced to drive for more than 20 minutes to access government services, a trip that for many will be simply unviable. Last year Campbelltown was elevated to the status of a regional city. I supported that move and I commend the Government for taking that action. Campbelltown rightly should be a regional city but it urgently needs the Government to provide support and services to the region.

Instead of investing in the region, the Government seems to be set on cutting funds, which hurts local families and limits the potential of the Campbelltown area. The people of Campbelltown will not accept these cuts to their services, and nor will I. My colleagues the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Wollondilly and I will continue to fight for the people of Campbelltown to ensure that they have quality access to these services. I call on the members opposite, in particular those who represent neighbouring electorates, and the Minister for Finance, Services and Property to reconsider the closure of Roads and Maritime Services facilities in Campbelltown.

## MUDGEES HOSPITAL

**Mr TROY GRANT** (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) [1.09 p.m.]: Today I talk about an exciting redevelopment occurring in the beautiful community of Mudgee, which I was very proud to inherit following the boundary redistribution at the last State election. Last night I hosted a community consultation session to discuss the redevelopment of Mudgee Hospital. I was joined by the Parliamentary Secretary for Rural and Regional Health and Western NSW, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell; Chief Executive of the Western NSW Local Health District, Mr Scott McLachlan; Health planning staff; and over 100 interested community members.

During the election campaign I was proud to visit Mudgee with the member for Orange, Andrew Gee, and announce that a re-elected New South Wales Liberal-Nationals government would invest \$60 million to redevelop the very tired and worn Mudgee Hospital. The election has been run and won, and the New South Wales Nationals are now hard at work delivering on our commitments for Mudgee, as we do on every commitment that we have made across this great State. Recently I distributed a survey across the Mid-Western Regional local government area asking residents for their opinion on the health facilities and services they would like in their community to meet their health needs into the future. I asked the community what they consider to be the major issues affecting the health and wellbeing of people in the area and the services they would like to see as part of the redevelopment.

The surveys returned so far have provided valuable feedback and the results will be compiled and provided to the local health district and Health Infrastructure NSW to help form the planning process. Cancer treatment, paediatrics and mental health services all rated very high in survey responses received to date, as did access to day surgery, maternity facilities and improved access to specialist services. When asked about planning for future services, the provision of additional chemotherapy and renal dialysis services ranked very high, alongside the need for additional beds to meet future demands as the community of Mudgee continues to grow and prosper.

I am pleased that a number of local health professionals have returned surveys and were in attendance last night. Considerable private investment is going into medical centres in Mudgee, which will complement the redevelopment work that the Government undertakes. In November 2014 the New South Wales Government launched the NSW Rural Health Plan: Towards 2021. I congratulate the Minister for Health, the most outstanding Minister for Health this State has ever seen. The plan builds on achievements made in rural health services to date, aiming to provide world-class care as close to home as possible. I acknowledge the outstanding support provided to the Minister during that time by the Hon. Melinda Pavey, who was then the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Health.

Since 2011 the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals have brought a new focus to health that was basically non-existent under Labor. There have been no more broken promises about delivering hospital projects and improved health services in rural and regional communities. We have listened and we are delivering. We are proud of the results we are achieving across this State. Since coming to government we have invested in hospitals in Wagga Wagga, Tamworth, Bega, Port Macquarie, Dubbo, Byron Bay, Parkes, Forbes, Kempsey and Lismore; and the list goes on.

I also mention the numerous multipurpose services projects, such as the wonderful project in Gulgong that the member for Orange successfully championed and delivered for that community. I was very proud to attend just recently the traditional opening of that facility. It is now Mudgee's turn, a beautiful and prosperous community in the mid-western region of our wonderful State. The New South Wales Nationals will continue to stand up for regional people, ensuring that they can access quality health care in quality settings for generations to come. I look forward to working with the community during the planning phases of the Mudgee Hospital redevelopment and thank them for their ongoing and valued support.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [1.14 p.m.]: The New South Wales Parliamentary Research Service [PRS] recently released a briefing paper on domestic and family violence that paints a horrifying picture of this intimate brutality in our State. It is important that we listen to and understand the research, which looks at why domestic and family violence occurs and the conditions in which it is likely to occur, and asks how we can change the environment out of which violence in the home is more likely to occur. The PRS paper found that determining the exact number of Australians affected by domestic violence was difficult because as few as 14 per cent of victims report incidents to police. The reasons for keeping abuse hidden include a fear of violent reprisal or embarrassment, but equally troubling is that a significant minority simply do not believe that the authorities will be able to understand their circumstances and provide support. How do we change that perception? How can we help victims feel that police and other authorities will be able to help them?

Alcohol and substance abuse by offenders is a factor in many incidents. What are we doing to help address the scourge of alcohol and substance abuse in our society? The 2013 National Community Attitudes Survey [NCAS] found that two of the groups "most likely to endorse attitudes supportive of violence and with the poorest understanding of what constitutes violence against women" were men and younger people aged 16 to 25—in other words, young men. According to the NCAS, more than one in five agree that partner violence can be excused if the person is genuinely sorry afterwards—21 per cent agreed—or if they temporarily lost control—22 per cent agreed. How do we reach young people in our community? How do we help bring about a positive attitudinal change in their culture?

The 2009-10 NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team found that in every one of the 12 intimate partner homicide cases that occurred in that year someone outside the relationship was aware of the violence that was being inflicted. When looking at the reasons why these bystanders did not intervene sooner it was found that, among a number of reasons, attitudes persist that domestic violence is a private matter. What is the Government doing on a policy level to put domestic violence on the agenda and to encourage a culture change in the attitude of communities—especially the Wallsend community—that normalise, minimise and ignore domestic and family violence? Some people respond better when issues are framed in dollar terms.

Those people should be aware that stopping domestic and family violence is not just a social cause, it is an economic imperative. In 2011 the Auditor-General estimated that domestic and family violence cost the New South Wales economy more than \$4.5 billion each year. The consequences of this aggression extend far beyond the immediate harm felt by the victims of domestic violence. The plague of this intimate betrayal affects victims, their families and the New South Wales community as a whole. It is time that the Government started working to address the root causes of the impact of domestic violence.

### **TRIBUTE TO UNCLE RAY JACKSON**

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [1.19 p.m.]: I reflect on the life of Uncle Ray Jackson, a warrior of the Wiradjuri people and a man whom I came to know over the past 20 years, first of all when I was the fairly new member for Wakehurst and as the shadow Minister for Corrective Services and then shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I had the opportunity to get to know Uncle Ray Jackson through his very strong advocacy not only for his people but for all those who suffered oppression or injustice.

I start by acknowledging Uncle Ray's contribution but I also acknowledge the contribution to this nation of all Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal people have managed the land for 60,000 years. I am sure Uncle Ray would be recognised by all as an elder who did amazing things on behalf of Aboriginal people as well as a man who worked on behalf of all those who needed support to stand up to oppression and injustice. He was father to Carolyne, Francine, Biame and Aaron; he was grandfather to Rebecca, Tara, Kristine, Madika and Oki; and he was great-grandfather to Amira. He also was effectively the adopted father of my Chief of Staff, Kath McFarlane, and her husband, John Murray, both of whom shared his

passion to support the oppressed and the vulnerable in our community.

Uncle Ray was born on 27 March 1942 and, sadly, passed away on 23 April 2015. He was a founding member and president of the Indigenous Social Justice Association. As I indicated, I first met Ray through his tireless work to assist families of people who died in custody. He did enormous work over decades to support families who had lost loved ones in custody in corrective services facilities or in police cells. It did not matter in which part of the country those events occurred he was there to support them. The last time I saw Ray was on 17 February 2015, only a few weeks before his death. At that time he was at the Community Justice Coalition meeting at the old law school in Sydney. That particular coalition has John Dowd as its president and the Hon. Elizabeth Evatt, AC, as a principal member. Ray, although quieter than he was normally, was still passionate about the issues that had been so much the focus of his life over the previous decades.

Ray's memorial service was held at the Redfern Community Centre on 1 May this year. Tributes came from far and wide. The United Families and Friends Campaign, based in the United Kingdom, sent him a message of love and respect for the help he gave to families who had lost sons, daughters, wives, husbands, sisters and brothers in police and prison custody. The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies wrote of his legendary commitment to overcoming the discrimination and oppression of Indigenous peoples of every nation and called him "an inspiration to young and old everywhere". There was also a message from a former Black Panther and once America's most wanted woman, and now a very respected professor at the University of California, Angela Davis, who had shared the stage with Uncle Ray at numerous conferences and rallies. She sent her heartfelt condolences.

Dr Ruby Langford Ginibi—an elder of the Bundjalung nation, a lecturer in Aboriginal history, culture and politics, and a famous author—said on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday that Ray's "time and efforts to get freedom for our Koori people" meant that Ray "ought to get a medal". It was left to the French Government to award him that medal, and I thank the French Government for that. In 2013 Ray Jackson was awarded the French human rights medal, the Prix des Droits de l'Homme de la République Française. He is the only Australian ever to have won the award.

In 2011 Ray Jackson was recognised with another award—as he was on many occasions—this time for Koori Elder of the Year. It was presented by Governor Marie Bashir. Before his death, applications were made for him to be recognised through the Australian honours system. I hope he posthumously receives such an award. An application is before Macquarie University for him to be awarded a posthumous honorary doctorate. I say on behalf of the members of this place who had dealings with Uncle Ray Jackson over many years that he was truly a warrior for the Wiradjuri people as well as for all the Aboriginal nations that make up this great continent. On many occasions, I was at the end of Uncle Ray's relentless advocacy for his people and for the human rights of all people, particularly prisoners. I, and many others who worked with him, will miss him.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON** (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.24 p.m.]: I join with the Minister for Family and Community Services in praising the work and life of Uncle Ray Jackson, a proud Wiradjuri man. He was a quiet but passionate man who was very supportive of his communities. He has been recognised during his life, and I join with the Minister in the hope that he continues to receive the accolades he so justly deserves. He worked passionately to overcome discrimination for Aboriginal people. We are a better community for the life of Uncle Ray.

#### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE NETBALL ASSOCIATION**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS** (Miranda) [1.25 p.m.]: On Saturday 22 August 2015, I attended the Sutherland Shire Netball Association fifty-fifth annual grand finals presentation. The event was the culmination of a 14-week playing season followed by semifinals, finals and grand finals, which took place at the Bellingara Netball Courts in Miranda. The Sutherland Shire Netball Association was inaugurated in 1960, when it was known as the Sutherland Shire Girls Basketball Association. According to Netball New

South Wales, the association is the largest in the State, with 25 affiliated local clubs and players ranging through all ages and competency levels.

Netball is a tough and physically demanding sport. It is a serious, competitive discipline which, as stated by Netball New South Wales, requires spirit, excellence and skill. Amongst women, it is the most popular team sport in the country. It is a particularly exciting time for netball in New South Wales, with the state-of-the-art Netball Central, a new headquarters for Netball New South Wales, being opened in December last year. This project was a \$27 million endeavour funded by the New South Wales Government and delivered in cooperation with the Sydney Olympic Park Authority. The facility will be home to the Netball New South Wales Hall of Fame. Induction into the Hall of Fame is an honour dedicated to those who have reached the pinnacle of the sport and have dedicated themselves to the game's advancement.

Netball Central was one of the key facilities used during last month's Netball World Cup—a competition in which our Australian Diamonds were victorious. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Australian team's vice captain and captain of the New South Wales Swifts, Kimberlee Green, who is a shire girl from the Miranda electorate. Another example of exceptional achievement in netball is Lisa Beehag, who was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2011. Lisa started her career at the age of 11 in our very own Sutherland Shire Netball Association and has represented the nation on 25 separate occasions. She won 11 national netball championships between 1980 and 1993 and has worked in elite coaching since her retirement from the sport in 1994, including coaching the New South Wales Swifts and working at the Australian Institute of Sport. Lisa and Kimberlee are both fantastic role models for the girls coming up through the ranks at the Sutherland Shire Netball Association.

I return to the association's grand finals. Six clubs participating on the day hailed from the Miranda electorate. The Miranda Magpies Netball Club had one winning junior team, 11C1, and four winning senior teams, A3, D3, A2 and B4. Greenpoint Netball Club, based in Oyster Bay, had one winning seniors team, A4. Jannali Netball Club had six winning junior teams, 10C1, 11AR, 13B2, 16B1, and 18 Divisions 2 and 3, and one winning seniors team, C1. Gynea Netball Club also had six winning juniors teams: 10C1, 11AR, 13B2, 16B1 and 18 Divisions 2 and 3. Sylvania Heights Netball Club's seniors team, D1, prevailed in their match. St Joseph's Primary School's club—Joeys—had winning juniors teams with 12B1, 14A1, 16A2 and 18 Division 5.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the clubs, players and their coaches on a successful season. The premier A1 senior competition final was played between the Storm Netball Club and Sylvania Heights Netball Club. I make particular mention of four young women from my electorate, Nicole Medulla, Clara Gordon, Amy Mallen and Amber Spinner, who are members of these teams, and I commend them for their efforts. Players of all ages and abilities compete in the association's tournaments, with a special division for players with a disability. Anne O'Mara was indispensable in organising 49 players with a disability across four teams. Players between the ages of 11 and 50 were recruited to the game through group homes and disability enterprises local to the Sutherland shire. Players throughout the entire association are involved in playing with the special division, with a mainstream team allocated to play each of the four special division teams every Saturday.

Finally, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the hardworking executive in organising such a successful grand final event: president Maria Bettini; vice president Judy MacLachlan; secretary Vicki Morris; and treasurer Margaret Burke. These women, together with Anne O'Mara, touch the lives of many young people and make an invaluable contribution to our community. Thank you once again to all involved. I look forward to another successful season in 2016.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON** (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.29 p.m.]: What an interesting contribution from the member for Miranda. The Government joins her in congratulating the hardworking executive at Netball Central and at Sutherland Shire Netball Association. It is a very interesting fact that Sutherland Shire Netball Association is the largest in the State with 25 affiliates.

Netball is a tough sport, it is competitive and it is the most popular women's sport. I can attest to the fact that the member for Miranda is a terrific player as I played with her in the parliamentary netball team last week. I am sure all members recognise the great success of the Australian Diamonds last weekend in knocking over the Silver Ferns in the world championship. I commend the member for Miranda for raising this issue of significance about community sport in her electorate.

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr Adam Marshall) left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

## **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I extend a warm welcome to 16 students of Granville Boys High School and their teachers, guests of the member for Granville. I welcome 25 students of Oxford College, Sydney and their teachers, guests of the member for Sydney. I also acknowledge the presence in the Chamber today of Glenn Kolomeitz, former candidate for Kiama, guest of the member for Shellharbour.

## **CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR**

**The SPEAKER:** During August, September and October 1915 recruitment for the Australian Imperial Force continued apace as demands for more troops for both Gallipoli and the Western Front grew. In those months, four men closely associated with this Parliament volunteered for service. George Edden, a Chamber attendant, enlisted on 6 September 1915 and served with the Australian Army Service Corps in France. It was with this corps that James Ridley, another Chamber attendant, served, although he enlisted in October 1915 and served in the Middle East. Walter James Rose-Bray was a Clerk in the Legislative Assembly who enlisted on 10 August 1915 and served with the Australian Imperial Force in the Middle East.

Volunteering for service during the Great War were three of the seven sons of James McGowen, the first Labor Premier of New South Wales, leading this State from 1910 to 1913. His third son, Stanley Redfern McGowen, enlisted on 16 August 1915, just four days after his elder brother Frank was wounded at Gallipoli and a week before the death in combat of a younger brother. Stanley Redfern McGowen, who had previously been a Clerk in the Legislative Assembly, served in the Australian Medical Corps in the Middle East. After the War he returned to service in this Parliament, becoming Chief Clerk in the office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works.

Unlike many other servants of this Parliament, each of those four brave men was to return from the War and resume their careers. However, the McGowen boys remind us how tragically common it was for one family to have more than one of their sons at the front and to run the risk that their family losses would be numerous. One cannot help but reflect upon the stories of how many families lost more than one family member, often serving together and dying alongside each other. Lest we forget.

## **ASSENT TO BILLS**

### **Assent to the following bills reported:**

Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Amendment (Firearms Offences) Bill 2015  
Workers Compensation Amendment Bill 2015  
State Insurance and Care Governance Bill 2015

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Notices of Motions**

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

## QUESTION TIME

*[Question time commenced at 2.22 p.m.]*

### AMBULANCE SERVICE OF NSW

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Can the Minister confirm that women who are left haemorrhaging as a result of sexual assault, have suffered a second trimester miscarriage, or have given birth suddenly outside of a hospital, are no longer category 1 emergency call-outs for ambulances?

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I can advise that the categorisation and the triage processes that ambulances undertake are under review. That is an international process, but I believe New South Wales should take the lead, and I have asked the Ambulance Service of New South Wales and the Ministry of Health to take a look at that. I do not believe that people suffering those conditions should wait. That is my personal view and I have made that view known to the Ambulance Service of New South Wales and to the Ministry.

**Mr Michael Daley:** What are you going to do about it?

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Were you not listening? I just said that I have asked for those international triage codes to be looked at. If necessary, New South Wales will take the lead in coming up with a different set of codes. I will take that, then, to the ministers' council and overseas, if necessary. There has been such a focus on our ambulances lately. Frankly, I am extremely disappointed at the campaign that has been conducted by Labor and by the hierarchy of the Health Services Union. I do not mean rank and file paramedics; I mean the hierarchy of the union.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** There has been scaremongering in relation to what is happening in our health services. The ambulance call-takers take a call every 26 seconds. And the paramedics, in the main, respond very appropriately. In fact, in 2014-15, the last year where figures are available, patients in the 1A category were responded to within 7.65 minutes against a target of 10 minutes. So our paramedics are, in the main, responding to the most urgent case within the time frame. There will always be times of peak demand. Members of the Opposition know about this from when they were in government. There are occasions when patients wait longer than I would like.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Wollongong to order for the first time. The member for Maroubra will come to order.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I have said, unequivocally, that unacceptable delays need to be investigated. It is not about a lack of resources for the Ambulance Service of New South Wales. It is about making sure we have patient transfer across the whole system; it is about the patient journey.

**Ms Linda Burney:** I think the ambos know what they are talking about.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. She will come to order and cease interjecting.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** The member for Canterbury might be interested to know that this week I have spoken to a number of paramedics, including some out in the country and in the city. Particularly, I note that some of those paramedics called one of the hospitals, which was erroneously claimed by the

union hierarchy to be on bypass, and apologised to the hospital.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** That campaign was conducted by the Health Services Union. You need to understand that that union is in competition with another ambulance union for membership. It is not about ambulance resources. The ambulance budget has gone up by 26 per cent since we have been in office. There are 270 additional full-time-equivalent paramedics since I have been the Minister. For the first time in 20 years we are allocating money to upgrade our ambulance stations, equipment, paramedic vehicles and ambulances in the city. A number of my colleagues have been out looking at those fabulous sites where we will be investing in major ambulance stations, which hold up to 40 or 50 vehicles in some cases. Out in the country there has been major investment in upgrading ambulance stations. So a great deal of money and effort is being poured into ambulance services. We will review those parts of the system that can be improved to smooth the patient journey so that patients can be dropped off at our hospitals more quickly and get the paramedics on the road again.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** One of the initiatives that I would like to highlight has been introduced quite recently in one of our major hospitals. They have introduced nurses in the emergency departments to take over the care of patients brought in by ambulance. In the two weeks that this has been in place, they have already shown that they have freed up 200 hours of paramedic time. Those are the kinds of initiatives that we need to look at. It should not be a case of blaming all paramedics or looking at the wrong end of the system. It is about a whole-of-hospital approach.

### **ILLAWARRA AND SOUTH COAST ROADS**

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government delivering better infrastructure for Illawarra motorists?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I acknowledge not only the best member for Drummoyne that has been seen in the Parliament but also the best Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads. It is true that last week the Minister for Roads and I had the opportunity to visit the South Coast and the Illawarra to do two things that Labor does not seem to want to do: First, we told people we were coming, which for some reason Labor members do not like to do; and, secondly, we opened a project that we built. Labor members have no idea what that looks like. They all ask, "What does that look like?" I acknowledge the tireless advocacy of the member for Kiama, who has been outstanding in arguing for improvements to the Princes Highway. We all know what Labor members said. For years and years—at least for more than a decade—Labor members said that they should do something about the Princes Highway, but they did nothing. This Government is very proud also to acknowledge your advocacy as the member for Shellharbour.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Did the Premier say I am the member for Shellharbour?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** No. Shellharbour is represented by a Labor member and you represent the South Coast.

**The SPEAKER:** I was about to call the Premier to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** No, no. The member for Shellharbour, the member for Wollongong and the member for Kiera did nothing whereas the member for the South Coast and the member for Kiama did everything. We were very proud to visit the Illawarra and to deliver a \$340 million project that will include 7.5 kilometres of new roadway. Members who represent Illawarra and South Coast electorates already know the difference the project is making. It also will deliver two new interchanges, access to Gerringong and Gerroa and the new Omega Bridge, and 300 jobs to the local community. The Government is very

proud to be delivering those advantages. The Government continues with its road-building projects. As everyone knows, the Government has not stopped at this project but has kept going. We are moving towards construction of the next stage, which is the Foxground to Berry bypass that is expected to be completed by the mid-2018. This Government regularly has committed more funds to the improvement of the Princes Highway because we know how important it is.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Madam Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Does the member for Keira wish to take a point of order?

**Mr Ryan Park:** Yes.

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

**Mr Ryan Park:** It is not the princess highway. It is the Princes Highway.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira, of all people, is making grammatical corrections. He should not even start. There is no point of order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** And we wonder why the member for Keira is in opposition, if that is the best he has to offer.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** While we were visiting the Illawarra and speaking to people about the Princes Highway, it was clear that the hundreds of community members who congratulated the Government for doing what was required wished to know why on earth the member for Keira, the member for Wollongong and the member for Shellharbour voted against the Albion Park Rail bypass. Why did they vote against it?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Shellharbour that this is not a debate. I warn her that she will be called to order if she continues to interject.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I could not answer their question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I do not know why those members did not want the bypass to go ahead. I told them that, despite the fact that the member for Wollongong, the member for Keira and the member for Shellharbour do not want it, the good news is that this Government wants it. This Government will continue to improve the Princes Highway because it is so important.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Shellharbour will come to order or she will be removed from the Chamber. She will cease shouting. I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the second time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Princes Highway upgrade is an incredibly important project and this Government is very proud to deliver it. I note in relation to road projects that although the members for Wollongong, Keira and Shellharbour lack the backbone to do what is right, there are some Labor members who have shown some backbone.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Oh?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** There are. In relation to the WestConnex project, we are beginning to see

members of the Opposition expressing support for the WestConnex project. I thank the member for Kogarah, the member for Rockdale and the member for Heffron for standing up for what is right. Although they are prepared to support road projects, the members who represent electorates in the Illawarra are not interested in promoting the Princes Highway. But the good news is that this Government will continue to improve the Princes Highway because the Illawarra and South Coast region deserves it. That is the attitude that people may expect from this Government.

**Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.**

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** It is worthwhile making the point that when the members for Rockdale, Kogarah and Heffron expressed support for WestConnex, clearly it was an outbreak of recognising sensible policy and adopting sensible positions. That is what the Government would expect.

**Mr Chris Minns:** We did not express support for it at all.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Oh yes you did. I do not understand why the member for Wollongong, the member for Shellharbour and the member for Keira continue to be against the Albion Park Rail bypass, but this Government will continue to deliver road projects that the community deserves—and that is what the community will get from this Government—while Labor members play political games. We are doing what is right for the community and we are very proud to do so.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. Will the Coalition parties adopt the same standard as Labor and not preselect any property developers for the next local government election?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. The Minister is waiting for order to be restored before answering the question.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. I welcome a question on local government because in the past five years the Opposition has asked only five questions about local government. I am pleased to be asked a question.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! It is very early in the Minister's answer. The Minister has barely uttered two sentences. What is the member's point of order?

**Ms Linda Burney:** Madam Speaker, through you, I ask the Minister not to debate the question but try to answer it—if that is possible for him.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is not debating the question. The Minister is making some introductory remarks during his answer.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I know that Labor members are embarrassed because I remind them of their dismal record in local government. Finally, I have been asked a question about local government. I have had the suit dry-cleaned, I am wearing a new tie, and my hair has been cut—and finally I have been asked a question!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I cannot hear the Minister. Members will come to order.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The Government is concerned about communities across New South Wales, unlike Opposition members who are more focused on themselves.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: I fail to see why the Minister cannot get that ridiculous grin off his face.

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

**Ms Linda Burney:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

**Ms Linda Burney:** The Minister should try to answer this simple question.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The member for Canterbury likes my tie—and I thank her for that. The New South Wales Government has made clear that it will amend the law to ensure that councillors cannot vote on any matters in which they have a pecuniary interest.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Londonderry will come to order. He will cease shouting and interjecting.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This Government has said that it will fix the problem, and that is exactly what will happen. Other issues relating to councillors' pecuniary interest will be considered as part of the broader review of the Local Government Act that the Government is undertaking.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Heffron will cease interjecting.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** New South Wales needs comprehensive reform of local government, councils that are efficient, councils that are effective and councils that are acting in the best interests of the communities and the ratepayers they serve. Communities deserve better and need to know that they do not have councillors who are acting out of self-interest. People who are elected as a councillor should regard their role as an honour and a privilege that allows them to serve their community and make a difference. The Government also will introduce reforms in relation to misconduct by councillors. I recognise that most councillors are serving their communities with integrity so in the next few weeks when reforms are being formulated I will ensure they will include mechanisms for dealing with matters swiftly. I will do that so members of the public may have confidence in the councillors they elect. When Labor was in government, nothing was done to implement local government reform. Even now Labor offers absolutely nothing.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting. The conduct of Opposition members is unacceptable.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is answering the question. What is the point of order?

**Mr Michael Daley:** If the Minister will not answer the question he should sit down.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is answering the question. There is no point of order.

**Mr Michael Daley:** We will not be lectured to by the Minister. If he does not want to answer the question he should sit down and stop ducking the issue.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The Government and the Premier are committed to reforming local government. The Opposition has a three-point plan to fix local government. Guess what it is. Hike up rates! That is the Opposition's answer to reforming local government in New South Wales. We have a 65-point plan.

**Mr Ryan Park:** That's ridiculous.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira is not an expert on grammar and speechwriting. The level of interjections from Opposition members this afternoon is unacceptable. Members will come to order.

### **SPORT AND RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What is the Government doing to help upgrade and develop sport and recreation facilities in local communities?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I thank the member for Tamworth for his question; I will get to some of the wonderful work he has done in his electorate shortly. When we came to government we remember well the huge community infrastructure backlog that was left to us by members opposite after 16 years of waste and mismanagement. I am happy to report that in just 4½ years the Government has turned the tide. We have fixed our finances and we are now embarking on the most ambitious infrastructure agenda for decades. This is the case across New South Wales, across the important sectors of our community.

With the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals' commitment of at least \$600 million for stadiums, our global city will be a great drawcard for international events and tourism. I congratulate and applaud the work of the Premier and our wonderful Minister for Sport in terms of their global vision for our stadiums in New South Wales. But the Government's attention does not stop there. We know that, just as important as our major stadiums are, our local sports grounds and facilities—the breeding ground for our future sporting champions—play a vital role in healthy communities across our suburbs and towns.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Blacktown will come to order. The member for Londonderry will come to order. The member for Heffron will come to order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Today I am proud to announce the opening of expressions of interest for our \$8 million local sports infrastructure fund. Through ClubGRANTS Category 3 we have funded important upgrades—

*[Interruption]*

I note the interjection by the member for Wyong.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have noted it as well. I call the member for Wyong to order for the first time.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Obviously the member for Wyong does not think the \$2 million investment in Jamison Park in Penrith or the \$1.86 million investment in Lambert Park in Balmain was of any use.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wyong will cease interjecting. This is not a debate. If he

continues to interject he will get the answer he deserves. I call the member for Heffron to order for the first time.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Members opposite, particularly the member for Wyong, do not care about the \$500,000 redevelopment of an important regional sporting facility such as the Scully Park precinct in the Tamworth electorate. Next year this important local field will host a major rugby league match for the first time in many years when the country versus city origin match is played at this redeveloped ground. With the opening of the ClubGRANTS Category 3 sports infrastructure funding round, the New South Wales Government will provide a much-needed boost to sport and recreation facilities in local communities across the State. Over the next four years the Government has committed to provide \$50 million across ClubGRANTS Category 3 funding, including \$8 million a year for sports and recreation infrastructure, \$2.5 million for community cultural infrastructure, and \$2 million a year for emergency services mitigation and relief infrastructure.

Every member of Parliament should encourage local eligible organisations in their electorate to apply—even those in Wyong, although the member for Wyong does not seem to care. Up to 16 projects will be funded in this round, with grants ranging from \$500,000 to a maximum of \$1 million per application. All public sport and recreation facilities that can benefit from local communities are eligible, with particular emphasis on disadvantaged and regional and remote communities. Expression of interest applications will be assessed by an independent committee. The independent ClubGRANTS Fund committee has already played a critical role in the previous two funding rounds by assessing applications, and will again oversee this round and make recommendations to the Government on the most competitive projects in early 2016. The reformed ClubGRANTS Fund committee met last Friday to endorse the process that included representatives from ClubsNSW, the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, and the department of regional development and sport in New South Wales.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Additionally, four positions on the committee will go to sports groups that have significant participation figures, on a rotating basis. Only the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals have any plans for future investment in our communities. We have the financial discipline and commitment to work harder to deliver meaningful results.

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

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. Given that all members of and candidate for the New South Wales Parliament are subject to legislated electoral spending and donation caps, will the Minister ensure that spending and donation caps are extended to local government before the 2016 elections?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I have been asked two questions on the same day so I do not know whether I will be back for the rest of this year.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I repeat what I said at the beginning of my previous answer: The New South Wales Government has made it clear—

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We will amend the laws to ensure that councillors cannot vote on any matters in which they have a pecuniary interest.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As for other issues relating to councillors' pecuniary interests, they will be considered as part of the broader review of the Local Government Act that we are undertaking.

**Mr John Robertson:** This is your chance to shine and you are just repeating yourself.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I look forward to hearing from the Opposition. For 16 years the Labor Government did nothing to reform local government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maitland will cease interjecting.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** For 16 years members opposite watched infrastructure crumble and councils' infrastructure blow out to \$7.4 billion, but they did nothing about it.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. The question is about political donations. I hope the Minister has an appropriate answer but so far he has not even mentioned political donations.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Strathfield should cease interjecting and listen to the Minister's answer. Opposition members will cease interjecting. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Members on this side of the House are committed to ensuring that we have efficient and effective councils working in the interests of their communities across the State. What those opposite did for far too long was bury their heads in the sand; they did nothing to fix local government. They watched the behaviour of individual councillors and they watched councils crumble across the State but they did nothing.

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am surprised that any member would take a point of order considering the level of interjections. Does the member for Charlestown wish to take a point of order?

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** I do, Madam Speaker.

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

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. The Minister is raising issues of history. The question is about current local government elections.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister's answer is relevant to the question. No standing order has been breached. Opposition members will cease interjecting. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I am happy to hear from the Opposition because the Government is committed to real reform of local government across New South Wales.

**Ms Kate Washington:** You haven't heard from us.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We have spent four years working with councils across this State. If the Opposition has something sensible to put forward, we will be very happy to hear it. But all we have heard is the plan to hike up rates. We want more than that, and our communities deserve more.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Port Stephens to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of two hours.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Port Stephens left the Chamber at 2.51 p.m.]*

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The New South Wales Government has committed a record \$1 billion to ensure that we have a smarter system of local government. We are cutting red tape. We are getting—

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Point of order: It is Standing Order 129, relevance. Madam Speaker, you might recall in the electorate I come from and its surrounds the terrible corruption that took place—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Swansea will resume her seat. There is no point of order.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We are committed to reform of local government. We are providing financial incentives to help councils. We are investing in significant reform across this State and we are removing barriers. Communities across this State can be confident that members on this side of the House are working to ensure that councils reflect their wishes. *[Time expired.]*

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

## **REGIONAL HEALTH**

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. How is the Government investing in health infrastructure and improving services for regional New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I thank the member for Orange for his question. I spent time with the member last week visiting some of our most exciting projects. Of course, there are many projects in regional New South Wales that we could talk about, from Bega and Tamworth, to Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, Port Macquarie, Lismore and Kempsey—I could go on. Last week's visit was to Parkes and Forbes, where Labor had promised hospitals for years and years but nothing happened.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** The reality is that not a cent was allocated to those projects. So it was wonderful to see at Forbes Hospital a \$41 million redevelopment that has restored the wonderful heritage building and brought it back to its original condition. It is beautiful and it is providing fantastic clinical services. Behind it is a whole new hospital—

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** —providing amazing capacity for that local community.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** That community now has a new emergency department, an inpatient

unit, birthing suites for maternity services and clinical support services—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Rockdale to order for the first time.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** —including medical imaging, an upgraded ambulatory care unit and expanded renal and dental facilities. When visiting this hospital we needed only to talk to some of the clinical staff to see how excited they were. The hospital was previously a difficult place to work in as some facilities were located at one end of the building while the maternity section was at the other end, so at night there was a security risk. The staff love the new facility, and it was a pleasure to be there. We then visited the greenfield site of Parkes Hospital, which is currently under construction.

This \$72.5 million hospital was first promised when Bob Carr was Premier—that is how long ago it was promised. How many dollars did Labor allocate to the project? None, zip, zero. This \$72.5 million hospital is now nearing completion. It is a beautiful facility, and its operating facilities will be the envy of many hospitals around the State. There is a new birthing unit, ambulatory care and a helipad at ground level, from where patients need only be wheeled up a short pathway into the emergency department. This is critical for patient care.

So far I have talked about this Government's investment in capital works that provide much better capacity for hospitals to deliver efficient patient care. When we visited Orange Base Hospital we launched the State Cardiac Reperfusion Strategy—the first in the world. This is a life-changing strategy not only for patients in New South Wales but also potentially for patients internationally. We met a farmer from just outside Peak Hill, Bryce Farlow, who had suffered a heart attack on his farm in April. When paramedics reached him they realised he had likely suffered a heart attack. Under the State Cardiac Reperfusion Strategy every paramedic in this State is trained to identify those symptoms and to intervene through the use of an electrocardiogram machine linking the patient to expert clinical diagnostics.

The clinicians in a distant hospital might say it is time to start the intervention, which may involve thrombolysis—or the administration of drugs to bust up clots. Paramedics then take the patient to a clinical service or hospital either by road or by air and there a stent insertion or other intervention is made to save the patient's life. It was a great treat to meet Bryce and to hear his story and see how well he is doing. This is the first State in Australia—and, we believe, the first jurisdiction in the world—to introduce this strategy. However, it is not the first New South Wales initiative to lead the world. The strategy means that any patient anywhere in the State has access to this kind of service. Also, for patients in country areas we have improved access to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme [IPTAAS].

**Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.**

*[Interruption]*

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I am not surprised that those opposite are groaning; they do not represent any patients in rural and remote areas. These patients live a distance of—

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** That's rubbish.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** You are remote in Maitland, are you?

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Did we know that Maitland is remote? These patients live 100 kilometres from treatment and must travel for specialist treatment.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Maitland to order for the first time.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I am proud that patients can receive 85 per cent of their medical care within their local health district. But there are occasions when people will have to travel, and we have reformed the IPTAAS from 1 September to increase the commercial accommodation rate per night for eight to 14 days from \$43 to \$80 for a single room, which is an 86 per cent increase; and from \$80 to \$105 for a double room, which is a 75 per cent increase. We have also increased the mileage rate from 15¢ a kilometre to 22¢ a kilometre, and we have done test runs to prove that this will get patients 100 kilometres to care.

These are much-needed reforms. To put the matter in context, when I became Minister the single-room rate was \$33 a night; it has now increased to \$80 a night for commercial accommodation patients over eight days. In addition, the Government is investing in major facilities attached to our hospitals that provide accommodation for families whose loved ones are in hospitals receiving prolonged treatment. There will be more news about that in due course.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Maitland to order for the second time. She will cease interjecting. The member for Maitland might think I cannot see her because she is behind another member; but I can certainly hear her.

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILLOR CONDUCT**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. I am sure the Minister would like to hear the question.

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG:** In light of the announcement yesterday that the Government will retract its own legislation, how many property developers elected as councillors since 2012 have benefited from decisions made where they declared a pecuniary interest?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That is the type of question the member for Macquarie Fields could have put on notice.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Same old suit, same old tie, same old Labor.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Same old tie.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Same old three calls to order for the member for Keira.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said in responding to the previous question, the New South Wales Government is amending the laws relating to voting by councillors who have pecuniary interests. I also point out that this Government has committed to changing the Local Government Act so that by the September 2016 elections these changes will be made as part of the reform of local government. I also point out that the Government has been on this journey for the past four years. We are committed to a stronger, smarter system of local government in New South Wales. We have invested more than \$1 billion in reform of the sector.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We have put \$258 million in financial incentives on the table for councils to come together in mergers. Piloting of joint organisations is occurring across this State. Currently there are five pilots: there is one in central New South Wales and one in the Hunter.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: My point is taken under Standing Order 129. The Minister may

take the question on notice if he wishes, but it was very specific.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister chose not to take the question on notice, so there is no point of order. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

**Mr Michael Daley:** There are standing orders on this issue.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Minister's comments remain relevant to the question that he was asked.

**Mr Michael Daley:** The Minister is going nowhere near it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister's comments have been relevant.

**Mr Michael Daley:** He should just answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra likes to argue with me; it is a sport.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said, this Government is committed to reform of local government and is committed to working with councils across the State, because as a part of this journey we have been working in partnership with councils throughout this process. We have financial incentives on the table for those councils that wish to adopt a merger proposal. We have piloting of the joint organisations. As I said, Labor allowed the infrastructure backlog to blow out to \$7.4 billion; it allowed council infrastructure to crumble, and it did nothing to address it.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister's comments remain relevant to the question asked. Is the member for Canterbury seeking to take a point of order on relevance, under Standing Order 129?

**Ms Linda Burney:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Minister's comments remain relevant to the question.

**Ms Linda Burney:** If the Minister cannot answer the question, you should direct him to resume his seat.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Macquarie Fields could have put the question on notice. However, I am sure the strategists behind me and to my left asked him to proceed in this manner. The Minister's response remains relevant. It is too late now to raise a point that the question should be put on notice.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As I said earlier, in 2013 the cost of dealing with councillor misconduct across this State was about \$745,000 per council. In 2014 the cost of dealing with councillor misconduct was just below \$1.2 million per council. That is ratepayers' money being used to deal with code of conduct complaints across this State. I point out also that TCorp, following an analysis of New South Wales councils, noted that in 2014 about 25 per cent of councils were in either a weak or a very weak financial position.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Cessnock will come to order. This is not a debate or an argument.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** If nothing was to change, the predictions are that within three years 50 per

cent of New South Wales councils would be in a weak or a very weak financial position.

**Mr Anoulack Chanthivong:** Point of order: My point is taken under Standing Order 129. The question asked the Minister for a number. If he does not know the number, he can take the question on notice.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister's response remains relevant to the question. That is all I can ask of the Minister.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This is question number four, and I have had three of them. That is what I note. Labor's relationship with the local government sector had broken down. I hear the member for Charlestown.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We have had to teach the member for Charlestown about local government since she became a member of this place, because when she was first elected the member thought she might have to have a by-election for that seat if she were to stand down, and that that was going to cost the ratepayers a quarter of a million dollars. Let me, as Minister, inform the member that she does not need to resign, and it will not cost her ratepayers to have a by-election. *[Time expired.]*

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister's time has expired so the member for Canterbury cannot take a point of order.

**Ms Linda Burney:** I was just going to say to the Minister, "You are an embarrassment."

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member does not need to say anything; the Minister has concluded his answer. Members will come to order. I direct the member for Cessnock to remove himself from the Chamber until the end of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Cessnock left the Chamber at 3.07 p.m.]*

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. What is the Government doing to change behaviours to prevent domestic violence?

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

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I thank the member for Lismore for his question. I know how important this issue is to the member's electorate, and I commend him for his strong support for preventing domestic and family violence in the community. The New South Wales Government recognises the importance of preventing domestic and family violence, and is committed to making this an increased policy focus. As the State's first Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence—a position I am honoured to hold—that, of course, is a primary objective. I think all in this place know this is a very complex issue, and it needs real and lasting solutions. A key part of stopping violence is preventing it from occurring in the first place.

We know that there are men in our communities who use violence against women and children. Domestic and family violence is a pervasive and insidious crime, and it is time for men to take responsibility for their controlling and violent behaviours when they occur. It is time to put men squarely in

the middle of the frame and to bring the focus back on changing the behaviour of violent men as a first step. It is these men who need to man up. For the first time, the New South Wales Government is funding non-government organisation led programs for violent men to change their abusive behaviour towards women and children. Changing attitudes and behaviours of perpetrators is as crucial as providing assistance to victims to prevent domestic and family violence.

That is why this Government is investing more than \$5.2 million over three years to pilot the new Men's Behaviour Change programs in four regions from January next year. I was pleased to announce today the names of the successful tenderers that will be tasked with delivering these programs for violent men to change their behaviour. These programs will be piloted by BaptistCare NSW and ACT in Campbelltown and Tuggerah, the Men and Family Centre at Lismore and Tweed Heads, and the Kempsey Family Support Service in Coffs Harbour. These non-government organisations [NGOs] will help engage more than 1,300 men and—this is critical—support their partners.

These programs are designed specifically for men who want to change their behaviour and recognise the need to be accountable for their behaviour. They put the focus back on men to take responsibility and challenge them to acknowledge the devastating impact they have on the women and children in their lives. Men can either be referred through agencies such as the Men's Referral Service by calling a 1300 number or self-refer to the programs, which will include mixed individual and family counselling as well as group work. This is yet another key step this Government is taking to prevent domestic and family violence in our communities. There is no silver bullet, but there are many steps—as someone said recently, "silver shot". The investment in the Men's Behaviour Change programs will also complement the work of the Men's Behaviour Change Network. This group works to build the capacity of the Men's Behaviour Change sector in New South Wales. Women and children—indeed all of us—have the right to live our lives freely and safely. Those—in particular, those men—who deny women and children this right need to take a very hard look at themselves, take responsibility for their actions, and they need to choose to change.

#### **AMBULANCE SERVICE OF NSW**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given that ambulances are lined up 13 deep at Liverpool Hospital, an 83-year-old woman waited three hours on the footpath for an ambulance and recently there were no ambulances available for category 1 patients with life-threatening conditions, what does the Minister have to say to the families wanting an ambulance in New South Wales?

*[Interruption]*

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I welcome back the member for Kiama. We understand he has been down in his electorate holding the dyke in an effort to help save local people. I am surprised that the member for Maitland is asking a question about Liverpool. Where is the member for Liverpool? Why is he not asking a question about Liverpool?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Keira that he is on three calls to order.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** All the member for Maitland has done is pick bits out of the shadow health Minister's press release. She does not even have an original thought of her own. I have already indicated in my earlier response that the delay was totally unacceptable for the 83-year-old woman who waited nearly three hours for an ambulance to arrive when she was on a footpath last Friday. I made inquiries today. Members will be pleased to know that she is doing well. She is at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. The Ambulance Service and everyone has apologised to her. I understand that senior management from the Ambulance Service visited her on Friday to personally apologise. The acting chief executive of the Ambulance Service of NSW has given me an explanation as to the delay.

I am looking into further information and potential actions to prevent that happening in the future, but I have already indicated to the House some of the things that we are doing. It is really on the basis of smoothing patient flow from the point where patients need to be picked up by a paramedic through to the hospital, dropped at the hospital, through to the emergency department, into the operating theatre or into a ward, then out of the ward and back home. This is called patient flow, and there are a whole lot of initiatives that are being looked at and introduced that we believe will continue to make a major difference. In relation to other incidents that have been talked about and particularly about the bank up of ambulances, anyone who saw what I did over 16 years in opposition would know that on occasions there were 30 ambulances stuck at these—

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order: I did not ask the Minister to explain these appalling situations. I asked the Minister what she was going to say to the families.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** The question was about the 83-year-old patient. It was about the blockage of ambulances tied up at Liverpool and other places. I am now responding to that. I have already indicated to the family that the wait was unacceptable and I apologised to them. That is why we are putting in place strategies to deal with it. There is no way we would have gone from only 59 per cent of emergency department patients seen and through the emergency department within four hours when those opposite were last in office to 75 per cent now. That indicates a much smoother flow through hospitals. That is why these ambulances banked up are not the norm like they were when I was the shadow health Minister. That occurred every week of the year—winter, summer, day or night. It is now reduced to times when there is peak demand. Much publicity has been given to the fact that we are experiencing a very serious flu season and that demand is only going to increase.

There was very good coverage of this on Channel 9 the other night. I compliment the television station for doing that work. It showed, for example, the major increase out at Nepean Hospital in the presentations of people with flu. We are introducing measures such as nurses taking patients off ambulance trolleys. We are looking at fast-tracking those patients through the emergency department into wards where they are most appropriately treated. We are looking at changing the discharge system so that nurses can discharge according to protocols and we have invested substantially more in the health system—\$4 billion more than there was when I became the health Minister in 2011—a \$4 billion increase in the budget, or 27 per cent; not a \$3 billion cut, according to the Labor lies.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** We have also increased the ambulance budget by 26 per cent. We have employed 270 full-time equivalent paramedics. We have upped the ante, increased the ambulance budget, built more ambulance stations and provided more vehicles.

## **STATE INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr MATT KEAN:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. What progress has the Government made in delivering new and improved infrastructure for the people of New South Wales?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I thank the member for Hornsby for his specific question this afternoon. We are in a golden era when it comes to infrastructure. Milestone after milestone is being met across the Government's infrastructure program. Wherever we look across the State we see cranes in the sky, jobs on the ground and work being delivered.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I again remind the member for Keira that he is on three calls to order.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** In 100 years people are going to look back at this period and see that this was a time when the State and the city were transformed. It is not just the light rail project here in town. For instance, there are some 70 projects underway in the CBD—everything from the Wynyard Walk, the Wynyard and Museum station upgrades, Darling Harbour Live, Barangaroo Ferry Hub, Sydney Metro and numerous residential and commercial developments which are happening across the city at this time. We were elected to get on with the big build, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are hitting milestone after milestone on the \$8.3 billion Sydney Metro Northwest project, and I am pleased to inform the House that tunnelling on that project has now passed the 60 per cent mark. It has been less than a year since tunnelling started and the work is truly going gangbusters.

This is the beginning of the new metro rail system for Sydney. Services in the north-west are expected to begin in 2019 with stage two to see the line extended under Sydney Harbour, under the city and through to Bankstown. For the first time in Australia we will finally have a metro system that is truly comparable to the world-class networks of most major global cities. Just like Singapore, Hong Kong, Paris and Dubai, one will not need a timetable on Sydney Metro; one will just turn up and go. Major construction on the CBD light rail begins in October, a project that will transform the way that people move around the city.

A fortnight ago I confirmed that construction of this project will be brought forward to commence on 5 October. This will minimise construction from 23 December to 4 January and create more space for shoppers and retailers in the lead-up to this busy time of year. This will not be an easy time for commuters but the short-term pain will result in a fantastic lifelong gain for the city of Sydney. The Government will do everything it can to keep the city moving under the command of Marg Prendergast, Coordinator General of CBD Transport. Only yesterday the central business district [CBD] coordination office was tested with a burst water main in York Street. It is fair to say that city commuters responded well as a result of that incident.

In Newcastle, this Government is delivering game-changing projects that recognise the city's exciting future. The new design for the Wickham Transport Interchange has been unveiled. This project will unlock the city's potential and create numerous jobs—the member for Newcastle should say thank you. Since the truncation of the rail line, the CBD has been reconnected to the foreshore, with six pedestrian crossings opening so far and a seventh is on the way.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I place the member for Newcastle on three calls to order. He will cease interjecting.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Planning for the light rail is well underway. Geotechnical investigations and service location works were completed along the proposed route earlier this year. The next round of community consultation will start later this year before construction gets underway. In roads we are building WestConnex, which will create 10,000 jobs, and the widening of the M4 is now underway. I pay tribute to the member for Kogarah for his advocacy on the WestConnex project. He is trying to distance himself from his colleagues but that disguise is not working. It is badly failing him. The moment he shaves, the member for Auburn will be in real trouble. This Government is getting on with building roads across the State. The Premier alluded to the work that is happening on the Princes Highway. The construction of the Northern Beaches Hospital, which will have 488 beds, 1,400 car spaces and a helipad, is underway. The Minister for Health is getting on with the program for Westmead as well, which will have \$1 billion allocated to works.

**Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.**

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Milestone after milestone is being met in health infrastructure under the leadership of the Minister for Health. The Parramatta light rail is also progressing well and work is being carried out to advance that project.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Lakemba will cease shouting across the Chamber.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Without doubt we have the number one State economy. We are also the number one State when it comes to infrastructure rollout. This Government has a proud record of achievement and it will continue to transform New South Wales with its ambitious program.

**Question time concluded at 3.23 p.m.**

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

## **STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE**

### **Membership**

**Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:**

That Stephen Bruce Bromhead and Nickola Lalich be appointed to serve on the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee.

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

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time. He will not point and shake his finger at the Leader of the House. I place the member for Kiama on three calls to order.

## **COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **Report**

**The Speaker** announced the receipt, pursuant to section 35 of the Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014, of the final report of the Commission for Children and Young People for the period 1 July 2014 to 9 January 2015.

**Ordered to be printed.**

## **OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS**

### **Report**

**The Clerk** announced the receipt, pursuant to section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations Report entitled "Ferry Safety Investigation Report, Sinking of MV Venture, Cabarita, Port Jackson, 1 March 2015", received out of session and authorised to be printed on 20 August 2015.

## **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Report**

**Mr Michael Johnsen**, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 4/56", dated 25 August 2015, together with minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 3/56, dated 11 August 2015.

**Report ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Michael Johnsen.**

## **PETITIONS**

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

#### **Inner-city Social Housing**

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

#### **Same-sex Marriage**

Petition supporting same-sex marriage, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

#### **Pet Shops**

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

#### **Slaughterhouse Monitoring**

Petition requesting mandatory closed-circuit television for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

#### **Plastic Bags Ban**

Petition calling on the Government to introduce legislation to ban single-use lightweight plastic bags at retail points of sale in New South Wales to reduce waste and environmental degradation, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

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

#### **State Emergency Service Volunteers**

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [3.27 p.m.]: The past 24 hours has shown us yet again that we are a lucky community with incredibly dedicated men and women who tirelessly volunteer their time for those affected by events, whether natural or otherwise. Those opposite should support our fantastic State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers and vote to accord this motion priority. Volunteers worked throughout last night and have continued that work today in order to clean up the devastation that was wrought on parts of our State over the past 24 hours. Those opposite should support this motion and our SES workers. The member for Heffron will support this motion because the 1999 hailstorms wiped out a large part of Heffron. The member for Sydney will support this motion because the SES did amazing work in his electorate last night.

In the past 24 hours volunteers conducted 27 clean-up jobs in the Hunter and 78 clean-up jobs in the electorates of Wollongong, Shellharbour, Keira and Kiama. Indeed, the member for Kiama is acting like King Canute. He has successfully held back the dam waters threatening to flood his electorate. In the past 24 hours SES volunteers have responded to 579 call-outs across this State. We should be paying tribute to them today and there can be no better day on which to pay tribute to those who worked tirelessly to bring relief to those affected in regions of western and southern Sydney and also in the Illawarra and South Coast. It is not only the hard work that was done in the past 24 hours that should be recognised but also the incredible work that thousands upon thousands of SES volunteers contribute every day right across this State.

#### **Local Government Amalgamations**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY** (Auburn—Leader of the Opposition) [3.30 p.m.]: I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Coogee. The NSW State Emergency Service has always enjoyed the support of all members of this House, and continues to do so. The member for Coogee should be careful not to suggest that failing to support his motion would mean that bipartisan support has lapsed; it has not. When two matters of substance are before the House it is within the power of the Government to have both motions accorded priority. Every day we are told by the Premier, the Minister for Local Government and others in senior ranks of government how important local government reform is for this State. I agree with them. Important and priority reforms have to be achieved for the level of local government level in New South Wales, but we contend that does not begin and end with forced council amalgamations.

The really meaningful reform agenda for local government is to ensure that the shocking decisions made by this Government in 2012 to change the law to allow councillors with direct interests to vote on matters that benefit them commercially be reversed. We have been calling for that. Indeed, we welcome the back-flip but it will not change three years of decisions in places like Auburn where votes given to them by this Government have been used to force shocking planning decisions through those councils. We need to go further. Why is it that when the Premier and I run for office we are subject to tight spending and donations limits yet somebody running for a ward of local government is not? It stands to reason that when each member of the Parliament of New South Wales is held to tight donations and spending limits that that should also flow through to the local government level. We on this side of the House can point to the fact that the lord mayoralty of Newcastle was bought by Jeff McCloy. That is the sort of pernicious influence we seek to stop. That is why this matter should be accorded priority. Indeed, both of the matters before the House this afternoon ought to be accorded priority. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [3.33 p.m.]: I seek leave to move a motion to suspend standing and sessional orders to permit the consideration of both notices of motions to be accorded priority at this sitting.

**Leave not granted.**

**Question—That the motion of the member for Coogee be accorded priority—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

## **STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS**

### **Motion Accorded Priority**

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [3.36 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Pays tribute to the State Emergency Services [SES] volunteers for their efforts over the past 24 hours in responding to 579 call-outs from across the State.
- (2) In particular recognises SES volunteers in the Sydney western region, Sydney southern region and Illawarra-South Coast region.
- (3) Recognises the incredible contribution that thousands of SES volunteers make right across the State.

The past 24 hours has seen some severe weather events affect different parts of our State—many close to Sydney. My electorate office is closed today because it flooded and the ceiling fell in as a result of the heavy rainfall we had in Coogee yesterday. Fortunately, we have not needed to call the State Emergency Service [SES] for assistance but across this State others have not been so lucky. Today is the perfect day for us to recognise our SES volunteers, in particular the incredible effort of each and every one of them in

the past 24 hours.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Members who wish to conduct private conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH:** SES volunteers responded to more than 181 call-outs in the Sydney southern region and more than 201 call-outs in the Sydney western region. Indeed, according to my latest update, there have been 906 jobs to date. These volunteers mobilise with very short notice. A former member of my staff was a member of the Waverley-Woollahra unit of the State Emergency Service. He often worked all night helping to repair storm damage, et cetera. That sort of dedication deserves recognition by this House. Members will recall that in 1999 parts of Kingsford, Kensington and Randwick were absolutely devastated by a massive hailstorm. Thousands upon thousands of volunteers spent weeks working—and they returned months afterwards—to ensure that the tarpaulins that had been spread over the roofs of houses were maintained until the roof repairers and plumbers could get to all those houses.

It took more than two years to repair all the properties. I saw State Emergency Service personnel and volunteers working 24/7 at that time. I take my hat off to them for the comfort and security they brought to people who live in the eastern suburbs of Sydney and who were so severely affected by the storm. Today I pay tribute to workers and volunteers who are on the front line as we speak in the Illawarra, the Hunter, Western Sydney, southern Sydney and in any other part of the State that has been affected by natural disasters, particularly severe storms. We in the New South Wales Parliament are thinking of you and we thank you for the fantastic work you do today and will do in the future.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [3.41 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition, I express support for the motion that has been accorded priority and moved by the member for Coogee. We endorse the tribute paid by the member for Coogee to State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers. As we all know, in the past hours there have been 579 call-outs across the State. The motion not only recognises SES volunteers in the Sydney western region, the Sydney southern region, and the Illawarra South Coast region but also recognises the incredible contribution that thousands of SES volunteers make right across the State. At the outset I state that the Labor Opposition recognises the wonderful contribution that our SES volunteers make.

I have said previously on many occasions that our SES volunteers are our guardian angels. They leave the creature comforts of their homes and their jobs to put others first, which is crucial during times of natural disasters and emergencies. It is one of the great tenets of SES volunteering. We all know that SES volunteers put themselves in situations that would never be encountered by people in their day-to-day routines. When the levels of watercourses rise and flooding occurs, the SES issues announcements and warnings regarding flooding. It warns people not to go into floodwaters, yet people do. Sometimes people think they can beat the water but we all know that that is not the case. We all know that when water is moving it can be horrendous and cause catastrophic damage. On numerous occasions SES volunteers don a harness and get into raging floodwaters. We know that every time they go out, they put their lives on the line.

During periods of torrential rainfall SES volunteers are putting tarpaulins on damaged roofs and cutting down trees that have fallen on structures. The SES volunteers do an exceptionally good job. As members know, the Jerrara Dam near Kiama is in danger of imminent failure. I note the presence in the Chamber of the member for Kiama. A warning has been issued by the SES about extremely dangerous flooding downstream on Mount Brandon Road, Jerrara Road and Jamberoo Road. I am sure the member for Kiama will enlighten us about events that are unfolding on the South Coast. A severe wet weather warning has been issued about damaging winds and heavy rainfall for people in the Illawarra and South Coast regions. As part of the weather being experienced on the South Coast, fringe weather events can occur in the Sydney metropolitan area. Under the circumstances I have outlined, people must ensure that they heed information provided by SES volunteers.

I congratulate two members of the House—the member for Maitland and the member for Port Stephens—who recently held recognition ceremonies for SES volunteers, Rural Fire Service volunteers, Fire and Rescue NSW and our wonderful NSW Police Force to thank them for the work they do. The recognition ceremonies were held after the occurrence of the super storm in April which caused a death in Dungog. When extreme weather events occur, we want to ensure that people are safe and that there is no resultant loss of life. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee of that.

I take my hat off to the member for Maitland and the member for Port Stephens for their recognition of SES volunteers and others. However, as we all know, volunteers are not motivated by recognition. They are motivated by their ability to provide assistance, not because they think they will receive a medal for what they are doing. Our emergency service volunteers go out into their communities during severe weather events because they put others first and themselves last. That is the characteristic that makes our emergency service volunteers the guardian angels of our society. They put their lives on the line for the benefit of others. For the reasons I have stated, the Labor Opposition supports the motion moved by the member for Coogee.

**Mr LEE EVANS** (Heathcote) [3.46 p.m.]: Severe thunderstorms hit the Sydney metropolitan and Illawarra-South Coast areas over the past 24 hours with a number of areas in the State having been impacted by wild weather. Again the NSW State Emergency Service [SES] has swung into action to support our community. The SES works closely with the Bureau of Meteorology and is aware of forecasts for heavy rainfall in the Illawarra and the South Coast. By 5.00 a.m. today the New South Wales SES operations centre had received 1,540 calls from across the State. It received 580 requests for assistance, 259 of which came from southern Sydney, the Illawarra and South Coast suburbs.

The focus of the SES response this morning has largely been concentrated in the Illawarra and Kiama-South Coast areas. Damage to roofs comprised the majority of calls. However, since yesterday the New South Wales SES has made 47 flood rescues, 14 of which occurred in the Illawarra. The NSW SES has preparations underway to deploy out-of-area resources into the southern Sydney region and the Illawarra-South Coast region to support local resources. The Kiama unit of the New South Wales SES is a multiskilled specialist SES unit that has personnel who are trained in a range of rescue capabilities. The Kiama unit alone has responded to 48 jobs in the local area, including three flood rescues. The unit also has undertaken several rescues involving horses and cattle that became stranded in floodwaters.

Today the Jerrara Dam at Kiama has been a focus of attention. Just after 10.00 a.m. today, a dam failure evacuation order for Jerrara Dam was issued. This followed the dam failure warning system for Jerrara Dam issuing a red alert for downstream areas of the dam. The alert means dam failure is imminent. If the dam fails, it will cause extremely dangerous flooding of the Mount Brandon Road, Jerrara Road and Jamberoo Road areas. Residents were advised to evacuate within the hour and were advised not to delay. I am confident that our emergency services are ready to respond and assist the small number of residents who could be impacted if the dam fails. The SES urges all members of the public not to enter floodwater. They advise it may be deeper and flowing faster than it appears. Mr Gareth Ward, who is the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra, visited the SES Kiama unit this morning and, as reported in the *Illawarra Mercury*, offers the following advice:

People need to be reminded not to drive through submerged water. You can never be sure of the current and if you do you are not only putting your own life at risk but you are also putting the lives of several SES volunteers at risk.

It is expected that severe weather will continue for some time. In conclusion, I express the hope that the next 24 hours are not so challenging as have been the past 24 hours.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE** (Blue Mountains) [3.49 p.m.]: I commend the member for Coogee and other members in this place for this motion. I take the opportunity to pay tribute not only to State Emergency

Service [SES] volunteers for their efforts in the past 24 hours in responding to a huge number of callouts and peoples worry and despair but to the volunteers who contribute to efforts across the State during any emergency. I acknowledge the member for Kiama, who is present in the Chamber, and the difficult conditions his community is dealing with at present. Obviously, being from the Blue Mountains, I mention my SES unit, which covers one of the largest municipal areas in the world. The Blue Mountains local government area covers 1,433 square kilometres along the Great Dividing Range, in the west of the greater Sydney area, and about 70 per cent of that area sits in the Blue Mountains National Park. Some of the difficulties that are faced by our SES include terrain and climate—the very attributes that make our area an attractive place to visit.

I acknowledge that at the beginning of May this year the NSW State Emergency Service celebrated its sixtieth birthday. The State Emergency Service was formed after deadly floods affected the Hunter back in 1955. To this day, it is important for us to acknowledge our SES volunteers. For an operational period of 14 days in April-May of this year, more than half of the Blue Mountains SES fleet was deployed to the Gosford, Wyong, Taree, Grafton and Port Stephens areas after more than 21,000 calls for assistance were made. Today I pay tribute to John Hughes, the local controller of the Blue Mountains SES, his operations team and countless volunteers. Since the inception of the Blue Mountains SES unit in 1957, the unit has been involved in a large number of emergencies throughout the Blue Mountains and New South Wales. Today in the New South Wales Parliament I take my hat off to them and to all the SES volunteers across New South Wales.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.52 p.m.], by leave: I thank all members of the House for the opportunity to debate this motion, which I am sure we all agree on. I thank the member for Coogee and my friends on the Opposition benches; to that extent I thank the shadow Minister, the member for Coogee, the member for Blue Mountains, and the member for Heathcote for their comments. All of us have a wonderful opportunity to interact with great people in our electorates, but it is special to have the opportunity to see firsthand the work done by our volunteers, particularly the State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers. They come from all walks of life and they down tools in order to put themselves in the middle of any dangerous situation that may confront them. When they are confronted with those situations, it is amazing to see how quickly their training comes to the fore and the enormous work they do for our community.

The Illawarra and South Coast are by far the worst affected areas in the State. At last count when I was at the State command headquarters there were 333 reports of incidents across our region, with the deluge affecting many roads. The shadow Minister referred to Jerrara Dam, which has been put on red alert. I can assure the community and members of the House that everything is being done to secure the safety of residents below Jerrara Dam. Kiama council is currently decommissioning the dam, hence the concerns about the safety of residents and indeed horses owned by Riding for the Disabled, which are in and around that facility. In particular, I thank Warren Turner, the local controller for the Kiama SES and people such as John Wall and Greg Murphy and everyone involved in the Kiama SES who have swung so seamlessly into action. Many of them did not get any sleep last night.

As I drove to a funeral for Mr Artis Medenis in Gerringong, it was evident that there would be considerable issues across our region. At last check, Fern Street in Gerringong was closed. Lake Conjola is flooding at the moment, which is a great concern for that community. Schools such as Bulli and Minnamurra Public and indeed Jamberoo preschool have all closed for the day. But I can assure members that this will not dampen the spirit of our community. The Kiama community, which is outstanding, has faced natural disasters before. Indeed, it was only a few years ago that we faced the horrific tornadoes that ripped through our community. Then we had people from around the region come and assist us.

I note the presence in the Chamber of the member for Maitland. Today I was speaking with one of her constituents who had come from Maitland to assist us. I thank the member for Maitland and all other members whose electorates have sent people to assist our community. We are deeply grateful. Thank

you to the ABC and other media outlets. I thank the ABC for the role it plays as our emergency services broadcaster, particularly Peter Riley, whom I saw this morning. Thank you to all the staff, personnel and members of this House, regardless of what side we are on, who support their volunteers. They are the true unsung heroes of our great State.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [3.55 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Blue Mountains, the member for Fairfield, the member for Heathcote and the member for Kiama for their contributions. The State Emergency Service [SES] in this State should be above politics. We rely on them so much and in many ways. The amount of work they do is incalculable in regard to what it would cost the State if we had to pay for that service. I do not think that we could afford such a service, which is responsive and effective, has local knowledge and can be deployed quickly and to many regions. This is a great day for us to say thank you to all the State Emergency Service units across the State. Of course, I pay tribute to the two units in my area: the Waverley-Woollahra SES unit and the Randwick-Botany SES unit. When I was the mayor of Randwick, the Botany SES unit needed accommodation so we happily absorbed it into the Randwick SES to make a combined SES. They have wonderful facilities at Randwick City Council.

Some areas within the Kiama electorate still remain under threat. Houses have been evacuated. Over the next 24 hours the level of threat in the State is critical and we need to be vigilant. It is a timely reminder to say: do not proceed through flood waters, obey the directions given by emergency service workers, read the signs and make educated and mature judgements to stay away from floodwaters, surging tides or any other wild weather that might be encountered. I commend the motion to the House.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** I reinforce the comments of the member for Coogee in relation to advice from the State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers. I add my special thanks to the families of SES workers who stay at home while their loved ones are out protecting us. I also thank the employers who give SES volunteers relief time to do their volunteer work.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Pursuant to sessional order Government business proceeded with.**

## **RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (BUSH FIRE PREVENTION) BILL 2015**

### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 12 August 2015.**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [4.00 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Labor Opposition, I address the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015. The bill amends the Rural Fires Act 1997 to implement recommendations that were set out in the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme Review, and consequential amendments. The inception of bushfire prevention legislation was spawned from the necessity of further bushfire mitigation measures as a result of the devastating Blue Mountains bushfires in 2013. The 10/50 vegetation clearing scheme was introduced as the answer to these calls. The 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires saw over 200 homes lost, with widespread danger to life and livelihood throughout the region. The original legislation that was introduced was not perfect. In fact, it was far from it. However, since its inception there has been ongoing consultation, with amendments being introduced as a result.

The 10/50 vegetation clearing scheme allows people to clear vegetation near their homes to improve protection from bushfires. This can occur in a designated area determined by the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service and is within the 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement area identified on a

map published on the NSW Rural Fire Service website. A review of the 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement scheme has recently been completed and primary changes within this legislation are as a direct result of the findings of this report. Over 3,600 submissions were received and the Rural Fire Service worked directly with the Minister for Emergency Services with regard to taking on board the concerns raised and the subsequent proposed changes to this legislation.

Among the proposed amendments within this legislation is the assurance that any person who is carrying out bushfire hazard reduction work or vegetation clearing on private land is not guilty of offences under environmental legislation. This legislation allows landowners to clear trees on their property within 10 metres of a home without seeking approval and to clear underlying vegetation such as shrubs—but not trees—on their property within 50 metres of a home without seeking approval. An amendment has been proposed to extend such vegetation clearing rules to include vegetation near farm sheds, not just near homes. Clearing does not require external assessment provided that clearing is undertaken in accordance with the 10/50 vegetation clearing code of practice.

This legislation will now define a "tree" as a woody plant that stands three or more metres in height and has a self-supporting trunk with a circumference of 0.3 metres at a height of 1.3 metres above the ground. The proposed amendments will enable a landowner to clear trees and vegetation within 10 or 50 metres of an external wall of a building. This legislation has now clarified a muddy situation where landowners had been removing trees and vegetation based on the proximity from their neighbour's external wall. This has been changed to now require the landowner to obtain written consent from his or her neighbour before any clearing works may be undertaken.

One of the primary issues of contention with this legislation had been the reports of misuse of the 10/50 clearing code by individuals who have cleared away trees and vegetation in sections of their properties for no reason other than to increase the value of their property by opening up their views. It is a grave concern that such vital legislation, which aims to save lives and properties across the State, is being abused by unscrupulous individuals who have no interest in saving lives but only wish to gain monetary benefit. Such reports of misuse of the 10/50 code have led us to question what else can be done in order to resolve this issue. As such, the New South Wales Labor Opposition will be proposing amendments in the other House that aim to provide further provisions that will strengthen the legislation and provide much-needed administrative changes aimed at stopping individuals from misusing the 10/50 code.

It is important to note that the essence of this legislation is about saving lives and property. However, it is also incredibly important to note that with this goal in mind we must also be conscious about the environment and wildlife being affected as a direct result of actions taken under this code. It would be reckless to go around chopping down absolutely everything without thinking of the consequences. Unfortunately, this is something that has been occurring due to loopholes in former enactments of this legislation. Members on this side of the House will always support the efforts of the NSW Rural Fire Service and the outstanding work it does to keep our communities safe all year. This legislation has implemented a number of sensible changes and recommendations that were set out in the 10/50 review. However, we believe more can be done. As such, the New South Wales Labor Opposition does not oppose the bill.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.06 p.m.]: I contribute to the debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015. The objects of the bill are:

- (a) to provide that persons are not guilty of offences under environmental legislation merely for carrying out bush fire hazard reduction work or vegetation clearing work if the work is carried out under, and in accordance with, the *Rural Fires Act 1997*,
- (b) to permit vegetation clearing work to be carried out in certain areas near farm sheds in order to reduce bush fire risk,

- (c) to clarify how provisions authorising vegetation clearing work apply to the removal of trees,
- (d) to ensure that the written consent of adjoining neighbours is obtained before certain vegetation clearing work is carried out.

The bill is the result of an operation carried out by the NSW Rural Fire Service to completely review the 10/50 vegetation clearing scheme. The review was conducted in partnership with the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Planning and Environment. I acknowledge the contribution of all those, including community organisations and individuals, who took the time to make a submission to this very important review. All submissions were duly considered. Together these agencies have made 30 recommendations that will significantly improve the way the 10/50 vegetation clearing scheme works in New South Wales.

It is not often that a report tabled in Parliament contains a number of recommendations that are adopted in their entirety by government. Over the years, I have seen many reports that have not been adopted in this manner. I mention the report of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel [OPC] and Office of the Public Guardian [OPG]. Of the 25 recommendations that were made—dealing with people who have lost the ability to make decisions—24 of them were adopted on a bipartisan basis. Through the 30 recommendations being implemented in this legislation, people will be given the ability to make decisions.

The report is conclusive, and it makes very interesting reading. It is important to ensure that people who live in bushfire-prone areas can protect their homes proactively by reducing fuel loads without the inconvenience of red tape. I note that the communities of some members of this Chamber are fire prone; we have noted the destruction that has occurred when bushfire incidents occur, as they do from time to time. Australia is a very dry continent; it has the type of environment that explodes into terrible fires, sometimes from natural causes, sometimes from accidents, and sometimes, sadly, from fires lit by those who intend to do harm. Unfortunately, some have taken advantage of the 10/50 rule for purposes other than bushfire protection; that is a disappointment to everyone, and it cannot continue. The changes being introduced will ensure that people who are most at risk can continue to access 10/50 legislation with safeguards built in to minimise abuse of the scheme.

There is a greater relationship between 10/50, the environment and our planning framework. The environment is a recurring theme in the review recommendations. Its importance is reflected in the more than 3,500 submissions received—a matter I acknowledged at the beginning of my contribution to this debate. There is no doubt that the community wanted greater environmental protections introduced; and that is what we see before us today. We are protecting core koala habitats, coastal wetlands, littoral rainforest, trees 100 metres from the coastline, critically endangered plant species, critical habitats, and a range of critically endangered ecological communities. These are areas that will be excluded from the 10/50 vegetation clearing scheme. Additional environmental protections include removing mangroves and saltmarshes and trees 100 metres from the coastline from the 10/50 arrangements.

Improvements to bushfire risk and amendments to the Rural Fires Act are being made. Bushfire risk is being improved by giving councils the ability to remove low-risk pockets of bushland from the 10/50 code of practice provided that appropriate risk-management strategies are in place. Some amendments will be made to the Rural Fires Act to provide greater clarity to users of the scheme. However, the principal way in which the new arrangements will take effect is through updates to the 10/50 code of practice. I am sure all members will be interested to know that copies of the new code will be made available on the NSW Rural Fire Service website once the 10/50 arrangements come into effect—that is, when this legislation is passed by this Parliament. We expect the new arrangements to be in place to enable people to clear their properties before the bushfire season begins. The season officially starts on 1 October, but notionally commences a month earlier in northern parts of New South Wales. People will be able to check their eligibility for the 10/50 scheme and download a copy of the report at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/1050](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/1050).

As I said, the season officially starts on 1 October. But, as we speak, some regions are experiencing wet conditions. That is very good news for rural and regional communities that have suffered the effects of terrible drought for many years. We are now experiencing good conditions, and we look forward to reaping a magnificent crop if the current weather conditions of good, widespread rain continue. Sadly, some communities, such as in the Illawarra and parts of Sydney, are experiencing torrential rain. Our emergency services once again rose to the challenge and have been out servicing our communities. We should acknowledge the work that they have been doing over the past 24 hours to protect communities and to repair some of the damage. However, I point out that, with the fire season coming up, and following such good conditions in regional and rural New South Wales as well as in coastal areas, this legislation becomes very important.

It is vital to send to farmers and landholders the very strong message that they must prepare for what could be a very difficult fire season. Already, we are hearing about El Niño and dry conditions. Those who live in areas that have been identified as being at risk of bushfire, such as the Blue Mountains—which recently suffered terrible losses of property and, on occasion, loss of life—must be prepared. They need to have an action plan that includes cleaning gutters and reducing the fuel load in their landscape. It never ceases to shock me, when I travel around areas such as the Blue Mountains as well as some regional communities, that people continue to stack wood against their houses and allow high grass to grow almost to the backdoors of their properties. When a fire breaks out, it is just too late to remove that fuel. I encourage people to begin now to prepare their properties for fires, because it is too late to start preparations when a fire is approaching from the back paddock and winds are blowing embers into their gutters.

On Sunday I attended the Kingsford Smith room at Kingsford Smith airport to farewell some 71 emergency services staff—from New South Wales and most other States of Australia, as well as a number from New Zealand—who left Australia to help our friends in Washington State in the United States of America. The west coast of America is experiencing dreadful fires, and lives have been lost. I had the privilege of farewelling those men and women, who serve our communities every day. I wished them well, stressing to them it is most important to all of us—and the other governments that I represented on that day—that they return home safely. Those men and women will be tasked with an array of responsibilities, but their first responsibility is to be safe in everything they do. All members of this House will join me in wishing those men and women the very best, and thanking them for putting themselves forward to help our friends on the west coast of America in what is a dreadful fire season. We look forward to their safe return. This is good legislation, and I urge the Opposition to support it.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [4.16 p.m.]: I contribute to debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015. As I have told this House on many occasions, Swansea is a unique electorate—a geographically long and thin electorate, surrounded by natural beauty, peppered with land that has been reserved because of its environmental significance to greater New South Wales. A great deal of this reserved land takes the form of dense bush that separates the Pacific Ocean from the coastal villages and hamlets on one side, and more of this beautiful bushland existing between local communities and Lake Macquarie on the other. Living in such a naturally beautiful environment has meant that people will choose to bring that environment into their backyard, leaving as many trees standing as possible when they build their homes. Locals in my area do not want dramatic change to the surrounding environment. They do not want disaster, whether it be wind, flood or fire, to be used as an excuse to clear vast areas of natural bushland—which, unfortunately, we have seen happen in the past in southern areas of the electorate.

Within this context, and given the prominence of bushland and tree-dense national parks in the Swansea electorate, it is crucial that we work to get this bushfire prevention bill right. We need to find sensible ground between protecting our citizens and their property and protecting our beautiful natural assets for the many generations that will come after us. But what we have seen from this Government is not quite that. The bill simply does not go far enough in a number of key areas, in my view. While we

acknowledge that some issues around environmental protections have been addressed, those protections are just not enough. There is still uncertainty around the regulation of the 10/50 rule, and there is not enough protection for critically endangered ecological communities.

Those protections should have been there from the start. I do not think we will ever know the true extent of what we have already lost, but media reports about this matter suggest that there has been far too much. I have some strong concerns about what the Government's bill will mean for the electorate of Swansea. Everyone in this place knows that the Hunter region and the Central Coast were devastated recently by an east coast low and the winds associated with this system. Much of the damage was caused by trees brought down by gale-force winds. The damage was extensive and people became very frightened—every tree in their backyard or their neighbour's backyard was of concern to them. In addition, the electorate experienced fierce fires late last year, as Mr Deputy-Speaker will remember, causing evacuations across a number of the suburbs.

That being said, we acknowledge that there must be sensible protections for people and their property. This should not be an opportunity for local government to capitalise on people's fears and emotions and change policy without having any regard for the future of the environment. Wyong Shire Council, however, grabbed the opportunity with both hands. If a residential property is less than 1,500 metres square, you will be able to remove any tree as long as it is not a threatened species. If your property is larger than 1,500 metres square then trees within 12 metres of the structure can be removed. The mayor himself gave this advice to the people of Wyong:

... to residents who are worried about the integrity of any tree following the storms – now is the time to look into getting it removed.

Wyong Shire Council also advised residents:

We are cutting red tape and giving residents the authority to remove a tree they feel is a risk to themselves or their property.

Then of course it said, "If you are not sure of the species, make sure you contact council." Really? There needs to be more accountability than that. Lake Macquarie City Council, which is the council in the north of the electorate, stands in contrast with the idea of using recent disasters as an excuse to take the axe to trees that pose no danger to the community. Dr Alice Howe, Lake Macquarie's sustainability manager, recently said that the introduction of the 2014 scheme had led to an increase in the removal of significant vegetation that did not present a fire risk when assessed under NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] guidelines. And while Dr Howe has welcomed the changes introduced by the Government that go to addressing the issue of chopping down trees that pose no threat, like Labor members, Dr Howe is of the belief that the scheme could be strengthened further. I agree with her.

We believe we can get this right, but we do not think the Government is there yet. How can we get there? We can get the bill right by passing amendments that go a little further than what the Government has proposed. We could return the assessment process to the NSW Rural Fire Service and local councils as per the Rural Fires Act 1997. We should establish a public registry to ensure that there is a record of properties that have used the 10/50 rule. We must exclude from entitlement areas all land parcels that wholly or partially contain critically endangered ecological communities as listed in the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. Labor members are concerned that the new code of practice that this bill proposes has not been made publicly available. We are concerned that the completed map of the redefined 10/50 entitlement area has also been kept from public scrutiny.

But, I repeat, I hold grave concerns about the fact that the bill relies on self-assessment rather than the NSW Rural Fire Service to undertake land-clearing activities: no expert advice, no scientific evidence is needed—just clear it if you want to. Restoring authority to the RFS or local government in accordance with the Rural Fires Act 1997 is an absolute must so that this bill has some integrity. Labor's

shadow environment spokesperson, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, has been vocal in expressing the concerns that we on this side of the House hold. She has said:

The fact that wetlands were considered to be a reasonable inclusion within this code in the first place was wrong.

We welcome anything that's going to protect koala habitat but there's a lot [about] habitat we need to look at ...

In 12 months there have been three different iterations of the code.

Obviously it was not right in the first place and, unfortunately, it is still not right. We are now up to our third iteration that may or may not be doing what it is supposed to do: protect people and property and also look after the environment. This simply is not sensible policymaking. This ad hoc approach—change from here, change to there—will end up being disastrous in our local communities and for our local landscape. I hope that the Government will consider some amendments to the bill.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [4.25 p.m.]: I make a contribution to debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015. Unlike the previous speaker, the member for Swansea, I have full faith in this amending bill. Late last year when the 10/50 scheme was introduced, my area of Tweed was the focus of intense media scrutiny when a local gentleman decided to clear trees on his properties. The police were called and there were people with chainsaws, protestors and so on. It was fairly unsavoury. Mr Deputy-Speaker and I attended a number of meetings with the Tweed Shire Council. We were advocating for a review, which was carried out. I am pleased that the council made a significant contribution, taking a common-sense approach.

While I endorse the amendments—all 30 recommendations were thought through very wisely—I cannot ignore the fact that the purpose of the bill is to protect people's lives and properties. That is its underlying purpose. The NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] completed its review in partnership with the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Planning and Environment. Together, the agencies have made 30 recommendations that will significantly improve the way that 10/50 works in New South Wales. These are contained in the released report of the review. All the recommendations have been accepted by the New South Wales Government.

I took the liberty of speaking not only to our Tweed Shire Council—our planners have an extraordinarily strong rapport with our local controller, David Cook, which I am sure Mr Deputy-Speaker knows very well—but also to local RFS volunteers and a lot of the property owners who will be affected as well as many environmental groups and so on, even various previous Federal Greens candidates. I met also with Kay Bolton from Fingal Head Coastcare. We discussed the amendments and I was assured that they go a long way towards satisfying stakeholder concerns. I acknowledge that there will be some who believe the bill does not go far enough, but I can stand in this Parliament today and say honestly that, from lengthy consultations in the paddocks and in the backblocks, it substantially satisfies their concerns. As we know, unfortunately some people took advantage of the 10/50 scheme. I had a two classic cases of that in my electorate.

With the safeguards built to minimise the abuse of the scheme, there is a greater relationship between the 10/50 scheme, the environment and our planning framework. This is significant because the legislation brings forward the different agencies not only to protect our environment but also to make the 10/50 scheme clearer and easier to understand for those concerned. It is important to note that more than 3,500 submissions were received throughout the consultation process. I made a submission about my concerns. I wonder how many people who did not believe the clearing review went far enough made submissions. There is no doubt that the community wanted greater environmental protections introduced, and that is what is happening today. We are protecting core koala habitats, coastal wetlands, natural rainforests, trees within 100 metres of the coastline, critically endangered plants, critical habitats and a

range of endangered ecological communities. These areas will be excluded from the 10/50 vegetation rules. Additional environmental protections in the 10/50 arrangements will include the removal of mangroves, salt marshes and trees 100 metres from the coastline.

Another significant part of the legislation is improvements to bushfire risk and to the Rural Fires Act. The bushfire risk is being improved by giving councils the ability to remove low-risk pockets of bushland from the 10/50 scheme, provided that adequate risk management strategies are put in place. A greater emphasis is placed on local councils to ensure that they are ready for the horrific bushfire season. Amendments to the Rural Fires Act 1997 will provide greater clarity to the users of the scheme. The principal way in which the new arrangements will take effect is via updates to the 10/50 code of practice. Copies of the code will be made available via the local Rural Fire Service website once the 10/50 arrangements come into effect. The member for Wagga Wagga has already mentioned that the scheme will start on 1 October and will commence a month earlier in the northern parts of New South Wales.

Government members were concerned about the way people were using aspects of this legislation. Unfortunately, it was to their own benefit, which upset local communities. The particular case in Fingal resulted in evil graffiti. It split the wider community; neighbours were fighting with each other and with their councils. This year on Valentine's Day I was presented with a large woodchip. When I asked the local environmental groups about its significance they related it to the Valentine's Day massacre that occurred many years ago in the United States of America. I have the woodchip and Valentine's Day card proudly on display—it is not often that I get a Valentine's Day card from local environmental groups. I kept them as symbols.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** How did you lift it?

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** The girls brought it in. I explained to the environmental groups that the review was underway. We have a positive outcome. No legislation is perfect; there are always loopholes. I have been in this place for nine years and I have lost track of the number of times that amendments to amendments have been made because of the way that judges interpret legislation. Nobody wants to see loss of life or property through fires. I agree with the member for Wagga Wagga: We should act now. People should clean up their yards and create a bushfire plan. This legislation will allow local councils to clear small pockets of bushland. Local councils are connected to their local community, Landcare, Coastcare and other groups. We should do all in our power to banish the bureaucracy and make some common-sense decisions in the process. This is a common-sense amending bill, and I commend it to the House.

**Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) [4.34 p.m.]:** As the member for Blue Mountains I know that the changes the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015 seeks to enact will impact on the daily lives of each of my constituents. These changes will affect not only the fire risk profile of houses in bushfire-prone areas but also the local environment that we are fortunate to call home. To this end, I acknowledge that this legislation arises, to a great extent, in response to the Blue Mountains bushfires of 2013, which caused the loss of more than 200 homes in the Winmalee, Yellow Rock and Mount Victoria regions. I pay tribute to the amazing work of local Rural Fire Service [RFS] brigades, the volunteers, the staff at the bushfire control centre and the firefighters who travelled from interstate to fight the Blue Mountains bushfires two years ago, and all of their families who worry about them during critical incidents such as fire emergencies.

In speaking to this legislation I will refer to two significant reports. The first is the findings of an assessment carried out by the NSW Rural Fire Service in 2009, which examined the 10/30 code in Victoria. This document informed the introduction of the New South Wales 10/50 code. Secondly, I will refer to preliminary advice from the Office of Environment and Heritage to the NSW Rural Fire Service in November 2014. Naturally, the 10/50 vegetation clearing code of practice is an issue of significant concern to my constituents. Many of them have presented to me opposing views. The Blue Mountains City Council and the Blue Mountains Conservation Society are experts in the management and protection

of our local environment and have prepared submissions to the 10/50 clearing review. I encourage members to seek those out and to understand the complex issues from the perspective of local experts. I share their concerns about this legislation.

I am fundamentally concerned that the Government has opted for a self-assessment process for vegetation clearing. Allowing self-assessment cuts out the expertise of the local RFS and council in making decisions about which trees must be removed and which ones must be allowed to stay. It often pits neighbour against neighbour. These decisions are complex and the impacts of bad decisions made by ill-informed or reckless self-assessors are long lasting. Moreover, the publicity around the 10/50 scheme and the lack of self-assessment provisions has reached far and wide, as we have heard today in this place. There is real concern from communities beyond the Blue Mountains that unscrupulous home owners will take advantage of the scheme to improve their property's views under the guise of mitigating bushfire risk.

The one-size-fits-all approach, which is a hallmark of the Government's 10/50 package, presents a number of risks to our unique environment, including risks to our biodiversity; negative impacts on the environment, including impacts upon threatened species; soil erosion; land slippage risks; destruction of riparian zones; and risks to our Aboriginal and cultural heritage. The NSW Rural Fire Service acknowledges that it is clear that while the scheme is designed to reduce bushfire risk there has been some abuse of the fuel reduction provisions for other purposes. Separately, the Office of Environment and Heritage admits that the 10/50 rule is not being used for its intended purpose—that is, it is being used to improve views rather than bushfire risk management. The RFS and the Office of Environment and Heritage concede that the code does not consider enough the potential environmental impacts, including on threatened species and endangered ecological communities, and that they will potentially deliver significant loss of biodiversity in New South Wales.

The Rural Fire Service's review of the Victorian 10/30 code in 2009 concluded that the approach may not generate the safety outcomes the community is hoping for and may in fact result in some people being more vulnerable. It went on to say that the clearing of vegetation without considering how the resulting debris will be managed is likely to result in a greater bushfire hazard. Shortly after I came to office I was contacted by a young man from Mount Riverview, Eli Bendall, who is a member of the Wilderness Society. He was able to point to local examples where improper waste disposal was occurring, exacerbating the bushfire risk for families in the Blue Mountains. Woodchips were being scattered in asset protection zones, around people's homes, in large piles beneath power lines and at bushland interfaces between suburbia and national parks or forests.

This reckless behaviour dramatically increases bushfire risk, both in starting a fire and in providing fuel for an established fire to grow and travel through suburban communities. This risk stems from the self-assessment process and it means that trees which may not represent a significant bushfire risk are converted into potential fuel, creating or exacerbating risk. In recognising these issues, the Office of Environment and Heritage concluded that "10/50 is creating a false sense of security on the part of landowners". An evidence-based approach must be employed with this policy area. It cannot be done by the seat of the Minister's pants. It is not a policy area that can be directed by megaphone or press release. The self-assessment provisions must be removed from the 10/50 scheme and some expert input restored to the process. I hasten to add that we must not increase the administrative burden upon the NSW Rural Fire Service or local councils without properly funding their work.

We need to ensure that enough money is available to the Rural Fire Service and local councils so they can do their work. It is easy for members to talk about the excellent work of our emergency services, but it must be backed by a commitment to properly fund them. The responsibility of minimising the impact on protected areas of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage National Park should be balanced with the need to manage risk posed by bushfire. I support the bill with the proposed Opposition amendments—namely, that we return the assessment process to the NSW Rural Fire Service and local councils; we establish a public registry; and we ensure that the endangered ecological communities per

schedule 1A part 2 and schedule 1 part 3 of the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 are included.

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [4.42 p.m.]: I support the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015. The 10/50 scheme introduced on 1 August 2014, just over a year ago, was a potent, fresh way to let country people get on with the job of protecting their homes, livelihoods and families. Until people have lived with the threat of bushfire they perhaps do not fully understand the consternation and anxiety that are part and parcel of summer. Fire is always somewhere in the background of our thoughts and, more commonly than we would like, on television or lighting up the skies of regional New South Wales. Unfortunately, some people took the scheme as a backdoor way of improving the views from their homes. The protection or advancement of views has not been a prominent concern in my electorate of Albury. That does not mean; however, that it will never turn into an issue between neighbours. The principles must be set. At the centre of the 10/50 scheme lays another of those classic divides between the city and the bush.

Three things have impressed me about this scheme and, indeed, the role of this Government: necessary improvements to the scheme were detected early; the planned review of the scheme was fast-tracked due to concerns—the report noted that "some landholders were abusing the scheme, by clearing vegetation for purposes other than bushfire protection"; and 30 recommendations have emerged from the report which this Government has accepted. The "Review of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Entitlement Scheme" by the NSW Rural Fire Service, the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Planning and Environment, makes for interesting reading. Many points have been clarified.

For example, in recommendation 10 the definition of "tree" has been expanded to limit the clearing of multi-stemmed trees beyond 10 metres. In recommendation 11 it is now beyond dispute that the scheme applies to both native and non-native vegetation. In recommendation 23 it is appreciated that clearing under the 10/50 scheme may take place only after lawful authority for occupancy of the building has been obtained. One of the most important improvements for my electorate is contained in recommendation 27—namely, that section 100R (1) of the Rural Fires Act 1997 be amended to provide that the 10/50 scheme extends to the external wall of a building that comprises or is part of a farm shed. New section 100R, "carrying out vegetation clearing work", provides:

- (1) This section applies to the following buildings only:
  - (a) a building containing habitable rooms that comprises or is part of residential accommodation or a high-risk facility (but not if there is no lawful authority for the use of those rooms as habitable rooms),
  - (b) a building that is a farm shed (but not if there is no lawful authority for the use of the building as a farm shed).

What precisely is a farm shed? I am sure we all have a rough idea about what makes a shed a shed, but we need more precision when opening the gate to rights to remove trees and other vegetation. In this bill there is no room for rough-and-ready sheds. New section 100P defines what we are talking about:

***farm shed*** means a building that:

- (a) is erected on land that is in one of the following land use zones (or in the case of land that is zoned under an environmental planning instrument other than an instrument made in the form of a Standard Instrument—a land use zone that, having regard to the objectives of the zone, has the substantial character of any of the following land use zones):
  - (i) RU1 Primary Production,

- (ii) RU2 Rural Landscape,
  - (iii) RU4 Primary Production Small Lots, and
- (b) has a floor area of more than 50 square metres, and
- (c) is used by a primary producer wholly or substantially for a purpose associated with carrying on one or more of the following primary production businesses:
  - (i) the cultivation or propagation of plants or fungi, or their products (including seeds, spores, fruits, grain, flowers, vegetables, tobacco, bulbs and oils), but not a plant nursery,
  - (ii) bee keeping or aquaculture (within the meaning of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*),
  - (iii) the rearing or grazing of livestock, including horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, goats or poultry or other birds, for the purpose of selling the livestock or products derived from the livestock, and
- (d) if it is used for processing products—is used for processing products a majority of which are produced on the property on which the building is erected, and
- (e) is not a moveable building.

I am pleased to see this new definition and extension of the scheme to farm sheds. While the first version of the scheme placed necessary emphasis on protection of homes, it remains a reality that farm sheds are often even more important than farm homes because of the machinery stored undercover. The bill addresses this fundamental financial fact of farm life. Bushfire protection initiatives are only as good as the degree to which the public is aware of their terms. Residents can check their eligibility for the 10/50 scheme and read or print the report at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/1050](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/1050). I have checked my own property on this website tool and it worked efficiently. Under the first version of the 10/50 scheme my home was not included in the affected area, but I now find that improvements in mapping have brought me into the fold. With that additional incentive, I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH** (Ballina) [4.48 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of The Greens to the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015. The Greens empathise with the spirit of this legislation in the context of the horrendous 2013 bushfires in the Blue Mountains, the Hunter and Port Stephens areas. I went to primary school in Hazelbrook in the Blue Mountains. Twice bushfires came to the back of our property and destroyed my father's orchard. The Greens do not take this issue lightly, but we have opposed the 10/50 laws from the start because of the unintended consequences of these rules. The clearing of thousands of trees, including endangered ecological communities and threatened species, has become the unintended consequence of this legislation. The reality is that the code has become little to do with bushfire protection; rather, it has become an out for developers and property owners to improve their views and property values at the expense of ecology, amenity and communities.

The Greens have always supported responsible bushfire management as well as appropriate planning and rules to ensure that inappropriate development in bushfire-prone areas is not allowed. The Greens have also supported evidence-based proposals to improve bushfire protection. The reality is that, far from making people safer, there is strong evidence that the 10/50 code does not mitigate fire risk. Evidence obtained under the Government Information (Public Access) Act [GIPA] includes a NSW Rural Fire Services assessment of the Victorian code, which is very similar to the New South Wales code. In that report, concerns were raised about disposal of waste. The report documents evidence of woodchips being scattered close to homes and infrastructure, which increases bushfire hazards. The report also

flags concerns about breaking the relationship between trained assessors and the wider public. It suggests that by encouraging illegal tree removal operators, that further increases risks to the public.

Both the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Office of Environment and Heritage accept that the current code is being abused for purposes other than bushfire risk management. As we heard earlier from the member for Tweed, on the North Coast the impact of 10/50 has been particularly harsh. One example is Fingal Head, which has been cited widely in public debate and is a devastating example. I commend the member for Tweed, who is not in the Chamber at present, for the work that he is doing and for his acknowledgement of the horror show that was Fingal Head and the abuse of 10/50. I will read a short excerpt of a piece written by a resident, Isabel Macintosh, for the *Saturday Paper* earlier that year about what happened at 40 Queen Street, Fingal Head. It reads:

At 7am on an almost-spring Monday last year, residents in Fingal Head were woken by the sound of chainsaws. It didn't take long to find the origin of the noise. On Robert Nankivell's property, the same one where his own ecological assessment had identified 27 different rainforest species, five men were hard at work clearing protected littoral rainforest. A resident rang the police. Council was called. The federal environment minister's office was phoned. The 10/50 code rescinds every New South Wales law and can only be overridden by the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act.

Police stopped the work, waiting to hear if the EPBC Act had been breached. In a previous clearing incident, prior to the 10/50 code, Fingal Head Coastcare had successfully stopped unapproved clearing on the same property, arguing that heavy penalties could be imposed for destroying local protected vegetation. This time it was different. Greg Hunt's office phoned back saying that the 340-square-metre area was not large enough to be of concern and the clearing could continue. By 7 pm that day another remnant of littoral rainforest was gone. Trees were left uprooted and dying on the block. Eventually the lot, the seed source for the last remnants of littoral rainforest on the north coast, was mulched.

We also heard from the member for Tweed that he experienced the momentum of that time and how horrendous it was. The article goes on to state:

Kay Bolton from Fingal Head Coastcare says that more than 44 mature trees were lost that day. With them went the hollows that take decades to form in a tree's trunk and branches and provide a critical habitat to many species listed in the Threatened Species Conservation Act. Two days later a big old barking owl was spotted sitting desolately on a clothesline, says Bolton, its home now sawdust.

The Minister may have indicated changes planned to the code to exclude littoral rainforest and other areas, but the damage is done. The Government's support for 10/50 as a concept has left the community with a broad message that it is a free-for-all for clearing in this State. To address this, the underpinning feature of 10/50 must be removed: self-assessment is not an appropriate way to ensure bushfire risks can be reduced while preserving important vegetation. What happens is that, piece by piece, remnant and endangered vegetation is chopped away and the community is left to try to get a response from government after irreplaceable bush and ecological communities already are gone.

In the spirit of this House commending State Emergency Service [SES] personnel and volunteers earlier today, I take this opportunity to commend the Richmond Tweed Region's SES commander, Kaylene Jones, and praise her for her tireless and courageous service to our community. Ms Jones has received a promotion and will be appointed to the role of assistant commissioner and director of regions east. I congratulate her. I also congratulate members of the community who have campaigned for amendment of the 10/50 rules—Stop the Chop and the Wilderness Society, in particular, and on the North Coast, Fingal Head Trust, Northern Rivers and Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers and Friends of the Koala. The community campaign is working very hard to convince the Government that amendments are

necessary. I am sure the campaign will continue. The Greens will move amendments to this legislation in the upper House.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [4.55 p.m.]: I support the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015. As a member who represents a country electorate in this House, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to support this very practical and common sense amending legislation that will make changes to the Rural Fires Act 1997. I am pleased that the Minister has taken up an issue I raised during debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Vegetation Clearing) Bill 2014, which introduced the 10/50 clearing codes. I referred to how high-risk facilities would be defined. As we have heard during this debate already, under the original iteration of the 10/50 codes the only high-risk facilities to which the 10/50 code applied were dwellings or residential properties.

While I appreciate the importance of some issues raised by members who represent coastal or metropolitan areas concerning a backdoor approach adopted by some residents who use the codes for purposes other than fire prevention, from a rural perspective—which is the only perspective from which I can speak with any authority in this House—the laws have been very well received and have not been abused in my electorate in any way whatsoever. Based on advice I have received from my local Rural Fire Service personnel, the laws that were introduced in 2014 and this amending legislation will contribute greatly to saving property and potentially to saving lives during the forthcoming fire season which, in my electorate, is threatening to be one of the worst in a very long time. On 17 June I stood at this very same lectern and stated:

When we are talking about rural areas and high-risk facilities we are not just talking about people's homes. In rural areas, particularly on properties—

The member for Kiama may be interested in what I am about to say—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** I am very interested.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I remind the member for Kiama that he is on three calls to order.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** The quote continues:

—farm machinery sheds, chemical storage sheds and shearing sheds are high-value facilities [as well]. I have already raised with the Minister the possibility of extending the scope of this bill in the future to ensure that the protection that applies under this bill to [residential] dwellings can also apply to those high-risk facilities that contain valuable equipment for farming families and high-risk equipment such as ... storage sheds.

I am absolutely delighted that the statutory review was brought forward to address the concern I expressed 12 months ago during debate on earlier amendments to the Rural Fires Act. At the conclusion of the review, some very common-sense changes have been introduced to broaden the definition of high-risk facilities to include farm sheds. The amendment is set out in item [3] of schedule 1 to the bill where what is a farm shed is very clearly defined. The proposed section states:

***farm shed*** means a building that:

- (a) is erected on land that is in one of the following land use zones ...
  - (i) RU1 Primary Production,
  - (ii) RU2 Rural Landscape,

- (iii) RU4 Primary Production Small Lots, and
- (b) has a floor area of more than 50 square metres, and
- (c) is used by a primary producer wholly or substantially for a purpose associated with carrying on one or more of the following primary production businesses:
  - (i) the cultivation or propagation of plants or fungi, or their products (including seeds, spores, fruits, grain, flowers, vegetables, tobacco, bulbs and oils), but not a plant nursery,
  - (ii) bee keeping or aquaculture (within the meaning of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*),
  - (iii) the rearing or grazing of livestock, including horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, goats or poultry or other birds, for the purpose of selling the livestock or products derived from the livestock, and
- (d) if it is used for processing products ...
- (e) is not a moveable building.

So it clearly defines what we know intuitively in rural areas as a farm shed—a permanent structure that is used for the purposes of primary production or for purposes associated with primary production. As I mentioned in my contribution to the debate in June last year, it could be a chemical storage shed or a farm machinery shed that houses necessary items for the purpose of carrying out primary production. This change in definition is important for rural people because the most valuable thing on many properties is not the family home. Notwithstanding that we cannot put a value on a human life, photographs and certain documents and memories contained within the family home, in dollar terms in respect of the viability of that property, what is stored in chemical sheds, machinery sheds or hay sheds is much more valuable than the run-of-the-mill items that we find in any domestic home.

The definition is important. To achieve properly the objectives of the Act to enable people—whether they are on the coast, in a metropolitan area or in a rural or remote area—to achieve better bushfire prevention, it was necessary to expand the definition as I and members of the Northern Tablelands community had requested. On behalf of many people in the Northern Tablelands electorate—especially the primary producers who came to me and expressed their desire to see the definition expanded—I express my appreciation. At this point I acknowledge the Rural Fire Service [RFS] volunteers who are preparing for this year's fire season. They have done a lot of work, many with brand-new tankers and new stations throughout the Northern Tablelands electorate, to prepare for what I trust is not, but is predicted to be, a very severe bushfire season given the harshness of the winter we have experienced in the Northern Tablelands.

I acknowledge the Superintendent of Namoi-Gwydir RFS, Michael Brooks, Superintendent Chris Warbridge of Northern Tablelands RFS, Superintendent Steve Meacham of New England RFS, and their various officers and volunteers. I acknowledge the work they have done in the past, but also thank them in anticipation of the work they will be called on to do in serving our community and protecting lives and property over the upcoming fire season. The work they do is magnificent. They have my full support and the support of everyone throughout the Northern Tablelands electorate. Again, I commend the Minister for bringing forward these changes through the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015, picking up 30 recommendations from the review. The review was brought forward because of the concerns I raised and other issues that metropolitan coastal members raised as a result of the implementation of the 10/50 code.

I emphasise again from a rural perspective that the 10/50 code is brilliant. It works incredibly well, it is effective and it is not abused. It is used for its intended purpose—that is, to better protect essential property and sheds in rural areas and to help the RFS to better protect property and lives. It has certainly been achieving that. The expansion of the definitions in new sections 100P and 100R will allow rural communities and primary producers to do even more to protect valuable items on their property. That is terrific. I am glad that the concerns I raised on 17 June 2014 have been recognised and acted upon, for which I thank the Minister and Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT** (Prospect) [5.04 p.m.]: I address the House in support of the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015, with appropriate amendments that will be moved by the Opposition. Bushfires are one of Australia's most common natural disasters. Over the past half century more than 300 Australians have been killed, in the most horrifying way, as a result of bushfires. First, I pay tribute to all the lives lost to Australian bushfires and to the brave men and women of the Rural Fire Service [RFS], Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Ambulance Service and their equivalent agencies throughout Australia. The Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015 will legalise vegetation clearing near buildings, including farm sheds, under the 10/50 vegetation clearing scheme. This will allow the complete clearance of vegetation within 10 metres of a building and clearance of non-tree vegetation within 50 metres of a building.

Reasonable clearance of vegetation is essential for protecting buildings and people in areas at risk of bushfires. However, it is important that any regulation that allows the clearance of vegetation includes strategies to balance environmental impact with the potential derivative of increased safety. There is a limit to the amount of safety clearing vegetation can bring in the case of bushfires, and it is the responsibility of the New South Wales Government to ensure that the environment is not adversely impacted by this limit being exceeded. Last year the New South Wales Government accepted 30 recommendations put forward by the Rural Fire Service, including placing restrictions on areas where vegetation could be cleared. The RFS did not make these recommendations lightly. It understands that vegetation clearance is important to preventing bushfire damage. However, it has done a phenomenal job in offering a balance between protecting our State's most vulnerable bushland with the need to take measures to control bushfires.

Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and his team have worked tirelessly to develop these recommendations and they should be congratulated on this work. Under the current policy, no approval is required for landowners to clear land within 10 metres of a building, within a zone designated by the Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service. This regulation has been in effect for more than a year, and in that time six key areas of concern have arisen. First, the scheme relies on a self-assessment model; secondly, there is no registry of properties that have used the 10/50 rule to clear vegetation; thirdly, the scheme does not take into account threatened species, habitats or ecological communities; fourthly, there is no involvement of local councils in determining categories of vegetation zones; fifthly, there is no publicly available code of practice; and, finally, there is no clear map of the entitlement area for use of the 10/50 rule, despite a redefinition of the rule presented by the Government.

We are extremely lucky to have the Rural Fire Service in New South Wales. The RFS is the world's largest volunteer fire brigade, with more than 70,000 volunteers, of which I am one. The RFS and its previous incarnations have been on call for every bushfire in New South Wales for more than a century and have saved countless lives and homes from ferocious bushfires. I strongly believe the RFS is succeeding in its mission to provide a world standard of excellence in the provision of a community-based fire and emergency service and offering the highest standards of training, community education, prevention and operational capability. I am extremely proud of its achievements, as I am sure are all members of this House.

In a large part due to the efforts of the New South Wales RFS, our State has managed to prevent the deaths of hundreds, possibly thousands, of people in bushfires. Sadly, not everyone has been saved.

In the past 30 years 14 lives and hundreds of homes have been lost to fire in New South Wales. Each year hundreds of firefighters are injured in the line of duty. Over a 10-year period between 2002 and 2012 there were more than 7,000 reported injuries and five fatalities among firefighters in New South Wales. This figure is extraordinary. Factoring in other emergency workers, the figure goes to more than 8,000 reported injuries. Without the selflessness of the hundreds of men and women who are being injured each year while saving the New South Wales community from fire and accidents, I fear that many more lives would be lost.

I pay tribute to one member of the Rural Fire Service who passed away recently. David Black was a pilot assisting the RFS by water bombing fires and tragically lost his life on 24 October 2013 while trying to save the community from fires near Ulladulla. Mr Black was a highly skilled pilot with more than 10,000 flight hours, yet he made the ultimate sacrifice while trying to save others. Witnesses say that the wings of his plane literally fell off the fuselage before crashing. Unfortunately, his body could not be retrieved for days as the crash site was surrounded by flames and smoke from the fires that Mr Black was fighting.

Water-bombing helicopters and plane pilots are integral to fighting bushfires, and many RFS volunteers have stories to tell about the great work these pilots do and how they have saved their bacon time and time again. I also commend the firefighters of Fire and Rescue NSW for their bravery during the 2013 fires. I particularly mention two people, one of whom lives on the border of my electorate of Prospect. The two people are Onur Ayyildiz and Grant Quinlan, senior firefighters who have recently been awarded medals for bravery. They put themselves in harm's way when rescuing a 30-year-old woman who was found on her property and was about to be engulfed in flames. Onur did not hesitate in taking off his oxygen mask and firefighting coat to prevent a horrendous tragedy. It is worth noting that Onur works full-time as a firefighter for Fire and Rescue NSW and is also a volunteer firefighter for the RFS Horsley Park brigade.

In October 2013, our State's worst fire disaster since the 1960s tore through the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Hunter, Central Coast and Southern Highlands. Two people were killed and 248 houses were destroyed. The civilian stories from that time are harrowing. One example is Sergio Rosato, the principal of St Thomas Aquinas Primary School in Winmalee. He led 500 children to safety whilst surrounded by fire. He and several teachers walked with students to the White Cross shops to stay out of harm's way. During the emergency Mr Rosato's home was burned to the ground and even to this day the students of St Thomas Aquinas are affected by memories of the fire. I also think about St Columba's High School in Springwood, where hundreds of students sheltered, including two of my nephews, whilst the RFS fire crews on more than a dozen trucks fought back the flames. Outbuildings had already been lost.

Similar stories are repeated time and time again. Another example is Phil and Sue Dunlop, retirees who stood by their home as it was surrounded by fire. As they watched the fire approach, burning away scrubland around the home, they did all they could with buckets and hoses trying to keep it at bay. Despite their best efforts, the fire raged on. After the windows in their home finally blew out due to the heat and a nearby car exploded, they were evacuated and are lucky to be alive today.

We are well aware that bushfires have the potential to do far greater damage, claim more lives and destroy far more homes than was the case in October 2013. Every year there are potential fire disasters that are averted due to the fantastic work of the RFS and Fire and Rescue NSW. Only recently in Eastern Creek, within the electorate of Prospect, a fire broke out only metres from the M4 highway. This fire required 200 firefighters to quell it. Had it not been for the hazardous materials [HAZMAT] and rescue work of the RFS and Fire and Rescue NSW, I have no doubt there could have been a much worse disaster. This House has the responsibility to legislate the necessary means to prevent bushfires impacting on the people of New South Wales. The New South Wales Government must continue to provide the best resources available to the RFS and to encourage as much recruitment as possible.

I am a volunteer at the Horsley Park RFS and I encourage everyone to consider joining their local brigade. I acknowledge the members of the Horsley Park and Eastern Creek RFS brigades, within the

seat of Prospect. They do so much for local communities. The work of an RFS volunteer is rewarding and they receive the best training available to volunteer firefighters anywhere in the world. Besides fighting fires, the RFS is involved in helping people affected by storm damage, search and rescue, motor vehicle accidents and community education programs. All of these activities are vital for the safety of New South Wales, and many are conducted by regular volunteers who have busy day jobs and young families. I call on the House to commend the RFS and Fire and Rescue NSW and acknowledge the Opposition's support for the bill.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I welcome members of the public attending A Little Night Sitting program, which is being conducted by the Parliamentary Education division. They do a fantastic job. I hope you have a good evening.

**Mr GLENN BROOKES** (East Hills) [5.14 p.m.]: I speak in the second reading debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015. The NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] has completed its review of the 10/50 vegetation clearing scheme. The review was conducted in partnership with the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Planning and Environment. Together the agencies have made 30 recommendations that will significantly improve the way the 10/50 principle works in New South Wales. All of the recommendations have been accepted by the New South Wales Government.

The intention of the 10/50 code continues to be sound. In bushfire-prone areas people will continue to be allowed to protect their homes and to reduce fire fuel without a lot of red tape. Some people took unfair advantage of the original rules and as a result this Government has taken action. The changes being introduced will ensure that people who are most at risk can continue to access the 10/50 rule with safeguards built in to minimise abuse of the scheme. From the more than 3,500 submissions received, the Government has made the environment a key factor in these changes.

The community wanted greater environmental protection. As a result, we are protecting core koala habitats, coastal wetlands, trees 100 metres from the coastline and a range of endangered communities, to name a few. These will be excluded from the 10/50 scheme. Improvements to bushfire risk and amendments to the Rural Fires Act are also being made. The Government is giving councils the ability to remove low-risk pockets of bushland from the 10/50 code provided appropriate risk management strategies are in place. This means pockets of bushland along the Georges River in my electorate can be managed and therefore will not need to be removed by council. I know many locals who are going to be pleased with this decision, as they all love our leafy riverside reserves and picnic spots.

Amendments will be made to the Rural Fires Act 1997 to provide greater clarity to users of the scheme. However, the principal way in which the new arrangements will take effect is through updates to the 10/50 code of practice. The new code will be made available on the New South Wales Rural Fire Service website once the 10/50 arrangements come into effect. It is expected the new arrangements will be in place to enable people to clear before the bushfire season begins. The season officially starts on 1 October, but notionally commences a month earlier in northern parts of New South Wales. People will be able to check their eligibility for the 10/50 scheme and download a copy of the report on the RFS webpage.

It is important that the scheme being put in place is not abused. The clearing of vegetation acts as a firebreak for houses, many of which back onto bush. Over the years the bush has grown and is pushing into people's properties. Councils have been reluctant to keep firebreaks clear of trees, whether they are still standing or have fallen, and this allows the build-up of fuel on the ground. These amendments have taken into consideration the lessons that have been learned along the way. It is important that we understand why this legislation is necessary. It is a common-sense approach and allows fires to do their job. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [5.19 p.m.]: In making a contribution to the debate on the Rural Fires Service Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015, I wish to endorse the contribution made by the

member for Fairfield. I have been moved to make a contribution to the debate after hearing the member for Blue Mountains. The member for Blue Mountains comes from the area of that tragedy in October 2013. She was on the ground, dealing with the complexity of that tragedy and also the response. I urge the House to note the contribution that she made to this debate and to note also the conflicts with and the amendments to the bill that she proposes.

I also wish to pay tribute to the emergency services, that magnificent organisation the NSW Rural Fire Service and all the emergency organisations, including the Fire Brigade which tried to minimise the damage that resulted from the fires of October 2013. Those bushfires and the tragedy of the 200 homes that were destroyed touched everyone in the community. Even parliamentary staff were impacted by it. One particular parliamentary staff member who had been serving this place for a long time lost everything. I remember being moved at the time by the contribution made by other members of Parliament. The member for Fairfield probably will be embarrassed by my disclosing this, but I recall that the member went to a local electrical wholesaler and asked if the wholesaler could donate a refrigerator to that staff person because he had lost everything. The contribution of the member for Fairfield was one of many that were made in regard to that tragedy.

However, as is often the case when there is a quick legislative response to a disaster, the Parliament can get things wrong. In fact, on many occasions I have told the House that a kneejerk reaction or quick legislative response to what is happening in the news cycle or to a tragedy that occurs in this State often is erroneous. It is hard enough even with detailed consultation, listening to relevant stakeholders, and allowing public input to get legislation right and to minimise unintended consequences. Legislating without those inputs can cause extreme difficulties. The Parliament's response in 2014 was supported by the Labor Opposition in the context of the climate that was urged upon this House at that time. It reflected on both major political parties.

The consequences of acting with such haste prompted a substantial review, and that review has concentrated particularly on the 10/50 code of practice. The thousands of people who had input into that review exposed quite a lot of unscrupulous behaviour by those who sought to benefit from the code as well as from the poor practices of those who applied the code. The Opposition will propose a number of worthwhile amendments to this bill. The member for Blue Mountains has articulated considerable concern about areas that the amendments propose to address. I ask the Government, between now and when the bill is debated in the other place, to take those suggestions on board.

I know the Minister for Emergency Services has carriage of this bill because it involves an emergency services issue, but there should be close consultation with the Minister for the Environment. The Minister for the Environment and member for Cronulla, as the House knows, is a senior counsel who has considerable legal experience. He could add value to the wording of the bill in the period after it leaves this Chamber and before it reaches the other place. One of the major areas of concern relates to the question of self-assessment. Self-assessment leaves the 10/50 code open to abuse; self-assessment has caused the problems sought to be addressed by this amending bill.

The Opposition proposes in the other place to move amendments that would have the effect of providing a mechanism of approval similar to that of the clearing scheme under the Rural Fires Act 1997. That scheme provided for approval for land clearing either by the NSW Rural Fire Service or perhaps by a local council. If the House is concerned about delays that may be occasioned in getting that form of approval, then it could in the amendments specify a particular time frame within which that approval is required. So the Parliament could require that the approval occur within a specific period of time.

A second issue, to which the member for Fairfield drew the attention of the House, is that there has been no registry to assess which properties have used the 10/50 code to clear vegetation. There should be such a central register so that there is a record of what areas have been cleared. This is important to ensure abuse does not occur and that continued environmental degradation does not occur. The Opposition says that the bill does not take into account threatened species, habitats or ecological

communities under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995; nor does it include all critically endangered ecological communities. I would ask the Minister for Emergency Services to use his broad knowledge and experience in this area to refer to the statutory provisions in his reply so that we can be satisfied that amendments are not required in that area.

The other matter that I draw to the attention of the House is that the review recommends that councils have the ability to reclassify small bushland reserves from category 1 vegetation to category 2 vegetation but there is no time line set out for that process. The member for Fairfield made reference to that. Also, the bill involves a new 10/50 code of practice, but we have not yet seen the code. So we are unable to judge, without even a draft code, what variations are or might be necessary. Further, as the member for Fairfield indicated, the bill involves a redefinition of the 10/50 entitlement area. As the member pointed out, there is not a complete map of the entitlement area.

The Opposition supports the direction in which the Government is proceeding with this bill, that is, to deal with unintended consequences. But I would just say this to the House: there is no prospect of abuse of the code being removed while self-assessment remains. Bearing in mind the consequences that have been clearly articulated by the member for Blue Mountains, it is only through the process of approval by the Rural Fire Service and local government that the House can be satisfied that, one, removal of vegetation is not occurring by abuse; or, two, that the very risk of fire that is sought to be removed by the clearing of vegetation is not made worse by the removal of vegetation or the lack of clearing.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [5.29 p.m.]: At the outset I acknowledge and thank the Minister's office for the briefing given to the crossbench today. I also acknowledge that The Greens and Opposition have very reasonable amendments, which they will be moving in the other place. The Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015 continues the 10/50 policy that has seen the loss of more than 5,000 trees, including habitat trees and threatened species. The 10/50 code removed the need for landowners to obtain assessments from the NSW Rural Fire Service or local council to remove trees within 50 metres and vegetation within 10 metres of a habitable building in bushfire-prone areas. It allowed them to clear the vegetation without any oversight.

The system has failed to meet its objectives. Trees that should have been protected have been destroyed, many to open up views while no evidence has been presented that bushfire risks to property have been improved. In fact, the approach to tree removal is considered to create serious risks to people and property. Woodchip and offcuts from cleared trees and vegetation create fuel and there are no requirements on how they are disposed of or for landowners to get expert advice. I understand there are instances where woodchip has been scattered adjacent to homes and powerlines, thereby creating serious new fire risks.

Landowners also experience a false sense of security from the removal of vegetation. Many will think that removing trees and bushes is the best and only way to protect their home. This is not the case. Other or even additional measures are often needed. Landowners in bushfire-prone areas should get an expert assessment with tailored advice that incorporates building maintenance, ember protection and evacuation planning. The regime prior to the 10/50 policy ensured that concerned landowners were visited by an expert who assessed their specific situation and provided comprehensive advice. For many this no longer occurs.

The environmental impacts have seen significant loss of biodiversity. I welcome changes to the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice that will exclude World Heritage and Ramsar wetlands, core koala habitat, certain ecological communities, critically endangered plants and critical habitat, coastal wetlands, littoral rainforest, mangroves and saltmarshes among other environmentally sensitive regions as well as Aboriginal heritage areas. But not all endangered communities are excluded, such as the turpentine and ironbark communities and Illawarra Lowlands Grassy Woodland. Furthermore, cumulative environmental impacts including soil erosion and carbon emissions from clearing elsewhere will continue

to be ignored.

It is well acknowledged that the 10/50 regime is being used to clear trees that block views. While the code of practice will exclude land within 100 metres of the coast and mapped estuaries, this will do nothing to prevent clearing for views on hilltops or of non-water related views. Lane Cove residents are particularly concerned that urban bushland remnants in their area remain a high level bushfire risk equivalent to that of the Blue Mountains. I agree that this demonstrates that the methodology is flawed and could erode the vital tree canopy in this area without improving bushfire risks. The 10/50 system allows the removal of trees and vegetation with no expert oversight. Without this oversight no records will be kept and it will be difficult to determine how effective the policy is. The experience so far has shown that self-assessment is environmentally destructive and leaves the system open to abuse. I strongly believe the 10/50 code should be withdrawn, with the previous system restored. It is disappointing that New South Wales will continue to lose natural habitat and much-needed trees.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS** (Wyang) [5.32 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution this evening to debate on the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015. The uncertainty around the law that has been in place since November 2014 has impacted on the area that I represent. As most speakers have mentioned this evening, the original legislation for the 10/50 vegetation clearing scheme was brought in after the 2013 New South Wales bushfires, and appropriately so. It was in response to a significant natural disaster. At the time the Parliament was acting in good faith and, with the support of the Labor Opposition, enacted these laws. But we have found since that there has been abuse of the legislation. As other members have indicated, it is around the issue of self-assessment. Self-assessment leaves the legislation open to abuse.

Earlier this year the Wyong Shire Council area, the local government area that my seat encompasses, experienced storms and significant tree damage. The local population was concerned about dangerous trees, and rightly so given that quite a while after the storm, with the ground being so wet, trees were falling down in the middle of the day. I witnessed one area where a big tree came down across the Pacific Highway, just missing a bus. The local council response was to implement rules, which are still in place, that on blocks under 1,500 square metres any tree could be cut down without permission. That clearly was going too far, even though there was good reason—and local residents agreed—that dangerous trees should be removed in the shortest possible time. Through the Australian Labor Party [ALP] councillors, we attempted to move for a six-month period whereby the policy would be reviewed.

The indiscriminate cutting down of trees in some areas, such as Bateau Bay in the electorate of The Entrance, was clearly being done to improve views and not for reasons in accordance with the intent of the legislation. I am very glad that the Government is seeking to amend the legislation. It is hoped the amended legislation will be used for its original purpose, that is, bushfire hazard reduction and dealing with areas of bushfire threat, of which there are significant areas on the Central Coast. I fully support that purpose. I do not support developers and others using the laws for reasons other than bushfire protection.

I question the intent of some of the councillors who supported that any tree on a 1,500 square block could be removed, whether or not it was in a bushfire-prone zone. The implementation of an assessment process through the NSW Rural Fire Service or the local council, as has been proposed by the Opposition, will provide a checking mechanism. It is a smart move that will ensure that people use the 10/50 code for the right reasons. If a tree is dangerous, I do not think anyone would dispute that it should be removed. But giving people open slather opens up all sorts of possibilities about the removal of bushland.

I also agree with the proposal of a public register to track where trees are being removed. It will act as data collection that can be used to gauge whether the amended legislation is effective. The bill protects threatened species. But we need to go further to make sure that natural areas—such as in my electorate where a great deal of greenfield development is occurring; people like to live there because of

the wildlife and natural environment—are not left with a denuded landscape as a result of clear-felling.

As previous members on this side have said, the Opposition supports the bill. We thank the Government for conducting a review. A significant number of submissions were received—I think 3,600 submissions—and included a great deal of information. I read with particular interest the submission from the Sydney Coastal Councils Group. It had some very good recommendations in its submission which could be applied to my electorate. I hope the Government and the Minister see fit to agree to our amendments. We put them forward as a way to strengthen the legislation, not to be obstructive. Our proposed amendments will improve the bill and ensure that it covers all bases, particularly the issues of self-assessment and the removal of trees not in accordance with the purpose of the bill.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [5.38 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to address the Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015. It is an important piece of legislation. Before turning to the specifics of the bill, I will address that fact that over the past few months we have observed the Government seeking to review legislation to make changes. It has happened with the workers compensation legislation and the rural fires amendment bill. There is a temptation for people to attack the Government and say, "It got it wrong in the first place; that is terrible." Therefore, there is resistance from Ministers and others to amend legislation because if they do they know they will be attacked and subject to criticism. However, I commend the Minister and the Government for reviewing this scheme because it is difficult to review decisions made previously and to acknowledge that they need improvement.

From the outset, it is important to note that even though The Greens opposed the legislation and we highlighted our concerns, I am not knocking the Government. The approach of listening to the community and reviewing decisions delivers better results. We must always call upon the wisdom of the public. Legislation was introduced at the time of terrible bushfires to ameliorate a perceived threat, but unfortunately it has not satisfied the original objectives that were set out by the Government to address the issue. All members fully support bushfire safety regulation that considers private property, human life and the environment. However, we must ensure that the objectives set out in legislation are met. Unfortunately, the legislation failed to mitigate fire risk and did not address the substantive reason for its introduction: to protect the lives of people and to keep properties from danger.

It is clear that the process has been abused significantly. It is also causing significant unwarranted ecological damage. The great number of community organisations in New South Wales that have been created to oppose this legislation demonstrates that it is not supported by the community. In his second reading speech the Minister for Emergency Services addressed this issue and made some good points about the amendments in the bill that are required to stop its being exploited. One member stated that the purpose of this legislation is not to "improve your views or increase the value of your home", which is exactly what happened. The legislation has been misused. It has not only failed to meet its legislative objectives but also led to significant ecological damage. Unfortunately, it has also reduced amenity for people in many communities.

The Greens welcome the amendments and believe the review of the 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement scheme is well overdue. It is proposed that most of the changes will not be included in the legislation but will be made directly to the code. We believe those changes should be part of the legislation because they will then be subject to review by Parliament. Many of the changes that resulted from the review were key requests put forward as a result of the concerted community campaign waged across New South Wales by local councils, conservation and environment organisations and community groups. They spoke about the loss of trees caused by the 10/50 legislation. The code was never targeted at bushfire protection from the outset, and it has been exploited. We have heard stories today and also read in our local newspapers that developers and landowners wanted to maximise their views and profits and were not concerned about protecting their properties from fire. Our concern is that, even with changes to the code, thousands of hectares of bushland and tree canopies across New South Wales are still open to abuse.

We welcome recommendations 10, 11, 26, and particularly recommendation 27, which will be implemented by the bill. They are important steps forward and highlight that World Heritage sites and Ramsar wetlands must be protected. It is remarkable that they were excluded from the tree-culling code in the first place. We welcome the changes being made to help protect vegetation. The Wilderness Society identified some of its concerns in its correspondence to The Greens. Gaye White is the convener of Stop the Chop, which is a community organisation comprising conservation organisations, bushland societies and residents associations from all over the State. They include: Lane Cove Bushland and Conservation Society Inc., Willoughby Environmental Protection Association, Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers, Pittwater Environmental Foundation, Native Animal Trust Fund Inc., Save Little Manly Foreshore, Ryde Community Alliance, Stringy Bark Creek Residents' Association Inc., and Hornsby Conservation Society.

That is a small example of the dozens of organisations that are concerned. I am glad that the Government has listened to the many concerns expressed as part of the review process and is taking steps to address them. I trust that in the future we will consider matters carefully and diligently before proceeding. The Greens will make some additional strengthening amendments to the bill in the upper House. In particular, one amendment will provide that in order to remove trees under the code a person will require a certificate from council that the removal is 10/50 code compliant. We will propose that provision also be made for councils to recover reasonable costs for this certification. We also want a complete list of exclusions in place under the revised code, and expert decision-makers to be required to ensure that the code is applied appropriately and consistently. That is a major change we would like to see implemented.

Lastly, we believe the amendment should be repealed in the Rural Fires Act. The only way to completely mitigate the negative effects of this code is to repeal it and to return to evidence-based tree clearing with the involvement of councils and the Rural Fire Service. It is our view that we are stepping forward after taking a step backwards. I thank the Minister and his staff who have worked on the bill for resisting the idea that we cannot make amendments to improve things and that as a result the Government has brought forward this legislation.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT** (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) [5.47 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Fairfield, the shadow Minister for Emergency Services, for taking a great deal of interest in this amendment. I thank the member for Wagga Wagga and Parliamentary Secretary; the member for Swansea; the member for Tweed; the member for Blue Mountains; the member for Albury; the member for Ballina; the member for Northern Tablelands; the member for Prospect; the member for East Hills, who has a superior understanding of matters relating to the fire brigade and fighting bushfires; the member for Heffron; the member for Wyong; and the member for Balmain. Their contribution to this debate was helpful to me as the incumbent Minister, and indeed to those who have taken an interest in this particular amendment. I signal concerns in relation to some of the foreshadowed amendments, particularly regarding a call for the Rural Fire Service [RFS] to do all the assessments. The Government is not a bottomless pit, and the cost to the taxpayers of New South Wales would be quite fulsome.

The Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015 clarifies the way that the 10/50 clearing scheme operates and ensures that people who live in 10/50 areas can continue to be engaged proactively in protecting their lives, homes and livelihood from bushfires. The amendments work in tandem with the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice to produce a more integrated framework for the management of bushfire risk in New South Wales. Balanced by greater environmental and planning protections, the enhanced 10/50 scheme is stronger—as we have heard from all speakers—and more responsive to the needs of our community. Therefore, 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 David Elliott 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.**

**Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.**

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

---

#### **MURRUMBIDGEE PROSTATE CANCER CARE COORDINATOR**

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON** (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.51 p.m.]: Until relatively recently, prostate cancer was something most people were unaware of. Prostate cancer does not really get the publicity and nor does it receive the public awareness that other equally serious cancers, such as breast cancer or melanoma, receive. This is not helped by the fact that many sufferers tend to shy away from talking about the disease, finding it difficult to discuss this sensitive topic. But prostate cancer deserves greater recognition and greater discussion. Prostate cancer was the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia in 2011 and it is estimated that it will remain the most commonly diagnosed cancer in 2015. In 2015 it is estimated that the risk of a male being diagnosed with prostate cancer by their eighty-fifth birthday is one in seven. In Australia the projected number of new cases of prostate cancer diagnosed in 2015 is 17,250, and it is estimated that prostate cancer will make up almost 25 per cent of all new male cancer cases diagnosed in 2015.

Prostate cancer is generally a slow-growing disease and the majority of men with low-grade prostate cancer live for many years without symptoms and without its spreading and becoming life threatening. However, high-grade disease spreads quickly and can be lethal. Appropriate management is the key. Appropriate management includes the services of a dedicated prostate cancer support nurse. A locally based prostate cancer support [PCS] nurse works with patients and their families, providing support, assisting with access to services, sourcing reliable information about diagnoses and treatment, coordinating care and providing education and training. Prostate cancer sufferers in my electorate of Cootamundra have been without such a nurse, relying on their urologist for immediate diagnosis, necessary treatment and periodic reviews, and having to travel long distances for specialist appointments.

I have been lobbying for a dedicated PCS nurse for the Murrumbidgee Local Health District [MLHD] for quite some time. I first raised these concerns, on behalf of a constituent, with the then Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health in September 2012. The incidence of prostate cancer is unusually high in the MLHD compared with other health districts. The reasons for this higher incidence are not entirely known; nor was the reason why in August 2014—when 14 prostate cancer support nurses were announced in a pilot project by the then Federal Minister for Health, Mr Peter Dutton—the MLHD was not included in the list of New South Wales health districts that were to receive a nurse. Mr Eddy Williams, chairman of the Cootamundra Prostate Cancer Support Group [PCSG], first brought this anomaly to my attention, and I made representations on behalf of the group.

I met with the members of Cootamundra PCSG and heard firsthand about the issues these men

face. I have lobbied hard for the recruitment and employment of a PCS nurse, bringing the need for such a nurse to the attention of the Murrumbidgee Local Health District on numerous occasions. I am delighted to welcome today's announcement by the Murrumbidgee Local Health District and the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia—a significant organisation doing fantastic work across the nation—of the formation of a partnership to fund a specialist prostate cancer care coordinator for the region. I thank the Federal Government for funding such an important initiative.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.53 p.m.]: I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for raising this important issue in Parliament. She referred to the announcement today of a prostate support worker to help provide education for all cancer care nurses within the Murrumbidgee Local Health District. The issue has attracted significant publicity and many people—including the local member for Cootamundra and others—have worked very hard to achieve this result. Communities will be pleased about this exciting appointment. The cost of half the position is being met by Federal funds through the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia [PCFA] and the other half is being met by the NSW Government through the local health district. It is a pleasing announcement. Many members of Parliament share the services of the Murrumbidgee Local Health District. They should be acknowledged, as should all those who campaigned hard for this very good result. I congratulate the member on raising the matter in the House.

### **ASSYRIAN GENOCIDE 100TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT** (Prospect) [5.54 p.m.]: I draw the House's attention to the 100th anniversary of the Assyrian genocide this month. They say time heals all wounds, but I believe some wounds are too deep to heal. The Assyrian people have a history that goes back millennia. However, due to violence, racism and hate they have become a people oppressed over centuries. After one and a half millennia of oppression the Assyrian people suffered one of humanity's worst acts of genocide during the First World War. In 1915, 300,000 Assyrians were brutally murdered, for no other reason than their race and their Christian faith. The perpetrators of this horrendous act knew they were committing a crime against humanity when they slaughtered hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children. The stories of murder and torture are gruesome. A survivor of the genocide, Reverend John Eshoo, wrote:

Assyrians were assembled into one caravansary, and shot to death by guns and revolvers. Blood literally flowed in little streams, and the entire open space within the caravansary became a pool of crimson liquid.

The executioners began by cutting first the fingers of their victims, joint by joint, till the two hands were entirely amputated ... Then their throats were half cut, so as to prolong their torture of dying, and while struggling in the agony of death, the victims were kicked and clubbed ... Many of them, while still labouring under the pain of death, were thrown into ditches and buried before their souls had expired.

The genocide was not an act of war; it was a crime against humanity. It is time the Turkish Government recognised the genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire. In the century following the first genocide of 1915 the Assyrian people have not been free of oppression; the persecutions continued. In August 1933 Assyrian Christians were attacked again, in what is now known as the Simele massacre. Accounts of this act of genocide are both horrific and heart wrenching:

The Assyrian population of the village of Simel was indiscriminately massacred; men women, and children alike. In one room alone, 81 Assyrians from Baz were barbarously massacred. Priests were tortured and their bodies mutilated. Girls were raped and women violated and made to march naked before the Arab army commanders. Holy books were used as fuel for burning girls. Children were run over by military cars. Pregnant women were bayoneted. Children were flung in the air and pierced on to the points of bayonets.

The massacres continued in 1945 and 1946, with massacres in Azerbaijan and other northern regions of Iran, and then again in 1962 at Barwar, Iraq. The brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein in Iraq caused untold tragedy for thousands of Assyrians, many of whom fled to Australia. Even after the fall of Saddam Hussein the oppression has continued. Already ISIS has demolished several millennia-old sites of historical significance, and continues its horrific mission of committing acts of genocide against Assyrian Christians. I join a chorus of millions in praying for and demanding an end to this violence. The electorate of Prospect is privileged to be home to thousands of Assyrian families, and I am very privileged to work with many leaders of the Assyrian community. There is great hope for the Assyrian people. Despite the odds, they have survived and contributed enormously to science, mathematics and philosophy.

The spirit of democracy will shine through in the Middle East eventually and I believe the perpetrators of cruelty will be brought to justice. However, the pursuit of peace and justice is never won easily and requires the full support of humanity to succeed. As the member for Prospect, I am committed to assisting the Assyrian people in any way I can. I look forward to the day when the autonomous Assyrian province in northern Iraq is established. That day will come and the House, the Federal Government and the international community must help make it happen. I have faith that, in time, peace will come to the Middle East, and the Assyrian people will no longer be oppressed. To make peace in the future we must remember the past and, in doing so, remember the millennia of oppression and the hundreds of thousands of lives lost to the genocide. May God bless and protect the Assyrian people.

#### **ROYAL COMMISSIONER JOHN DYSON HEYDON, AC, QC**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS** (Ku-ring-gai) [5.59 p.m.]: I reluctantly enter the public debate about the Hon. Dyson Heydon, AC, QC, and the application to remove him as a royal commissioner on the grounds of alleged apprehended bias. I have no doubts that Mr Heydon will deal with this issue with the propriety and integrity that have been the hallmarks of his stellar legal career over many years. I have had dealings with Mr Heydon only in our respective positions as lawyers. Mr Heydon lectured me in equity in 1985 at the University of Sydney law school. He did so as a public service because, as a leading Queen's Counsel, he had higher-paid things to do with his time. I had the fortune to brief Mr Heydon on three occasions prior to his appointment in 2000 as a justice of the New South Wales Court of Appeal, which was his first judicial office. He was appointed by the Carr Labor Government. Everything that has been said recently about the exceptional quality of Mr Heydon's intellect is well deserved.

On the question of his integrity, I should share my firsthand experiences. I was the partner of a firm of solicitors that instructed Mr Heydon as senior counsel to take over a case from another Queen's Counsel who had become unavailable just prior to the time that some written submissions needed to be completed for a hearing before the Court of Appeal. Mr Heydon refused to include in those submissions several points that the junior barrister and I had put in the draft submissions. We vigorously discussed whether the points should be included. I had the power to sack Mr Heydon and brief another barrister in order that the points I favoured could be included. Mr Heydon knew I had the power to sack him but refused to include the material I advocated for in the submissions. I still recall him saying that "signing a submission is like signing a cheque." He would only put his name and integrity to something that he believed was intellectually credible. He showed the sort of professional integrity and independence for which he is legendary.

Everyone who worked with him was left in no doubt that his intellectual integrity and independence was at the core of his professional ethos. I cannot imagine that his approach to the unions royal commission is any different. I believe Mr Heydon has lived in the Ku-ring-gai electorate and in the Federal electorate of Bradfield for at least the past 20 years. I have been a member of the local Liberal Party for the past 16 years, including from 2008 to 2015 when I was the Bradfield Federal Electorate Conference [FEC] president, which is the senior voluntary position in the local Liberal Party. To my knowledge, Mr Heydon has had nothing whatsoever to do with the Liberal Party during the years of my membership and active local involvement in the party. In my experience, the comment attributed recently

in the media to one of Mr Heydon's former High Court colleagues, who described Mr Heydon as "apolitical", is correct.

I should add one further observation. Mr Heydon was a member of the High Court when I took my bows as a new silk in early 2012. Prior to the ceremony he invited some of the new Sydney silks and their partners to have lunch in his chambers at the High Court of Australia building in Canberra. I do not know for sure the politics of all those who were invited and attended, but I am certain from the conversations on that day that there were people who were very left of centre and who are unlikely to be supporters of the Liberal Party. But they were guests of Mr Heydon at that lunch in his private judge's chambers. I hardly knew Mr Heydon socially prior to that day, having met him only through the legal community and having had only some minor conversations with him. It was very generous of him to have those present as his guests for lunch.

Those who know Mr Heydon are not just Liberal Party members like me or what people would call "conservatives". For example, Mr Richard Cobden, SC, a former President of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and an intellectual property law expert, last week wrote a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* expressing similar sentiments to mine about Mr Heydon. When good decent people like Mr Heydon, who have led a life of exceptional service to our community, are unfairly berated and denigrated, we all as a society lose out. I have been very saddened by the events of recent weeks. I think it has reflected very badly on those who have conducted the public attack on one of our country's greatest lawyers. We need people of outstanding ability and integrity like Mr Heydon in public life. I hope that people like him are not deterred from entering public service because of the attacks upon a man of such good standing. I thank the House.

#### **PORT KEMBLA MEALS ON WHEELS**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [6.04 p.m.]: Last weekend I was privileged to attend a recognition ceremony for Port Kembla Meals on Wheels volunteers, many of whom have contributed 50 years of service. The *Illawarra Mercury* published a fine report about the group. Friendship, helping others and sense of a life well lived are what three dedicated volunteers have achieved in their 50 years of helping Port Kembla's sick and elderly. Joyce Warrington, who is 88, still helps to deliver Meals on Wheels, while June MacNamara, who is 89, and Kathleen Catterall, who is 95—also founding members—serve on the current committee. This type of dedication to community work over a long period absolutely deserves recognition. At a time in life when other people might be thinking about taking things easy, those women continue to deliver meals on wheels, possibly to those who are younger than themselves. Recognition by this House is so richly deserved because often the work of long-term volunteers goes unrecognised and the people involved do not receive the accolades they deserve.

Port Kembla business owner Ruth Claussen approached Mrs Warrington in July 1965 asking whether her "gang" would help set up a service for those in need in Port Kembla. I suggest that today the term "gang" would conjure images of a different type of activity, but this story is about a compassionate type of community interaction. Mrs Warrington gathered three friends and their children and organised a concert in her backyard. She also sold afternoon tea and handmade toffee apples. Mrs Warrington explained:

We raised 10 pounds that we gave to Ruth to buy utensils to carry the meals in.

The two Port Kembla hotels and the RSL prepared the meals. If there were any special dietary needs Mrs Claussen would cook the meal herself in her menswear retail store. The small group of dedicated volunteers worked on a monthly roster and went out into the community in pairs. From the early 1970s the Port Kembla Hospital took over the catering of meals. Later the service expanded to include Berkeley, Lake Heights, Primbee and Windang, which are all areas within my electorate. Mrs Warrington said:

Delivering meals to the sick and those who couldn't cook for themselves has allowed me to help

somebody else up that ladder.

Mrs Warrington still enjoys dropping off meals to people in need, although her sister-in-law now does all the driving. In the beginning heavy aluminium containers were used to carry the meals and keep them hot. They had to be washed at the end of each day. In 1979 the containers were changed to disposable packaging. Due to an increase in paperwork, the Port Kembla Meals on Wheels association now employs a coordinator. The service still provides approximately 50 meals a day.

Anyone who feels that they would like to help and who wishes to be in touch with people who do such a magnificent job can contact my electorate office. I take this opportunity also to commend the *Illawarra Mercury*—something I rarely do—for publishing a story about such a wonderful community activity that brings people together in a spirit of giving and doing for others, instead of focusing only on oneself. That is not the type of story that usually attracts a great deal of coverage in newspapers. For that reason I commend the newspaper as well as the journalist who wrote the story, Jodie Duffy, for enabling people in the Wollongong electorate and the Illawarra region to get to know those women and the wonderful work they do.

### GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [6.09 p.m.]: Greyhound racing relies on animal cruelty. There is strong support in my electorate and in the wider New South Wales community for the industry to be banned. Racing treats greyhounds as disposable commodities. Each year the greyhound racing industry kills approximately 18,000 healthy dogs. Approximately 8,000 are destroyed because they will not run fast enough to make a profit. An additional 10,000 are destroyed when they retire at three or four years of age because there are not enough homes to adopt them. Greyhounds normally live 12 to 14 years. Some retired greyhounds will be used to breed more pups for the industry but even they will be destroyed once they stop breeding, at the age of approximately six years. Racing and training are dangerous for dogs, with significant risks of injuries including broken hocks or legs and head trauma. Up to 200 injuries are reported each week during races and about five dogs are killed each week as a result of races. Often treatment of injuries is not considered economical to owners.

There have been exposés of trainers administering performance enhancement drugs to dogs, including cocaine, caffeine and anabolic steroids. Racing dogs do not live a happy life when they are not racing; they are not companion animals and are often housed in deplorable conditions in tiny barren pens or kennels, released only to train or race. There are reports that they are underfed to maintain a low racing weight. Last year *Four Corners* confirmed concerns that live baiting is widely used to train greyhounds. Live baiting involves tying live piglets, rabbits, kittens and native possums to lures, hurling them around tracks at fast speeds while greyhounds chase them and maul them to death. The bait animals suffer excruciating deaths as their bodies are ripped apart. Greyhounds are naturally gentle animals and their trainers often taunt and incite them to chase, attack and kill the bait animal. This is all done to get greyhounds to run faster and bring in a higher return at the races.

Live baiting is illegal yet *Four Corners* showed that it is used by many high-profile trainers across the country. The problem is that the greyhound racing industry profits from cruelty and profit is the only priority, not animal welfare. The incentive for cruelty will always exist and no amount of tweaking regulation and enforcement procedures will ever provide a guarantee against cruelty. Greyhound racing also profits from human misery. Between 80,000 and 160,000 Australian adults suffer from a significant gambling problem and a further 230,000 to 350,000 people are vulnerable. When gambling becomes a problem there are serious social implications. Homes and jobs are lost and law-abiding citizens engage in criminal behaviour. Family members, including elderly parents and children with no control of this participation in gambling, become victims. People's lives are ruined. Australians spend about \$19 billion on gambling products each year, equivalent to 3.1 per cent of household consumption expenditure. For New South Wales the expenditure is \$7.15 billion, which is 3.5 per cent of household consumption and higher than any other State or Territory.

Sports betting remains prevalent and has been surrounded by rigging scandals. It is disturbing that this industry received tax breaks with the support of the major parties. Greyhound racing fails to provide any long-term community or economic benefit and it is cruel. Surely government revenue could have been better spent. I share widespread community concern that the greyhound racing inquiries will do nothing more than increase enforcement and penalties and that cruelty will continue. Cruelty in horse racing must also end. Despite its glamorous image, horse racing profits from cruelty. Horses are subject to intense training and racing that cause physical stress and risks significant painful injuries, including torn ligaments and tendons, dislocated joints and bone fractures. Treating these injuries is difficult and expensive, and most injured horses are destroyed.

Outside races and training, horses are stabled where they get no social or environmental mental stimulation; the resultant boredom and mental suffering leads them to develop stereotypical behaviours and to self-mutilate. While less frequent than greyhound racing and horse racing, wild goat racing in rural regions also has a barbaric side. There is no oversight or regulation, and undercover operations have exposed animals being kicked, tormented, overridden, overworked and even dragged by the tips of their horns. Racing a feral animal is impossible to do without tormenting it and causing it to suffer, and it should be banned outright. Racing animals is about greed; animal welfare can never be guaranteed because cruelty is profitable. As a humane society we should not permit, let alone support, such treatment of voiceless sentient beings and it is time for the archaic practice of racing animals to end.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**Pursuant to sessional order matter of public importance proceeded with.**

## **NATIONAL MEALS ON WHEELS DAY**

### **Matter of Public Importance**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS** (Ku-ring-gai) [6.14 p.m.]: There can be fewer more recognised community organisations in Australia than Meals on Wheels. It is truly a household name. It had its roots in Britain in the Second World War, set up to assist the frail and aged who wanted to stay in their homes but who needed help to do so. In Australia today that theme continues. It was only about a decade after Meals on Wheels found its wheels in England that its services spread to Australia. In 1952 in South Melbourne a lady on a tricycle took it upon herself to deliver meals to the needy in their homes, eventually handing over to the Red Cross when the whole affair became too popular and the wheeled wonder could no longer keep up. South Melbourne was to be just the start and Meals on Wheels would eventually become the national icon it is today.

It is truly a marvellous organisation built on a foundation of volunteerism. Indeed, it is estimated that 78,700 volunteers will deliver meals to about 58,000 Australians this year—that is more volunteers than there are recipients. The New South Wales contribution to this effort is more than 400,000 meals delivered across the State each year. Today the New South Wales Government and this Parliament pay tribute to this great organisation, in advance of tomorrow which has been set aside as National Meals on Wheels Day. The meals that were first delivered in South Melbourne would no doubt have been a near copy of the fare that would have been showing up on tables in Great Britain. How times have changed because today Australia's great ethnic diversity is reflected in the food that is now prepared.

We are blessed with having a Meals on Wheels branch in Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai operating out of a modern industrial kitchen at Turrumurra in my electorate of Ku-ring-gai. Recently it celebrated its fifty-fifth anniversary. My staff thought they would call up Meals and Wheels Hornsby Ku-ring-gai today and find out what long-time chef Tony Lyons has up his sleeve this week for his many hundreds of clients. The menu includes Thai-style red curry with fish, butter chicken, rogan josh, steamed fish in a lemon butter sauce, a variety of other fish dishes, chicken parmigiana, massaman curry, and roast pork in a

smoked sauce, to name a few. Tony said that 14 years ago when he came to work as a chef at Hornsby-Ku-ring-gai Meals on Wheels, the majority of meals he prepared were based on what the client wanted: classic roast meals. Those days have certainly changed.

Tony's day starts at Meals on Wheels before 5.00 a.m. cooking meals for delivery later that morning. Tony's is a great story at Meals on Wheels. He signed on with the organisation 14 years ago for three months and has never left. But his is just one great story in the Meals on Wheels annals. Some volunteers have been delivering meals for more than 40 years, and I was honoured to mention some of those in my local area in one of my earliest speeches in this place some months ago. Why do they do it when they could be doing anything else and be enjoying their own retirement? They do it because they care—and that is what makes Australia such an amazing place. Not only do Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai's 1,200 volunteers deliver meals to people living alone in their own homes but increasingly they deliver to independent living clients in retirement villages and also to community groups volunteering their services to others, but calling on Meals on Wheels for help. Some volunteers are at home with their feet up when Meals on Wheels finds out it is short of helpers that day. A phone call goes out and time after time the volunteers throw on their shoes and turn up to take deliveries.

This is truly a great organisation and its benefits are far more wide reaching than we may realise. A hearty and healthy meal is keeping countless people out of hospitals, relieving the strain on the hospital system. Meals on Wheels volunteers are also a tonic for loneliness; a friendly face at the door when there often is little or no other contact with the outside world. Who knows what effect that has had on extending the lives of countless clients? I say proudly that the Federal and New South Wales governments provide funds towards the operation of Meals on Wheels. There could be no better money spent on behalf of the community. I noticed today that on the Meals on Wheels website there is a section that calls for more volunteers. I urge anyone who can find some time and resources for one of our worthiest causes to step forward. On behalf of all members in this place I say to Meals on Wheels: Thank you. Congratulations on your National Day of recognition and may you have many, many more.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [6.19 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition, I contribute to this matter of public importance recognising that tomorrow proudly marks National Meals on Wheels Day. I thank the Government for drawing this important day of recognition to the attention of this Parliament. National Meals on Wheels Day recognises the work of its 78,700 volunteers at more than 740 branches around the country, including the many wonderful volunteers in my electorate of Swansea at Swansea Meals on Wheels and Belmont Meals on Wheels.

In the course of a year, Meals on Wheels delivers more than 14.8 million meals, made by more than 78,700 volunteers, to about 53,000 recipients Australia-wide. About 4.5 million meals are delivered by 35,000 volunteers in New South Wales each year. The wonderful Swansea Meals on Wheels has been operating for an impressive 41 years. They still prepare their meals on site, fresh every day—how good is that? They have 120 volunteers and deliver about 14,500 meals a year to about 100 clients each day. The Belmont service has been operating for at least 40 years too, and like Swansea, they still cook their own meals on site every day. Their 65 volunteers prepare and distribute between 25,000 and 30,000 meals every day to over 200 clients—what a massive effort.

I am proud to inform the House that to mark National Meals on Wheels Day, the Swansea service invited me join them to volunteer just a little bit of my time to deliver some meals to locals in my electorate; an invitation I happily accepted just yesterday. To be completely honest I had an absolute ball. I met some great people and a few loveable larrikins along the way. Lee and Col were my drivers, with Gareth, Bec and Donna in the office. I have also been invited to join the kitchen crew who work so diligently to prepare these fresh and nutritious meals, and I cannot wait to give a helping hand. Volunteering is the lifeblood of organisations like Meals on Wheels, and it is the work of volunteers that has seen its continuous operation in the Swansea electorate for over 40 years. I encourage anyone in New South Wales who would like to give a little bit back by helping out to contact Meals on Wheels and volunteer some of their time. Volunteers can give as little or as much as they like, and I can guarantee

they will get a lot out of it.

The Meals on Wheels organisation has a pretty incredible history. In World War II, Meals on Wheels was established in Britain to assist older and frailer citizens who needed help to stay in their own homes. It allowed them to be checked on regularly, ensured they were well-fed and cared for and that they had a friendly visit every now and again. Today, the same applies. In 1952, a woman in Melbourne got on her tricycle to deliver some home-cooked meals to elderly people in her neighbourhood. It was a small operation that grew so rapidly that eventually the Red Cross had to step in to help her out. In 1957, five years later, Sydney City Council started Meals on Wheels in New South Wales, cooking meals in the Town Hall to be delivered throughout the inner city. They charged two shillings—that is about 20¢ per meal in today's currency—what a bargain! These days, Meals on Wheels operates with four wheels instead of three and the deliveries extend a lot further than the inner city.

With an ageing population it is more important than ever to provide services to elderly and less-mobile members of our community. Meals are prepared by chefs and designed to be nutritious. These meals offer variety and, importantly, they must be delicious. Meals are affordable—although I am sure we all agree that no price can be put on regular social interaction and a chat with a friendly local. Each meal is carefully packaged and delivered by a team of awesome volunteers. Meals on Wheels involves more than just putting food on the table. It is a friendly face, a lovingly prepared meal, a human connection for both the volunteers who prepare and deliver the service and the people receiving the meal. I pay tribute to this wonderful organisation and on behalf of all members in this place I thank volunteers for the wonderful work they do in our communities. I wish the organisation and its volunteers a fantastic National Meals on Wheels Day tomorrow. As the tagline goes, Meals on Wheels certainly is more than just a meal.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [6.24 p.m.]: Tomorrow is National Meals on Wheels Day. It is with great admiration that I applaud the 35,000 volunteers at Meals on Wheels who provide 4.5 million meals per year across New South Wales. The Meals on Wheels organisation has been a part of our lives for the past 60 years. It helps the frail and young people with disabilities by giving them the choice to stay in their homes where they are most comfortable and happy. By helping people remain independent in their homes as long as possible, these volunteers are also helping to save tax dollars and support carers to support their loved ones. As we heard earlier, Meals on Wheels originated in Britain during the Second World War to assist the elderly who wanted to stay in their own homes but who needed help to do so.

In Australia, Meals on Wheels started in 1952 in South Melbourne. The meals were delivered by a lady on a tricycle and when it became too much for her the Red Cross took over. In New South Wales, Meals on Wheels was started in March 1957 by Sydney City Council. In the first week 150 meals were cooked in the kitchen at the Town Hall and served to inner-city dwellers. The cost of a meal back then was the princely sum of two shillings. The service quickly spread to other areas. Today approximately 315 groups in New South Wales are known as Meals on Wheels or Food Services. But apart from a hot meal being delivered to thousands of homes each day across the State, to our elderly, incapacitated and many living alone, Meals on Wheels volunteers take the time to have a chat, give a friendly smile and check that all is well in the lives of the people they visit. This can make a huge difference to someone for whom a volunteer may be their only daily contact.

On the Central Coast we are fortunate to have our Meals on Wheels Centre at Tuggerah, where more than 400 volunteers deliver meals to 500 recipients each day—this equates to approximately 182,500 meals annually. Meals on Wheels provides nutritional meals to 15,000 recipients per day who may otherwise exist on tea and toast. Volunteering, which is an extremely important community service, is estimated to be valued at \$200 million per year. In New South Wales most Meals on Wheels receives funding through the combined State and Commonwealth Home and Community Care (HACC) program to cover administrative costs. Several years ago volunteers cooked and packaged hot meals literally at home. Today, because of occupational health and safety, food safety and risk management requirements, meals are prepared by catering companies. Meals on Wheels has come a long way from its

humble beginning in South Melbourne when meals were delivered on a tricycle, but the care and kindness continues to go. The commitment of Meals on Wheels volunteers to our community is worth applauding; their kindness and dedication have been duly noted today.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS** (Ku-ring-gai) [6.27 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Swansea and Terrigal for their contributions to this debate. As the member for Swansea said, there is always a need for people to step up and volunteer for this very worthy service. The great benefits of volunteering are apparent to anyone involved in voluntary organisations. These services benefit both the recipients of the service and the volunteers who give of their time and who develop great friendships with their fellow volunteers and clients of the service.

These volunteers, many of whom are retired, derive great satisfaction from being involved with such a community activity. The clients of Meals on Wheels also derive great benefits from the service, especially the human contact. The elderly in our community are an important group who have contributed to our communities and country during their lifetimes. They are also vulnerable. We heard about the great food being delivered to elderly people who use the Meals on Wheels service. These meals are important to their health and quality of life. We thank the volunteers who, with the support of government, provide this most necessary service.

**Discussion concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.30 p.m. until  
Wednesday 26 August 2015 at 10.00 a.m.**

---