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## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Thursday 10 September 2015

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

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

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Notices of Motions**

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

**Pursuant to sessional order General Business Order of the Day (General Orders) proceeded with.**

### **ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [10.10 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution made to New South Wales by those who have sought asylum, refugees, and other immigrants, including those on 457 visas.
- (2) Notes that seeking asylum is a human right and asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants should be treated with respect and dignity.
- (3) Commends the Government for its compassionate approach towards asylum seekers and refugees, including providing the most generous travel concessions in Australia.
- (4) Notes that the people of New South Wales are welcoming of the refugees and asylum seekers fleeing war and destruction who need safe passage to a new home.

My husband watched with pride as his home town of Frankfurt welcomed refugees from the heartbreaking devastation and war in Syria. I know from speaking to colleagues and constituents that the people of New South Wales are ready to welcome refugees from the global humanitarian crisis and want our Government to help facilitate their safe passage. Just this morning I was talking to Barney Gardner from Millers Point about how empty homes yet to be sold in Millers Point, Dawes Point and the Rocks, including the large Sirius building, could be used for emergency, temporary or more permanent housing. I urge the Government to consider the idea. Cities are multicultural and welcoming places where displaced people can find a new home.

Australia is a country of migrants and refugees, with 28 per cent of its population born overseas, and half live in Sydney or Melbourne. An estimated 823,000 refugees have settled here since 1901. In my electorate, large numbers of people from 200 countries make up our diverse community. Australia is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which requires us to provide protection and support to people who fear being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or who are outside their country and cannot return to their home. People seek asylum in order to be assessed as refugees. Sadly, our governments have often demonised, shut out and exposed people seeking asylum from harm, rather than



protecting and supporting them.

Syria has suffered under a brutal regime for 40 years, with support from Western governments. The massive democratic uprising in 2010-11 was harshly suppressed. The Syrian Government released a large number of terrorist prisoners and unleashed the civil war that we see playing out today. Of a population of 23 million, more than 240,000 people have been killed, with perhaps 11,000 killed in prison. There are 150,000 political prisoners. Half the population has been displaced by the conflict. There are 7.6 million internally displaced people and four million refugees. About 650,000 people are trapped in conflict zones, with the Syrian Government using illegal barrel bombs against areas where people have rebelled. In this power vacuum, some neighbouring countries and extremist groups have added to the conflict to further their own geopolitical purposes.

In Syria there has been a massive movement of refugees. More than 2,000 people are known to have died fleeing the war, of which 75 per cent were women and children. The image of Aylan Kurdi lying dead on a Turkish beach has stimulated a massive outpouring of compassion as people have realised that these are real people. Aylan's mother and sibling both died trying to reach safety. We have seen many images of families landing in boats, exhausted and then walking to safety.

Germany, France and the United Kingdom have all responded by increasing their refugee intake. In June this year 568,000 people were awaiting the outcome of asylum claims in Europe. Germany is expected to accept 800,000 new asylum applications this year alone. Angela Merkel, in particular, has shown positive leadership to counter the inevitable racism and xenophobia that comes with the fear of change, saying that there will be a zero tolerance approach to those who do not respect the human rights and dignity of people seeking protection. We have seen ordinary people across Europe reaching out with food, water, clothing, care and welcome. I have been contacted by constituents who say that they are willing to share their home with a refugee family and to provide practical help. Similar sentiments are being expressed across Australia.

The situation in Syria is dire, but it is part of a much larger crisis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] says that there were 60 million people displaced by persecution and conflict at the end of 2014. There are 38 million internally displaced persons, 20 million refugees and two million asylum seekers whose claims are yet to be processed. Those figures do not include refugees from climate change. I commend the New South Wales Government for its move to provide travel concessions to asylum seekers from 1 January next year. It is a practical measure that will help people who have left everything behind to get back on their feet.

I thank the Premier and Leader of the Opposition for their words before question time yesterday that demonstrate that New South Wales wants to do more to help in this crisis. It is impossible for us to imagine the fear and panic of the thousands of people fleeing persecution and death. Many people in New South Wales feel helpless when watching this on the news, but we can help; we can do more. I hope that we see further offers of financial aid and further increases in the refugee intake to assist people who are fleeing this cruel and non-discriminating global humanitarian crisis. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [10.17 a.m.]: I commend the member for Sydney for moving his motion on asylum seekers and refugees. It has the full support of the Government. The Government recognises the enormous contribution made to New South Wales by those who have sought asylum. Refugees and other skilled migrants, including those on 457 visas, have made a huge contribution to Australian society. Multiculturalism in New South Wales is a great success story. Much of that success is owed to those who have come to this State as asylum seekers and refugees. People from more than 140 countries have made New South Wales their home. We are all proud Australians from a diverse range of backgrounds, and this House welcomes that diversity.

Diversity has contributed to our rich and vibrant cultural life and become part of who we are. It



contributes to one of our State's most valuable economic assets. One in five small businesses, a vital part of the economy of New South Wales, is owned by people born overseas. New citizens are helping to forge stronger international business links, to the advantage of this State. Multiculturalism makes a significant contribution to the social fabric, the multicultural mix and economic activity of Sydney and New South Wales more broadly. The New South Wales Government is working hard to promote multiculturalism, Australian citizenship and cultural diversity.

Community harmony has made us one of the most successful multicultural States in the world. Each year the Government's multicultural calendar is filled with events. The most successful events are those that demonstrate our cultural diversity and recognise the achievements of the many dedicated individuals who contribute to advancing our society. Our society is improved by the asylum seekers and refugees who have chosen to call Australia home. New South Wales has always been at the forefront in settling those who come from overseas, whether through normal immigration channels or seeking refugee status and asylum.

I spent a week in Syria 25 years ago. It was an eye-opening experience. The country was at peace at the time, but the population lived in terror. I had just arrived and had not changed any money. I told a shopkeeper that I had no Syrian money, only American dollars. There was a look of terror in his eyes as he checked up and down the street to see whether anyone had seen me and then slammed the door. Such is the presence of the secret police and the security services, which have spied on the ordinary populace of Syria and terrorised them for decades. This is yet another blow to these people: seeing their State descend into what I believe is the most dreadful and barbarous of wars—a civil war where brother fights brother. We should be doing all we can to relieve not only this immediate suffering but also the lifelong suffering that the Syrian people have experienced.

I welcome the Prime Minister's announcement of Australia increasing the intake of Syrian refugees, and I commend the Premier for leading the charge on this matter and saying to the Prime Minister and to Australia that this is not just the Federal Government's problem, this is not just Tony Abbott's problem, this is New South Wales' problem and we will rise to the challenge and assist. We have seen a great deal of unity across this country in the past couple of days because we have been reminded of our character as Australians and our obligations to help those in need.

I met my partner Paul in London in late 1990. Paul was an Englishman before I imported him and he said to me, "What is an Australian?" There are clearly identifiable stereotypes we associate with Australians, but he wanted to know what it is to be an Australian. For years and years I could not answer his query—I could not put my finger on what it was to be an Australian. For two years, as mayor of Randwick, I conferred citizenship on more than 2,000 people, but it was an undefinable concept and I could not find the words to describe being an Australian. I now believe that Australia is an attitude; it is a set of values. I have found that the one thread that runs through all Australians, through all the diversity and that which divides us, is the thread of humanity, where we will reach out to somebody in need even though they may be a complete stranger. That is what I find about the Australian character: No matter where people in need come from, no matter what their belief, Australians show humanity, and we are exercising that strongest part of our character this week.

**Ms JO HAYLEN** (Summer Hill) [10.24 a.m.]: I am very pleased to speak on the motion of the member for Sydney in relation to our refugee intake and response to the crisis in Syria. When I first spoke in this House back in May I spoke of the important contribution migrants and asylum seekers have made throughout Australia, and in the Summer Hill electorate in particular. I spoke of how Marrickville would not be Marrickville without the Greek or Vietnamese migrants who have enriched our neighbourhoods; how Ashfield would not be Ashfield without the Chinese migrants Prime Minister Hawke encouraged to our shores. Each of our suburbs is a rich melting pot of cultures. Many languages are heard on our streets and our kids celebrate different cultural holidays.

Multiculturalism is one of the great hallmarks of our country and of this State. We all have value



and our country is built by many hands on the foundations of mutual respect. In every way, our diversity makes us stronger. I stand today to reiterate those values on behalf of the people of my electorate and on behalf of the Labor Opposition, and I am sure I speak for all in this place. The images coming out of Europe over the past few weeks have been deeply moving. Like many Australians, I have been moved by the videos of families running across the border into Macedonia, and I have been awed by the sheer scale of the refugee camps. I have been moved by the images of Germans applauding and welcoming refugees with gifts and open arms. Of course, like many, I have been shocked and horrified by the photograph of a little boy, lifeless and limp, washed up on a beach.

These images speak to our humanity and they call us to action. At our best, we are a generous country. We recognise that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees make a vital contribution to our culture and economy. Here in New South Wales—the biggest and boldest State in the country—we have a capacity and willingness to do more. I thank and congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for calling for an additional 5,000 Syrian refugees to be welcomed to New South Wales, irrespective of their beliefs. I congratulate Premier Baird for being one of the first political leaders to call for Australia to step up and accept additional refugees this year as a result of the crisis.

I am pleased to hear that the Federal Government has agreed to an emergency humanitarian intake of an additional 12,000 refugees. I know that many of them will make New South Wales home and will make a vital contribution, as the waves of immigrants who came before them have done. There is no doubt that the Abbott Government would not have made this announcement were it not for the leadership shown by our Premier and Leader of the Opposition over the weekend and for the thousands of Sydneysiders who turned out to the Light the Dark rally in Hyde Park to show their openness, compassion and willingness to do what is right for those facing the hardest and most tragic of circumstances.

Like many Australians, I am deeply concerned by our country's treatment of asylum seekers. In an era defined by the detention of children, turning back the boats and deaths at sea, I hope we can look back at this moment in history and say we did the right thing. I hope that we will take this opportunity to demonstrate a more compassionate approach in our immigration policy in this country. We should increase our refugee intake to at least 30,000 and end offshore detention. I am pleased that here in New South Wales we are ready and willing to welcome Syrian refugees who have fled from violence and persecution and who have taken the greatest risk, and perhaps the only opportunity they could, for a better life. At the end of their journeys we will meet them in what I know is the typical Australian way: with warmth, respect and friendship. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [10.28 a.m.]: I support the motion of the member for Sydney by acknowledging the contribution made to New South Wales by people from other lands, supporting the right of people to seek asylum and commending both the State and Federal governments for the decision to be generous, as is the Australian way, in supporting those in need. It is true that Australia has a proud record of being a nation prepared to be a good citizen of the world and of helping those in most need. Since the end of the Second World War we have taken huge numbers of refugees. We are one of the few countries that throughout that period has consistently accepted displaced people and given them permanent new homes in our land from wherever in the world they came. We have an annual quota—it has gone up and down over the years—which has recognised the commitment of this land to taking those in most need from places of danger, places of persecution and places of war elsewhere on earth.

Four million Syrians have been forced to flee their country—it is a huge number. The scenes we have seen on television are just a glimpse of the human toll this tragedy in Syria is taking. Some parts of Syria are literally like hell on earth. It is unimaginable how people try to function on a daily basis in such circumstances. Unimaginable barbarism and savagery is being perpetrated on ordinary people; there is no functioning government and no certainty about what each day will bring. Clearly a huge burden has fallen on Syria's neighbours as these millions of people have fled their homeland, and now that burden is spreading further. It is only right that Australia is taking a share of that burden and a share of the response to the humanitarian crisis.



Like those who have spoken before me, I congratulate the Premier Mike Baird on showing real leadership and for speaking up and articulating the concern of the people of this State in response to this humanitarian crisis. Other State and Territory leaders have done the same. But I would like also to extend genuine congratulations to Tony Abbott. I do not think we should be begrudging about this. The rest of us share the care and concern, but it is the Federal Government that has to make the decisions and wear responsibility for them. So particular congratulations need to go to Tony Abbott, his Cabinet and his Government, and particularly the members of the Government who spoke up and were prepared to step up and take that responsibility.

As was demonstrated by prime ministers of Australia before Tony Abbot, like Prime Minister Howard in response to the Kosovo crisis, Prime Minister Hawke in response to the massacre in Tiananmen Square or, earlier on, Prime Minister Fraser in response to the Vietnamese who came to this country, Australia has a long and proud tradition of stepping up and answering the call, from both sides of politics, right around Australia. Where there is genuine need, Australians will be counted. Equally, we have to be realistic. We have heard how many millions of people are displaced in the world. They cannot all be resettled in Australia or indeed in any country. We have to be part of the long-term solution of making their homelands safe. That is the only answer for the millions who are displaced. We have to be both compassionate—as we are, and as I am glad we have been—as well as far-sighted and sensible about trying to bring about justice and peace throughout the world, so that all can enjoy a safe home.

**Mr JIHAD DIB** (Lakemba) [10.32 a.m.]: I speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Sydney. On Tuesday this week, during my private member's statement, I spoke about the Alawir family, refugees from Syria, and how they have survived and arrived here, but also about the contributions that they have made and will make. They are already hard at work and creating their own slice of heaven in this the most beautiful and greatest country on earth. The successes of refugees will be talked about by a number of my colleagues; I am here to talk about a few more, as well as about some of the people behind the scenes. In south-western Sydney we see it on the ground: we see so many of the refugees and the contributions that they make. I am pleased that many of my colleagues are to speak about those refugees and their contributions.

I want to talk about one person in particular, the principal of Holroyd High School, Ms Dorothy Hoddinott, AO. Holroyd High School is well known for the excellent contribution that it makes towards people who come from refugee backgrounds. Dorothy Hoddinott is one of the most humble and inspiring people that I have ever met. She was awarded the Human Rights medal in 2014. She is also the first woman ever to have received the Australian College of Educators medal, which she was awarded in 2012. I have spoken with Dorothy on a number of occasions; even yesterday I had a little bit of a chat with her, talking about her school.

The school runs a transition program for refugees, to help those who come here to have all sorts of opportunities. One of the programs run by the school is a scholarship program called the Friends of Zainab. This year, there were 12 recipients under that program. Friends of Zainab pays scholarship recipients a small amount of money so that children from refugee backgrounds have an opportunity to go to university, so that they too can get on that great treadmill of life. In a *Sydney Morning Herald* op-ed, Dorothy Hoddinott gave this short description of some of the children in her school:

We have children in the school who have seen their parents murdered ... who have been raped ... who have fled for their lives and have come by boat to Australia, seeking safety, and have instead been locked up in detention centres, watching the adult world around them disintegrate into despair and madness.

Dorothy also spoke about the fact that poverty should never determine the quality of the education of such children, or their futures. She also gave a plug for Gonski, which I too will do any time I can. She said to me recently that her current battle is to get the small number of asylum seekers who do not get a



good enough Higher School Certificate mark into university. She added:

I use the word "battle" because that is what it is; and the injustices will continue unless at least some of us are prepared to engage in those battles.

Society has its gems; Dorothy Hoddinott is one of those gems. She does the hard work through her leadership and through her inspiration. We could talk about our rights under international law and our obligations under the convention on treating asylum seekers and refugees with respect and dignity. But the deeper question is: How do we respond at this time of humanitarian crossroads? Do we want to be known for our compassion or for our hardness? What is our legacy? What is it that we, as a nation, stand for? We are signatories to the United Nations convention, but that does not mean we pick and choose and do so at a time when it suits us. We are a nation that embodies humanities, as my colleague said. I quote this recent statement:

No one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land.

That remark has received a lot of coverage. Before we start to demonise refugees we need to, if we can, walk a mile in their shoes. The quote encapsulates everything that is crucial about refugees. We often hear people talk about so-called queue jumpers; but the fact is that when you are desperate you might just jump that queue—that is, assuming that there actually is a queue in which to line up in the first place. We have to treat these people as humans, as people like ourselves: mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. We showed our compassion in the Kosovo catastrophe of the 1990s, and we took in thousands of people. We, as a nation, found a way. Twenty years later, those new Australians are proud of this nation and are grateful that it saved their lives; they are proud of their heritage and proud of Australia. That is who we are: a generous and welcoming nation. We are a patchwork of many different fabrics, with each of those fabrics bringing something special and unique.

I congratulate Luke Foley and Mike Baird on all of their work and for their bipartisanship on this matter. They make us proud to be members of Parliament. I must confess, though, being a little bit concerned when I hear a member of Parliament, in stark contrast, questioning the Premier's message of compassion, hope and humanitarian action. As a final note, I would like to mention the Light the Dark evening, when thousands of people from across Australia stood together. The Government's recent announcement to take 12,000 refugees is a great step forward. I did not look at Aylan and wonder about his religion or his race. When I looked at Aylan, I thought of myself as a father and as a human being. We are a generous community, and there will always be a place for someone in need. We are at a point in history that we will look back on in times to come and be proud of the fact that we sat in this Parliament when these two leaders showed the value of bipartisanship on issues of human justice. I commend the motion to the House. I thank the member for Sydney for bringing it to this House, and I stand proud to have spoken in support of it.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.36 a.m.]: I would like to add to some of the comments made in the debate, and I commend all of the comments that have been made in the House this morning, especially in relation to the generosity, compassion and humanity displayed by all Australians. I particularly commend the actions of Premier Mike Baird in leading on the front foot, as he has done so many times, backed up of course by our Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, with actions, not just words. We can stand around and talk about this matter until the cows come home, but the fact is that Australia has taken this humanitarian action to save people's lives. I particularly like the sentiment expressed by the Prime Minister in saying that we will particularly focus on women and children.

I always like to add something personal to any debate. That is why I am pleased to stand in the Chamber today, because there will not be too many other occasions when I can advise the House of an experience I had in 2008 in meeting a lady here by the name of Wofur Sultan, who migrated to America as a teenager. She spoke out quite publicly against the persecution she suffered from Muslim men against her while she was a young Muslim lady in Syria. I listened intently to her incredible story,



particularly when she arrived in America and saw a lady who was working as a labourer doing repair work in an electricity authority. She could not believe that a woman could be given such an incredibly important job. I was struck by the moment: we would see that woman as a labourer doing a job, yet Wofur, having suffered the persecution that she had and being treated like a third-world citizen, looked on in amazement at this lady who had a job working in the electricity industry in America.

Wofur, an inspirational lady, was featured on the front page of *Time Magazine* some time ago. I will never forget the experience, and I think of where we are at the moment in relation to these many millions of people who, persecuted in their very troubled country, decide to flee from it. There is one thing I should mention. I commend the actions of Europe and the Western countries which, once again, are putting their hand up and making humanitarian efforts to save people's lives. But what is Saudi Arabia doing? That is a country whose wealth per capita is greater than that of Germany. Saudi Arabia has a wealth of resources greater than any other country in the world. It is a country that directly adjoins Syria. It should be condemned for its lack of action to deal with this refugee crisis. It sits dormant on this great human tragedy, which is happening on its doorstep, and has said nothing; it remains silent and should be forever condemned for its actions. I commend the motion to the House and support all the comments that have been made.

**Ms JULIA FINN** (Granville) [10.40 a.m.], by leave: I speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Sydney. It is a timely and important motion. I very much welcome the decision to allow an additional 12,000 Syrian refugees over and above our annual refugee intake. I commend the statements of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in supporting and welcoming those refugees to New South Wales. Of course, as New South Wales has the largest Arabic-speaking population in Australia, it is only fitting that we take a large proportion of those refugees. It will be easier for people to settle in communities where they can communicate with people around them.

The war has gone on since 2011 and 240,000 people have died. Around four million refugees have left the country and another 7.6 million people are internally displaced. There have been human rights abuses on both sides of the war. The Assad regime has ruled with the use of political persecution for many years and has used secret police widely throughout the country. I have travelled to Syria twice and can state that these police were recognisable and easy to see around the place. For the decades that the Assad regime has ruled, religious freedom has been allowed while political freedom has not. That changed when the war began and Islamists commenced their involvement in the war.

Forty per cent of Syria's population is made up of Shia, Christian, Jewish and Druze residents. Since the war began all those people have been persecuted, along with moderate Sunnis. Some of the first people to be displaced by the war were the Palestinian refugees who have been living in Syria for decades. I have travelled to many of the wonderful World Heritage sites in Syria and I have been really dismayed over the last few years to see them being destroyed. The Umayyad Mosque, the fourth most significant mosque in Islam, was one of the first monuments to be badly damaged by the fighting. The recent scenes in Palmyra, with archaeologists and curators of museums being murdered and ancient monuments being destroyed—monuments that have stood throughout Roman, Christian, pre-Christian and Muslim civilisations and the rule of Syria—is an absolute disgrace.

Krak de Chevaliers was the scene of fighting for many, many years. That castle took 130 years to build. It was taken by the opposition and when the opposition group split, they fought among themselves within the castle. Only last year it was taken back by a combination of the government and local militias. Of course, the damage to Aleppo, Damascus and the other cities has been enormous. My seat of Granville has an enormous Arabic population; well over 20 per cent of the electorate was born in the Middle East. It also supports many asylum seekers and refugees from around the world—from West African countries to Iran and Afghanistan. Of course, it hosts Holroyd High School, about which the member for Lakemba spoke and its wonderful principal, Dorothy Hoddinott. Holroyd High School does a fantastic job in supporting refugee students, not just from the local community but also from Parramatta, Auburn and other parts of Sydney.



I cannot mention the conflict in Syria without mentioning the huge support given to people by the Kurdish forces. I note that Syria's great national hero, Salah El Deen or Saladin, was Kurdish. There is a great monument to him in Damascus and his legacy is one of the reasons why the Kurds have been perhaps more sympathetic to the government and the government has been more sympathetic to the Kurds over the years. Aylan Kurdi, the poor child whom we all saw lying dead on the beach—a tragedy that inspired so many people around the world to finally take some action—was Kurdish. It is wonderful that so many people have seen fit to support the Syrian community but that is in stark contrast to the situation the Tamils faced after 2009 and the lack of sympathy they received. We should note the persecution we added to that of the Sri Lankan government when considering applications for asylum from Tamils.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [10.44 a.m.], by leave: I make a contribution to the motion of the member for Sydney and commend the member for moving the motion. During the Fifty-fifth and Fifty-sixth parliaments that I have had the privilege to be a member of, there have been occasions when the Chamber has dealt with motions and issues that have received bipartisan support; this is one of those motions. It is a grave situation in the Middle East and Europe, with the displacement of people and refugees seeking asylum, shelter and refuge.

As the member for Fairfield and a representative and resident of south-west Sydney, I know too well what happens when asylum seekers and refugees arrive on our doorstep. It should be put into perspective that people from many different cultures reside in Syria. There are Syrians, Chaldeans, Mandaean, Druzes, Yazidis; there are many different cultures. South-west Sydney, including Fairfield and Liverpool, has community groups, services and places of worship for these people. Settlement Services International does a great job when asylum seekers and refugees arrive here and it provides six months of service to them. However, more needs to be done because six months is not a long time.

When people arrive in Fairfield the Syrian Resource Centre works very hard for them and does not turn away a single person. It caters to people from Assyrian, Chaldean, Yazidis, Mandaean backgrounds and works tirelessly to provide ongoing support post-Settlement Services International. However, it is critical to highlight that the Assyrian Resource Centre has only one worker, who is Carmen Lazar. She has only been provided with \$300,000 over three years to operate this office. Carmen Lazar receives phone calls on her mobile and phone calls late at night at her home from people in south-west Sydney and from overseas who are seeking assistance. Carmen is one of our guardian angels in our community. At the same time as caring for people who seek assistance, she trains and is supported by wonderful volunteers. The Syrian Resource Centre requires urgent assistance because Carmen cannot manage on her own.

Importantly, the Federal Government, the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition are working together. We are Australians; we are a country that was built upon the hard work and hands and shoulders of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. As was so eloquently pointed out by the member for Castle Hill, it is disappointing that some countries in this world do not pull their weight, particularly in the Middle East, and are not providing a single person with shelter and assistance. I once again commend the member for Sydney for this motion. We are very proud Australians and I am sure every single member will do their utmost to ensure that the Syrian refugees who arrive on our doorstep very soon are given the support, love and care that they deserve in this great country, Australia.

**Ms JENNY LEONG** (Newtown) [10.48 a.m.], by leave: I thank the member for Sydney for working collaboratively with this Chamber to enable this motion to be reordered so that we have the opportunity to speak on it today. Seeking asylum is a human right. No-one is illegal. Over many years while working at Amnesty International, I was closely connected with campaigns to protect and defend the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Australia and across the globe. While working for Amnesty in London, I worked closely with human rights advocates and Middle East experts on what, at that stage, was the emerging human rights crisis in Syria.



In 2011, in my role as a crisis campaigner with Amnesty's head office, I found myself with a megaphone and a group of Syrian human rights activists and campaigners on the pavement outside the United Nations building in New York calling for global action to respond to what at that stage was thousands of innocent civilians who had died or were fleeing persecution and violence. Today that number has reached the tragedy of 250,000 men, women and children who have died. I am proud to be in this Chamber representing The Greens, a party that has had a long, strong and proud tradition of standing up for the compassionate treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. When I heard the compassionate words of former Leader of The Greens Bob Brown, I was inspired to get involved in politics; and that is why I now find myself standing here in this place. It is with much pleasure that in this Chamber we are now showing a sense of compassion and leadership towards responding to the issue of the treatment of asylum seekers in this country.

The president of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Gillian Triggs, confirmed this morning that there are Syrians currently living on Manus Island and Nauru in detention, as well as Syrians living in the community on temporary protection visas in this country. We know that some Syrians are being held in mandatory detention at Villawood, less than an hour's train ride away from this House. We must remember that this is not a problem just happening overseas and elsewhere. The violations of human rights of people are happening in our jurisdiction, in this State and in our city of Sydney where we gather to represent its people. I acknowledge the compassionate words of the Premier, as many have done, and the recent compassionate act taken by his Government to grant travel concessions to asylum seekers.

Given the detention of Syrians and many others in our city now, I do question whether we could be doing more. Today I recognise and respect that we are moving and working in a spirit of collaboration, something that for so long has been missing from this debate. So I will not move amendments or express changes to this motion, on which we will reach consensus. I wonder if in this Chamber we would reach agreement on calling for an end to the mandatory detention of asylum seekers in this State. I wonder if we would be able to join together to show compassion and to say that we do want people living in our State to be subject to the inhumane treatment of living on temporary protection visas.

At the very least, if we are collectively recognising the humanitarian disaster in Syria, surely we can all agree that we should immediately accept the applications of those from Syria who are currently in our detention centres and those who are currently locked up on Manus Island and Nauru and move to swiftly grant asylum to those Syrians living in limbo on temporary protection visas in our community. As a Parliament, in the spirit of this motion, let us also ensure in the coming weeks that we provide financial support and the services needed to assist those being relocated in our State. I thank the member for Sydney for allowing us to consider this important matter.

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [10.52 a.m.], by leave: I acknowledge all those who have contributed to this debate as well as those who are not able to do so today but share in the sentiment that has been shown across the House. I am delighted to support the motion moved by the member for Sydney and to use this opportunity to welcome yesterday's announcement by Prime Minister Tony Abbott in the Federal Government that Australia will take an additional 12,000 Syrian refugees. This is a sensible and compassionate response. I acknowledge the leadership of the Premier, the Hon. Mike Baird, for articulating in a meaningful way our responsibility as a global citizen to react to the current crisis and for putting the issue on the agenda of his Federal counterparts. I think his actions have not only spurred an outbreak of common sense and benevolence at a political level but have also, most importantly, helped to bring the community along on this initiative.

There is one thought we should all have when we see vision of thousands of refugees off our shores or in the waters off Europe, or massed at railway stations or by the roadside, stateless and with only the possessions they can carry, heading for an unknown destination where they hope to begin their lives anew. That thought is: there but for the grace of God go I. In other circumstances this could be any of us or any of our family members, leaving our homes and all we know behind for an uncertain future in a



bid to protect our families and give them a life with some semblance of hope. Although 12,000 refugees brought to Australia will make only a small impression in the problem at hand—there are hundreds of thousands of displaced people on the move as a result of the Syrian conflict—this country's response will make a vast difference to every one of those 12,000 lives. By opening our arms and our country, we give them safety and the opportunity for a secure future.

The benefits of taking these people in do not flow one way. Australia has benefitted monumentally from the contributions of people who have come to this country as refugees. As mayor of the City of Lake Macquarie in former times, I had the privilege of officiating at ceremonies to bestow citizenship on people who had migrated to Australia under these circumstances. Invariably they were hardworking members of their new communities, enormously grateful for the opportunity their new country had given them. I would be surprised if other members of this place who have been mayors or councillors and who have attended such ceremonies have not had similar experiences.

One man from southern Sudan sticks in my memory. He was a quiet man, who would lower his eyes in deference when speaking. He and his family had fled terrible violence and persecution in their country. One of his brothers had been murdered and another was missing, presumed dead. He did not say much at the ceremony but afterwards I received a heartfelt handwritten letter from him in which he thanked me, the then member for Charlton, Greg Combet, who had also officiated at the ceremony and the Australian people for giving him a chance. He wrote, "I was dead. You have given me life." Our decision to welcome Syrian refugees similarly offers life and hope to people who have run short of hope. I commend the Federal and State governments for their actions in addressing the current humanitarian crisis, and I thank the member for Sydney for bringing this important motion to the House. More so, I acknowledge the coming together of the members of Parliament across this House.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [10.56 a.m.], by leave: I commend the member for Sydney for moving this important motion on refugees and asylum seekers and add my voice in support of it. At the outset, I acknowledge that the recent decision of the Federal Government and our Premier's decision relating to concession fares are welcome and positive developments. I also acknowledge the statements the Premier has made publicly to help lead this debate. It was in Vienna, of all places, during the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights that I first met people from the region, and Kurdish people in particular, who had been fighting for dignity and freedom. That prompted my strong interest in the plight of asylum seekers and refugees and how we manage situations of conflict. Today people have said loudly and clearly that this nation has a role to play in dealing with the source of refugees and asylum seekers. That needs to be emphasised. We need a foreign policy that promotes peace and social justice so that we can avoid further tragedies.

The Government's proposal to take an increased number of refugees is an important step forward. Syrian refugees are not seeking a better life; they are running for their lives. They have experienced an incredible amount of conflict and pain, and it is our responsibility to help support that community. The Greens called for \$150 million of additional funding for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] to help address the crisis. It is one-tenth of the amount that the Federal Government spends on locking up refugees offshore every year. Although the Federal Government's contribution does not meet the level we requested, it is welcome and we should acknowledge the Prime Minister for his work.

The Federal Government's commitment to accept 12,000 refugees is positive but, to put it in perspective, Germany will take refugees numbers equivalent to approximately 1 per cent of its population. If Australia were to take the same proportion we would accept 230,000 refugees, not 12,000. To put that in context, 12,000 people equals around 12 days of population increase in this nation—our population grows by about 1,000 people each day through immigration and child birth. The figure of 12,000 is relatively small, but of course it is welcome. The Greens supported a refugee intake of 20,000, which was proposed by Amnesty International, the Refugee Council of Australia and others. However, we welcome and acknowledge the Government's commitment.



I thank all members who have spoken today and the people in the community who have raised their voices. I acknowledge the Light the Dark rallies that were held around Australia where tens of thousands of people asked for a more compassionate approach to the issue of refugees and asylum seekers. At the beginning of my contribution I spoke about peace and social justice. We need to ensure that our foreign policy position does not exacerbate problems in other countries but instead builds capacity and promotes peace and democracy. That is one reason The Greens support a review of the Kurdistan Workers' Party [PKK] to ensure that its voice can be heard without its being minimised as a terrorist organisation or a negative influence. I thank members for allowing me to contribute to this debate. On a day like this it is important that we come together in a positive and unified manner. I acknowledge the contributions of Coalition members and the work of the Premier and Prime Minister.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [11.00 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Coogee, the member for Riverstone, the member for Summer Hill, the member for Lakemba, the member for Castle Hill, the member for Granville, the member for Fairfield, the member for Newtown, the member for Balmain and my Independent colleague, the member for Lake Macquarie, for their contributions to the debate. It is wonderful that members from across this Parliament have come together on a motion that talks about the importance of welcoming people who are in devastating and desperate situations in Syria and around the world during the global humanitarian crisis. The motion is particularly important because Australia does not have the best record on dealing with asylum seekers and refugees.

We know that the Australian Government cut the refugee program by one-third in 2013 while the world's displacement crisis was growing to its highest level in 70 years. The Australian Government cut overseas aid and funds to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] and shifted funds from humanitarian programs into military responses. That may very well include bombing in the region, which could cause further displacement and more civilian tragedies. We know that we do not have the best record on holding people in offshore detention centres while paying a great deal of money to do it. We have spent \$55 million for Cambodia to take just four refugees, one of whom has already left. The Senate inquiry into Nauru uncovered more than 67 cases of child abuse, as well as sexual assault and the death of an asylum seeker in detention. Media reports have exposed poor management and spying on Federal members of Parliament. Despite that, the Government has announced that operators of the facilities will have their contracts renewed.

In response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria the Australian Government first committed to taking 4,400 people from Syria and Iraq instead of other countries, which is 30 per cent of the 13,750 places Australia provides under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program—a tiny number. Fortunately, after the encouragement of many people within the Federal Government, the Federal Opposition, the Federal crossbench and the State Parliament, the Government increased the number. Along with the other speakers in this debate, I welcome the fact that the Federal Government has now offered to take 12,000 permanent Syrian refugees beyond the existing humanitarian increase and announced an extra \$44 million in funding to the UNHCR. I share community concern that, just as war does not discriminate against whom it harms, we should not discriminate amongst refugees based on their religion or ethnic background.

Pressure continues for the Australian Government to increase the overall refugee intake during this crisis. Constituents who have contacted me have supported a big increase to the Australian refugee intake and to aid to provide crisis support to the many thousands of people who have fled their homes. What they have not been calling for is increased bombing. I hope my motion goes some way to lighting the dark in this desperate situation. I thank the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and all members who have spoken strongly in support of my motion today. I thank Federal Senator Sarah Hanson-Young and others who continue to be strong advocates for asylum seekers and refugees. I also thank the President of the Human Rights Commission, Gillian Triggs, for her amazing and outstanding work. As I said, I hope this motion helps to light the dark in a desperate and heartbreaking situation. Many people in New South Wales are looking forward to welcoming the Syrian refugees to their home towns and cities. I



commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## **SHOALHAVEN HOSPITAL**

**Debate resumed from 27 August 2015.**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.06 a.m.], in reply: I acknowledge in the Speaker's gallery my very good friend and State Electoral Conference president Councillor Andrew Guile from the Shoalhaven, who does wonderful work in the independent schooling sector. It is great to see him here. I thank him for his support in spite of what he has to work with as far as the candidate for Kiama is concerned. I am delighted to conclude this debate on Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital and note that Shoalhaven City Council has been incredibly supportive of our efforts in this regard. As I indicated the last time I brought this matter to the House, this motion relates to improvements to car parking at Shoalhaven hospital and a new linear accelerator for the hospital. As I indicated in that debate, the hospital has been fortunate to receive a linear accelerator. Tragically, we have found that the demand for cancer treatment services means that a second linear accelerator is required.

I was told by Anthony Arnold, who does an exceptional job managing oncology services at the hospital, that demand for the first linear accelerator has grown to about 93 per cent so a second accelerator is required. I congratulate Paul Dean and all the members of the Shoalhaven linear accelerator committee, particularly the Lions clubs in the Shoalhaven. They have fought hard to ensure that we get cancer services for the Shoalhaven. They are very committed to seeing a second linear accelerator installed at the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital. It will make a difference for country people who have to travel enormous distances. As I said when I first brought this matter to the House, this issue has affected my family deeply. It fills me with pride to know that my advocacy in this place, together with the community campaign, has brought about the delivery of these services that will serve our community. We have achieved what we set out to achieve, and we are supporting those who need our support.

The car park upgrade, which is desperately needed, is going to be funded by this Government, and I take this opportunity to commend Minister Skinner for the \$8 million that will go towards improving the car park at Shoalhaven hospital. My friend and colleague the member for South Coast has also been a strident advocate of improving services at the Shoalhaven hospital. I thank her and all the other members of the community who have campaigned for this improvement. We do not want nurses, doctors and other staff walking through the dark to find their parked cars, particularly during shift changes. I thank the member for Keira for his contribution to this debate, but what I cannot thank the Labor Party for is reciprocal support on these matters. Of course, the Labor Party has no interest, and never had any interest, in the Shoalhaven. It ignored the Shoalhaven when it was in government for 16 years and it continues to ignore the Shoalhaven. In fact, those opposite did not make a single mention of the Illawarra or the Shoalhaven in the infrastructure strategy they took to the last election.

So I say to the Labor Party that it would be nice if we had a genuine debate, but it is hard to have a genuine debate about somewhere when you need to use a global positioning system [GPS] to get there—and that is how those opposite treat the Shoalhaven. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Keira. Of course I will continue to take up the fight in this place for great local health services. This Government has made great investments in health services in the Illawarra—for example, the upgrade of Bulli Hospital. These are investments that the member for Keira was not able to match during the election campaign. There has been the \$106 million upgrade of Wollongong Hospital; the \$27 million upgrade of car parking at that hospital, which will double the number of parking spaces; and the \$251 million investment at Shellharbour Hospital, which, again, the member was not able to match at the recent



election campaign.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Where is she?

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Of course none of the Labor Party members representing the Illawarra region are in the Chamber for this debate. So little do they care about funding health in the Shoalhaven that none of them are present. This Government is investing in health services. This Government is investing in health care. We will continue to deliver for the region whilst the Labor Party remains conspicuously silent.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**ALISON QUIRK, YMCA NSW YOUTH PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATIVE**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [11.11 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Moree Secondary College Captain Alison Quirk on her selection to represent the Northern Tablelands in the 2015 YMCA NSW Youth Parliament.
- (2) Notes that Alison has recently returned home after a stint in Sydney at a political boot camp with 159 other students from across the State who are formulating bills that will be presented and debated in the Parliament in July.
- (3) Wishes Alison a successful and enjoyable experience in the Youth Parliament as a representative and ambassador for rural young people.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** What a hardworking member.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** I note the interjection. Alison Quirk is an outstanding young woman. One of the great privileges of being a member of this House is that it affords us an opportunity to praise publicly people from our electorates—in my case the electorate of the Northern Tablelands—and particularly young people. It always gives me pleasure to praise young people in this place, particularly people like Alison Quirk, who I have no doubt post their secondary schooling will leave an indelible mark not only on their local community but also on society in general. Alison Quirk is a very impressive young woman. She is not only studying for her Higher School Certificate [HSC] at the moment—which I anticipate she will absolutely blitz because she is incredibly hardworking and intelligent—but also a trainee nurse. She is following in the footsteps of her father, David Quirk, who does an excellent job as the general manager of the Mehi Cluster within the Hunter New England Local Health District, based around Moree. I am very pleased to say that Alison takes more than a passing interest in politics, which I think is wonderful.

When I visit schools in my electorate I always say to young people—for whom politics may seem boring, daggy and uncool—that it is wonderful when they are interested in issues and decision-making processes in their community and are willing to put up their hand, stand up and speak out on behalf of not only young people but also the entire local community. I see Alison regularly when I visit Moree Secondary College, at the hospital, where she is doing some trainee work, and at other community events. I know that she had an absolute blast at the Youth Parliament this year. What a great event it is. I acknowledge the YMCA and the Youth Parliament it runs. I am sure every member of this House is familiar with this project and has young people representing their electorates in the Youth Parliament. There they learn about government, Parliament and how it all works. I hope that nurtures their interest in



public life and the ways they can advocate, whether in local government, State Government, Federal Government or in leadership roles in their local community.

I acknowledge the YMCA for the terrific initiative that is the Youth Parliament, and now there is also a Junior Parliament. I certainly enjoyed being involved in the Youth Parliament. I know that members representing the electorates of Castle Hill, Kiama, Tweed, Tamworth and Wyong and Mr Deputy-Speaker also enjoyed being involved—I am sure it is much easier to preside over debates in the Youth Parliament than debates in this Chamber. Alison enjoyed her time at the Youth Parliament. She presented a bill about renewable energy in this State, particularly in country areas. That is an issue close to both our hearts. In Alison's own home town of Moree there is a brand-new solar farm project in its final stages of construction. Those 220,000 panels will have the capacity to generate electricity to power 15,000 homes per annum. It is a \$168 million project. When you see that happening on your community's doorstep why would you not be passionate about encouraging more renewable energy in your region?

Alison is studying for her HSC at the moment, as I said earlier. I put on record my congratulations on the way that she represented the Northern Tablelands electorate in this place. She represented the region with great distinction, honour and intelligence. I also wish her the very best of luck in her upcoming HSC exams, which will commence very soon. I know that she will be successful because she is a very diligent and conscientious young woman. She is also extremely articulate. I just cannot say enough about how impressive she is. It has been a pleasure to know her for the short time I have. She is a most impressive young woman.

I have encouraged Alison to continue her involvement with the Youth Parliament and to urge other young people to become involved. After finishing her studies, she plans to pursue a career in the health sector. I hope that she keeps in mind that there could be a career option for her in this place—but not too soon—or in local government or Federal Parliament. Alison is a brilliant young woman. It has been a pleasure to get to know her. I congratulate her on her achievements so far in life and wish her all the best for the upcoming Higher School Certificate. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS** (Wyong) [11.18 a.m.]: I speak for the Opposition on the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands. I congratulate not only Moree Secondary College Captain Alison Quirk but also the YMCA on the wonderful NSW Youth Parliament program that it runs each year. The Youth Parliament is not a one-off event held here in Parliament House. It involves a training camp and a residential camp. I know from people in my electorate who have been involved in the program that participants spend a lot of time learning about how the political system works. They also work together to draft motions that advocate for their communities.

I am pleased to tell the House that a young fellow named Daniel Turner who works part time in my office was chosen to attend the Youth Parliament a few years ago. He now acts as a mentor for students involved in the program. Daniel is passionate about his community and took the program very seriously. He wanted to give back to it by continuing to participate afterwards. Daniel is significant because he has a disability. He is very intelligent and epitomises the standard and skills of the young people involved in this very good program. A young lady I sponsored previously in the program, Taylor Marks, graduated in law from Bond University this year. The program is a springboard for people. It teaches them about their local community and about how Parliament works. It inspires them to go on to bigger and better things in their careers.

The Opposition congratulates the member for Northern Tablelands on raising, as he often does, matters relating to his electorate. This debate is an opportunity for members to recognise not only young people who stand out in their community but also the great program that is the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament. Long may it continue, and may its popularity grow. It is incumbent upon all members to look for people in their communities who would benefit from participation in the program. The Opposition supports the motion and congratulates Moree Secondary College Captain Alison Quirk on her participation in the Youth Parliament and wishes her well in her Higher School Certificate this year.



**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [11.23 a.m.]: I speak in support of the motion moved by the excellent member for Northern Tablelands, Adam Marshall. Prior to becoming the member for Northern Tablelands, he was mayor of Gunnedah Shire Council. I recall that he was the youngest mayor in Australia. The member had a keen interest in politics before that. He has long been involved in community issues and has worked to make a difference in Gunnedah, Tamworth and communities in the electorate of Northern Tablelands. The member has been an active participant in his community from a young age. He is also a former student of Farrer Agricultural High School. Now he is the member for Northern Tablelands.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Tamworth will return to the leave of the motion.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** I will. I am talking about the member for Northern Tablelands and his interest in community issues from a very young age to illustrate that the Youth Parliament affords the same opportunity to young people. The Youth Parliament involves them in their community and inspires them to take an interest in what is happening around them. Participation in the Youth Parliament encourages young people to put their hand up and to say, "This is what is happening in my own backyard; I am going to take an interest in it and make sure that I have a say." Young leaders from the electorate of Tamworth have participated in the Youth Parliament. In 2013 the participants were Logan Katter and Benjamin Draper, who attended Farrer Agricultural High School, like the member for Northern Tablelands. Brandon Dickson, the captain of Peel High School, attended the Youth Parliament in 2014. Brandon is an outstanding young individual. He wrote to me following his involvement in the Youth Parliament stating that he was very excited to become a member and could not thank my office enough for its support. He said:

I am glad that I have had the opportunity to learn and share the concerns that young adults face in the Tamworth area and other areas across New South Wales.

That is why the Youth Parliament is so important. I thank teachers for their support and for encouraging young people to become involved in the Youth Parliament and in their communities. We can all become too tied up with our own world and with looking after number one. We need to look after number two, three, four, five and six. We do that by putting up our hand and saying, "Yes, I am going to make a difference." The Youth Parliament is a good way to do that.

Wonderful opportunities are available to young people these days. The Youth Parliament, which is organised by the YMCA, is one of those opportunities. I encourage every young person who has an interest in the community to put up their hand, take that step forward and to say, "Yes, I want to have a go. I want to make a difference in my community." Young people who take part in the Youth Parliament really enjoy it. They have my support and the support of the member for Northern Tablelands. The member does an outstanding job and shows why the Youth Parliament deserves our continued support.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.27 a.m.]: I am delighted to support the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands. I acknowledge that he was a participant in the Youth Parliament, as was I, in the National Youth Parliament in 1999. This year Kiama was represented in the Youth Parliament by two eminently capable young women, Bianca Crapis and Imogen Bakewell. Bianca and Imogen demonstrated in this Chamber why they were up to the job of representing Kiama. It is wonderful to see young women not only taking an interest in politics but also standing up for their community. I am delighted to support the participation of women in politics. We need more women in this Chamber, and that is why I supported the participation of Bianca and Imogen in the Youth Parliament.

Bianca and Imogen raised in this place issues that are important to people in the electorate of Kiama. I was proud to hear them raise the topic of mental health and wellbeing. Both young women have deep empathy for the people of the electorate of Kiama. They understand why it is important to stand up



for mental health services. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I sat in your chair and presided over the Youth Parliament. The youth parliamentarians spoke with compassion and conviction about the issues for which they were advocating. I am sure that every member of this place was also incredibly proud to see what their member said and how strongly and stridently they argued their points. I am very, very proud of each and every one of them.

The Youth Parliament program run by the YMCA should be supported by all members. I remember being in a classroom giving an address on civics, and when I asked if there were any questions a young person said, "I am not interested in politics." I said to that young person, "I understand that you are not interested, but you are affected, and if you are going to be a little bit affected you should be a little bit interested." My message to all young people is that they should take an interest in politics; it is about the things that make up our society and our community, be it the local council, the State Government or the Federal Government. Politicians across the divide—Liberal, Labor, Greens, every side of this House—are interested in what those who are the future of our community have to say. The people who sat in this Youth Parliament will one day be leading our community, and we will be looking to them to deal with the confounding and confronting issues facing us.

The Youth Parliament program encourages young people to take an interest in politics; it encourages them to gain a greater understanding of civics and public affairs. I commend, support and congratulate all sides of this House for their participation. It is apt that the member for Northern Tablelands has moved this motion and I congratulate him again. He constantly and continually encourages young people to participate in the program. The Kiama Youth Forum was held in this place not too long ago. The forum brings together student leaders from across my electorate. Last year we also held the inaugural Kiama Mental Health Youth Forum, which brought together young people to talk about issues affecting youth specifically in the area of mental health. This was born out of the concept introduced by the member for Hornsby, who held a similar youth forum in his electorate that specifically examined mental health. It was no accident that the Kiama Youth Forum was held; it was an initiative of young people who had attended the forum the year before.

There is no doubt that mental health is an increasing concern. People are identifying the issues that we are confronting. It is not a case of the incidence of mental health increasing; it is a case of people being prepared to talk about it. It is out of forums such as the Youth Parliament and the individual youth forums that members hold that these issues come to the fore and young people get the opportunity to have their say and to make an important contribution to the wider public debate. I thank my friend the member for Northern Tablelands for his hard work in relation to young people and for moving this motion today so that we can commend members of the 2015 Youth Parliament.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** With the indulgence of the House, I would like to make some comments about the Youth Parliament. I endorse all the comments made by members from both sides of the House this morning in support of the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament. This year in my electorate I was very pleased to be associated with and to encourage three young people who attended the Youth Parliament: Josie McIntyre from Tenterfield and Jye Beardow and Nicola Barlow from Lismore. They were a real credit not only to themselves but also to the schools they represented for the time and effort they put into the Youth Parliament. They certainly appreciated the experience they gained from attending the Youth Parliament.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [11.31 a.m.], in reply: At the outset I thank the member for Wyong, the member for Tamworth and the member for Kiama for their contributions to this debate. It is a discussion because I think everyone is in agreement that Alison Quirk is an incredibly impressive young woman—and her representation of the Northern Tablelands in this year's Youth Parliament was outstanding—and that the YMCA Youth Parliament deserves and has everyone's support. It is a great initiative and it is pleasing to see it continuing to grow. I have certainly benefited from it myself, as the member for Kiama pointed out. However, more importantly, it is about making young people aware of the role of parliaments and the processes that are followed, and trying to encourage



them to take an interest in them as they move on into their adult years. I reiterate that Alison Quirk is a young woman whom I am very confident, like many of the young people who have attended the Youth Parliament—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** She will be a good local member one day.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** I am sure she will be. In fact, if she moved to, say, Kiama or to Gerringong, I think she would be a real runner for the next preselection. But she will not be moving there because she is a country girl at heart and I am sure that she will stay there. Alison's passion is for people in her community, for her peers and for the health profession—just like her father—and I am sure that whatever path she chooses in life she will be incredibly successful and will leave an enormous positive legacy. She has already been recognised for her leadership potential: she is captain of Moree Secondary College and she has been a representative in the NSW Youth Parliament.

I am more than happy to do everything I can to encourage her and to support her in the remainder of her secondary schooling and in whatever path she chooses post-secondary school. Well done, Alison, you have done Moree proud, your family proud and your school proud, and the electorate of the Northern Tablelands is incredibly proud of you. Thank you for what you did in representing our electorate and, again, all the very best for your Higher School Certificate studies and your future career endeavours. I am sure you will be blessed with many more successes. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **PRINCES HIGHWAY UPGRADE**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.36 a.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Government on upgrading the Princes Highway at Gerringong, Berry and South Nowra.
- (2) Notes the historic and record spending on roads in the Illawarra region.

I am proud to move this motion today, not only to reflect on the record investment we are seeing in the Princes Highway but also to continue to advocate and to hold the Government to account in relation to roads funding in my electorate. It is a pleasure to see my friend and colleague the member for Keira, the shadow Minister, in the Chamber. I am sure he will be contributing to this debate. I know that, like me, he is proud of the fact that this Liberal-Nationals Government is investing record sums in roads throughout the Illawarra. I acknowledge that the Premier was in my electorate recently to open the \$340 million upgrade to the Princes Highway at Gerringong. Lives have been lost on that section of road. One of the reasons I stood for Parliament was to fix the Princes Highway.

I am sure that members, particularly country members, have had similar experiences of seeing people who have lost friends or members of their family on country roads around their regions. There is no greater satisfaction that I have as a member of Parliament than driving up and down the Princes Highway and seeing evidence of this Government's historic road investments. The community has called for these upgrades and this Government is delivering them. It was a bright, sunny day in Gerringong when the Premier, the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, and the mayor of Kiama, my friend Brian Petschler, removed the last witches' hats from the highway, to great celebrations in the Gerringong



township. I thank particularly the people of Gerringong for their patience in dealing with the delays that have occurred. I am extremely proud of those record investments.

I take the opportunity to thank my friend and colleague the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay. There has been no greater advocate of the Princes Highway than the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. He has been a champion of roads across this State and he has overseen record investments in the Princes Highway. We simply could not have achieved what we have in my electorate without the Hon. Duncan Gay. He is an absolute champion of roads, a champion of our community and a great Minister. I thank him for his continuing support. The Berry bypass is receiving an upgrade that has been called for since 1955—a \$580 million upgrade. Both that project and the Gerringong upgrade are being constructed by Fulton Hogan, which is doing a wonderful job.

**Mr Mark Coure:** How many kilometres?

**Mr GARETH WARD:** The member for Oatley asks how many kilometres. The upgrade at Gerringong involves 7.5 kilometres and the Berry project involves about 11 kilometres—a fantastic upgrade, dividing the highway.

**Mr Mark Coure:** How many bridges?

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Eighteen bridges. I am sure the member for Oatley is getting a lot from reading my brochure. I am sure he is seeing, first hand, what a good local member can achieve. I hope he takes note of that brochure. The Speaker and member for South Coast did an outstanding job in fighting and campaigning for upgrades at South Nowra. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge, in that context, her former staff member Luke Sikora, who I know worked incredibly hard with the Speaker on those upgrades. I know the Speaker is proud to have delivered that upgrade at South Nowra. It would not have happened if it were not for the strident advocacy of Shelley Hancock, the member for South Coast. That opened up the renowned bottleneck through South Nowra.

I also acknowledge the Government's funding allocation to the Albion Park Rail bypass—a \$550 million upgrade of the Princes Highway through Albion Park, providing relief at 16 intersections and five sets of traffic lights, which have been a source of constant frustration for people in my electorate. I look forward to seeing that construction work at Albion Park, because I know that when completed it will make a huge difference on a section of the Princes Highway that is a missing link between the northern part of my electorate, through Yallah and Albion Park to the Oak Flats interchange. This project will make a huge difference, linking with the section of highway at Dunmore.

I acknowledge that members on both sides of this House have been great contributors to the Princes Highway, and I thank the former Government for its contribution. However, that has been well and truly surpassed by either the spent or committed \$1.5 billion invested by this Government, which has resulted in record spends on roads. The Illawarra and South Coast have never before seen these types of investments. I am so proud to see the level of investment that we are getting. But it would be remiss of me to come to this House and not to fight for more.

**Mr Mark Coure:** More!

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Yes, more. I say to the Government that I will be taking up the fight for the Berry to Bomaderry section of the Princes Highway. I call on the Government to upgrade the Princes Highway between Berry and Bomaderry. I announce in the House today that I will be launching a petition to continue to hold the Government to account, and to apply pressure for funding for further upgrading of the Princes Highway. It would be remiss of me, having been critical of the former Federal Labor Government, not to apply to the current Federal Government that same criticism in relation to Pacific Highway funding. Not one cent, from either Liberal or Labor Federal governments, has been allocated for works on the section of the Princes Highway between Albion Park and Bomaderry. However, I do



commend and thank the member for Gilmore, Ann Sudmalis, for her strident advocacy and indeed her support for funding to progress the upgrade and the new third Shoalhaven River crossing. There is no doubt that the Federal member for Gilmore has been such an advocate, but I must reserve any praise for the Federal Government until that money is forthcoming. I and my State colleague the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight will continue to take up that fight.

I thank two people, firstly former Premier Barry O'Farrell, without whom the Gerringong section of the highway would not be upgraded. I recall standing with Barry O'Farrell, when he was Leader of the Opposition and I was a candidate, when he famously said that if he does not build it, do not vote for him. I remember thinking, "We certainly need to get cracking on this project." Of course, a year into government we got moving on it. The second is my great friend, my party leader and Premier, Mike Baird, who got behind me, along with the member for Bega, Andrew Constance, without whom the Albion Park section of the highway would not have been possible. I thank members for their support. I will continue to be a champion of the Princes Highway, and I will continue to ensure that our electorate receives the priority it deserves.

**Mr RYAN PARK** (Keira) [11.43 a.m.]: Speaking about this important issue—the Princes Highway—would normally be in the purview of my colleague the member for Shellharbour. However, the member is on approved leave this morning. I acknowledge the ongoing advocacy of the member for Shellharbour regarding upgrades of the Princes Highway.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons)**: Order! Government members will come to order.

**Mr RYAN PARK**: There has not been a stronger advocate than the member for Shellharbour for upgrading of roads in our region.

**Mr Gareth Ward**: Point of order: The member for Keira is misleading the House.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons)**: Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr RYAN PARK**: I acknowledge a couple of contributions from the member for Kiama. Firstly, he kindly and appropriately acknowledged the contribution that the previous Labor Government made, particularly regarding a number of components of the Princes Highway. The majority of that road from Albion Park through to Dunmore, and the Kiama bypass, was delivered under the Labor Government. It is the responsibility of governments of all persuasions to deliver major upgrades on what has been a terrible highway that is responsible for loss of life. I would expect governments of all persuasions to continue upgrading the highway.

Labor has a very proud track record on delivering roads in the Illawarra. A small bridge, known as Sea Cliff Bridge, arguably one of the most iconic bridges in the country, was delivered by a Labor Government. That was a \$50 million upgrade. Then there was the \$120 million to deliver Memorial Drive, the major arterial road in the north. It seems that, from time to time, some members forget these projects delivered by a Labor Government. We will continue to advocate and support the need for funding to be delivered for road upgrades. I will say a few things about the Berry bypass. What is interesting about that bypass—and it is a matter that no-one has been able to get to the bottom of—is the \$70 million blowout in the budget for those works. It is interesting that during the recent debate on the Albion Park Rail bypass the member for Kiama said:

... only they would be so inept to spend \$50 million more on a road ...

The member told the public that the Berry bypass would cost \$510 million. Unfortunately, things changed. All of a sudden, the road upgrade cost blew out by an extra \$70 million.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons)**: Order! The member for Kiama will come to order.



The member for Keira was silent during his contribution.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Those hardworking Fairfax journalists at that great publication the *Illawarra Mercury* tried to get to the bottom of this cost blowout. They found that no-one, from the Premier down to the member for Kiama, could explain the blowout. A report in the *Illawarra Mercury* dated 13 June 2014 said, under the headline "Officials dodge questions on bypass cost blow-out"—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: Perhaps the member would say whether Labor supported the Albion Park Rail bypass, because Labor opposed it and voted against it.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** The *Illawarra Mercury* report said:

The NSW Government has failed to explain a \$70 million cost blow-out for the Foxground to Berry Bypass, after Premier Mike Baird revealed a significant difference between the estimated and actual costs ...

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 76, relevance. The motion is about investments in the Princes Highway. The member's contribution has been completely irrelevant because Labor never invested in the Berry bypass or the Albion Park Rail bypass.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Part of the motion is about the Berry bypass on the Princes Highway.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! The member for Kiama will come to order. The member for Keira was silent during his contribution. I ask the member for Kiama do likewise.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** The *Illawarra Mercury* journalists then investigated and reported:

The Mercury asked Mr Baird's office to explain the reasons behind the difference, and how the Government would fund the increase. No response has been received.

It gets even worse, because then there were difficult exchanges of words between the Liberal member for Gilmore—our very good friend the Liberal member for Gilmore—and the member for Kiama, two very close friends. The member for Gilmore retaliated by describing the member for Kiama as—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: The member for Keira has not cited the source; nor is this relevant to this debate.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! I am sure the member for Keira will do so when he has the opportunity.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** He should come back to the question.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! He would have that opportunity if the member for Kiama did not disrupt his contribution.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** The Federal member for Gilmore retaliated in that great publication in the electorate of the member for Kiama, the *South Coast Register*, saying his comments were "irresponsible and incorrect". That is not a Labor member saying that; that is his Federal Liberal colleague saying that. I know how close the two are; I know they are very good friends, and I know they work very hard together—



**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76 and tedious repetition under Standing Order 59.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** The highway is very important. Opposition members will continue to lobby the Government to allocate funds. When we regain government in a few years we will continue to invest in what is arguably the most important road corridor in this country, certainly for commuter traffic and the increasing freight and tourist traffic. Although I commend the member for Kiama for raising the importance of Princes Highway investment, we need to highlight the investment of the former Labor Government and concerns about the blowout of the current project.

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [11.50 a.m.]: It is a great honour to speak on the motion, another motion on the Princes Highway upgrade, moved by the member for Kiama. I congratulate him on his great work with these upgrades. Instead of praising the member for Kiama and the Baird and O'Farrell governments that have delivered for the people of the South Coast, the Illawarra and Wollongong, the member for Keira supported the motion but spoke against it. Comparing Labor's record on infrastructure with ours is like comparing chalk with cheese. Labor had 20-odd rail plans but delivered none of them. Labor wasted \$500 million on the Sydney Metro—cancelled it, announced it and cancelled it again. Labor even paid compensation. It cancelled it and opened it again. Labor said, "This is going to go ahead for the good of New South Wales," and of course a year before the election it cancelled it again, wasting \$500 million.

The Government is getting on with the job. I place on the record the outstanding work of not only the member for Kiama but also the members for South Coast and Bega, and the member for Heathcote, who has been a great supporter of these upgrades in the Illawarra. It is a \$580 million investment, stretching 11.6 kilometres, with 18 bridges and three underpasses. Construction on the project started in January 2015, with an expected completion date of 2018. People living in those communities will be able to use road well and truly before the 2019 election. I congratulate those members on getting this project started and completed, hopefully by 2018.

I refer also to the Albion Park Rail bypass, the Gerringong upgrade and the Berry to Bomaderry upgrades. The member for Kiama should be commended for his great work. The Gerringong upgrade involved funding of \$340 million and included 7.5 kilometres of upgraded highway and 28 bridges. Construction started in July 2012 and the project was completed in August 2015. Indeed, I saw in the media and on Facebook the Premier, accompanied by the roads Minister and the member for Kiama, declaring the project open. I congratulate the member for Kiama and his constituents because, in total, this is \$1.5 billion of Princes Highway upgrade funding. In politics talk is cheap, but actions speak louder than words.

The Government is getting on with the job of building much-needed infrastructure, not only on the South Coast but also in Sydney. A number of hospitals and railway stations have been upgraded and a number of road projects have started and been completed—for example, the South West Rail Link and the M5 West, which was completed during the Government's first term. The M5 East started with widening and duplication of the tunnel. These are projects that we are delivering under our watch because ours is a government that delivers infrastructure for the communities in which we live.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.54 a.m.], in reply: Trust the member for Keira to play politics on the Princes Highway. As he has returned so adequately to type, I will respond to his comments. I acknowledge that the member for Shellharbour is on leave, but who promised the Albion Park Rail bypass during the last election campaign? It was one side of politics, not Labor.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Look at our infrastructure statement.



**Mr GARETH WARD:** I acknowledge the interjection. He is the salmon that jumps on the hook. It is like getting mauled by a guinea pig when he interjects. He says, "Look at the infrastructure statement"—not one mention of the Illawarra. He should be embarrassed. In fact, he should go to the corner. No-one wants to see his face. When it comes to promised investments the member is absolutely lost in space. It is like looking at the cast of *Gilligan's Island*. We have the Skipper and Mary Ann, who is the member for Wollongong. Who would be Gilligan? It would have to be the member for Keira, because Opposition members are simply lost at sea. He said last week—I enjoyed this—"Why doesn't the Government bring forward the Albion Park Rail bypass?" It was not promised by Labor during the election campaign and members opposite voted against the means of funding it in this place; that is, the long-term leasing of the poles and wires.

Labor members suggest bringing forward a project they did not promise and then voted against funding. The member for Keira is an absolute hypocrite and his side of politics is cantingly hypocritical. How politically opportunistic and dangerous the Opposition would be if it ever won government. The member for Keira was the deputy director general of transport, yet he talks about funding transport projects. How did his Metro project work out? Labor blew \$500 million, not to mention the \$127 million spent on the Tcard without a single ticket being issued. Despite that, the member for Keira has the temerity and audacity to come into this place and make assertions. It is like getting flogged with warm, wet lettuce. He can bring it on any day of the week. On transport I am happy to take him on, because Labor promised nothing for the Illawarra. Labor is shameful and an embarrassment.

Labor had the opportunity during the last election campaign to promise infrastructure, but it promised not one project. In fact, Labor members voted against the Berry bypass when they voted against the long-term lease of Port Kembla. What happened at the election? They wanted that money, after having voted against the lease. Like the long-term lease of the poles and wires, they wanted the money but they did not want to vote for a strategy that would deliver it. It was the same with Albion Park. They said, "Bring forward a project, but we are going to vote against the means of funding it." Labor did not promise the Berry bypass, did not promise the Albion Park Rail bypass, and it has continually and habitually voted against roads proposals in this Parliament that would deliver the necessary funding.

The member for Shellharbour did not promise those roads projects; the member for Keira did not promise those road projects. I say to the Opposition, "Why don't you actually tell the people of my electorate why you are not funding them?" They had a secret shadow Cabinet meeting a little while ago—the Kiama conclave. They came down to Kiama and had secret meetings. Did they go out to the public and say, "This is what we are going to promise?" Did they actually talk to anyone? No. They decided to have a nice little bottle of Chardonnay and talk about whether they should take socialism out of their manifesto. On the great issues confronting the State, there was nothing from them. Labor votes against the Illawarra and infrastructure projects. It talks about investments, but when it comes time to do something, where is it? What are Labor's solutions, promises or contributions? Labor has habitually failed. It should be called out for its incompetence and ineptitude. Labor should start voting for projects that will generate jobs. Instead, Labor members vote against us and oppose us. Shame on New South Wales Labor.

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 48**

Mr Anderson  
Mr Aplin  
Mr Ayres

Mr Hazzard  
Mr Henskens  
Ms Hodgkinson

Mr Rowell  
Mr Sidoti  
Mrs Skinner



Ms Berejiklian  
Mr Brookes  
Mr Conolly  
Mr Constance  
Mr Coure  
Mr Crouch  
Mrs Davies  
Mr Dominello  
Mr Evans  
Mr Gee  
Mr George  
Ms Goward  
Mr Greenwich  
Mr Gulaptis

Mr Humphries  
Mr Johnsen  
Dr Lee  
Mr Maguire  
Mr Marshall  
Mr Notley-Smith  
Mr O'Dea  
Mrs Pavey  
Mr Perrottet  
Ms Petinos  
Mr Piccoli  
Mr Piper  
Mr Provest  
Mr Roberts

Mr Speakman  
Mr Stokes  
Mr Taylor  
Mr Toole  
Mr Tudehope  
Ms Upton  
Mr Ward  
Mr Williams  
Mrs Williams

*Tellers,*  
Mr Bromhead  
Mr Patterson

### **Noes, 31**

Ms Aitchison  
Mr Atalla  
Mr Barr  
Ms Car  
Ms Catley  
Mr Chanthivong  
Mr Crakanthorp  
Mr Daley  
Mr Dib  
Ms Doyle  
Ms Fin

Mr Harris  
Ms Harrison  
Ms Haylen  
Mr Hoenig  
Mr Kamper  
Ms Leong  
Mr Lynch  
Ms McKay  
Mr Mehan  
Ms Mihailuk  
Mr Minns

Mr Park  
Mr Parker  
Mr Robertson  
Ms K. Smith  
Ms T. F. Smith  
Ms Washington  
Mr Zangari

*Tellers,*  
Mr Lalich  
Mr Warren

### **Pairs**

Mr Baird  
Mr Barilaro  
Mr Grant  
Mr Elliott  
Mr Kean

Ms Burney  
Mr Foley  
Ms Hay  
Dr McDermott  
Ms Watson

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

### **LITERACY AND NUMERACY TEACHERS**

**Mr RYAN PARK** (Keira) [12.06 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that in 2010 the then Opposition announced a commitment of 60 new literacy and numeracy teachers for the Illawarra.



- (2) Notes that as of 1 May 2015 this commitment has not been met.
- (3) Calls on the Government to explain when all of those teachers will be working in Illawarra schools.

Paragraph (1) of the motion is factual. I know that the member for Kiama likes documents to be tabled, so I have copies available. On about 27 November 2010 the then Leader of the Opposition and former Premier Barry O'Farrell came down to the Illawarra. The Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra, the member for Kiama, issued a press release at the time, which stated:

NSW Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell today visited the Illawarra and announced a NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will deliver 60 new teachers for the Illawarra region as part of its plan to help ensure children develop the foundations for success ...

He continued to state how great is the Coalition and how bad is the Labor Party. As a former school teacher, I thought it was a pretty good announcement. Opposition members would remember that 2011 was a difficult time for us, with the Liberals and The Nationals coming into office. I thought the one good thing was that the Illawarra would be getting 60 new literacy teachers. I kept the media release because the member for Kiama and I keep track of one another and we know what each other is doing. Over the course of a number of years I have raised this issue multiple times with the Minister for Education, who has kindly joined us in the House today. At this stage only a few of those teachers are in place. We have had 10 teachers, sometimes up to 12, and at one stage I think there were 19. Five years on, one would think that we should be getting close to the delivery of the 60 teachers that were promised in 2010.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Have they not kept a promise?

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I know keeping promises is not their strong suit, but after five years one would think that we might be close to halfway or three-quarters of the way. We are not there; there are not 60 literacy teachers in our schools. That is a shame. When a member of Parliament who is obviously going to be the next Premier stands up with a local candidate a couple of months out from an election and makes a commitment to deliver, the community might think that after five years they would have delivered. The community might be even more inclined to think that, given a press release in which the Government said:

That's why a NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will deliver 60 additional teachers across the Illawarra region to help children's literacy and numeracy skills through an expansion of Reading Recovery Program and ensuring it also includes numeracy.

They are clear and specific words, but in 2015 less than one-third of those teachers are in place. People in the Illawarra expect that when a commitment is made a commitment is met. The State Government does not deliver too many services that are more important than the provision of quality teaching and learning services through education and schools. If members are not passionate about education they should not be in this Parliament, because this is the level of government that is essentially at the front line of delivering for New South Wales schools. The Government's commitment was the largest education commitment made at the time. In terms of dollars, 60 teachers at an average annual salary then of about \$100,000 is a substantial educational and broader political commitment to make. People in the Illawarra would like to think that after five years the Government has made inroads. It is disappointing for the students, their teachers and their schools that those 60 teachers have not been delivered.

Today I call on the Government to give a detailed explanation as to when and why its commitment changed and why it did not come clean about the change. Will the Government identify that the money equivalent to that which was needed for the 60 teachers has been allocated to Illawarra schools? The community and region that I represent have a right to those answers in today's debate.



Quality education is at the core of State Government services and should be the focus of this Parliament. I am delighted that the member for Lakemba and the member for Wyong—two great educational leaders who have successfully found their way into this Parliament—are here today. Those two professional practitioners know better than anyone the importance of investment in quality teaching and learning and the importance of getting literacy fundamentals right. I am very disappointed that five long years after the member for Kiama and the former Premier made this commitment the schoolchildren, teachers and parents of the Illawarra are still waiting for that commitment to be honoured.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.13 p.m.]: For good reason, I move an amendment to the motion in the following terms:

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

this House:

- (1) Notes the Government's \$261 million five-year Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan, which is based on the key recommendations of the Ministerial Advisory Group chaired by Dr Ken Boston, AO.
- (2) Notes indications already suggest the plan is providing an evidence-based prescription for improvement in literacy and numeracy standards on behalf of children in New South Wales.
- (3) Congratulates and thanks teachers in New South Wales for the great work they do in teaching literacy and numeracy.

The mover of the motion indicated that all members of the New South Wales Parliament should have a commitment to education. I say firmly for the record that I do not think a greater commitment to the education of our children has ever been made than that of the Liberal-Nationals Government. It started in 2010, as the member correctly indicated, when we brought to government a commitment to education like none other, to improve the literacy and numeracy standards of students across New South Wales. I will cut to the chase about what we need to do and what we need to improve. We need to ensure that as children go through their schooling they can read, write and add up. That is basically it. Reading, writing and adding up are the fundamental requirements, especially for primary school age children. That is why we introduced our policy in 2010. As I said publicly at the time, it was one of the best policies that the Liberal-Nationals developed when coming into government in 2011.

The member for Keira said that there was a commitment to deliver 60 additional teachers to the Illawarra. He is right. I am glad that the member who moved the motion—albeit a motion that has been amended significantly—understands that those 60 teachers were to be delivered by 2016. By the end of 2016 we will have delivered the equivalent of those 60 teachers. We are now more than a year away from the end of our \$261 million five-year literacy and numeracy plan and, I have to apologise, we have not delivered the 60 teachers; we have delivered the equivalent of 42 additional teachers as part of that five-year plan. We have not delivered the 60 teachers because we are not at the end of the plan. It was a five-year plan and at the end of five years there will be the equivalent of 60 teachers in the Illawarra.

Our policy is already making a huge difference. Dr Ken Boston has said that it is delivering real results and there has been a significant improvement in children's literacy and numeracy standards. That was our intention and that is exactly what we are doing. We based our policy on the recommendations of Dr Ken Boston, who is a well-respected person and an ardent supporter of quality education. Our policy is delivering considerable results. By the end of the five years, resources equivalent to 900 teachers will have been provided under the action plan to meet the needs of the most seriously underperforming schools and students across this State.

Our plan of action, which is based on the key recommendations of Dr Ken Boston, is already



providing sound evidence that standards are improving. There is abundant evidence that the plan has lifted the literacy and numeracy standards of kindergarten to year 2 students in targeted schools. It is profoundly important to ensure that no child is missed or falls through the cracks at a young age. This Government is ensuring that our youngest students achieve the necessary standards of numeracy and literacy, because we know if they miss out they will have problems not only in their school life but also in the years later. That is why the program is targeted at the very early years.

Across all schools targeted under this action plan, the assessment data for kindergarten to year 2 students show that from the end of 2012 to the end of 2014 the percentage of students reading at or above the expected standard had increased, especially at kindergarten level. When compared to 2012 results, in 2014 student performance in reading in targeted government schools had also improved significantly in kindergarten and year 1—an increase of 20 percentage points for kindergarten and 13 percentage points for year 1. It is an outstanding achievement by a policy that is still in its infancy. There is still another year to run until we complete the quota of 60 specialised teachers in those areas.

In comparison to 2012, in 2014 targeted schools in all three education sectors and in each school year, from kindergarten to year 2, demonstrated an increase in the percentage of students and were rated as meeting or exceeding the end-of-year standard in numeracy. I cannot commend this Government's approach to education any more than that. Are we focused on improving the standards of numeracy and literacy? Absolutely we are. If the Opposition were genuine, rather than uttering weasel words, they would be talking up our wonderful teachers. Our teachers and schools are improving standards, and this Government is very proud to have injected this massive amount—a quarter of a billion dollars—into funding new teachers to help achieve those standards.

**Mr JIHAD DIB** (Lakemba) [12.20 p.m.]: I move:

That the amendment be amended by leaving out paragraphs (1) and (2).

We are here to talk about teachers and the great value they bring to our schools. We just want more of them—that is the crux of it. I welcome the opportunity to support the motion of my parliamentary colleague the member for Keira on the importance of literacy and numeracy education, not only in the Illawarra but across the State. The member for Keira has eloquently outlined the reasons for his motion and the failure of the State Government to deliver on an election pledge that it made five years ago.

My contribution to this debate will be brief. Prior to being afforded the privilege of becoming a member of Parliament I was a teacher; indeed, I was a principal of a public high school—as was my colleague the member for Wyong. There was no better demonstration to me of the value of improved literacy than to see my students grow in spirit, confidence and esteem as their skills in literacy improved. Research clearly shows that language and literacy are of personal, social and economic importance. It is also a fact, as confirmed by study after study, that unless students are literate and numerate their chances of employment success are substantially reduced.

The results of testing and improvements, or what we as educators refer to as "value-adding" or "growth", are the hard evidence. The transformation of my school was built around the improved learning outcomes of our kids. I could talk for hours about the exceptional efforts of staff, including their hours of volunteering, to build our students' sense of belief and achievement. On many occasions they dipped into their own pockets to support the kids. That is not an isolated story from Punchbowl Boys High School; similar stories about teachers can be told right across the State and, indeed, the nation. Sadly, schools are under-resourced. Whilst much is made of the Government's increased funding in parts, very little is said about the Government's "robbing Peter to pay Paul" method through which the funding came about. However, I digress.

Rather than focus on the shortfalls of the Government in terms of funding, I will use as an example a former student. At 14 years of age he had a reading age of eight. I discovered this by accident



when we were chatting at Punchbowl one day while he was waiting for a bus. He told me that he thought he needed glasses. I asked him to read a sign on a shop across the road. He said "Mr Dib, it says 'chemist'." To a point he was right, except that in fact the sign read "pharmacy". He confessed that that was why he often got into trouble. When I questioned him about that he said, "Mr Dib, sometimes I worry that I am going to be asked a question and I will not be able to answer it or I am going to be asked to read and I can't read. So it's just easier to get kicked out of class." That is a real-life story of what happens with kids who struggle with literacy. It should not be a question of funding. We have to find the money for these initiatives because these kids need it.

I tell that story because it shows how much of an impact difficulty with literacy can have on young people. At my school we always found a way. We implemented many initiatives; we did whatever we could to support the literacy of students. Those students were struggling for a number of reasons, perhaps personal circumstance or they came from a home where English was not the main language. I saw this young man recently at a Bulldogs game, of all places. He told me that he is now working as a steel fixer. It broke my heart when he said, "Mr Dib, I wish I was smarter." Investing in education is worthwhile; it is an investment in our future. I have seen the difference a great and well-resourced education system can make. If we want a better society, it starts by affording everyone a better educational experience. I commend the motion and my amendment to the House, and I congratulate my friend and colleague the member for Keira on moving such an important motion.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES** (Mulgoa—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.24 p.m.]: I speak in support of the amendment moved by the member for Castle Hill. Since coming to government in 2011, the Liberal-Nationals have not only delivered on our commitment but also taken the necessary steps to deliver an action plan that will ensure the needs of all underperforming students and schools in New South Wales are met. Our plan of action, based on the key recommendations of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Literacy and Numeracy, chaired by Dr Ken Boston, AO, is providing an evidenced-based prescription for improvement.

Taking action and delivering critical support to where it is needed most is at the heart of the Government's \$261 million five-year Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan. Over the total five years, resources equivalent to 900 teachers will have been provided under the action plan to meet the needs of the most seriously underperforming students and schools. In 2015-16 the Government has allocated over \$62 million to support the implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan. In 2015, over 440 government, Catholic and independent schools across New South Wales will receive targeted support under our action plan.

In the Illawarra region, 13 schools are being supported—11 government, one Catholic and one independent school. These 13 schools were identified for participation as their National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] results from year 3 are in the lowest quartile of performance. As at 1 May 2015, from the beginning of 2012 the 13 schools have been provided with resources equivalent to 42.6 full-time teachers. By the conclusion of the action plan in December 2016, our commitment from 2011 that we made to the people of Illawarra will have been met.

Our action plan is a catalyst for change. It is targeted at enhancing classroom practice in literacy and numeracy, closing student performance gaps, embedding whole school instructional leadership across all schools and using tiered interventions early when remediation in literacy and numeracy is needed. The action plan amply demonstrates not only the positive impact of instructional leaders in helping to lift the performance of students in their literacy and numeracy outcomes but also the pivotal role of instructional leadership in providing mentoring and coaching for teachers to improve classroom and whole school practices. Improving and changing teaching practice to focus on the needs of the individual student are fundamental to the success of our plan.

There is now abundant evidence that the action plan has lifted the literacy and numeracy performance of kindergarten to year 2 students in targeted schools. Of note is the analysis of data



emerging from the independent evaluation being conducted by Erebus International. In speaking in support of the amendment moved by the member for Castle Hill, I highlight that, in my electorate of Mulgoa, Horsley Park Public School and Banks Public School are taking part in the Early Action for Success strategy. By the middle of this year 84 per cent of stage 1 children at Banks Public School are on track in reading. Similarly, 83 per cent have met or exceeded the midyear expectation for numeracy.

Horsley Park Public School is a much smaller school. All 11 kindergarten students are on track in reading and have reached the end-of-year expectation in early numbers. Those schools have received over half a million dollars in total this year to provide targeted support and training in the early years. I add my hearty congratulations to and endorsement of all of our teachers, our support staff workers and parents, who work together with teachers to wrap around the students all the support, encouragement and guidance they need so that our youngest students, those just starting on their educational experience, achieve their potential. I congratulate all those involved.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS** (Wyang) [12.28 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Keira, which calls on the Government to honour its 2010 commitment to provide an extra 60 teachers to support schools in his electorate. Like the member for Lakemba, as a former school principal I know the importance of literacy and numeracy. I devoted 23 years of my life—17 as a principal—to guiding young people through the education system. I note that the amendment moved by the member for Lakemba amends paragraph (3) of the Government's amendment to the motion to congratulate teachers in New South Wales for the great work they do in teaching literacy and numeracy.

We can build all the buildings we like, but research shows that teachers make the real difference to children's reading abilities. We must equip teachers with the knowledge and skills that they need to help children to learn to read. Students learn to read in different ways. No one way is effective for all students. Particular attention must be given to those students who struggle in the mainstream classroom. Many children start kindergarten with a reading deficit. Once upon a time parents read to their children every night. Children explored nursery rhymes and word patterns before they started school. That is not necessarily the case now. For many children the classroom is not a level playing field. In a normal classroom there is a wide range of abilities, starting in kindergarten.

That is why programs such as Reading Recovery and Best Start are so important. Under Best Start, children are assessed before they start the school year to identify whether they need extra assistance. In year 1 the Reading Recovery program identifies children with the lowest level of reading ability and aims to bring their reading up to the level of their peers in a short time. Reading Recovery is an excellent program. As a principal, on many occasions I was fortunate to participate in behind-the-glass teaching, which is a peer review of teaching practices, where I watched teachers interact with the children in their class. I was also very fortunate to hear children read their stories to me on a regular basis, both in my office and when I visited their classrooms.

I have mentioned a couple of good strategies in education. Good things are happening in our classrooms, thanks to the work of the previous Government and the current Government. I congratulate the current Government for putting in place a number of good strategies. As the member for Keira highlighted, it is important that more resources be provided to schools to help those children who most need assistance. I endorse the motion moved by the member for Keira and the amendment moved by the member for Lakemba.

**Mr RYAN PARK** (Keira) [12.32 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the member for Castle Hill and the member for Mulgoa for their contributions to the debate. I thank the member for Lakemba and the member for Wyang, in particular, for their contributions. They are both experienced leaders in education and experts in education policy. I am glad that the member for Kiama and the member for Heathcote are in the Chamber to hear the conclusion of debate on this important motion for the Illawarra. As a former teacher, I am passionate about the provision of education resources to our region. Regardless of who is on the Treasury bench, commitments in education must be delivered. I would like to see the committed



resources delivered and measured. I will continue to raise this issue and many others relating to education in my role as member for Keira and shadow Minister for the best region in New South Wales.

**Question—That the amendment of the member for Lakemba to the amendment of the member for Castle Hill be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 33**

Ms Aitchison	Mr Harris	Mr Parker
Mr Atalla	Ms Harrison	Mr Piper
Mr Barr	Ms Haylen	Mr Robertson
Ms Burney	Mr Hoenig	Ms K. Smith
Ms Car	Mr Kamper	Ms T. F. Smith
Ms Catley	Ms Leong	Ms Washington
Mr Chanthivong	Mr Lynch	Mr Zangari
Mr Crakanthorp	Ms McKay	
Mr Daley	Mr Mehan	
Mr Dib	Ms Mihailuk	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Doyle	Mr Minns	Mr Lalich
Ms Finn	Mr Park	Mr Warren

**Noes, 44**

Mr Anderson	Ms Goward	Mr Rowell
Mr Aplin	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Mr Ayres	Mr Henskens	Mrs Skinner
Mr Barilaro	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Speakman
Ms Berejikian	Mr Humphries	Mr Stokes
Mr Brookes	Mr Johnsen	Mr Taylor
Mr Conolly	Dr Lee	Mr Toole
Mr Constance	Mr Maguire	Mr Tudehope
Mr Coure	Mr Marshall	Ms Upton
Mr Crouch	Mr O'Dea	Mr Ward
Mrs Davies	Mrs Pavey	Mr Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Perrottet	Mrs Williams
Mr Gee	Ms Petinos	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr George	Mr Piccoli	Mr Bromhead
Ms Gibbons	Mr Provest	Mr Patterson

**Pairs**

Mr Foley	Mr Baird
Ms Hay	Mr Elliott
Ms Hornery	Mr Roberts
Ms Watson	Mr Hazzard



**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Amendment of the member for Lakemba to the amendment of the member for Castle Hill negated.**

**Question—That the amendment of the member for Castle Hill be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment of the member for Castle Hill agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

### **ARMIDALE RURAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [12.48 p.m.]: I move:

That this House thanks the Minister for Health and the Deputy Premier for the \$60 million commitment to redevelop the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to move this motion in the House today and to talk about this issue, which I have addressed in this Chamber on many occasions since my election to this place almost 2½ years ago. When I was campaigning for the May 2013 by-election I said that the redevelopment project was not only an important project for me but also the most critical project facing the Northern Tablelands electorate. For nearly a decade the community of Armidale and the wider region have been campaigning for a major redevelopment of that hospital. The Armidale Rural Referral Hospital is the largest hospital within the Northern Tablelands region, servicing a broad catchment area of almost 100,000 people. The hospital had money spent on it in the past.

I note that in April 2014 the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, opened the \$8.3 million Ambulatory Care and Chemotherapy Services Centre, with contributions of more than \$6 million from the State Government and nearly \$1.5 million from the Federal Government. However, we were really in search of a major redevelopment. It was a project that my predecessor, Richard Torbay, had been working on for a number of years for the community; and it was something that the community was very passionate about. So I came into this place in May 2013 with a deep desire and commitment to the people of Northern Tablelands to get this redevelopment done. I am pleased to say that the community lobbied hard.

As the local member of Parliament, it was a pleasure to stand side-by-side with residents in speaking up and speaking out about the desperate need for this redevelopment—a new emergency department, an expanded number of new operating theatres, a critical care unit, what was known colloquially as "getting our old intensive care unit back" in the hospital, as well as new community health facilities and new medical wards. I am very pleased that, in the lead-up to the election, on 10 March the Deputy Premier visited the hospital and announced that the Coalition, if re-elected to government, would spend \$60 million to undertake the redevelopment of the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital. It was a very happy day. Hardworking members of the hospital auxiliary, hospital staff, members of the local health advisory board and local council representatives were present. Armidale Dumaresq Council, through a series of mayors and councillors, has pushed very hard for this redevelopment.

Fast-forward to the election and to the Coalition's re-election, and I was absolutely delighted that the first tranche of that \$60 million funding was allocated in the 2015-16 State budget. This was the first time since the campaign began around a decade ago that we had seen real money—in black and white as a line item—in the State budget for this project. In the next couple of weeks I will be at the hospital



again, talking with management and staff. General Manager Catharine Death and her staff are doing a terrific job at the hospital. I will be joined by Michael Di Rienzo, Chief Executive Officer of the Hunter New England Local Health District. We will release to the community all the plans and diagrams, and brief the staff and the public so that people can see exactly what they are getting for their \$60 million.

At this point I can make people aware that we will have a brand-new, four-storey building that will turn the entrance and exits of the hospital around for construction of the new emergency department, intensive care unit and operating theatres. The number of operating theatres will increase from two to four, which is a huge benefit given how busy the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital is becoming. To highlight the busy nature of the hospital, I reference the latest Bureau of Health Information report on the latest quarter results, April to June 2015. In that quarter the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital had 4,161 visitations to the emergency department.

I am pleased to say that 86 per cent of those patients were triaged, treated and left the emergency department in less than four hours. That is 13 per cent above the State average, and is very pleasing given how busy the emergency department is. The average time for patients leaving the emergency department was 65 minutes quicker than the State average, and 37 minutes better than the average for the Hunter New England Local Health District. Again, that is a terrific result, and a real credit to Catharine Death, the manager of the hospital, and her team in the emergency department—the doctors, the nurses and the staff—who do such a terrific job caring for patients in Armidale, in conditions that frankly do not meet the current health needs of the region, hence the need for the redevelopment.

We have some of the best staff in our hospital; they are the most caring and dedicated people you could meet. However, the conditions in which they have been working in the Armidale hospital are not ideal. Conditions do not allow them to do everything they want to do; they certainly do not cater for the health needs of the growing Northern Tablelands region. I am delighted with the \$60 million redevelopment. It is a credit not to me but to the people of the Northern Tablelands, the people of Armidale, and of course the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, who is probably sick of seeing me. I am now pushing for redevelopment of Moree hospital, so the Minister will be seeing a lot more of me. I also pay credit to the Deputy Premier, who played a key role in securing this money. The community is really looking forward to this redevelopment taking place. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [12.55 p.m.]: It gives me some pleasure to stand on this side of the House and contribute to debate on the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands, my friend Adam Marshall. The motion thanks the Minister for Health and the Deputy Premier for this very significant investment in the member's electorate. I can only begin to imagine how pleased the member must be about that commitment. But it is not only the member who is pleased; his electorate and the greater region serviced by the Armidale hospital will have much better health facilities from this investment in that community by the Government.

The member for Northern Tablelands mentioned that this is an ongoing issue that was commenced and taken up well by the former member, Richard Torbay. But it is the current member who has taken up advocacy on the issue and prosecuted it to its completion, so a great deal of credit goes to him. The member for Northern Tablelands mentioned a number of other bodies and people who were involved in this project, including the hospital auxiliary. Unusually, the member did not name all the members of the Armidale hospital auxiliary; I am sure there are many of them. These are very dedicated people who give up a lot of time to undertake the work of the auxiliary, and I wish to acknowledge them. But there are other players in the game. Of course, the Hunter New England Local Health District covers my area as well, and areas such as the Lower Hunter, Lake Macquarie and all the way up to the border area of the Northern Tablelands. I acknowledge the efforts and commitment of the chief executive officer, Michael Di Rienzo, to deliver this project on behalf of the Government; but I recognise also the contribution of the local manager, Catharine Death, who was referred to a number of times by the member for Northern Tablelands.



It must be wonderful for this community to know that if they, their children or their loved ones are in need of hospital care they will have a modern facility that will meet the expectations of the growing Northern Tablelands community, ensuring that they will have new, modern facilities such as the new emergency centre, new operating theatres—they are so important, particularly in light of health issues associated with infections from surgical procedures—as well as community health facilities and a range of other services delivered at the hospital. I support the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands, and I acknowledge the investment by the Government, and particularly the work of the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, in delivering for this community.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [12.59 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his contribution. He understands only too well the importance of these sorts of redevelopments. While we can sometimes get lost talking about the hundreds of millions of dollars that are spent on metropolitan hospitals, and rightly so because they service much larger populations, the scale of the redevelopment at Armidale Rural Referral Hospital is a game-changer for health in our region. I acknowledge the remarks of the member for Lake Macquarie and his sincere commitment to improving health services and health infrastructure. I thank him for acknowledging the efforts of the Armidale community in achieving this goal.

However, all the good will in the world and all the efforts of the community and the local member of Parliament will come to nought unless there is a receptive ear at the other end of the lobbying. We have received that from the Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, in the case of Armidale Rural Referral Hospital. I commend her for her work, not only at Armidale Rural Referral Hospital but also throughout country New South Wales. At the conclusion of the Fifty-sixth Parliament, which will mark eight years of this Government being in office, we will have seen 70 rural and regional hospital redevelopment projects either completed or in the process of being completed throughout country New South Wales. That is a remarkable achievement in eight years.

I do not want to be partisan, but this is long overdue. I thank the Minister for Health and the Deputy Premier for the assistance they have given to me. They have been receptive to my representations on behalf of the community. We are incredibly grateful for this commitment, this injection of funding, that will redevelop this hospital for the next 30 or 40 years and set our region up to be a centre of excellence for health. It will complement and value-add to the School of Rural Medicine at the University of New England. The redevelopment means that we will have the capacity now to fully train and retain our own general practitioners from the very start of their training at the university through until their final year in the field.

It complements the School of Rural Medicine and the Tablelands Clinical School. The redevelopment also builds on the beautiful new building, the ambulatory care and chemotherapy building, that has added extra chemotherapy services to our region. I commend the motion to the House. I thank the Minister and, most importantly, reserve my biggest thanks to the Armidale community for being so passionate and never giving up. It confirms the old adage that people power is still so important in politics. Credit for this magnificent redevelopment goes to the community. I look forward to continuing to update the House over the next few years as we see the first sod turned, the cranes come in and the building go up. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Pursuant to sessional order Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) proceeded with.**

#### **STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE**

**Report: Changes to the Standing and Sessional Order and the Citizen's Right of Reply Procedure**



**Question—That the House take note of the report—put, by leave, and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Report noted.**

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Report: Inquiry into Companion Animal Breeding Practices in New South Wales**

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

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [1.04 p.m.]: It has been a great privilege to chair the Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices in New South Wales. As members would be aware, the committee was appointed at a time of ongoing media reports of exploitative for-profit puppy factory operations, some notorious prosecutions of poor breeding practices and escalating community concern about the welfare of companion animals. The objectives of the inquiry were to review the current situation in the State compared to other jurisdictions, to investigate the correlation between the number of animals kept by breeders and animal welfare, to examine the necessity of implementing a breeders' licensing system, to examine the implications of banning the sale of dogs and cats in pet stores, to address any required legislative changes, and to address any other related matters.

We approached our task with a strong desire to deliver a comprehensive report with robust yet practical recommendations to expose and to remove rogue and unscrupulous puppy factory operators who put profits above animal welfare. However, whilst doing this we were mindful of not overburdening the majority of good breeders across the State, and there are many. The committee also had the benefit of the work of the New South Wales Companion Animals Taskforce, which reported to the Government in 2012. The committee commends the work of the task force and its members. The task force's recommendations are a firm basis for improving companion animal management in this State, and we were fortunate to be able to build upon its recommendations in our report.

The committee has made four findings and 34 recommendations. The most important among these is the introduction of a breeders' licensing scheme for all commercial dog and cat breeding in New South Wales and the requirement that when advertising the sale of dogs and cats in this State via any medium the breeder identification and animal microchip numbers be displayed; that pet shop sales not be banned for cats and dogs because a ban would lead to less scrutiny of animal sales without necessarily improving animal welfare standards; and that the New South Wales Government implement the recommendations of the Companion Animals Taskforce as a priority. I note that the committee identified as a concern the fact that the Government has yet to fully implement the recommendations of the task force, and as a matter of priority the committee strongly recommends it do so quickly.

Another finding was that the number of animals kept by a breeder is not in itself a factor that determines the welfare of breeding animals. Indeed, compliance with the breeding code of practice, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and changes we suggest in a breeders' licensing system would have more impact. The last finding related to the need for a common database and better coordination between the enforcement agencies, including local government, in New South Wales to remove inefficiencies, duplication and to achieve better animal welfare outcomes. As expected, this inquiry generated a huge level of community interest. We received more than 340 submissions, a petition containing 3,000 signatures, and more than 2,200 emails and other correspondence. We took evidence from 42 witnesses over three days of public hearings in Armidale in the Northern Tablelands electorate and in Sydney during July.

The committee is grateful to all those people who took the time to share their insights and



expertise. While many of the submissions understandably took a strong line regarding the rights and obligations of stakeholders and the wider community, there was a high degree of unanimity in the submissions that reform was necessary. Indeed, it is fair to say that all committee members were alarmed at the dearth of regulation and rules in this State and were aware of the need to fill that gap with practical ways forward for the Government. We feel we have done that. The committee hopes that its recommendations lead to early and effective improvements in animal welfare, a drastic decline in the incidence of unacceptable breeding practices, and a renewed culture of respect for the wellbeing of our companion dogs and cats. I thank Minister Niall Blair for initiating this committee inquiry.

More importantly, I thank all committee members: deputy chair the Hon. Mick Veitch from the upper House; the member for Terrigal, Mr Adam Crouch; the member for Granville, Ms Julia Finn; the member for Ku-ring-gai, Mr Alistair Henskens; Mr Scot MacDonald, the Hon. Mark Pearson from the Animal Justice Party, and the Hon. Bronnie Taylor from the upper House; and the member for Lake Macquarie, Mr Greg Piper. This was a unanimous report and its real strength was the committee members who represent the wide spectrum of politics in this place. I thank the staff who helped to draft the report and for their work throughout the inquiry. I acknowledge David Hale and Emma Wood and their respective colleagues and thank them for their work. On behalf of the committee, I commend the report to the House. We look forward to seeing the Government respond within six months and implement all the recommendations.

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [1.10 p.m.]: I will make some brief comments on the findings and operation of the Joint Standing Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices. I particularly acknowledge the chair, the member for Northern Tablelands, Mr Adam Marshall, and the deputy chair, the Hon. Mick Veitch, from the upper House, for their leadership throughout the inquiry. The membership of the committee represented the broad political spectrum in this Parliament. The behaviour of members is reflected in the unanimous adoption of the 34 recommendations and the four findings to which the chair has just referred.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the Minister, the Hon. Niall Blair, for having initiated this inquiry in response to valid concerns raised by the community and by activists groups that have been confronted with some of the most abhorrent behaviour and ill-treatment towards companion animals and the negative impacts it has. The problems that have resulted from that experience must be addressed by owners and the organisations that are charged with addressing them. That might involve cleaning up the mess or dealing with dumped animals. Police must also deal with poorly socialised animals that become aggressive. We are an intelligent and well-educated society and we are concerned about animals generally, and particularly our companion animals. However, we have failed in some areas. Perhaps some of that failure has been the result of a reluctance or tardiness in implementing the recommendations of the Companion Animals Taskforce.

The committee has made some practical recommendations which can be implemented and which are largely understood by the many people who made representations to the inquiry. The feedback I have received overwhelmingly supports the committee's recommendations. I acknowledge Minister Niall Blair for initiating the inquiry. I also acknowledge the chair, the deputy chair and the committee members who undertook this difficult inquiry. It is one of the best committee inquiries in which I have participated. The member for Granville and the chair are the only committee members in the Chamber, and I acknowledge their participation. I once again thank the members who participated in this inquiry.

**Ms JULIA FINN** (Granville) [1.14 p.m.]: This was a very good inquiry and the committee's findings are practical and will be easy to implement. Unanimous support of the recommendations by members from across the political spectrum reflects positively on the committee. The committee received well over 300 submissions, and more than 2,000 emails canvassing a wide range of views. The committee closely examined the findings of the 2012 Companion Animals Taskforce and was disappointed that they had not been implemented. Their implementation should be a Government priority.



The sale of animals in pet shops was a very difficult issue to address and the committee's recommendation has not necessarily been well received. I stand by the committee's decision even though at the outset I thought we would probably recommend banning the sale of puppies in pet shops. We acknowledged that the RSPCA has a partnership with Petbarn to sell its rescue dogs through pet shops, and that a minority of pet shops that are members of the industry association are required to meet very high standards for sourcing and selling their puppies. That said, the majority of sales are via the internet and the majority of exploitative breeders sell their puppies via the internet. Therefore, a ban on pet shops sales would not stop that practice. Requiring breeder registration details to be included in advertisements will have a strong impact, as will undertaking inspections of breeding facilities.

Preventing pet shops from keeping puppies on shop premises overnight will also improve animal welfare enormously. It will change the business practices of pet shops and it will mean that puppies will receive the attention and socialisation that they would miss out on if they lived in a pet shop between leaving the litter and arriving at their final home. Pet shop operators who do not care about puppies and who use them only to lure customers may well cease selling them. While the committee did not find a particular scale at which a breeding operation becomes unmanageable and cruelty and neglect more likely, it recognised that a large number of dogs warrants a well-staffed facility, with staff on site overnight. It is not feasible for a single person to manage 300 dogs alone; they cannot provide the care and socialisation required.

The committee also had a number of concerns about the Companion Animals Registry. The registry is due to be upgraded. It should include the details of breeders and it should be easier to use and to update when people move house or when animals are transferred. The committee also found that more resources were needed for the enforcement of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. That role is generally shared by charities. The RSPCA and the Animal Welfare League receive a small amount of funding from the Government to carry out that law-enforcement role. If the Government implements the committee's recommendations we will see a rapid improvement in animal welfare. Cats and dogs—and dogs in particular—in New South Wales will be much better off if these recommendations are implemented. I commend the report to the House.

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

**Report noted.**

## **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 5/56**

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

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSON** (Upper Hunter) [1.18 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I address the House on Legislation Review Digest No. 5/56. The committee has continued its important work this week of scrutinising all bills introduced into Parliament. For the current digest, the committee reviewed four bills: the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015, the State Arms, Symbols and Emblems (Fossil Emblems) Bill 2015, the Dams Safety Bill 2015, and the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Amendment (Rehabilitation of Persons with Severe Substance Dependence) Bill 2015. The committee made comment about two bills. I will highlight for members some of the issues on which the committee reported. In respect of the Dams Safety Bill, the committee considered the presence of a number of strict liability clauses relating to offences. The bill concerns the regulatory framework for dam safety in New South Wales. As such, it contains a number of clauses requiring prescribed dam owners to fulfil certain reporting and health and safety obligations.

The bill introduces a number of offences of strict liability if dam owners fail to comply with those obligations. In most cases strict liability is an issue the committee will always note. Strict liability means that only particular acts or omissions need to be proved to meet the criminal threshold and the Crown is



not required to demonstrate intent, negligence or recklessness on the part of the accused. However, the committee did not find the strict liability provisions in the bill unreasonable in the circumstances. As mentioned in the report, those types of provisions are not uncommon in regulatory settings where compliance with particular obligations is part of the key elements of the regulatory framework. In this case the provisions are designed to ensure the safety of prescribed dams in New South Wales and, given those circumstances, the committee considered them appropriate.

I now turn to the second bill the committee considered. The Drug and Alcohol Treatment Amendment (Rehabilitation of Persons with Severe Substance Dependence) Bill 2015 was a private member's bill introduced in the other place. According to the second reading speech, the bill was developed in light of increasing public concerns about the effect of drugs on users and the community. Despite the serious issues the bill seeks to address, the committee highlighted a number of issues according to the criteria in section 8A of the Legislation Review Act 1987. First, the bill provides for the involuntary treatment and detention of individuals with severe substance dependence to be extended to persons 16 years and older as opposed to 18 years and older. Whilst the bill provides that a parent or guardian of a young person must provide consent before involuntary treatment can commence, the committee considers this may unduly impact upon the rights and liberties of young people.

Secondly, the bill includes a retrospective provision in that the amendments will be applied to any person who is already subject to involuntary treatment under the Act. The committee will generally comment when provisions in bills are drafted to have retrospective effect. That is because retrospectivity is contrary to the rule of law, which means people know the law they are subject to at any given time. The bill also seeks to remove the role of the magistrate in any decision to extend a period of detention for treatment. Currently, if a period of detention for treatment needs to be extended beyond 28 days authorisation must be obtained from a magistrate.

The amendments contained in the bill will allow a person to be detained for treatment for 90 days. The committee noted that in some cases treatment may not be effective within 28 days and a longer period of treatment would be necessary. However, the committee considered that removing the role of a magistrate to assist in making that determination may potentially make a right, liberty or obligation unduly dependent upon a non-reviewable decision. In addition, the committee noted that the bill does not provide a person who is the subject of involuntary out-patient treatment with the same review rights as a person subject to involuntary detention treatment. The committee also considered that may potentially make a right, liberty or obligation unduly dependent upon a non-reviewable decision. I commend the digest to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN** (The Entrance) [1.23 p.m.]: I endorse the comments of the chair, the member for Upper Hunter, in relation to Legislation Review Digest No. 5/56 and make a contribution to debate on behalf of the Opposition. I acknowledge my colleague in the other place the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane for his assistance on the committee. I also acknowledge the committee support staff who help with our work. I thank manager Emma Wood and staff Jason Ardit, Jessica Falvey, Sasha Shevtsova and Mohini Mehta. The committee considered four bills, but I will comment only on the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Amendment (Rehabilitation of Persons with Severe Substance Dependence) Bill 2015. I note that four items were referred back to the Parliament because they trespass on personal liberties and rights. They are important issues whenever the committee raises them. I look forward to the member responsible addressing those issues before the bill is brought back before the House. I endorse the report.

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

**Report noted.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.25 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

**R U OK? DAY**



**The SPEAKER:** Today members are wearing yellow badges to mark R U Ok? Day. This national day encourages people to ask those around them, "Are you okay?" R U Ok? Day is about supporting people struggling in their lives and to raise awareness of suicide prevention and mental health. By simply reaching out, asking a question and offering support, everyone can make a huge difference in the life of another. I thank all members for wearing their badges and supporting R U Ok? Day.

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome all our guests in the gallery this afternoon to Question Time. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Councillor Adam Roberts from Port Macquarie Hastings Council, guest of the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a representative of Compass Housing Services and the City of Newcastle, Councillor Lisa Tierney, guest of the member for Coogee. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of 18 members of the Lions Club of Orange Canobolas, who are visiting us as guests of the member for Orange.

I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Glenn and Nikky Royall, former teaching colleagues of the member for Lakemba and me, in our old days at Ulladulla High School. I welcome them both. They are guests of the member for Lakemba and they will be guests of mine later in the afternoon. I extend a very warm welcome to 15 students from the University of the Third Age [U3A] Northern Illawarra, guests of the member for Keira. They were telling me a short time ago what a very fine young man the member for Keira is. They may see the real member for Keira here today. I also welcome 15 Italian students being sponsored by Sydney Grammar School, Sydney, and their teachers, guests of the member for Sydney.

### **QUESTION TIME**

*[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]*

### **TAFE WESTERN SYDNEY INSTITUTE**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business. What is the Minister's response to a leaked TAFE document that states enrolments at Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Richmond and The Hills colleges have "significantly decreased" and that this justifies staff cuts at TAFE Western Sydney Institute?

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question about the importance of TAFE in this State and enrolment numbers. As I have mentioned previously in the House and at the estimates committee last Friday, there have been changes in the way enrolments are reported across a number of sectors. We want to provide every opportunity to young people in this State and ensure that places are available for students who are enrolling in their primary qualification. Those opposite may pick individual campuses, institutes or particular courses that have declines.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Blacktown will cease interjecting. I call the member for Blacktown to order for the first time.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** This Government is providing great opportunities across New South Wales. A couple of weeks ago I informed the House of the 200 per cent increase in apprenticeships in the Northern Institute, which has been assisted by the infrastructure spending by this Government on the Pacific Highway. This Government grows the economy. When the economy grows, jobs are created. When jobs are created, there are more training opportunities for young people.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.



**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Does the Opposition want the answer?

**Mr Luke Foley:** Do you want the document?

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** The data that I am interested in—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Blacktown to order for the second time. The member will cease interjecting.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Over the past 12 months, the Government has created 61,300 new jobs in regional New South Wales. The data that I am interested in is that a quarter of a million jobs have been created by this Government over the past four years. We are giving young people the opportunity, the training and the skills not only for the jobs of today but also for the jobs of tomorrow.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting. They will not argue with the Minister.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** The information that I am interested in comes from students, who tell us that they want training delivered in a blended way, online and in the workplace. Industry is talking to us about partnerships. I have spoken before in this place about government-industry partnerships, such as the Barangaroo Skills Exchange with TAFE NSW. This partnership has provided opportunities for more than 500 apprentices, who will become the tradies and business owners of tomorrow. That is the data that I am interested in. The Opposition members will keep doing what they have always done: talk down TAFE, talk about the closure of campuses. They will continue to talk down the opportunities available for young people.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will come to order. There is too much audible conversation coming from Opposition members.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** On 1 July the Government announced 200,000 fee-free scholarships; that is a \$48 million investment. I inform the House that there are now more than 6,000 fee-free scholarship enrolments.

**Mr Luke Foley:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance, Standing Order 129. The question was specifically about the decline of enrolments and staff cuts at Western Sydney. I have waited patiently for 3½ minutes. The Minister has not once referred to the subject of the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. No standing order gives me the power to direct Ministers to answer a question in a specific way. The standing orders require only that Ministers be relevant. The Minister's answer is relevant to the question.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Western Sydney is a great place. A recent audit of job opportunities in Western Sydney, conducted by the TAFE Western Sydney Institute, found that 234,000 jobs have been advertised this year and 66,000 are still unfilled. There are fantastic opportunities for people in Western Sydney right now. The jobs are being created. The Government is putting in place the resources and providing the opportunities. Through such measures as the 200,000 fee-free scholarships, a \$48 million investment, the Government is encouraging people to obtain the skills not only for the jobs of today but also for the jobs of tomorrow.

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



## NORTH COAST INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS:** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What is the Baird-Grant Government doing to ensure that the communities of the North Coast have the frontline services and infrastructure they need?

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I acknowledge the Parliamentary Secretary for the North Coast, who does an outstanding job advocating for the communities of the North Coast. Opposition members do not understand the area; they think it is foreign territory. The Parliamentary Secretary is a strong advocate for the investment and infrastructure that North Coast communities deserve. The North Coast is a strongly performing region. Its industries range from tourism to agriculture. From Myall Lakes to the Tweed, the North Coast punches above its weight.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Labor ignored the North Coast, as it ignored all of regional New South Wales, for 16 years.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Members of the Opposition think that there is nothing other than koalas between Newcastle and Tweed Heads. Under Labor, the services and infrastructure that those communities deserve were lacking or left to deteriorate. That explains why when Labor took its campaign caravan to the North Coast to try to deceive the communities it received an icy reception. Labor's feeble attempt to win votes failed miserably. The Liberal-Nationals Government, since being elected, has begun to right Labor's many wrongs on the North Coast.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** As promised, we have delivered 90 new police officers to the northern region, which means that the local area commands of Tweed-Byron, Richmond, Coffs-Clarence, Mid North Coast, Manning Great Lakes, Port Stephens, Hunter Valley, Central Hunter, Lake Macquarie and Tuggerah Lakes have all been boosted by additional resources—something those opposite did not do for 16 years—and the positive effects are being felt. As I said in the House recently, the member for Myall Lakes and other members have experienced record low levels of crime in their electorates, according to Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research figures. The Government is investing in police infrastructure along the North Coast to ensure that our police have the best facilities. Tweed and Taree are examples.

After a strident campaign by the member for Clarence—for which I congratulate him—the Minister for Corrections is delivering a brand new 600-bed facility for Grafton, a facility the community has been calling for since the decommissioning of the old Grafton jail. The member for Clarence has also secured a bridge. Those opposite ignored the calls for a bridge for 16 years. The member for Coffs Harbour and all the members along the coast right up to Lismore know that the Pacific Highway is undergoing its biggest upgrade. The road was a death trap. Over 16 years members on this side of the House who represent North Coast electorates pleaded with the former Labor Government to invest in Pacific Highway upgrades in order to save lives, but those opposite did nothing. We had to drag Federal Labor kicking and screaming to fund the Pacific Highway upgrade; the former State Labor Government did nothing. Labor members should hang their heads in shame.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** In particular—and the member for Ballina will acknowledge this—approximately 26 people a year have died on a very steep and winding section of the Pacific Highway, yet those opposite would not make an investment to upgrade the highway.



**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order—

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Those opposite are ignorant and have no appreciation of North Coast communities.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Sit down.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will not tell the Minister to sit down. That is offensive.

**Mr Ryan Park:** He's a baboon.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will resume his seat. That is disgraceful behaviour. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** After 16 years of the former Labor Government the road was not good enough. It took us to deliver the upgrade. We are very, very proud of that investment. When it comes to health the story is the same. We have a health Minister who understands the regions. When she was the shadow spokesperson in opposition she went out to the regions and listened. And it took her and the Liberal-Nationals in government to deliver. I have been to more hospitals on the North Coast with the Minister for Health than in any other part of New South Wales. It is amazing what she is doing at Taree, Byron Bay, Lismore, Tweed Heads, Murwillumbah, Macksville and Kempsey.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** The wonderful Minister for Health spent 16 years in opposition doing her job as the shadow spokesperson, going out and listening to the communities, identifying the priorities for investment. She has prioritised regional New South Wales and she should be commended for it. Investments have been made in hospitals in Taree, Byron Bay, Lismore, Tweed Heads, Murwillumbah, Macksville, Kempsey and Coffs Harbour on the North Coast alone. She is the most outstanding health Minister this State has ever seen.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation coming from Opposition members.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Let me make this point very clear to everyone in this Chamber and to those in the gallery: only one side of this House cares about and can be relied upon to deliver for the people of regional New South Wales and, importantly, the North Coast—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Cessnock to order for the first time. The member will cease shouting.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** —and it is not those opposite.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the second time. I warn Opposition members who continue to interject that they will be placed on three calls to order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Labor's response to regional New South Wales is extraordinary. The Leader of the Opposition in this place says one thing and the Leader of the Opposition in the other place says another. One would swear they are driving on both sides of the road like a drunken driver, which they know something about.



**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Lakemba will come to order. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. Members will cease interjecting and arguing across the Chamber. The Minister for Transport will come to order.

### **WYONG HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE LABORATORIES**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Given that the Treasurer has now confirmed that the Minister for Education will need to find significant savings from within his department's budget to fund his failing Learning Management and Business Reform rollout, when will the Government deliver new science labs at Wyong High School?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** What about the member saying thank you for the new facilities at his old school, Point Clare Public School, where he was the principal? Actually, he did thank me and he said the Government was doing an excellent job and that the education Minister was a good Minister. There we were a year or so ago and we had imagery of the new facilities at Point Clare. It is a fantastic school and, in the spirit of bipartisanship, I have to admit that they said the member for Wyong was a pretty good principal.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** R U Ok?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** That is a good question. This Government has made a huge investment in capital works projects right across this State. During the election campaign the Government made a commitment to upgrade a number of science laboratories across New South Wales. With respect to the science labs at Wyong High School, I will take the question on notice. But on the issue of the Learning Management and Business Reform [LMBR] program, the premise of the question is wrong. It is not a requirement for the Department of Education to in any way find savings to pay for the unbudgeted component of LMBR—the part that Labor did not budget for. Let us look at the history of LMBR—and the Treasurer touched on this yesterday. In December 2011, the Auditor-General handed down a report for the period from 2006 when Labor first signed up to the LMBR. Let us compare the 2011 report with the Auditor-General's 2014 report. In 2011, *The Australian* reported:

A \$386 million finance, human resources and payroll systems project at the NSW Department of Education and Training is over budget and has failed to deliver expected benefits, according to the Auditor-General.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The article continued:

The audit report highlights various problems with the SAP implementation, with trained staff a glaring omission.

The bit they did not fund.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: The question was about science labs. We have a Minister who has a major problem, his leader is leaking about him, and he thinks this is funny.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. This is not an argument. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** We have done a fantastic job of making LMBR work, when for the first four or five years of its implementation it was a disaster under Labor. I raise those disasters to highlight the great job done by the Department of Education under the management of the Liberals and Nationals to make this project work.



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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Those opposite imagine that before March 2011 any history on this issue does not exist. I can tell them that it does exist and I can remind them exactly what that history is. The report goes on to say:

The application was meant to be deployed in schools between 2010 and 2011—

A history lesson: In 2010 Labor was in government.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Labor signed up in 2006. The program was meant to be rolled out in schools between 2010 and 2011 and was due to be implemented in TAFE in late 2010 but is yet to be deployed.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** All programs under phase two have been rescheduled.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Kogarah to order for the second time. He will cease shouting at the Minister.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** There had been substantial challenges with the Learning Management and Business Reform program when we came to government. But, as the Treasurer said yesterday, that was just one of many, many examples of the disasters that we inherited in March 2011.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** That is why the voting public absolutely rejected Labor; it was Labor's worst-ever election result. And that is why the voting public rejected Labor in 2015; Labor followed up its worst-ever election result in 2011 with its second worst ever election result, in 2015. The Auditor-General's report of 2011 confirms that. This Government has implemented nine of the 10 recommendations made by the Auditor-General last year, and we will continue to develop this program.

## **JOBS CREATION**

**Mr GARETH WARD:** My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the Treasurer update the House on how employment growth in the regions, including the Illawarra, is helping New South Wales lead the nation?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I thank the member for Kiama for his question and acknowledge everything that he is doing to create jobs in his community.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will cease interjecting.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Opposition members do not like to hear about jobs.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Swansea will come to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.



**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** At a time when our economy is outperforming those of the rest of Australia—

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** —New South Wales has become the employment capital of Australia. Today's Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that, in August alone, 9,200 jobs were created in New South Wales. That is more than 53 per cent of all jobs created around the nation. About 67,000 jobs have been created since the election in March. Since it has been in office, this Government has created more than 251,000 jobs. New South Wales has the lowest employment rate in the country, at 6 per cent. It is the lowest of any State; and it has been at or below the national average for 22 consecutive months.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am pleased to inform the House that regional New South Wales is doing particularly well. Why do Opposition members not want to hear the good news? Why do they not care about jobs?

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am very pleased to advise the House, especially all members representing regional and country areas, that 41 per cent of State job growth occurred in their part of New South Wales. It is interesting to note—

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** —that 20 per cent of all jobs created in the last year across the entire nation were created in regional New South Wales. If Newcastle and Wollongong are included in those figures, the figure goes up to 30 per cent.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** We appreciate that there are always challenges in regional New South Wales, as well as across the State in some sectors, in relation to job creation. But we are not taking our foot off the accelerator. For 10 years under Labor, unemployment was above the national average for 40 of its last 47 months. For 10 years those opposite failed to create the jobs that this State needed. When it comes to job creation, they are absolute hypocrites. They oppose this Government's infrastructure plans, they oppose Rebuilding NSW, and they voted against our Jobs Action Plan.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I am pleased to say that since the Jobs Action Plan was put in place 23,000 applications have come in. It is interesting to note where some of those applications have come from.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** More than 1,500 of those applications came from Maitland.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. The member for Keira will come to order. The member for Londonderry will come to order. The member for Fairfield will come to order. I will order



the clock to be stopped until the House comes to order.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Though Opposition members opposed the legislation to extend the Jobs Action Plan, their communities are benefiting from this policy.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. The Minister does not require any assistance.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** There is such good information to tell the House, but so little time to do so. Other highlights include more than 1,700 applications from Lake Macquarie, more than 1,200 from Wagga Wagga, more than 900 from Orange, and more than 850 from Coffs Harbour.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** There were more than 780 applications from Port Macquarie.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** There have been more than 700 applications from Tamworth, more than 700 from Albury, more than 630 from Dubbo, more than 600 from the Tweed, more than 560 from Singleton, more than 500 from Bathurst, more than 400 from Lismore—and the list goes on. I say to those opposite: Why did you oppose this legislation in Parliament? Why do you not care about jobs?

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I do not want to brush over the current jobs challenges in the Illawarra, but I came across some interesting statistics about that region. Given the member for Kiama asked the question, I thought it only appropriate to talk about the record of job creation in the Illawarra. When Labor was in government, on average, about 900 jobs were created every year in the Illawarra. Members might think that is not a bad statistic. But since the Coalition has been in government, on average, we have created 4,700 jobs every year in the Illawarra.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** These are Australian Bureau of Statistics figures. In the past 12 months alone, more than 10,000 jobs have been created in the Illawarra.

**Ms Kate Washington:** How many jobs have been lost?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Those are net jobs.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will not argue with the Minister.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** We have done in one year what it took Labor about a dozen years to do.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** But more jobs, and more job creation, is not just good for the economy; we know what that means for families and for individuals.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** We are proud of our record. Those opposite can oppose our plans,



but we will keep creating jobs.

### **SUTHERLAND HOSPITAL CHILDCARE SERVICES**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** My question is directed to the Minister for Early Childhood Education. Given a petition signed by 683 residents was presented today to the New South Wales Parliament opposing the defunding by the State Government of Sutherland Hospital's Koala Child Care Centre's evening service, what steps has the Minister taken to ensure that night hospital staff have affordable early childhood education and care?

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** I thank the member for her question. I am pleased that she has raised the issue of preschool funding because it is an important matter that those on this side of the House take seriously.

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

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** The question relates to the Lorikeet and Koala childcare centres. I can advise that we work in a devolved health system where local health districts have responsibility and autonomy to make decisions. Recognising this, I will not comment on the specific decisions made by the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District in relation to the Koala and Lorikeet childcare centres. Both the State and the Commonwealth have a role to play in supporting early childhood education and care services; I am sure the member for Charlestown understands that. The New South Wales Government, of course, has primary responsibility for education—as I am sure the member understands as well. It provides support to public and community-based preschools to enable access for children in the year before school and 3-year-olds from low income and Aboriginal families.

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

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** In addition, the Government has initiated a Long Day Care National Partnership Grants Program that will provide a \$20 million investment for long day care services to offer preschool programs. These grants aim to enhance the educational responses of our long day care providers. On the other hand, the Commonwealth provides \$2 billion—

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Charlestown will be heard in silence.

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** The question is specifically about what steps the Minister has taken to ensure that night hospital staff at Koala Child Care Centre have affordable early childhood education.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister's answer is relevant to the question.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** I am responding to the member's question about Lorikeet Child Care Centre. She should listen carefully and take note. As I was saying, the Commonwealth provides \$2 billion in funding to support childcare services, such as long day care services through the Child Care Rebate and the Child Care Benefit. The Child Care Rebate covers 50 per cent of the out-of-pocket costs of child care up to a maximum of \$7,500 per child per year after the Child Care Benefit.

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

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** Families using long day care services at the Koala and Lorikeet childcare centres may be eligible for this Commonwealth support. I take this opportunity, as I have some time left, to talk about the great things that the New South Wales Government is doing to support



education services in preschools. The Government takes this issue very seriously and I am proud to be the first Minister—

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: It is relevance. Clearly the Minister has done nothing to assist. You finished your answer; sit down.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time. There is no point of order.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** I know it is upsetting for members opposite to hear about the great things we are doing in the early childhood sector. We are delivering and making a difference. We know that the preschool funding model has delivered more services and more opportunities for four- and five-year-olds to access quality early childhood education in the year before school and for three-year-olds from low income and Aboriginal families. This is a significant change. We have seen an increase in the percentage of children attending early childhood education. That is a great result and something that was not delivered by those opposite. I reiterate that it is a responsible move as a result of the Brennan review. Professor Brennan, a highly qualified commentator on early childhood education, recommended in her report that we needed to direct our funding to where it matters most—that is, to four- and five-year-old children.

## **RURAL AND REGIONAL JOBS CREATION**

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business. How is the Baird-Grant Government supporting skills development and jobs growth in southern New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the third time. The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** I thank the member for Cootamundra and Parliamentary Secretary for her passion and advocacy for regional New South Wales, especially the southern area. She was born and bred in regional New South Wales and supports growth in those communities and regions. For New South Wales to have a strong economy we need a diverse economy, and that is what regional New South Wales brings. This is an abundant time for opportunity not just in metropolitan Sydney but in regional New South Wales. Members opposite choose always to shelve regional New South Wales. They talk down the regions, they talk down TAFE, and they fail to acknowledge the incredibly strong economic growth in regional New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Cessnock will come to order. This is not an argument. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the first time.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** As I mentioned earlier in question time, those opposite fail to mention the 61,300 jobs created over the past 12 months. The Baird-Grant Government has put regional New South Wales front and centre of decisions to create growth and to support our communities. We can see that across the board, with record investment in infrastructure, roads, hospitals, schools. Throughout regional New South Wales there is record investment; we are the infrastructure State. We are focusing on the strengths and opportunities that we see in regional New South Wales, making sure that we support those industries that are creating jobs and are important to regional communities to help them to continue to grow. South-eastern New South Wales is recording the strongest jobs growth since 2011, increasing month on month. We have seen an additional 13,800 people in south-eastern New South Wales. I update the House that the unemployment rate is just 3.2 per cent in south-eastern New South Wales, which is the lowest of any region and well below the national and State averages.



**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Cessnock will come to order. If he wishes to have a debate with the Minister he will do so after question time.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** We have used our policy settings and investments without using taxpayers' dollars, leveraging private sector investment and creating jobs. In the south-east and Tablelands regions we have seen \$16 million in private sector investment, creating 305 full-time jobs. They are real jobs; we are investing in real jobs. Regional New South Wales is growing so fast that it is pulling the electricity out of Sydney. We are investing in real jobs in Narooma, Murrumbateman, Cooma, Bodalla, Moruya, Jindabyne, Mittagong, Young and Goulburn. These are some of the centres that are seeing regional growth, jobs created and private sector investment.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Kogarah to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of one hour.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Kogarah left the Chamber at 2.56 p.m.]*

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** That guy gets an early mark most days; I do not think he likes being in the Chamber. This Government is committed to creating 150,000 new jobs over the next four years under Jobs for NSW. Our extensive infrastructure plans will deliver 1,000 apprenticeships. We are investing in vocational education and training because a strong economy and a strong State cannot be built on bridges and roads alone; a strong workforce is needed.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** We have invested \$100 million to support training for 47,000 apprentices over the next 12 months. For those interested, trade apprenticeships have grown 5.6 per cent as at 1 July 2015 compared with the same period last year.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** The member for Wyong calls this a bubble. He hates seeing growth and job creation: This guy is the grim reaper of TAFE. There he is at Goulburn campus, lurking in the shadows.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Point of order. My first point of order is about the use of props in the House and my second point of order is under Standing Order 75. The Minister should address the member by his correct title.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I uphold the points of order. The Minister will not use props and he will refer to the member for Wyong by his correct title.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** I mention the shadow Minister, the member for Wyong, because he is the greatest threat to TAFE in New South Wales, as he stands out the front of our TAFE campuses, lurking in the shadows.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Point of order: The Minister is flouting your ruling by continuing to wave the prop around after you directed him to cease using it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am not sure the Minister was doing that as it was difficult to see the prop. There is no point of order at this stage.



**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** We are also identifying opportunities in growth industries in regional New South Wales. The Government announced a \$25 million investment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] courses because we know the jobs of the future are going to be around innovation and technology. Regional New South Wales is placed to take advantage of new industries that rely on technology and innovation to grow. This Government sees opportunities in regional New South Wales. We are committed to investing in infrastructure. We are committed to partnering with the private sector. We are committed to making sure that young people in this State get the skills and training they need to get the jobs of tomorrow.

We are passionate about the vocational education and training pathway. I am passionate about TAFE. That is why last night it was great to be at the 2015 NSW Training Awards. Three awards went to TAFE students, teachers and businesses from the Illawarra and south-east areas. Our achievements come out of our conviction, dedication and passion for regional New South Wales. This Government knows that New South Wales Labor has no conviction; but we know that the Leader of the Opposition has two.

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

### **FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** My question is directed to the Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals. I refer to the motion passed at the New South Wales Nationals Cessnock conference opposing the sale of agricultural land to foreign state-owned enterprises. Why does the Deputy Premier oppose Chinese investment in New South Wales agriculture?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber. Members who are on calls to order are deemed to be on three calls to order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I used to like the member for Cessnock; I thought he was smarter than that. The Nationals in New South Wales have a proud and long tradition of democratic inclusion at our conferences. We actually allow our members to participate and to debate matters at our conferences, in stark contrast to those opposite. Let us not forget that in 2008 a Labor motion condemning an Australian company for underpaying workers was voted down—

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister for Education will come to order. I call the Minister for Education to order for the first time. What is the member's point of order? The member for Cessnock will not argue with the Minister.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** I am not arguing with him.

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

**Mr Clayton Barr:** My point of order is under Standing Order 129. I asked specifically about The Nationals conference and the Minister is talking about a Labor Party conference, which is clearly outside the leave of the question. I want him to talk about the motion moved at The Nationals conference and whether he supports that motion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The question should have been ruled out of order. When the member for Cessnock asks a question of that nature he will receive the answer he deserves.



**Mr TROY GRANT:** In 2008 a Labor motion condemning an Australian company for underpaying workers was voted down when it was discovered that the company was a donor to the Labor Party.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind members that many of them are on three calls to order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** The issue of whether a foreign enterprise or entity can purchase and invest in Australian businesses is a matter for the Foreign Investment Review Board, which sits at the Federal level. We will always defend our members' right to debate. Unlike Labor, we will not be a puppet of xenophobic union mates. Those opposite should be ashamed of themselves. We have a proud history of working with other countries. Before the electoral redistribution I was proud to have China Molly running a magnificent resource end-farming enterprise in my electorate. China is our largest trade partner and we work with every country and with those who are prepared to invest in New South Wales for the greater good.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: It is under 129. I will say it really slowly: Did you support the motion?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Unlike those opposite, I was proud to serve as the trade Minister for this State. We will not be criticised or lectured to by those who support a xenophobic election campaign. They are still hanging their heads in shame. The only one who has stepped up and admitted to their shame is the member for Kogarah, who is showing some leadership on this issue. How dare those opposite lecture us; they are an absolute disgrace. The member for Canterbury is a disgraceful Deputy Leader of the Opposition. It is all too complicated; they are a bunch of xenophobes. New South Wales Nationals are democratic and proud to represent the regions with passion and conviction. We will fight for regional New South Wales and the interests of regional New South Wales every day. We will not be dictated to. We are not puppets or Muppets of the union masters in Sussex Street. Those opposite are a disgrace. I reject the question. Have a good look at yourself. I am happy to chip in to buy you a mirror.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Canterbury to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of one hour.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 3.05 p.m.]*

## **ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. How is the Baird-Grant Government supporting Aboriginal people in rural and remote New South Wales?

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for his question. I know that he is passionate about every single person who lives in his community, but particularly those in Aboriginal communities. The Government is committed to improving the lives of first peoples in regional and remote New South Wales through education, commitment to culture, economic development and empowerment. I have spoken previously in this House about local decision-making, which is an initiative of Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment, or OCHRE, which is the New South Wales Government's plan for Aboriginal Affairs. This plan supports communities to have greater control in the delivery and coordination of government services and for government to back community-identified priorities, including in the area of economic development.

The model is currently being driven locally in six regional sites and, over time, Aboriginal regional alliances will build more decision-making powers, which may eventually include direction-setting over budget allocation, in partnership with New South Wales government services as the alliances help to build the capacity of communities. This model is working very well in western New South Wales. Murdi



Paaki runs from Tibooburra to Wentworth and covers most communities in western New South Wales, including Coonamble, Lightning Ridge and Menindee. The Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly was the first regional alliance to negotiate and sign an accord with the Government on 19 February 2015, and I recently met with the assembly in Cobar. The community is supportive of this governance model. Rick Morton from the *Australian* newspaper travelled to Walgett recently and spoke to Anne Dennis, New South Wales Aboriginal Land Councillor from the north-west and also part of the Murdi Paaki accord. She told the *Australian*:

There are still issues ... None of these things are fast fixes but the government is at least showing us respect. We have a voice in our own destiny.

That is a very important point. Members on this side of the House have listened to Aboriginal people. We understand that Aboriginal people must be not only a part of the conversation but also a part the decision-making process. Mrs Dennis went on to say that the focus on culture and heritage is breaking down barriers. The New South Wales Government has established five Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests as part of its commitment to language revitalisation. Each language and culture nest is being guided by the local community, which is working in partnership with its local school to improve education delivery and outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people, their families and their communities. As a result, Aboriginal children and young people are learning about their unique and ever-evolving culture, setting solid cultural foundations that will strengthen their future.

I had the privilege of visiting the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest in the electorate of Dubbo. It was heartening to hear from local elders such as Uncle Rod Towney and to see how proud they are that Aboriginal children and young people are engaging in education. I also note that the elders involved in the nest shared their wealth of knowledge to assist the Deputy Premier in being the first person to speak Wiradjuri in this Chamber. The other Aboriginal language and culture nests are supporting Aboriginal communities on the mid North Coast, far North Coast, north-western and western New South Wales. The New South Wales Government recently committed \$164,000 to fund Aboriginal community organisations through its Our Languages, Our Way program to support community-driven projects that strengthen community ownership and participation in their language journey.

The majority of the projects are supporting regional and remote Aboriginal communities. The Government recognises the importance of supporting Aboriginal students, including those in rural and remote areas, to get the very best start to their schooling. Under the Preschool Funding Model to which I referred earlier we provide two years of subsidised access to early childhood education programs for Aboriginal children. That model is already increasing enrolments in community preschools with 8 per cent more Aboriginal children aged three, four and five years enrolled in community preschools in 2014 than in 2013. I recognise that the support that the Government is providing to regional and remote Aboriginal communities will not necessarily result in overnight change. However, we are fully committed to working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities.

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

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** I am encouraged by the recent words of Anne Dennis, who said in the *Australian*:

We've gone through a lot of change in government policy out here ... It seems almost too much to say it, but I have hope. Things are changing.

**RENEWABLE ENERGY AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGETS**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Given that expert assessment of the Federal Government's latest climate change commitment is that it does nothing to change the behaviour of big polluters or to support renewable energy, what leadership will the New



South Wales Government show to tackle climate change by setting stronger targets for increasing renewable energy and reducing greenhouse emissions?

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I thank the member for Sydney for his question and note his strong interest in effective action on climate change. New South Wales is blessed with abundant renewable energy resources and an enterprising business sector that is creating new, sustainable jobs and providing green services for export interstate and internationally. We are also blessed by communities statewide that are keen to do their bit to avoid dangerous climate change and by a government of action on climate change. Our NSW Energy Efficiency Action Plan, NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan and a government energy action plan are driving investment in new jobs, reducing electricity bills and making the Government a leader in sustainability. We are making New South Wales the home for green jobs in Australia. Helped by strong New South Wales Government leadership, the Sydney finance and services sector is well positioned to become a centre for green services in the Asia-Pacific.

Our NSW Energy Efficiency Action Plan is delivering new jobs to tradies and energy efficiency professionals. We are working hard to meet our ambitious 16,000 gigawatt hour target for annual energy savings for households and businesses. We have a strong target for energy efficiency to keep faith with our commitment to use energy efficiency to drive down bills. Our Energy Savings Scheme is internationally recognised as one of the most efficient and effective ways to reduce energy bills—building the resilience of our communities, keeping downward pressure on prices, reducing emissions and, importantly, reducing electricity bills for consumers. The comparison with our opponents could not be starker. Let us not forget the hundreds of millions of dollars that Labor slammed consumers with through the Solar Bonus Scheme. It was supposed to have a budget of \$350 million. Where did it go? Up to \$1.7 billion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. I remind members that 15 of them are on three calls to order.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** Only Labor would introduce incentives without modelling the uptake and hit people where it hurt—in the hip pocket. Under Robbo the Magnificent, our Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, we have a pipeline for renewable energy that will deliver jobs, jobs and jobs for regional New South Wales. We have always supported strong targets on renewable energy. We supported the national 20 per cent renewable energy target by 2020.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira is on his final warning.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** We then supported the original 41,000 gigawatt hour target being retained, sending a clear signal to investors about our support for renewables. But targets should not be limits. In New South Wales last year energy from renewable resources apart from hydro increased by 15 per cent. The data shows that there is \$900 million worth of renewable projects under construction, which will create 300 direct jobs and 7,000 indirect jobs. In addition, \$5.3 billion is approved for renewable energy projects, creating 13,000 direct jobs and 30,000 indirect jobs. We are seeking approval for \$7 billion in projects that will create 24,000 direct jobs and 57,000 indirect jobs. We are a government of action on renewable energy. We established the position of the Renewable Energy Advocate to help with projects in New South Wales and we are making key investments in new technologies.

The Liberal-Nationals have helped capture more than \$582 million of Australian Government funding for 104 renewable energy projects so that New South Wales will be the leading State in large-scale solar installation and renewable energy development. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has contributed \$65 million out of \$440 million to the construction of Australia's largest commercial solar plants at Nyngan and Broken Hill under the Solar Flagships Project, in partnership with the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, AGL and First Solar. Those investments are fundamental to a bright solar future for regional New South Wales. To the member for Sydney I say that on climate change we need governments of action. That is why we have promoted a strong national



renewable energy target and why we have a strong New South Wales energy efficiency target. Unlike Labor's failed schemes, we are doing this in a fiscally responsible way that protects the vulnerable and their energy bills.

### **COAL SEAM GAS**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSON:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy. I compliment him on his tie and ask how have Government reforms helped to increase transparency between gas companies, farmers and landowners in rural and regional New South Wales and related matters?

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: The reference to the Minister's tie in the question is in breach of Standing Order 128 (f), which provides that ironical expressions are precluded from questions.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. Members will come to order.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** I wonder if those opposite are missing something from their strategy meeting. I hold here in my hand Luke's lucky eight ball. We will ask a few questions about that a little later. It says, "Property of Luke, don't touch." Earlier today I had the great pleasure of joining with the member for Upper Hunter, as well as representatives from the Country Women's Association [CWA] of New South Wales, Dairy Connect, Cotton Australia, the NSW Irrigators Council, AGL and Santos to witness the signing of the Agreed Principles of Land Access by two new signatories. The principles were originally signed by NSW Farmers, Cotton Australia, the NSW Irrigators Council, Santos and AGL in March 2014. They were re-affirmed by the public commitments made by AGL and Santos to not enter onto land for drilling operations where they were not welcome.

The principles also agree that landholders have the right to say yes to having coal seam gas operations on their land free from harassment or intimidation from third parties. With the re-signing of this agreement, the people of Gloucester and Narrabri can again rest assured that any drilling operations on their land will take place with their permission. One of the great untold stories of the coal seam gas [CSG] industry in New South Wales is the fact that there has never been forced arbitration for land access for drilling operations in this State. I make it very clear to the House that not once has a petroleum titleholder resorted to their legal right to have an access agreement determined without the willingness of the landholder.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maitland has the right to take a point of order. Government members will cease interjecting.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order: The children on the Government benches have lost their balls. I think it is distracting some of them.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** What this means is that many farmers are sitting down and working respectfully with gas companies to reach agreements which protect their land and soil and which also create a form of off-farm income.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order or they will be given an early mark and removed from the Chamber.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** Misinformation in our cities often purports that farmers across the State are under attack from gas companies. The truth on the land is very different. The truth is that we



have responsible and mature companies that work collaboratively with landholders to ensure land access arrangements benefit all parties. I note today that the Labor Party in the other place has chosen to join The Greens bandwagon and introduce a new coal seam gas moratorium bill. We of course know Labor's appalling record in this House when it comes to regulating this industry, and nothing has changed. Of course, Labor's bill glosses over the Camden Gas Project. Why would they look at a project that has been operating safely for 13 years? That will not help with the campaign to steal The Greens' votes at the expense of New South Wales.

Apparently it is okay for the project at Camden to continue operating, but it is not okay for projects to go ahead in other parts of New South Wales. Are members opposite serious? Sadly, they are. They would allow the Camden Gas Project to continue operating while destroying opportunities in other parts of New South Wales. This is another example of their laziness, their failure to do their homework, and their flip-flop policy development. Members opposite have not realised that they have no credibility on this issue. They have not realised that no-one is voting for them because of the good work this Government is doing on this issue. They should be ashamed of their failure to regulate this industry. They should have provided the same level of regulation that exists today when this industry was first getting off the ground 15 years ago. Members opposite failed, and they failed miserably.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on both sides of the House will stop their silliness. The Minister has the call.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** I note that the bill contains an arbitrary ban on coal seam gas operations in Narrabri and the Pilliga.

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 77. The Minister is anticipating a debate that will occur in this House and it is inappropriate for him to continue.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am glad the member for Wyong was paying attention to the Minister's answer. There is no point of order. The Minister is not anticipating debate.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** I ask the Leader of the Opposition what is the science behind this bill. Have members of the Opposition ever been to Narrabri and spoken to the local farmers and businesses that are seeing the benefits of this industry? No, they have not. Have they been to Gloucester and met the farmers there who are making off-farm income? No, they have not. Have any members opposite asked those farmers how they will feel if they have this income arbitrarily stripped away from them?

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 130. The Minister is not answering the question; he is clearly debating the issue. He is using this as an opportunity to have a debate about the issue.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Minister was asked a question and he is answering it.

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** Coalition members are the only representatives of the people of this State who can be trusted to have the interests of rural and regional people at heart as we oversee the safe and responsible regulation of the gas industry. While this Government has overseen the Agreed Principles of Land Access, the Labor Party has its own access agreement; it is called "The Agreed Principles of Union Access". Let us take a look at some of the principles set out in that document. It is a short document and it is not complex. Firstly, one of the agreed principles is that all phone calls from Sussex Street to Macquarie Street will be answered after no more than three rings.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. This has nothing



to do with the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I uphold the point of order. The Minister is beginning to stray from the leave of the question.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** I am addressing the "and related matters" part of the question. Secondly, and this is critical and explains a lot, the Labor agreement says that a democratic vote for the leadership of the party will be held only once the result of the vote has been decided by Sussex Street. The third and final point is that the nominated Leader of the Opposition will be parachuted into a formerly safe Labor seat despite the performance of the former Labor member. We all remember Barbara Perry. We miss her.

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** That is the record of members opposite. We on this side of the House are proud to say that we will continue to act in the best interests of everyone across the State, because, unlike members opposite, we believe in the future of rural and regional New South Wales.

**Question time concluded at 3.26 p.m.**

## **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**.

### **Anti-bullying**

Petition requesting a comprehensive statewide anti-bullying plan, including legislation, policy and programs, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

### **Pet Shops**

Petition opposing the sale of animals in pet shops, 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**.

**The Clerk announced that the following Minister had lodged a response to a petition signed by more than 400 persons:**

The Hon. Gabrielle Upton—Repeat Offender Sentencing—lodged 6 August 2015 (Mr Thomas George).

## **ADDRESS TO HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II**

**Debate resumed from 9 September 2015.**



**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.28 p.m.]: It is an honour and a privilege, as a member of the oldest Parliament in Australia that operates under the Westminster system, to pay tribute to Queen Elizabeth on the significant milestone that she has reached today. Queen Elizabeth Alexandra Mary was born on 21 April 1926. She is Queen of 16 of the 53 member states of the Commonwealth of Nations. She is head of the Commonwealth and Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Upon her accession to the throne on 6 February 1952, Queen Elizabeth became Head of the Commonwealth and Queen Regnant of seven independent Commonwealth countries: the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan and Ceylon. Her coronation service the following year was the first to be televised.

From 1956 to 1992, the number of her realms varied as territories gained independence and some became republics. Today, in addition to the first four of the aforementioned countries, Queen Elizabeth is Queen of a number of countries that have joined the Commonwealth, including Jamaica, Barbados, the Bahamas, Grenada, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The Queen is the world's oldest reigning monarch, as well as Britain's longest-lived monarch. On 9 September 2015 she surpassed the reign of her great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, and became the longest-reigning British head of state and longest-reigning Queen Regnant in history.

Queen Elizabeth is the elder daughter of the Duke and Duchess of York, later King George V and Queen Elizabeth. She was educated privately at home. Her father ascended to the throne on the abdication of his brother, Edward VIII, in 1936. Elizabeth then became heir presumptive. She began to undertake public duties during the Second World War, in which she served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service. I understand that Queen Elizabeth was a driver. In 1947 the Queen married Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, with whom she had four children, Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward.

Queen Elizabeth's many historic state visits include visits to the Republic of Ireland and reciprocal visits with the Pope. She has seen many constitutional changes, such as devolution in the United Kingdom, Canadian patriation and the decolonisation of Africa. She has reigned through wars and conflicts involving many of her realms. There have been many highs and many lows. Milestones in the Queen's reign have included her Silver, Gold and Diamond Jubilees. She has experienced the loss of significant figures in her life, such as Lord Louis Mountbatten, Princess Diana, the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret, the Queen's sister. It is important that we pay respect to the Queen for her exemplary life of public service. On the Queen's accession to the throne she made a statement that she would serve the realm for the rest of her life. The Queen has been an exemplar of service and continues to be so.

The Queen has visited Australia a number of times. On 19 February 1954, the Queen visited Wagga Wagga. Last week, as I attended the march commemorating one hundred years since the Kangaroos set off on the recruitment march for the Great War, I stopped by the plaque that marks the spot where the Queen stood when she visited Wagga Wagga. The city has preserved many artefacts in memory of the Queen's visit. One is an ornately carved timber chair that the Queen sat on. It is still being used to this day for the crowning of Miss Wagga Wagga, which is the longest-running fundraising event in the city's history. The chair has been refurbished and the community proudly treasures it. There are many other artefacts, photographs and pictorial histories of the Queen's visit. People came from hundreds of miles away to see her. I was not around in 1954, but I know people who were. The streets were lined with thousands of people who travelled from the outback to the city to see the Queen.

Since I have had the privilege and honour of being the member for Wagga Wagga, I have had the opportunity to greet the Duke of Edinburgh. He came to Wagga Wagga in 2002 on a royal visit and carried out a number of formal engagements. The Duke attended a luncheon held by the Wagga Wagga City Council, to which I was invited. It was a great honour to meet the man who has partnered the Queen for many years. He is the other half of that enduring partnership. The Duke was delightful to engage in conversation and I will remember the event for a long time. There has been a lot of debate over the years



between monarchists and republicans. The monarchist system of government is a strong and enduring system. Australia is one of the few countries that has had uninterrupted government because of that system. I am perplexed that people continue to debate republicanism versus the monarchy. It is clear that the monarchist system has provided strong and stable government. The debate is about the system, not about who is at the head of it.

It is clear that people who support a republic cannot agree on the way to choose the head of state. I do not want Australia to be in a situation where he who has the most money becomes president, and that could happen. Under the current system, appointments to the position of Governor-General are made by Her Majesty, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and the Government. The current Governor-General, His Excellency General the Hon. Sir Peter Cosgrove, AK, MC, (Ret'd), is a fantastic Australian who is eminently suited to the position. He is the Queen's representative and he operates under a system that has not let us down. I hope that the Queen continues to reign for many years to come.

If history repeats itself and good health prevails, we can expect the Queen to continue to do her work in a diligent way. She is a tireless worker. Even yesterday, on the day of her celebration, she was out working in the community. The republican debate will erupt from time to time, but I say to republicans that they should acknowledge with respect the great job that the Queen has done and continues to do. She provides leadership, comfort and guidance to the countries that make up the Commonwealth. In troubled times we look to the monarchy for guidance and support. That has been particularly evident in times of war. It is with great pleasure that I contribute to this debate. I wish Her Majesty well. Long may she reign. I say again to people with republican views that the monarchist system of government has served the country well. There are no alternatives. God save the Queen.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [3.38 p.m.]: Queen Elizabeth II yesterday became the longest reigning monarch in the history of Great Britain, surpassing the record set by her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria. It gives me great pride to acknowledge and pay tribute in the New South Wales Parliament this afternoon to this moment in our history of Queen Elizabeth II, Queen to the Australian people and Queen to 16 Commonwealth nations, as reigning Constitutional Monarch. The Queen was born at 2.40 a.m. on 21 April 1926 to the Duke and Duchess of York. At that time she was third in line to the throne.

In November 1947 she married a distant cousin, Philip Mountbatten, who was then created His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. The couple had four children: Charles, the Prince of Wales; Anne, the Princess Royal; Andrew, the Duke of York; and Edward, the Earl of Wessex. Elizabeth ascended to the throne in 1952 at the time of the decline of the British Empire and with Great Britain still recovering from the Second World War. It was a time when the monarchy was a distant institution that reigned over a country where social classes were still clearly apparent.

Her first prime minister at the beginning of her reign was Winston Churchill, a man who had served in the army of her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria. During her reign of 63 years, seven months and three days, approximately 23,227 days, Elizabeth has reigned over 12 British prime ministers—second only to George III, who reigned over 14 and two more than Queen Victoria. She has also reigned over 14 New Zealand prime ministers, 11 Canadian prime ministers, 13 Australian prime ministers and 17 New South Wales premiers. The first Australian prime minister to serve Queen Elizabeth II was the great Sir Robert Menzies. Royalty can have a strange effect on people who come into contact with it. It had an extraordinary effect on an estimated seven million Australians who flocked to see the young Queen more than 62 years ago, and on Prime Minister Robert Menzies, who the *Sydney Herald* newspaper reported as saying:

It is a basic truth that for our Queen we have within us, sometimes unrealised until the moment of expression, the most profound and passionate feelings of loyalty and devotion, the common devotion to the throne is part of the very cement of the whole national structure.



Nine years later he famously said in a toast to Her Majesty the seventeenth century words of Thomas Ford:

I did but see her passing by, and yet I love her till I die.

In the early years of her reign, Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family were only seen by the public on official occasions or people had glimpses of them in newsreels. It was the Queen who introduced the now famous "royal walkabout" at official visits, to clearly show a sense of public affection and informality to the people. During her reign Queen Elizabeth II experienced the highs of the marriages of her children, the celebration of her Silver, Gold and Diamond jubilees, and the birth of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. But she also saw tragedy with the death of Princess Diana, the marriage breakups of three of her children, the loss of her beloved mother the Queen Mother and sister Princess Margaret, and the appalling assassination of Lord Mountbatten.

The Queen's achievements are many. Those that stand out in today's events would be the historic visit to the Republic of Ireland, her reciprocal visits to and from the Pope, and the opening of the 2012 summer Olympics on 27 July and the Paralympics on 29 August 2012 in London, making her the first Head of State to open two Olympic Games in two different countries. She also opened the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal. But for me the most outstanding role the Queen played was at the London Olympics, where she played herself in a short film as part of the opening ceremony, alongside the inimitable Daniel Craig as James Bond. On 4 April 2013 she received an honorary British Academy of Film and Television Arts [BAFTA] award for her patronage of the film industry and was called "the most memorable Bond girl yet" at the awards ceremony.

I digress and go back to 1977. This was the time of the Queen's Silver Jubilee when she visited the city of Adelaide, my hometown. As a very enthusiastic five-year-old I recall making the trip with my parents to see the Queen's arrival. Even now, many years later, I recall quite clearly that day when she drove past in the ceremonial Rolls Royce. I enthusiastically sat on my father's shoulders and waved ecstatically to Her Majesty. She looked across, smiled and waved—a moment that will live in my heart forever. Queen Elizabeth is the patron of 600 organisations and charities. That is an extraordinary achievement in itself, but clearly this is a woman who lives her life for her service and loyalty to the nations over which she reigns. Her personal note about her faith often is evident in her annual Queen's Christmas Message broadcast to the Commonwealth. In 2000 she spoke about the theological significance of the millennium marking the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ. She said to the nation:

To many of us, our beliefs are of fundamental importance. For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life. I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ's words and example.

This is how she has truly lived her life and reigned over her Commonwealth, with dignity and with grace. Queen Elizabeth II is a great example to all of us and we are proud to have her in our lives, whether we have had the honour to be in her presence or have only been a spectator—or have been waved to. Hers has been a most remarkable life and I pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on being the longest reigning monarch in the history of Great Britain.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [3.45 p.m.]: Today I speak about a woman who is greatly admired by many in this country and indeed the world, but particularly by my colleague the Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs, who I know is very pleased to be seated at the table during this address. He has a great passion for the monarchy—

**Mr David Elliott:** The constitutional monarchy.



**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** The constitutional monarchy—and he makes sure we all know. I talk about Elizabeth Alexandra Mary, or as she is more commonly known, Queen Elizabeth II, who today has reigned for 63 years and seven months and becomes Britain's longest reigning monarch, surpassing the record set by her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria. The length of her reign has been calculated at 23,226 days, 16 hours and approximately 30 minutes at 5.30 p.m. British Standard Time, which was 2.30 a.m. in Sydney. Today the Queen reigns over the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand as well as Jamaica, Barbados, the Bahamas, Grenada, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize, Antigua and Barbuda, and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

**Mr David Elliott:** It is impressive.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** It is an impressive list of places. Queen Elizabeth II is the world's oldest reigning monarch as well as Britain's longest lived at 89 years of age. Born in London, Elizabeth is the elder daughter of the Duke and Duchess of York, who later became King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Her father became King on the abdication of his brother Edward VIII in 1936, at which time Elizabeth, at age 11, became the heir presumptive. The Queen began to undertake public duties during the Second World War and served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service. In 1947 she married Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, with whom she has four children: Charles, Anne, Andrew, and Edward.

The Queen has seen a number of firsts for the Royal Family during her life. She was involved in the first royal transatlantic telephone call on 18 May 1939 with her parents whilst they were visiting this country and she remained behind in Britain. In 1954 Elizabeth was the first reigning British monarch to set foot on Australian soil. She has since visited this country on 15 occasions. She opened Buckingham Palace to the public and began paying income tax in the 1990s. After the Gulf War the Queen became the first British monarch to address a joint meeting of the United States Congress. She is the most travelled monarch in history, having visited more than 116 countries. She carries out hundreds of engagements a year and, at the age of 89, she continues to make international State visits.

Queen Elizabeth II pioneered the first televised Christmas Message and she invented, as the member for Terrigal said, the royal walkabout so that she could meet and engage with even more people. Queen Elizabeth's reign has seen 12 prime ministers including Sir Winston Churchill, Sir Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Harold Wilson twice, Edward Heath, James Callaghan, Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and the current Prime Minister David Brown. That is two more than under Queen Victoria. On a personal note, the Queen is someone I admire greatly. I have always found that in a rapidly changing world she provides a great deal of continuity.

What I have always admired about the Queen is that she has managed to find a good mix of keeping the important traditions while remaining relevant and up with the times, including utilising television to allow the public access to important royal events and messages. The Queen also manages to find time for her family. They are often seen attending church together and her grandchildren often talk of catching up with her for a cup of tea at the palace and keeping her informed of what is happening in their lives. Recent television footage showing Prince George outside the church for his sister's christening revealed the Queen to be a loving great-grandmother who likes spending time with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The photos of the event also seemed to show that she suffers the same problems that I do as the godmother of a 2-year-old; she also seems to struggle to understand everything they are saying but tries hard to pretend that that is not the case.

The way that the Queen is marking this milestone is also testament to the type of woman that she is and to the type of Queen she has been. The Queen has asked that there not be a fuss made and has plans to work in Scotland with her husband opening the Borders Railway in Tweedbank, Scotland, the longest domestic line to be built in Britain for more than 100 years. But this is an opportunity to celebrate that we should not let pass. It will be noted by a flotilla of historic vessels, leisure cruisers and passenger boats taking part in a procession between Tower Bridge and the Houses of Parliament. The bridge will lift as a sign of respect and HMS *Belfast* will sound a four-gun salute. The BT Tower in central London is



scrolling the message "Long may she reign", and there will be postponement of business in the Commons for half an hour so members of Parliament can pay tribute to the Queen. David Cameron paid tribute to Her Majesty the Queen by offering a speech, which included the words:

It is of course typical of her selfless sense of service that she would have us treat this day just like any other. But, Mr Speaker, while I rarely advocate disobeying Her Majesty—least of all in her own Parliament—I do think it is right that today we should stop and take a moment as a nation to mark this historic milestone and to thank Her Majesty for the extraordinary service that she has given to our country over more than six decades. Mr Speaker, Her Majesty the Queen inspires us all with her incredible service, her dignified leadership and the extraordinary grace with which she carries out her duties.

Mr Cameron said it all right there. I wanted to note some more of Mr Cameron's words; he stated that the Queen had answered 3.5 million pieces of correspondence. As members of Parliament, we know how much time it takes to answer correspondence, so to answer 3.5 million pieces is particularly admirable. Mr Cameron said that the Queen had "sent over 100,000 telegrams to centenarians across the Commonwealth and met more people than any other Monarch in history." It is hard to overstate what Her Majesty has done for our country. In Britain, she has undertaken 265 official visits to 116 different countries. That is extraordinary, as the Minister has just said.

I am proud to stand here today to recognise a woman who has provided so much to Britain and to our Commonwealth and who is an inspiration to me and many others. Mr Cameron said that many who have met the Queen talk about her for the rest of their lives—as the member for Terrigal did. I saw Her Majesty from a distance when I was a 7-year-old in London. She did not wave to me, but I got to watch the car drive past and I waved to it. I saw the Queen again at Expo 88 in Brisbane, and I was very excited to see her. And we were very thrilled to host Prince Harry recently in Holsworthy. A lot of us were there, including our local baker. The Queen has certainly done what she promised to do as a 21-year-old, which was to dedicate her life to the service of the Commonwealth, whether that life be long or short. Thank you, Your Majesty, for all you have done for our country. God save the Queen.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.53 p.m.]: It is an absolute privilege and pleasure to acknowledge in this House the service of our Sovereign, Queen Elizabeth the Second. It is indeed a pleasure to see my friend Minister Elliott at the table, as he is a proud constitutional monarchist. Queen Elizabeth II has become Britain's longest reigning monarch. When she passes the record set by her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria, the Queen will have reigned for 63 years and 7 months, calculated at 23,226 days. The outstanding British Prime Minister David Cameron has led tributes in the House of Commons and there will be a River Thames salute. The Queen, who is 89, will spend the day on official duties in Scotland.

The exact moment that the Queen reaches this milestone is not known because her father, George VI, passed away in the early hours of 6 February 1952. On the Thames, a flotilla of historic vessels, leisure cruisers and passenger boats will take part in a procession between Tower Bridge and the Houses of Parliament. Sadly, one of those boats will not be the *Britannia*. What a disgraceful thing it was for Tony Blair to sell that vessel. In fact, many have said that that was the only time they had seen the Queen cry in public.

**Mr David Elliott:** What do you expect from Labour?

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Yes. Shame, Labour, shame. The bridge will lift as a sign of respect and HMS *Belfast* will sound a four-gun salute. The BT Tower in central London will scroll the message "Long may she reign". It will be day 23,226 of her reign. In an institution as old as the monarchy, that is a tall order to add to the other memorable features of her reign. Buckingham Palace has released an official photograph to mark the occasion. This is where she holds weekly audiences with the prime minister of the day and receives visiting heads of State and government. British Prime Minister David Cameron said



the Queen had a "remarkable record" and was "a symbol of Britain's enduring spirit admired around the world".

Elizabeth II has reigned for 63 years and seven months, beating Queen Victoria's record. Victoria became Queen at 18 while Elizabeth was 25. Elizabeth II rides in the same coach as Victoria did for the annual State Opening of Parliament. Both Queens were shot at by a lone gunman while out riding near Buckingham Palace. Elizabeth loves the private royal estate at Balmoral, which was bought by Victoria. Victoria ruled over an empire of 400 million people; Elizabeth is Head of State to 138 million people. Queen Victoria became Queen at the age of 18 and ruled for 63 years, 7 months and 2 days. Queen Elizabeth's reign has included 12 prime ministers, two more than served under Victoria.

When Queen Elizabeth first came to the British throne more than six decades ago, Winston Churchill was Prime Minister, a man who had served in the army of her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria. By the time the current holder of that job, David Cameron, was born in 1966, she had already been the monarch for 14 years. Since 1867, there have been more than 50 visits by members of the Royal Family to Australia, though only six of those came before 1954. Elizabeth II is the only reigning monarch of Australia to have set foot on Australian soil; she first did so on 3 February 1954. During her 16 journeys the Queen has visited every Australian State and the two mainland Territories.

Elizabeth II was the first reigning monarch of Australia to set foot on Australian soil, coming ashore at Farm Cove, Sydney, on 3 February 1954. She had two years earlier been en route to Australia when her father died while she was on a private visit to Kenya, forcing her to return to the United Kingdom. Once finally in Australia, with her husband Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, she undertook a journey through the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. Her duties included greeting 70,000 ex-service men and women at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and opening the Australian Parliament in Canberra. Indeed, she also opened our Parliament in New South Wales and sat in the other place. At the conclusion of the tour the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, stated in an article published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

It is a basic truth that for our Queen we have within us, sometimes unrealised until the moment of expression, the most profound and passionate feelings of loyalty and devotion. It does not require much imagination to realise that when eight million people spontaneously pour out this feeling they are engaging in a great act of common allegiance and common joy which brings them closer together and is one of the most powerful elements converting them from a mass of individuals to a great cohesive nation. In brief, the common devotion to the Throne is a part of the very cement of the whole social structure.

My family has had brushes with royalty. My mum, who grew up in Holyrood in Edinburgh, used to deliver papers to the palace. My nanna, when she was alive, used to love telling people that Margaret delivered the papers to the Queen. Be you republican or be you monarchist, all can respect her service as our Head of State. I am proud of all that she has done and continues to do. God save the Queen!

**Mr MARK TAYLOR** (Seven Hills) [3.59 p.m.]: I make a contribution to the Address to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on her becoming the longest serving monarch, reigning for 63 years and seven months. Her Majesty's reign has symbolised strong leadership. It has symbolised all that is good in Australia: a strong sense of service, community spirit and loyalty and strong values. While times have changed over many decades, the ideas that we hold dear, the ideas that founded our nation, still remain relevant today. This goes to the very heart of the matter; the Queen has been a timeless reminder of not just Australian values but also Commonwealth values as a whole.

Queen Elizabeth was the first monarch to visit this country, so it is befitting that we have such great affection for her. Her Majesty has ventured upon our shores 16 times, always as an apolitical figure. The Queen of Australia has seen off 13 Australian prime ministers, 18 opposition leaders and 14 governors-general. Those statistics have been repeated many times, and rightly so because of their



importance. Through both stable periods of government, like those of the John Howard era, and through unstable periods of constant change, the Queen has remained a beacon of integrity. She has embodied the values that we hold dear.

Many supporting a republic may wish that the Queen would abdicate. This is because they believe that the Queen's almost cult of personality sustains support for the constitutional monarchy, but it is here that the mistake is often made. It is precisely because the Queen refuses to abdicate, precisely because of her commitment to Commonwealth and her conviction to supporting our mutual strength that mainstream Australia supports the retention of the constitutional monarchy. When the young princess said in 1947 that her life would be devoted to service she was serious, as she has always been about such commitments and values.

It is typical that yesterday there were no special events and no pompous celebrations. The Queen was busily getting on with the job, opening new railway lines and new railway stations—not so different to the Government in New South Wales. Of crucial relevance to Australia, the Queen has been a remarkable ambassador for the Commonwealth on the international stage. As the Head of the Commonwealth, she has visited 116 countries on 265 international visits. She has seen no less than 12 American presidents come and go—a tribute not just to her longevity but to her ongoing relevance. On the subject of ongoing relevance, we must pause and reflect on the Royal Family's relevance into the future.

It is no surprise that the next generation of royals—Prince William and Princess Kate and their children, Prince George and Princess Charlotte—are enjoying tremendous public popularity across the entire society. In fact, only the other day my daughter, upon watching the news on television, commented that she did not wish to be a princess like Princess Kate. I said, "Why not?" She said, "Dad, there is way too much public duty, way too much hard work, and way too much constant work in the public eye." I did not find this comment from my daughter surprising as she has difficulty making her own bed. Hard work does not come easy to her. These young royals embody the same values as our Queen and it is why the constitutional monarchy will sustain long into the future. Many polls have shown that support for a republic is at its lowest among the young people of our nation, among those who were not yet born at the last referendum, and this is cause for celebration.

At the last referendum the people of Seven Hills voted to reject a republic. All three Federal electorates encompassing the electorate that I represent—Greenway, Parramatta and Mitchell—resoundingly voted "no". Just a few weeks ago I visited the Willows Retirement Village with Minister Ajaka and I was taken aback by how many residents wanted to engage about the constitutional monarchy. So many love our Queen that it appears very few Australians want to waste any more time, money or political resources attempting to change our Constitution for whatever small gain. I finish with a comment by Her Majesty's grandson Prince William, who said it best:

Time and again, quietly and modestly, the Queen has shown us all that we can confidently embrace the future without compromising the things that are important.

I thank Her Majesty the Queen for all of her service. I wish her and the entire Royal Family all the very best on this special occasion.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**

**Financial Year 2015-16**



**Debate resumed from 9 September 2015.**

**Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE** (Epping) [4.05 p.m.]: On the previous occasion I spoke on the Budget Estimates and Related Papers, I was talking about the significant benefits of the Sydney Metro Northwest, which is being delivered to the north-west of Sydney—long after it was promised by the other side and never delivered. Now it is being delivered as a result of fiscal responsibility by a conservative government, of which I am proud to be part. As I stated, this is the largest piece of infrastructure currently under construction in the Southern Hemisphere. As a State we should be very proud and members of this House should unanimously embrace this piece of infrastructure. However, some still question its merit.

I return to summarising important issues associated with this train line. Previously I was addressing the look of the train line post-2019. I said that in 2019 an interchange will be required at Chatswood as an interim measure while the Government finalises the Sydney Metro City and the Sydney Metro Southwest. Both of those are in the Government's forward planning and comprise a significant and important part of the extended train line planning for Sydney. Customers will be able to travel between Hornsby and North Strathfield each day to catch trains via Strathfield, as the service provided for in the past.

More than 100,000 people interchange trains every day on the Sydney rail network. Interchanges are common practice on all major rail networks. Customers who interchange at Chatswood will be able to cross the platform to change to the North Shore line to the city, if that is their preference. Planning of a timetable and supporting enabling works, to ensure that interchange at Chatswood is as seamless as possible, is already underway. Last week the Premier and the Minister for Transport were present when the first section of the skytrain was being laid at Cudgegong station. I have indicated previously that I hope an alternative name is given to that station, but as it stands Cudgegong Road is the location of the first section of skytrain.

**Mr David Elliott:** Tudehope Boulevard.

**Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE:** I acknowledge that interjection and see some merit in the suggestion. The skytrain contract is one of three major contracts on the Sydney Metro Northwest and it is a remarkable piece of engineering. There is no change to the schedule for the handover of the skytrain from the builders works to the operations contractor. We can all marvel at the way the skytrain is being delivered. The Government previously indicated that the final skytrain contract price may vary due to ongoing fine-tuning involving two other major contracts. Any changes to the scope or contract variations would be coupled with the total \$8.3 billion total budgeted cost of the metro project. The contrary value of the skytrain section of the Sydney Metro Northwest project has been adjusted to \$389.7 million.

The overall Sydney Metro Northwest Skytrain project budget is \$8.3 billion, and on the Government's projections that appears to remain unchanged. The contract was also adjusted to allow important work to be completed on time, including upgrades to closed-circuit television systems at Riley T-way and the southern bus layover at Rouse Hill, changes to the layout of the bus terminal and car park at the Rouse Hill town centre, improvements to the overhead wiring structures on the skytrain viaduct, site remediation, improving drainage systems where the skytrain comes out of the ground at Bella Vista, refining the design of the skytrain viaduct, and handing over responsibility for an urban design and corridor landscape plan to the skytrain builder. All that is part of the delivery of Sydney Metro Northwest. It is part of the budgeting by the Government and planning for a future train system in Sydney.

The north-west transport corridor is also an important part of the planning. Transport for NSW has been working closely with Blacktown City Council and Department of Planning and Environment to preserve the north-west transport corridor. The north-west transport corridor extends from the north-west metro stabling yard at Cudgegong Road to Marsden Park via Schofields. The corridor is designed to accommodate a future extension of Sydney Metro Northwest, should one be developed. Future planning is what distinguishes this side of the House from those opposite. The Government is already planning for



an extension of this rail link into north-west Sydney ahead of time, rather than having to react to the development of north-west Sydney and the costs associated with reactive as opposed to proactive development, which plans for future events. The Government is already planning for the future extension of that rail line.

The Department of Planning and Environment is currently seeking feedback on an amendment to the planning controls for two precincts in the north-west growth centre, Alex Avenue and Riverstone. The amendments are to identify the corridor on the land zoning maps for each of those precincts. The proposed amendments also include provisions that enable Transport for NSW to protect the corridor by requiring developers to consider the future rail alignment, and adjust their plans accordingly. Transport for NSW will make every effort to achieve a negotiated outcome with landowners impacted by the corridor—that is planning. In relation to single-deck trains, in a media release on 20 May 2009 a former Labor Minister for Transport, Mr Campbell, called single-deck trains "the future of transport in Sydney" and any opposition to them was "brain dead" However on 20 June 2013 the Hon. Penny Sharpe in the upper House said they were "short sighted" and thought they would "compromise passenger safety", as recorded in *Hansard*. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

That is from a party that spent half a billion dollars on its Rozelle metro. That project is perhaps best described as a zero-deck train system—zero decks, zero kilometres, zero stations, zero commuter car spaces—all for the bargain price of half a billion dollars. The benefits of metro are as clear as ever. They will have more doors and no stairs, which reduces dwelling times at stations. Initially there will be 15 trains per hour, and frequently a train every four minutes, moving large numbers of customers with a prediction of 98 per cent reliability. It will be separate from the suburban train system so delays on the existing suburban train lines will be alleviated. But if Labor cannot bring itself to listen to the Government, it should listen to other experts. In relation to the North West Metro train system, Infrastructure NSW said:

Single deck trains are able to operate at higher frequencies because delays at stations from passenger boarding and disembarking are less than with a double deck fleet.

The International Association of Public Transport referred to "increased quality of service, thanks to the enhanced reliability of trains and shorter waiting times in platforms." Any fears have been alleviated by the announcement of the second harbour crossing. With Premier Mike Baird's announcement that the second crossing is less than a decade away, the people of New South Wales now know they are not being taken for granted, and that this Government is ready to roll up its sleeves and tackle the serious long-term issues that we face as a State. I am very pleased that this Government is prepared to commit to long-term and involved solutions. The people of Epping suffered too long under the bandaid approach of successive Labor governments. The North West Rail Link has become the north-west metro. The \$977 million of continual funding in this year's budget is a renewal of the Baird-Grant promise to make this State number one again, and that they want to bring Epping along for the ride.

Furthermore, the continual funding of the NorthConnex is another budget highlight worth elaborating on. If you were ever to look at the road network for Sydney, you would see that the gap between the M1 and M2 stands out like a sore thumb, and you would wonder why that crucial gap has never been bridged. If you were ever to drive on it during peak hour, you would be convinced that it is purgatory on earth. In 2013 the NRMA identified Pennant Hills Road as the third worst road in both New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, and second worst in the Sydney road network. The road carries more than 80,000 vehicles a day, 10,000 of which are trucks. It is one of the roads utilised most by commuters and freight, whilst simultaneously carrying schoolchildren and families going about their daily business. It has a road crash and injury rate higher than the State average.

To have ignored the warning signs before this became a problem is a case of serious negligence. To have brushed it aside whilst the problem manifested itself is rank constitutional abuse. It is no accident that this problem emerged and festered under the bandaid Labor regime. Fortunately, work has already begun on rectifying this outstanding problem. NorthConnex will take up to 5,000 trucks off Pennant Hills



Road daily, commuters will avoid between 21 to 40 traffic lights, depending on their route, and Pennant Hills Road will be returned to the locals. It will be a safer, less-congested local road, and commuters to the city will be able to use the spacious tunnel to complete their journey 15 minutes quicker. I welcome the \$51 million of additional funding in this year's budget for NorthConnex, and I look forward to the myriad benefits it will bring to the people of Epping.

In addition to the infrastructure funding in this budget, it has also committed to additional funding for schools. The budget papers specifically mention Cherrybrook Technology High School as a key institution. Cherrybrook Tech was built in the late 1980s to support the rapidly growing north-west region, and it has fulfilled its purpose admirably. It now has more than 2,000 students enrolled and is growing. Quantitatively, it is a solid performer in the Higher School Certificate, consistently in the top 100. Qualitatively, it is an important institution in the local area, fulfilling so many of the social, cultural and personal needs of local families. In the Budget Overview, Cherrybrook Technology High School is mentioned specifically as a school that will receive additional funding in this year's budget. The need for the school's 43 demountables will be reduced by the delivery of new classrooms. The New South Wales schools and training budget has been increased by \$465 million this year. On 25 June I visited Cherrybrook Technology High School with the Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, to announce that the school would be receiving \$7 million to help it continue its mission.

An issue of particular concern that I wish to raise in relation to this year's budget is housing affordability. Housing affordability is a burgeoning issue nationally but it is particularly salient in New South Wales, and in Sydney especially. The median house price in Sydney is now a staggering \$800,000, and potentially \$1 million. That is a 13.4 per cent increase since the beginning of the year, and a 17.7 per cent increase since the beginning of last year. This is just the tip of the iceberg of the housing affordability issue. This House needs to seriously examine a whole host of factors, including lacklustre productivity growth, the viability of current wage growth, the falling Australian dollar, the domestic effects of the current account deficit, the current land lock and the real possibility of an oversupply of residential apartments. However, when distilled, one issue in particular demands the attention of the House: The family is the greatest casualty in the current crisis.

In the Sydney metropolitan region the difference between the actual median wage and the median wage required to purchase a house is consistently more than \$50,000. More often than not, it is pushing \$100,000. In other words, young families have virtually no hope of ever owning their home debt free in Sydney. The only chance young families have of living in this city is if both parents work and send their young children to child care. Of course, there is nothing wrong with sending children to child care—I was involved in the childcare sector. However, for the situation to be such that families face the ultimatum of "send your children to child care or do not live in Sydney" is one of the most anti-family policies on the books. It beggars belief that, despite the massive amounts of regulation in the housing market, families—the building blocks of society and our hope for the future—are being driven to the fringes and consigned to a lifetime of housing debt.

I am contented by the measures taken in this budget to help assuage the problem. This financial year the Government has budgeted \$400 million to address housing supply. The slow release of land is a key factor in housing affordability, and I welcome the Government's efforts to address the issue on that front. The Government has also allocated \$89.1 million to cut bureaucratic tape and processing times. That will help reduce costs and make the process more efficient. It is a welcome measure and a step in the right direction. This issue is critical because it puts immense pressure on the building block of society and our hopes for the future. In our times especially, we need to be proactively pro-family; the young families of today already have their work cut out for them, with the looming spectre of the ageing population.

I reiterate that the situation is in stark relief considering how much government regulation there is on the housing market. I am pleased by the Government's initial efforts to tackle the issue, and its track record of biting the bullet when it comes to meeting generational issues head-on is reassuring. I look



forward to helping this House address the housing affordability issue and am eager to play my part. In conclusion, I am very pleased with this financial year's budget. The Government is building a reputation for tackling the big issues head-on and shunning bandaid solutions. That is good news for New South Wales. I am particularly pleased as the member for Epping. The measures in the budget have addressed many areas of concern in Epping. The North West Rail Link has become the Sydney Metro Northwest with a second harbour crossing.

NorthConnex will return Pennant Hills Road to locals. Schools are being invested in and State finances are being managed responsibly. However, several salient points of concern still require attention. Measures in the budget begin to address the unaffordability of housing in Epping but much more needs to be done. I commend the 2015-16 budget not because it is a silver bullet but because it is a confirmation. It is a confirmation that the Government is committed to responsible government, confronting intergenerational problems head-on and shunning bandaid solutions. It is a confirmation that this Government is committed to working for the people of this State to make it great. I look forward to continuing to cooperate with the Government as the representative for Epping and, by doing so, realising my responsibility to my constituents.

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [4.23 p.m.]: I welcome the midwives and nurses from the nurses association and their supporters to the public gallery. Labor supports their cause and campaign 100 per cent. During my contribution on the budget estimates and related papers 2015-16 debate I will place on record how the Government's budget has failed my electorate. The Government made only two commitments at the election regarding the Illawarra: one was to construct the Albion Park Rail bypass and the other was to upgrade Shellharbour Hospital. There is nothing in this year's budget for either project beyond the usual planning funds. Despite pressure to outline a firm and precise timetable for each project, the Government refuses to set dates. In fact, it has voted against doing so.

The Minister for Health has confirmed that the business case for the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital remains incomplete. It has yet to be endorsed by the Ministry of Health. One would expect that, having made the election commitment with so much fanfare only a week before election day, all the detail relating to the business case should have been finalised by now. My concern is just what is being "revised" in the business case. What services and facilities that were promised on the eve of the election are now being cut out of the business case? That is an issue for our friends in the gallery and people across New South Wales. The Albion Park Rail bypass is a similar case. There is no start date and no finish date. Those two infrastructure projects present a total investment of \$800 million for the southern Illawarra. My view is that the Government will cynically delay the start of construction for both projects until the eve of the next election, in 2019. In the meantime, motorists using the Princes Highway along Albion Park Rail will be forced to put up with another four years of traffic congestion. I note that the member for Kiama has entered the Chamber to listen to—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** To listen to your lies.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** No, to listen to this debate. I ask that he cease interjecting because I showed good manners while listening to his contribution. Patients using Shellharbour Hospital have no guarantee that what was promised at the election will be delivered after it. During the last sitting I gave notice of a motion calling on the Government to start the two projects with urgency. There is a new urgency in getting them underway.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The member for Shellharbour promised neither of the projects at the last election.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Order! There is no point of order. The member for Kiama will resume his seat.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** The new urgency relates to the steel crisis in the Illawarra. Nearly a month



ago the trade union movement in the Illawarra and the University of Wollongong released a major study into the impact of the closure of the Illawarra steel industry. The report makes for a damning assessment of the Illawarra's economic and social future if the steel industry shuts down. The report concludes that if the scenario plays out up to \$3.3 billion of Illawarra gross regional product would be wiped away. In a \$15.5 billion regional economy that represents a 21 per cent fall. Up to 10,000 full-time equivalent jobs would also be wiped out. We simply cannot afford such an outcome in the Illawarra. We would become the Detroit of Australia if it happened.

On 24 August BlueScope Steel released its full year financial position to the Australian Stock Exchange. It outlined the challenges of making steel and foreshadowed that 500 jobs would be cut. Most importantly, the company is still actively considering closing its plant and importing steel rather than making it as it has for the past eight decades. The company also revealed what it has asked of the State Government in assistance. Despite the secrecy surrounding the Premier's recent discussions with BlueScope Steel, we know exactly what the company has requested of his Government. On Friday, led by the shadow Treasurer and shadow Minister for the Illawarra, I joined my Federal and State Labor colleagues to outline our 10-point plan to secure Illawarra jobs. Our plan has immediate, medium- and long-term measures to help address the current Illawarra jobs crisis. On Monday a summit of sorts was convened in Wollongong to discuss the steel crisis. It was good as those sorts of discussions go, but it is now time for substance.

I read in the *Illawarra Mercury* on 8 September that the Federal and State governments have already agreed to a "big proposal" but they will not announce it now. An enormous amount of speculation is floating around the Illawarra about what the "big proposal" actually is. I hope for the sake of the region that the Federal and State governments stop playing political games and start making substantive announcements now. After all, it is not as though the crisis has snuck up on us. The challenge for the Federal and State governments is to meet the expectations of the Illawarra that have been placed into heightened overdrive by speculation about a "big proposal".

As part of my contribution I will make a brief point about the transition of the Illawarra economy. We have been facing up to the challenges of restructuring in the Illawarra for the past three decades. It is almost a cliché to say that our economy is transitioning away from old-style volume manufacturing to services. This trend will continue for decades to come—there is no doubt about that—but manufacturing will remain important to the region. Its very nature will, however, continue to change. One area we need to focus on much more closely in the Illawarra is the rapidly changing nature of industry supply chains. We need to have a more comprehensive understanding of changing industry supply chains. There is also too much concentration, in my view, by Illawarra stakeholders only on linkages with the Sydney central business district.

There is another substantial region that I think we in the Illawarra have collectively neglected for too long, and I do not think the member for Kiama will argue about this. Western Sydney is right in our backyard—in fact, just over the magnificent Illawarra escarpment. It happens to be the third largest regional economy in Australia, producing nearly \$100 billion in economic output every year. Western Sydney is home to two million people. More than 150 of Australia's top 500 companies are located in Western Sydney. There are more than 160 small and medium enterprises in the region. Nearly 9,000 manufacturing businesses are located in Western Sydney.

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

**Pursuant to sessional order discussion on petition signed by 10,000 or more persons proceeded with.**

**registered nurses in Nursing Homes**



## Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

**Ms TRISH DOYLE** (Blue Mountains) [4.32 p.m.]: I stand here proudly for the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association [NMA] and the many residents in nursing homes and aged-care facilities across this State, their friends, families and supporters. I stand here on behalf of approximately 27,000 people who are signatories to a petition insisting that the New South Wales Government preserve the critical role of the registered nurses and directors of nursing in aged-care facilities across this State. This petition has received considerable community support. People want to have a registered nurse on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. People know that this arrangement is essential for safe, high-quality care.

Whilst the Minister for Health has enacted an interim arrangement effective until the end of this year, in order to consult with the aged-care community it is incumbent upon those of us in this place to represent our constituencies and what they are asking for. I have worked alongside the nurses in my electorate over the past few years and I have talked to many older residents throughout the Blue Mountains and this State and their families. People tell me that the very real difference that having enough staff, led by registered nurses, makes is enormous to both the care that can be provided and the care that is received. This should be the core foundation of quality aged care. Without registered nurses, many more aged-care residents would be sent to emergency departments in hospitals, placing even more stress on our already overstretched health system and causing unnecessary distress to patients and their families.

Allow me to spell out and have recorded here the reasons it is absolutely essential we support and legislate for registered nurses in nursing homes 24/7. Some of the things registered nurses do is: provide skilled clinical care to nursing home residents with complex high-care needs; undertake specialised wound care and nursing procedures for urinary catheters, nasogastric tubes and a range of otomies; minimise unnecessary transfer to emergency departments; and provide palliative care to the dying so that they do not have to go to hospital. They oversee multiple medications, including assessing the side effects, and they provide support and supervision to the entire and valued nursing team—our wonderful enrolled nurses and our assistants in nursing. It is important that I place the voices of our nurses who work in the aged-care sector on record. Jenny said:

I've seen many sad cases of people in their 80s and 90s being sent to hospital due to poor staffing. They end up dying in unfamiliar surroundings.

Louise said:

My skills give me the ability to spot the difference between a change in conditions that requires immediate attention and one that can wait until the doctor comes the next day.

I recently received a letter from a doctor in my electorate, who wrote:

I have had decades of experience looking after patients in nursing homes, hostels and other residential care facilities. These homes generally have my home phone number so that I can provide continuity of care after hours. This is important as I know my patients and can advise as appropriate.

It is an immense advantage having an RN on duty at all times as I know that I can talk to someone who is medically trained and who can give me the precise and relevant information that I need to make a decision about medical management.

I fully support the view that the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners has put in support of the NMA campaign:



I fully support such a view based on my own personal experience and I encourage you to take up this challenge in the state parliament.

I acknowledge the efforts of the following people in this campaign of significance. I thank my Mountains nursing "warriors": Shirley Ross-Shuley, Jocelyn Hoffman, Annette Peters, Louise Stammers, Peter Buckney and Peter Lammiman. I thank the NMA organisers: Jon Farry, Rita Martin and Stella Topaz. I thank those who spoke with passion, commitment and knowledge at the rally today: Lucille McKenna, Margaret Zanghi, Dr Yvonne McMasters and Des Hartree. I also thank NMA New South Wales General Secretary Brett Holmes. Currently New South Wales law requires that a registered nurse is on duty at all times in nursing homes. This is how it must remain. The Minister for Health is expected to make a decision soon about the future of registered nurses. I seek to extend my speaking time by one minute.

**Extension of time not granted.**

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Order! The member's time has expired.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [4.37 p.m.]: I thank the member for Blue Mountains for bringing this petition to the House and I welcome those who have come to Parliament today. I also thank everyone who has signed this petition for their interest. The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that residents of aged-care facilities in New South Wales receive safe and appropriate care that meets their needs, including high-quality nursing care. In addressing the petition it is important to outline the history of the New South Wales provisions and how accountability for aged-care services has changed in recent years. Regulation of residential aged care in Australia has primarily been the responsibility of the Commonwealth since the mid-2000s, when the Commonwealth introduced detailed oversight processes for aged-care services. At that time, Australian States and Territories other than New South Wales withdrew from regulation of nursing homes.

New South Wales also repealed State-based nursing home legislation in 2005 but chose to retain the minimum role by inserting provisions into the New South Wales Public Health Act. These provisions required nursing homes providing what was defined in Commonwealth law as "high-level" residential care to have a registered nurse on duty at all times and New South Wales law was limited to these high-care placements; it did not apply to nursing homes allocated low-care places. Overall, regulation of aged-care facilities and standards for the level and quality of support required for residents remained the responsibility of the Commonwealth. In 2012 the Commonwealth Government announced the Living Longer Living Better aged-care reform package. This package was in part designed to support residents who wished to continue living in place and represented a 10-year plan to reshape the national aged-care system.

The legislative changes supporting the reform packages made changes to the way that residential placements were described. These changes moved away from static definitions and distinctions between high-care and low-care placements to a more detailed assessment of residents that better reflected their needs at any one time. Removal of this distinction aimed to ensure that residents can access the level of care they need based on an assessment of their care needs rather than being limited by a designated level of care. As a result, the definitions relied on by New South Wales provisions effectively became meaningless. In 2014 the Government recognised the concerns that formed the basis of this petition. In order to be able to consider them further, a regulation was introduced to maintain the requirement for a registered nurse to be on site at those facilities which, as at 1 July 2014, had allocated high-care placements.

The regulation grandfathered the existing regime. It did not extend the registered nurse [RN] requirement to other nursing homes, such as facilities providing a low level of care. Two further actions have since occurred that will enable the Government to give proper consideration to the issues raised in the petition. The Minister for Health directed the Ministry of Health to establish an Aged Care Steering Committee as a consultative forum. Its key stakeholders include nursing and medical groups, aged care



service providers, Commonwealth regulators, and consumers. The purpose of the committee is to consider what, if any, further action New South Wales should take. The committee is tasked to look at the concerns raised by stakeholders, the data available on the effectiveness of Commonwealth and New South Wales regulations and the situation in other States and Territories. It will identify options for the way ahead.

More recently, General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 of the New South Wales Parliament held a broad inquiry into the level of care in aged care facilities. The inquiry terms of reference directed the committee to look at the New South Wales requirement for a registered nurse to be in attendance 24 hours a day, seven days a week at some facilities. The Government will await the outcome of the inquiry and the findings of the steering committee. The Government appreciates the work that nurses and midwives do and acknowledges that nurses are a constant and integral component of contemporary health care and are central to the provision of effective, safe and compassionate care.

The Government, in its last term, met its commitment to employ an additional 2,475 nurses and midwives and has increased the nursing and midwifery workforce by more than 4,600 overall since coming to office. In full-time equivalent terms, the increase in the nursing and midwifery workforce is more than 3,400. The Government will continue to boost the State's clinical workforce to record levels. Over the next four years, the number of front-line health staff will increase by at least 3,500 fulltime equivalent positions and will include 2,100 nurses and midwives, 700 doctors, 300 allied health professionals and 400 hospital support staff. In addition, the Government will fund 360 new specialised nursing, midwifery and support positions, comprising 120 clinical nurse or midwife educators, 20 mental health clinical nurse educators, 60 nurse practitioners, 20 clinical nurse consultants, 20 clinical midwifery consultants and 120 clinical support officers. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms Linda Burney:** You should be embarrassed.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is on three calls to order. I do not require assistance from members on either side of the House. This is a serious issue. I ask members to respect the speakers and to hear them in silence.

**Ms PRUE CAR** (Londonderry) [4.43 p.m.]: I congratulate the hardworking member for Blue Mountains on bringing this important petition to the Parliament. It has been signed by 27,000 people—a massive number. I acknowledge the members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association and the aged care workers, nurses, carers and family members who are here today. Thank you for coming. The industry is facing a significant issue. I have received an overwhelming amount of feedback from my community about it, as, I am sure, have other members. So many families are wondering what the future will be for their loved ones in aged care. I have experience of this issue in my immediate family. My family and I know the important role that registered aged care nurses play in the lives of people living in nursing homes and in the lives of their loved ones. When loved ones are in nursing homes, it can be a trying time. The care given by registered nurses around the clock provides comfort and confidence to families. On behalf of my family and my community, I say thank you to those nurses. We support you.

In New South Wales it is a legal requirement that there be a registered nurse on duty at all times in a nursing home. This requirement must remain. On 1 July 2014, the Commonwealth Aged Care Act 1997 was amended to change the definition of a "nursing home" in the New South Wales Act. This change has huge consequences for the industry and the nurses working in aged care. It is good that the amendment to the Act enables consultation before any changes are implemented at the end of the year. It is important that we raise the issue and show support for the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association so that the requirement for a registered nurse to be on duty in a nursing home 24 hours a day, seven days a week will not be removed at the end of the year.

Registered nurses are essential, given that many residents in aged care have been assessed as requiring a high level of care and have complex coexisting conditions. People do not go into nursing



homes unless they require high care, and they must be supported by registered nurses around the clock. Without registered nurses, many more aged care residents will be sent to hospitals that are already buckling under pressure. Removing the requirement for a registered nurse to be on duty will remove those professionals from aged care facilities. I commend the petition to the House. I am proud to support nurses across this State. *[Time expired.]*

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** Point of order: This is an important debate. I ask that the member for Blue Mountains stop showing a placard in the Chamber to visitors in the gallery.

**Ms Trish Doyle:** Do you mean this one?

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** The actions of the member for Blue Mountains are unparliamentary.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Order! There is no point of order. The placard has been removed.

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [4.46 p.m.]: I acknowledge the great work that nurses do in our community. In addressing the petition, the Government is committed to ensuring that any approach taken does not undermine the quality and safety of aged care facilities or the accessibility to aged care services for people in New South Wales. The initial requirement for a registered nurse was put in place in 2005 and it introduced duplication in regulation at the State and Commonwealth level. Since that time, other States have withdrawn from State-based regulation of nursing homes.

Commonwealth oversight of nursing homes has been the core regulatory regime across Australia for more than 10 years, with legislation designed to achieve a comprehensive national framework for aged care that incorporates regulation, funding, accreditation and compliance. It is recognised that the Commonwealth system, while comprehensive, does not require a registered nurse to be on duty at all times in residential aged-care facilities. Instead, the Quality of Care Principles 2014 require that "specialised nursing care needs are identified and met by appropriately qualified nursing staff". This means that the level of care required is focused on the needs of individual residents.

It is important that any assessment of future action by New South Wales considers national as well as local data on the quality of aged-care services. The data should give an indication of whether the quality of aged care provided in New South Wales is better or worse than the aged care provided in other States and Territories, none of which has a similar requirement. The requirement relating to registered nurses in the Public Health Act 2010 is the only remaining New South Wales legislation that applies to aged-care facilities. No other State or Territory has similar legislation; all the other States and Territories rely solely on the Commonwealth system.

It is important that consideration be given to the possible implications of the changes proposed by the petition. The petition calls for a registered nurse to be on site in all New South Wales nursing homes. The current requirement is limited to those facilities with high-care placements. I understand that concerns have already been raised by providers that this requirement could have implications for the viability of low-care facilities, particularly in rural areas. This needs to be considered. Two reviews of the issue are underway. It is appropriate that the reviews carefully evaluate the data available across Australia and that the Government await their outcome. I thank everyone for signing the petition and for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [4.49 p.m.], by leave: On behalf of The Greens I address the petition relating to registered nurses in nursing homes. At the outset, I indicate that we are strongly supportive of this petition. I thank the member for Blue Mountains, a fine local member, for bringing this important matter to the attention of this House. I am pleased to contribute to this debate on behalf of The Greens. I acknowledge the work of my colleague Ms Jan Barham in the other place in her role as the chair of the Legislative Council committee inquiring into registered nurses in nursing homes. The



committee, which is yet to report, has had an overwhelming response from the community, receiving 165 submissions. I am aware that almost 80 per cent of the submissions called for the retention of the New South Wales law requiring a registered nurse to be on duty at all times in a nursing home.

Within my electorate there are seven nursing homes that accommodate more than 600 older residents. Unsurprisingly, the population is ageing in line with the overall trend in New South Wales. It is estimated that the number of people aged over 65 will double to almost 14,000 in the next 20 years—just over 20 per cent of the population. It is clear that, in the face of this demand, registered nurses are best placed to provide the skilled expert clinical care to the residents of New South Wales, according to the key principle of high-quality, timely and equitable services. I note and support the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association recommendation that legislation in this State should retain safeguards to protect older people in our community. I also note concerns from the Australian and New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine New South Wales Division about the reduction or removal of registered nurses working at aged-care facilities.

Palliative Care New South Wales, in its submission, stated that "quality and informed palliative care nursing can only be led by an RN." That states a clear point that this House should listen to and understand. When the leader of the Australian Greens, a former doctor, visited my electorate in March, we, together with the member for Newtown and my other Greens colleague the member for Ballina, signed this petition. So The Greens are backing the retention of registered nurses in nursing homes in both the Federal and State Parliaments. I note the work of all those who have helped bring this petition to the Parliament and I congratulate everyone who has contributed to bringing debate on this petition before the Parliament today. I will conclude by reading from the petition, which states:

Registered nurses provide the skilled, clinical care to residents of NSW ...

The Legislative Assembly should ensure a permanent legislation is in place requiring a registered nurse on duty at all times and the appointment of a director of nursing in all New South Wales nursing homes.

Let us respect the dignity and quality care that people deserve. The Government must ensure that services provided by registered nurses remain in place in nursing homes 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON** (Port Stephens) [4.52 p.m.]: I seek leave of the House to contribute to the debate.

**Leave not granted.**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [4.53 p.m.]: Given the level of interest in this petition and the fact that many people in the community have travelled to be here this afternoon, I seek leave of the House to allow four more speakers on this matter, with a time limit of three minutes each. That would be a fair and honourable thing to do.

**Leave not granted.**

**Discussion concluded.**

**Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.**

## **COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS**

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### **HAWKS NEST-TEA GARDENS SAND DREDGING**



**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.55 p.m.]: I inform the House about the announcement of a sand dredge arriving at Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens to commence the opening of the eastern channel of the lower Myall River. The dredging operation is important for the ecological wellbeing of the lower Myall River, which flows from Myall Lake to Port Stephens. The dredging works have been possible due to significant funding from the State Government and the Federal Government. Great Lakes Council has been working hand in hand with the New South Wales Government and relevant State authorities for several years to ensure the project achieves the best possible outcomes. This is another project that is a great example of the New South Wales Government getting the job done.

#### **MARRICKVILLE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE HEADQUARTERS**

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [4.55 p.m.]: It was recently my pleasure to welcome the Minister for Emergency Services to the electorate of Heffron to witness, together with the member for Summer Hill, Marrickville Mayor Mark Gardiner and councillors from Marrickville Council, New South Wales State Emergency Service Commissioner Adam Dent and other community representatives, the opening of the new state-of-the-art Marrickville State Emergency Service headquarters. The facilities are remarkable and feature a new garage and a high-tech situation room that looks like something one would see in an action film.

In my opinion, the new headquarters are the jewel of the service. I believe it will make a real difference to the work of the State Emergency Service volunteers in our community. This project is recognition of the resolve of Marrickville Council, in particular, the late councillor and deputy mayor Emanuel Tsardoulis, who was known as Manny. Manny instigated this vital project and was a tireless servant to the people of Marrickville. He is sorely missed. In fact, I have a tear in my eye every time I think about him. I could not be prouder of this remarkable facility, the work of Marrickville Council and our tireless State Emergency Service volunteers, who selflessly give their time and risk their lives serving our community.

#### **GREAT IRISH FAMINE ANNUAL COMMEMORATION**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [4.56 p.m.]: I recognise the 2015 annual commemoration of the Great Irish Famine held at the Irish Famine Memorial at Hyde Park Barracks on Sunday 30 August. The event was organised by the Great Irish Famine Commemorative Committee. The memorial, which was also established by the committee, is to remember the more than 4,000 orphan girls and young women who came to Australia as a result of what is often known as the Great Famine in Ireland. It is more correctly known as the Great Hunger, or Gorta Mor in Irish. A famine suggests an absence of food. Actually, there was food in Ireland in the 1840s but it was shipped to England.

Speakers at the event on 30 August included the committee chair, Dr Patricia Strong, who hails from Belfast; Mr Peter Watts, Emeritus Director of the Historic Houses Trust; the Irish Consul General Jane Connolly; a former committee chair, Dr Tom Power; and Dr Perry McIntyre, historian and also a former chair. Many significant figures attended from the Australian and Irish-Australian diaspora, including Bishop Terry Brady and His Honour John O'Meally, previous chair of the Dust Diseases Tribunal. The committee deserves to be congratulated on its efforts in arranging this event.

#### **KU-RING-GAI ART SOCIETY AWARDS**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS** (Ku-ring-gai) [4.57 p.m.]: Since my childhood I have always had a passion for and love of the arts, in all their various forms. While any small talent I may have, if at all, is restricted to music, I hold an incredible admiration for those in the visual arts—in particular, our painters. So I was honoured when I was asked to be a guest at the annual Ku-ring-gai Art Society awards last month. This year held significance for this organisation because the awards night at St Ives Shopping Village recognised its golden jubilee, its fiftieth anniversary. So successful was this year's gallery



showing, a staggering 84 paintings sold for a total of \$54,417—that is about \$650 on average for each work.

Today I acknowledge the stewardship and hard work of Ku-ring-gai Art Society President Malcolm Carver and congratulate the main prize winners: Rebecca Gray, who took out the grand prize of \$1,000, sponsored by Bendigo Bank; and Louise Surman, who was awarded the golden jubilee \$2,000 cash prize and best in show trophy. Exhibition judges Alan Somerville and Judith White had a very tough job choosing the winners. I am simply glad I was not asked to do it.

#### **TRIBUTE TO DR JOHN STUART NEWLINDS, OAM**

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) [4.58 p.m.]: I recognise the contribution of Dr John Stuart Newlinds, OAM, who was blessed to deliver thousands of healthy babies over four decades. But it was the crisis in the early 1960s caused by thalidomide, a prescribed morning sickness drug, that demonstrated publicly his great surety of character. Dr Newlinds changed the course of medical history by being instrumental in the removal of the thalidomide drug from hospitals in the 1960s. The very drug that was for a woman's morning sickness was causing birth defects.

Dr Newlinds went on to have a successful career caring for women and babies at the Women's Hospital, Crown Street, Sydney, Mona Vale Hospital and the Royal North Shore Hospital. Dr Newlinds was also co-instrumental in setting up the first neonatal mortality committee in New South Wales and has been praised for his service to the Medical Benevolent Association of New South Wales. Dr John Stuart Newlinds, OAM, passed away peacefully last week. He lived in Duffys Forest in my electorate of Pittwater for more than 50 years. He and his wife, Mary, also a doctor—a general practitioner—dedicated their lives to helping others. I join all members of this House in conveying my thoughts and prayers to his wife, Mary, and their three children and seven grandchildren.

#### **CLARENCE VALLEY BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.59 p.m.]: I offer my congratulations to the Clarence Valley Business Excellence Awards Committee, chaired by Adam Gordon, who organised this year's recent awards ceremony. The winners on the night were Fresh Dental Care as Clarence Valley Business of the Year; Ruth Finlay as Trainee or Apprentice of the Year; Spar Maclean received the Better Access Award; and Harwood Marine received the Work Health and Safety Award. Winners of other awards included Bridgestone Select; Spar Maclean; Summerland Credit Union; Fresh Dental Care; Grafton 2 Yamba Houseboat Hire; Benny's Grafton Smash Repairs; CSR Gyprock Trade and Timber Supplies; Irons and Craig, which won two awards; and Optimum Health Solutions. People's Choice Favourite Employee was Julie Kendell and People's Choice Favourite Business was Farmer Lou's. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the amazing businesses we have within the Clarence Valley, and I congratulate not only the winners but also everyone who was nominated.

#### **ST MARYS SPRING FESTIVAL**

**Ms PRUE CAR** (Londonderry) [5.00 p.m.]: Tonight I pay tribute to 40 years of the St Marys Spring Festival, which was celebrated last weekend. The St Marys Spring Festival is the largest event in the St Marys calendar and attracts tens of thousands of people every year. To kick off the festivities I was honoured to attend the St Marys Spring Festival Gala Dinner, where the legendary Norma Thorburn was awarded the Spirit of St Marys award for her tireless work in promoting the proud history of St Marys. Norma is an institution in St Marys and has dedicated most of her life to serving the community. Well done, Norma. Well done also to Paulette Adams, the St Marys Town Centre manager, for ensuring the weekend ran smoothly and for all her efforts in advocating for the St Marys business community. I look forward to the next 40 years of the St Marys Spring Festival.

#### **ST BRIGID'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE**



**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [5.01 p.m.]: Tonight I recognise the official opening and blessing of St. Brigid's Catholic College in Lake Munmorah, which I was honoured to be invited to take part in just a couple of weeks ago. The opening and blessing of the new school in our community was led by Bishop Peter Comensoli. The Diocese of Broken Bay is to be congratulated on its commitment to local families upon the opening of St Brigid's and I thank the diocese for investing its faith in our community. The parents of the inaugural alumni have shown great courage in embracing a new school and all that that entails. I know that they have made the right decision. This is a wonderful, new and modern facility and the team at St Brigid's is dedicated to making the school a success. I congratulate the principal, Julie Terry, the educators, staff, students and families and I look forward to working with them and their community for many years to come. Finally, I would like the House to note the magnificent contributions made by the school leaders, Keely Garland and Lee Ryan on that day.

#### **GLEN STREET THEATRE**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.02 p.m.]: I wish to recognise those involved with the Glen Street Theatre in Belrose, which celebrates an amazing 30 years of operation this month. To mark the major milestone, a free outdoor sculpture exhibition has been established through the surrounding bush garden, as well as an indoor sculpture display. The theatre and broader site continue to evolve through sensible development into an exciting cultural hub. New works completed as stage one include improved lighting and landscaping at the forecourt and an enhanced theatre foyer with a new Box Office and bar. Stage two works include a new library, administration offices and a restaurant/cafe providing alfresco dining and a playground for children. The Glen Street Theatre precinct revitalisation points to a promising future for the cultural complex by providing a place for locals to meet, to relax and to appreciate the artistic talents of performers and the authors of static displays. I congratulate Warringah Council and all those involved with the Glen Street site and look forward to attending a performance of *The Wharf Review* at the Glen Street Theatre next month.

#### **DR TONY PARKES NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS FINALIST**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH** (Ballina) [5.03 p.m.]: I congratulate Dr Tony Parkes of Bangalow, who has been honoured as a finalist in the National Landcare Awards. Dr Parkes has been recognised for his 25 years of dedication to the restoration of critically endangered subtropical rainforest in the Big Scrub. Dr Parkes and Big Scrub Landcare have successfully restored 14 hectares of local rainforest and planted 35,000 rainforest trees. I acknowledge Dr Parkes' achievement and the incredible work of Landcare in my region and welcome the national recognition that their work is rightly receiving.

#### **OATLEY FLORA AND FAUNA CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [5.04 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the efforts of the Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society with the recent publication of a guide on Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands. Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands are located in my electorate and are bordered by Oatley Park and Oatley Heights Park. The wetlands are a constructed pond system designed to stop pollutants entering Lime Kiln Bay and the Georges River. The Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society is to be commended for its great work in conserving and caring for this beautiful area and for producing a comprehensive and easy-to-use guide. The guide provides practical measures that people can implement to improve water quality at Lime Kiln Bay and the Georges River as well as information about vegetation and walking tracks. The wetlands are home to a large number of native wildlife species and at least 18 species of water birds have been recorded in the area. Once again, I congratulate and thank the Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society for the great work it does in looking after Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands.

#### **TRIBUTE TO JANEEN HORNE**

**Mr JIHAD DIB** (Lakemba) [5.05 p.m.]: On 14 August I had a wonderful morning tea with Ms



Janeen Horne, a long-term resident of Riverwood and the 2015 Canterbury Council Citizen of the Year. Ms Horne is an inspiration: She is completely blind but functions at a high level, she is fiercely independent and she does not miss a beat. I had previously spoken to Janeen on the phone, but to share a cuppa and sweets with her certainly put things into perspective. I am in awe of her ability to live independently. Indeed, when I cracked a joke about her driving skills she directed me to a certificate proudly hanging on the wall that attested to her driving down the straight at Eastern Creek at 125 kilometres an hour. Ms Horne was the founder of the Canterbury Disability Access Committee and chairperson of the Association of Blind Citizens of NSW. She is exceptionally well regarded for raising community awareness and for her community service over a number of years. Janeen Horne is an example of what we can do when we have steely determination. I am inspired.

### **TERRIGAL AVOCA AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [5.06 p.m.]: I congratulate Terrigal Avoca on their win over Nelson Bay at the Black Diamond Australian Football League match on Saturday 18 August. The Nelson Bay team gave Terrigal Avoca a challenge in the first quarter, with Nelson Bay having a number of scoring opportunities but being unable to convert. This gave Terrigal Avoca a lead of seven points at half-time. Terrigal Avoca took control in the second quarter after kicking seven goals to nil and had an overall lead of 51 points. Well done, Terrigal Avoca.

### **HUMANS OF NEWTOWN BOOK LAUNCH**

#### **KING STREET CRAWL**

**Ms JENNY LEONG** (Newtown) [5.06 p.m.]: On Saturday 5 September the *Humans of Newtown* book was launched amongst market stalls, visual arts and live music at the Newtown Social Club. The book, a compilation of the work of local resident and photo journalist Jo Wallace, captures the stories of individuals who make up the diverse Newtown community. On Sunday 6 September I participated in the King Street Crawl—a celebration of the live music venues, local musicians, bars, restaurants, shops and creative industries that line King Street and surrounds. As part of the crawl I dropped by The Commune, Parliament on King, had a couple of beers at The Union watching the Daphne Rawling Band, dropped into the Townie, stopped by Midnight Special for Melodie Nelson and then was lucky enough to catch The Preatures' secret gig at The Bank. I thank everyone involved in making this event a massive success. Sadly I could not make it to all of the gigs. I look forward to working with this community to keep Newtown open, safe and weird.

### **HASTINGS OLD HOLDENS CAR CLUB**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [5.07 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to congratulate members of the Hastings Old Holdens Car Club, who raised \$1,500 for the Port Macquarie Unit of the State Emergency Service [SES]. The club's annual Classic Cruise weekend, which included the fundraiser, was again coordinated by Rick Wilson. The money bought specialised land-search equipment packs, with items such as a map case, waterproof binoculars and a multi-tool and compass. This equipment was recently handed to SES Deputy Unit Controller, Michael Ward. The Hastings Old Holdens Car Club has provided ongoing support to the SES. Its members are committed to enhancing the safety of all of us living in or visiting the wonderful Port Macquarie-Hastings region. I am privileged to live in this region in a community characterised by volunteerism and fundraising, and I thank the members of the Hastings Old Holdens Car Club.

### **ALISON HOMESTEAD**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS** (Wyang) [5.08 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House about Alison Homestead, which dates back to 1875 but which was unfortunately burnt to the ground in December 2011 and



recently re-opened on 3 September 2015. Many priceless historical documents and items were lost in the fire in late 2011. However, the Wyong District Museum and Historical Society stepped up for our community and worked tirelessly to help preserve many of the documents and items that were inside the burnt-out building. I am pleased to say that those items will now be on display at the museum for the community to see. As a result of the hard work and dedication of Wyong Shire Council staff members and the Wyong District Museum and Historical Society, the homestead has now been returned to its former glory, with a few modern finishes to ensure that this icon of Wyong history is able to withstand hundreds more years to come. I take this opportunity to thank the many community groups, local businesses and council staff who have spent the past four years helping to rebuild this iconic site in my electorate on behalf of our community. I also acknowledge the sense of community pride that has been generated by this process.

### **KIAMA STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.09 p.m.]: After winning the regional and State competitions earlier this year, the NSW State Emergency Service Kiama unit went on to represent New South Wales at the National Disaster Rescue Competition in the Australian Capital Territory on the weekend. The unit competed against all other State and Territory State Emergency Service units at seven stands over Saturday and Sunday. The team came away with the following awards: Best Team Leader, Warren Turner; Best First Aider, Anna Habeck; stand 1, 2, 3 and 5 winners; with the overall winner of the event being crowned National Champions. The team comprised following members: Warren Turner, Team Leader; Chris Warren, Deputy Team Leader; Anna Habeck, Rob McDonald, Dan Vrcoski and Simon Ross. This is a huge accomplishment that took months of training to secure. I also acknowledge Ashley Sullivan, State Emergency Service Deputy Region Controller of Illawarra-South Coast, and all our hardworking State Emergency Service personnel in Kiama. Congratulations. You have done our community proud.

### **VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [5.10 p.m.], by leave: The fourteenth day of August 2015 marked the seventieth anniversary of the Victory in the Pacific. Cabra Vale Diggers Club hosted the commemoration at Cabra Vale Memorial Park at 11.00 a.m., followed by a luncheon in the club. Some 200 former active servicemen and their families gathered to pay their respects to the Allies' victory in the Pacific, which occurred on 14 August 1945. More than 500 members from the community attended, including local primary and secondary schools.

The day commenced with the New South Wales Police Band leading the march from the club, down Bartley Street and into the Cabra Vale Park Memorial. Present at the wreath-laying ceremony was the Governor of New South Wales, the Hon. David Hurley; the Parliamentary Secretary for Veterans, Daryl Maguire; Brigadier John Crozier, AM, CSM; Chaplain Major William Phillips; and Federal, State and local government representatives. The Victory in the Pacific Committee is made up of Cabra Vale Diggers Club, Campbelltown RSL Sub-branch, Canley Heights RSL Sub-branch, City of Fairfield RSL Sub-branch, Harbord Diggers RSL Sub-branch, Ingleburn Club LTD, Ingleburn RSL Sub-branch, City of Liverpool RSL Sub-branch, Merrylands RSL Sub-branch, Mounties Group and Smithfield RSL Sub-branch.

### **TRIBUTE TO TIKIRAH DOUGLAS**

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.11 p.m.], by leave: I congratulate Tikirah Douglas, who last Thursday had her head shaved in front of hundreds of supporters from local schools, businesses and the wider community. For five months, Tikirah has tirelessly fundraised under the Shave for Pop banner to raise money for the hospital that took care of her grandfather, Malcolm Gunson, during his final days. At only 11 years of age, much of the community has been astounded by the determination and bravery of young Tikirah. The climax of the fundraising effort



saw an outpouring of support from those gathered from the community as an emotional Tikirah faced the clippers. Tikirah raised \$20,000 through her head shave. Sadly, early in the fundraising someone stole one of the fundraiser tins containing \$2,000. The community rallied behind this brave young girl. I congratulate her on behalf of the electorate of Wagga Wagga.

#### **HUNTER VALLEY SCOTS CLUB**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON** (Charlestown) [5.12 p.m.], by leave: For the past 34 years the Hunter Valley Scots Club has organised events to celebrate the Scottish tradition and provide the opportunity for comradeship among emigrants and descendants of Scotland. Since the formation meeting in Charlestown in 1981 to the club's move to its present home in Teralba and beyond, the Hunter Valley Scots Club has brought together a dedicated group of locals to celebrate tradition and to forge new friendships. The club is well known for its annual Burns Supper, which attracts around 200 people for a night of bagpipes, highland dancing and good food shared with friends. I have attended the Burns Supper for the past two years, and I have enjoyed the Scottish delicacies haggis, neeps and tatties. The club holds monthly social meetings and other events, such as golf days, soup and damper evenings and Caledonian dance nights. I acknowledge the hard work of the executive of the club, including president Gary Gray, vice-president Peter Adams, secretary Graham Pricter and treasurer Peter Tranter.

#### **FORBES PUBLIC SCHOOL WENBAN SPELLING SHIELD WINNERS**

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.13 p.m.], by leave: I advise the House that Forbes Public School has taken out the 2015 Wenban Spelling Shield, blitzing fellow competitors Forbes North Public School and St Laurence's Primary School. Year six students Montana Bevan, Sam Pascoe, and Josh Higgins claimed victory in a hard-fought spelling competition. The Forbes Public School team won with a score of 127 out of 150, while St Laurence's Primary School came second with a score of 84 and Forbes North Public School third with 76 points. Three year six students from each school are chosen by their teachers to compete in the challenge, which involves five rounds of 10 words that the students have to spell. They are given eight seconds to write down the correct spelling of each word. The Wenban Shield spelling bee has been contested by the three schools since 1987. I congratulate all staff and students from these three fantastic schools on their wonderful efforts in this year's Wenban Shield.

#### **TED WALE, 105TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [5.13 p.m.], by leave: One of the oldest constituents in my electorate, Mr Ted Wale, turned 105 on 12 August 2015. Ted also happens to be the oldest living member of the Australian Labor Party. I saw him at our last branch meeting, where I had the honour of presenting him with a framed certificate wishing him a happy birthday. Despite his age, Ted is still active, as he continues to undertake household chores from gardening to mowing the lawn. I have known Ted for many years and we have enjoyed many a chat. It is always interesting to hear about his experiences during the earliest decades of the twentieth century. He belongs to an era that witnessed significant change and transformation, as well as sheer devastation, such as the advancement in technology and the onset of both world wars. He is an inspiration to us all and I wish him a long and happy life.

#### **NORTHSIDE RIDING CLUB POLO SPECTACULAR**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.14 p.m.], by leave: I draw the attention of the House to the Northside Riding Club Polo Spectacular event happening on 27 September at the St Ives Showground, which is in my electorate. The Polo Spectacular is a major fundraiser, with the proceeds going to new, accessible restroom facilities and an accessible pedestrian pathway from the car park to the clubhouse at Princess Anne equestrian arena. In 2014 the riding club opened its competitions and clinics to para-equestrians—the first club in New South Wales to do so. The new facilities will create a more welcoming environment for riders with disabilities and increased safety for younger riders. I wish



Northside Riding Club all the best in the day's activities and for continued success in the future.

### **CANREVIVE CANCER FOUNDATION**

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [5.15 p.m.], by leave: On Friday 28 August I had the pleasure of hosting an afternoon tea at Parliament House to recognise the outstanding contributions made by the CanRevive Cancer Foundation. I meet with the president and members of the leadership team to discuss their work and issues affecting their organisation and the cancer patients who use their support services. This wonderful organisation works tirelessly to reduce the impact of cancer on patients and their families by providing information and emotional support, and caters for cultural and linguistic needs of Chinese-speaking people.

Understandably, the emotional toll on patients and families living with cancer can be overwhelming, and the support provided by CanRevive helps lighten the load and provides practical and meaningful support to people who need it most. Since its formation in 1995, CanRevive has provided assistance to more than 1,000 cancer patients and their families, with an average of more than 80 people attending their weekly activities across the St George district. I thank the volunteers of CanRevive for the work it does and wish them and the people using their services all the very best for a healthy, strong and bright future.

**Public recognition statements concluded.**

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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#### **WILEY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

#### **SCHOOLS DADS' FORUM**

**Mr JIHAD DIB** (Lakemba) [5.17 p.m.]: I acknowledge the great work being undertaken by Wiley Park Public School and the principal, Rene Demos, for taking a leadership role in transforming schools into community hubs. Each week, Wiley Park Primary School hosts a playgroup for local children and their families from diverse cultural backgrounds, many of whom are new arrivals to Australia. Funded by Good Beginnings Australia and the School as Community Centre, the playgroup is a great start to early education for children to learn skills that prepare them for school. The Good Beginnings Playgroup has grown into a valuable support network, where social isolation is decreased, especially for new migrant families, and where family support and referral services are available.

As a result, the relationships that develop between the parents, the school and the children form strong foundations for community building. I spent a wonderful morning with the families a little while back and saw firsthand the value of investing in people for social benefit. I shared the smiles, warmth and of course food, which are always the epitome of community. Best of all, I read to the kids one of my favourite stories of all time, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. During the past few weeks I also had the privilege of hosting a parent group from Wiley Park Public School. Of this group, who were all mothers, none had ever been to Parliament House and the majority were born overseas.

Mums from Kenya, Samoa, Tonga, Lebanon, Italy, Greece, Syria, amongst others, highlighted the diversity of the school's student cohort. The notion that Parliament is an open and accessible place for everyone, regardless of where they live and where they come from, is especially important to me, and I took enormous pride in showing them around. They were excited to have sat in the Chamber and witnessed a debate and to have morning tea in Parliament. I also thank the Hon. Kayee Griffin for helping guide the parents and for all the assistance she afforded me on the day. I also acknowledge and thank the Speaker for hosting the children and spending a little time with them when they came to visit.



Most recently, I participated in the school's dads' forum, where close to 100 men and women gathered alongside prominent community figures, including religious leaders from different faiths, teachers, youth workers and police Liaison officers, to ask questions and to discuss a range of topics designed to build stronger relationships between fathers, guardians and their children. By helping these mums and dads to navigate their way through the world of parenting, the school understands how much this can have a positive impact on a child's performance at school. Principal Demos not only has identified a need but also has managed to successfully bring people together to begin addressing this issue. I also acknowledge the teachers and the general assistant at Wiley Park Public School for their work in organising and preparing the wonderful barbeque and the pack-up afterward. They do that because they believe in the values of holistic education.

These community engagements show great initiative on behalf of the school. They also recognise that the school community is not something that only exists during school hours alone. It is a vital component of thinking about schools as community hubs. I congratulate Wiley Park Public School on its efforts to build a strong, cohesive and inclusive community. Earlier this week I spoke about the extraordinary works of Punchbowl Primary School and its support for the Alawir family. It was but one example of the care and compassion the school shows all of its community. As an aside, since then Principal Rose Manousaridis noted:

The work we do for our students and families ... we do with a great joy and commitment.

I also spoke this morning in this House about the practical compassion of educators like the wonderful Dorothy Hoddinott, AO, from Holroyd High School. In this momentous week, with the welcome announcement that Australia will assist an additional 12,000 people under its humanitarian immigration program, let us not underestimate what is ahead. There will be a great many children amongst those 12,000 people. The Federal Government will work its way through the inevitable processes of selecting and getting people here, and I am sure there will be the usual settlement services.

But let us acknowledge in this House that not far down the track, our schools—and in particular our public schools—will carry the majority of the weight of this load. They will need counsellors, English as a second language [ESL] teachers, special learning support assistants [SLSAs] and help from broader community services. Schools are not simply a nine-to-three operation for kids. They are, and they should be, the heart and soul of a broader community, but they cannot do it without real support and meaningful financial investment. We all know of the great work at schools and the way they build societies, but that cannot be done on goodwill alone. I call on the Premier to see that his fine words in support of the refugees and asylum seekers are matched over time, particularly in our schools, by an appropriate financial response from the Government.

### **SHOALHAVEN PARKINSON'S FORUM**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.21 p.m.]: On Wednesday last week I attended the 2015 Shoalhaven Parkinson's Forum at the Bomaderry Bowling Club, along with the Federal member for Gilmore and the Mayor of Shoalhaven, Joanna Gash. The forum was designed to raise awareness of Parkinson's disease and associated neurological conditions. At the forum there was an emphasis on educating the local community about the condition and highlighting the impact on the quality of life of people with the condition and carers. It was an incredible turnout, with almost 400 people in attendance—patients, carers and community members.

I acknowledge, in particular, the hard work of the Parkinson's Support Group in Nowra and in Ulladulla. In Nowra the coordinator is Betty Coulton and the secretary is Di Moller. In particular, I thank Nina Cheyne, the neurological nurse educator for the region, for organising the event and for all her incredible work in the community. We heard on the day from a range of extremely knowledgeable and informative guest speakers. I thank them for appearing at the event. They were Professor Simon Lewis, a researcher at Sydney University; Dr Paul Silberstein, a neurologist specialising in medical and surgical



management of Parkinson's disease and tremor and movement disorders; Dr Jeremy Christley, a local geriatrician; and Dr Sanjeev Taneja, a neurologist and brain specialist.

At the moment there are estimated to be 80,000 Australians living with Parkinson's disease. A diagnosis can occur at any age but the most common age is between 50 and 60 years old. The trigger for the disease is still unknown but it is understood that the neurones in a particular area of the brain are damaged or lost. Currently there is no cure for Parkinson's, but there are effective treatments and therapy options that can help manage symptoms for many.

Parkinson's NSW is a member of Parkinson's Australia, the national peak body and charity advocating for the needs of people living with Parkinson's and for their families and carers. Parkinson's NSW provides a range of services including an information line and counselling service, and local support groups including services on the South Coast based at Nowra and Ulladulla. These support groups offer members the opportunity to provide each other with emotional and practical support. They also help to break down any feelings of social isolation that are a result of their condition—and I have seen this occur often. Services like these are especially important in regional communities such as the South Coast.

Parkinson's NSW chief executive officer Miriam Dixon and her team are dedicated to improving the lives of people living with Parkinson's. I draw to the attention of members the Get Moving event in Martin Place on 18 September—that is next week—at around midday at which there will be a world record attempt for the largest core fitness class to raise awareness of Parkinson's. Parkinson's NSW and Parkinson's Australia have a number of priorities that they are currently focusing on to ensure the best outcomes for people living with Parkinson's.

These priorities are: recognition of Parkinson's as a national health priority area; investment in better care and support for people living with Parkinson's through access to Parkinson's nurse specialists and equitable access to medications and therapies; investment in upskilling the workforce to enable timely diagnosis and better care and support of people living with Parkinson's; and investment and capacity building in Parkinson's research. On a local level there is a need to ensure that funding is continued for specialist nurses in the Shoalhaven as the current funding is not guaranteed into the future. I encourage people to support Parkinson's NSW in their quest to improve the lives of people living with Parkinson's.

I have a long association with Parkinson's NSW and as a patron for both support groups in Nowra and Ulladulla. I have seen firsthand what communities coming together can do in those support groups. I have also seen some of the progress being made even over the past 12-year period in Parkinson's research. It is a very disturbing condition and disease affecting a lot of people in the community who often feel isolated and alienated. Because of the very nature of the condition, they really do not want to come out, so the support groups are important.

I have seen the funding of our neurological nurse educator in question time and time again—after a 12-month period or a three-year period—never really knowing whether her funding would be continued. Nina Cheyne is our new neurological nurse educator. I ask the Federal Government to make sure that in the future we do not have to fight for that funding to be continued. It is essential in a regional community such as mine that we have somebody who is prepared to go out into the homes of people suffering from Parkinson's, visit them and make their lives a little easier, and she certainly does that. I finish by stressing that Nina Cheyne, our neurological nurse educator, is not just a paid worker in this field. She is a wonderful individual who organised this forum. There was an incredible attendance by nearly 400 people, which we rarely see at any kind of function in the region, so it means that the community is behind Parkinson's. The community wants to support Parkinson's carers and patients and to get behind that cause.

**WOY WOY JUDO CLUB**



**Ms KATHY SMITH** (Gosford) [5.26 p.m.]: I would like to take a few moments to talk about the Woy Woy Judo Club, which was born out of the 1770 Judo Club, formed by Kodokan fifth dan Sensei Danny Simmons in 1982, making it the longest established judo club on the Central Coast. Since opening, this family-run club has taught traditional Japanese judo and had strong competition values at all levels of competition. Woy Woy Judo Club has produced local, State, national and international representatives and champions who have journeyed to Japan, Europe, Asia, South America, the United States of America, Canada, the Pacific Islands, and every State and Territory of Australia to represent the club and our nation in judo, all with outstanding achievements.

In 2000 Danny was presented with the Australian sports medal for his contribution to judo as a volunteer. In 2014 Danny was inducted into the Australasian Martial Arts Hall of Fame for his 60 years of service to judo. A ceremony was held to mark the occasion on Saturday 16 August 2014. His wife, club administrator Ms Lindy Simmons, said:

Eleven people of all different martial arts were inducted on the night, and Danny was the only one to receive a standing ovation.

Danny began his judo journey in 1955 at the South Sydney Police Boys Club in Waterloo, under the guidance of Sergeant Ernie Chambers of the Redfern police. During his career, Danny struggled with pulmonary fibrosis. However, he never let that get him down and he still managed to instil dedication into his students. Unfortunately, a short while ago Danny senior passed away and Danny junior, his son, stepped up to the mark. Danny junior forfeited his own very promising career aspirations to instead take the reins teaching and helping with the operations of the club.

Danny junior, your commitment and loyalty to your judo club cannot be praised too highly, along with the dedication of your mother, who has devotedly worked for the club since its inception, and that of your sister Coralie. Mum, Lindy Simmons, is the unsung hero, working tirelessly behind the scenes and making sure the wheels of the business keep turning. Lindy, you can be very proud of your achievements. I look forward to attending a judo tournament in the future and working closely with the organisation to address any issues you may have. Coralie provides vital support to the club. The dedication she has added to ensure its continuation is admirable. To the club as a whole—there are many hundreds of members of this club—I wish you all good luck in your future sporting endeavours. You are members of a great club with excellent tutors and I hope you all go far.

## **NATIONAL SERVICE**

**Mr STUART AYRES** (Penrith—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport) [5.29 p.m.]: In March 1951 the Commonwealth Government introduced National Service for all 18-year-old males. It was the third such scheme to have existed in Australia since Federation. National Service was introduced in response to concerns arising from political instability and conflict in our region. Between 1951 and 1959 approximately 227,000 young Australian males were called up for National Service. Trainees were required to complete five years from the initial call-up with the Reserve of the Commonwealth Military Forces. In 1959 that scheme was abolished.

National Service was reintroduced in 1964. Between 30 June 1965 and 7 December 1972 a total of 63,735 men were called up for two years of full-time service integrated into regular Army units. This was reduced to 18 months in 1971. Indeed, 150 Nashos, as they were colloquially known, served in Borneo in 4RAR and 21 and 22 Construction Squadrons and 15,381 served in Vietnam. The remainder served in support units in Australia, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea. During the 21-year period, 212 Nashos died in action in Borneo and Vietnam, while another 1,500 to 2,000 were wounded. All National Servicemen are entitled to wear the Australian Defence Medal and the Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972 Medal. Many of them belong to the RSL movement and proudly march in their own right on Anzac Day.



In 2002 Mr Harry Morfoot and Mr Tom Kelly were members of the Blue Mountains Nasho Sub-Branch. Many of their members travelled up from Penrith to Springwood to attend the monthly meetings, and Harry and Tom felt that Penrith would be a good place to start its own sub-branch. They called meetings and gathered enough support to request a charter from the NSW National Servicemen's Association to form the Penrith sub-branch. In 2012 they celebrated their tenth anniversary and currently have almost 150 members. In 2012 they officially changed their name to the Penrith City Australian National Servicemen's Association. Following 12 years as president, Harry resigned and Mr John Taylor took over the role. John currently holds the presidency as well as the role of secretary.

They meet on the third Sunday of each month at Penrith RSL and they are always happy to welcome new members and visitors. Membership is made up from former members of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Many of them are returned ex-servicemen from the Second World War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. The constitution of the organisation allows for other non-service persons interested in the welfare of the Penrith City Australian National Servicemen's Association to become members. They are a registered charitable organisation and donate each year to the Cancer Council, the Salvation Army, the burns unit and cancer research institute at Concord Hospital, St John Ambulance and DefenceCare. They also sponsor the Army, Navy and Air Force cadets.

Many of their members dedicate their time to collecting donations and selling badges for Anzac Day, Legacy and Remembrance Day. I have no doubt that during Legacy Week last week the Nashos would have been out in force, making sure that the families of their mates are being looked after. Since its inception, the Penrith association has collected in excess of \$120,000 to support these fantastic charities and continue to grow the strength of the Penrith community. Some members of the Penrith City Australian National Servicemen's Association belong to the Ingleburn Military Heritage Precinct, which was previously the Ingleburn Military Barracks and home to the 13th National Service Battalion. The precinct has now been made into a museum and historical area where schoolchildren and anyone else interested in the history of the Army can come and learn more about it. National servicemen have been called upon many times over the years to help other Australians. They have been the backbone of the Australian Defence Forces and we should always remember and commend their service.

They were often referred to as chocolate soldiers because the regular Army believed that these guys would melt under pressure. They served and corrected that view and, in fact, they ended up wearing the chocolate soldier brand with pride, particularly after the existence of the National Service during the Second World War and its defence along the Kokoda Track. They moved from the Kokoda Track to serving a number of locations. I am incredibly proud to call many members of the Penrith association mates. They continue to service their community extremely well and we continue to honour them in the House today.

### **BO-PEEP KINDERGARTEN**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON** (Vaucluse—Attorney General) [5.34 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House an unfortunate occurrence that recently took place in my electorate at the Bo-peep Kindergarten at the corner of Dover Road and Old South Head Road, Rose Bay. On the morning of Wednesday 15 July 2015 Brooke Starrett, Bo-peep's supervisor, arrived at the kindergarten to discover that it had been broken into overnight and extensively vandalised. When I spoke with Brooke she told me how she arrived at the kindergarten to find smashed windows, glue and paint strewn across the floor, children's toys destroyed and crude imagery drawn on the walls. Perhaps the most troubling impact to the children who go to this preschool was the theft of their beloved preschool guinea pigs, Toupee and Gypsy. A staff member's scooter was stolen by the perpetrators but thankfully the scooter has now been recovered and returned to its owner.

On 1 August my local community came together to support the Bo-Peep Kindergarten by hosting a sausage sizzle to raise funds to replace some of the lost items. I warmly commend those who showed their support by turning up, donating items and buying a sausage. Their assistance has made a huge



difference to Bo-Peep in its recovery from these terrible circumstances. In particular, I commend two local schools, Vacluse Public School and Bondi Public School, which both held fundraisers to cover the costs of the damage from the vandalism. The children of Ballykin, another preschool located on the same street, showed their support by joining the search for the missing guinea pigs. Sadly, it appears very unlikely at this stage that the two guinea pigs will be recovered.

On Monday 17 August 2015 I visited Bo-Peep Kindergarten to show my support. I listened to the young children, who told me how they felt about the vandalism. They were clearly shaken. It is not something any child, let alone a preschool-aged child, should ever be exposed to. I acknowledge also local resident and kindergarten mother Karen Collins. I thank Karen for sharing her perspective with me. She was understandably shaken by the incident occurring at what we as a community think should always be a safe place for children and families.

During the visit I was presented with a wonderful card, made by the children—it now sits on my desk—welcoming me to their preschool and sharing their thoughts with me about what had happened. I thank Brooke Starrett, who runs the preschool, for her strength, which no doubt comforted the children and their parents, who were obviously in distress. It was a distressing incident. Brooke's bright and cheery attitude and clear affection for the children has been an asset to the preschool and its community over this difficult time. I thank the Rose Bay Local Area Command, led by Superintendent Bradley Hodder, for their work in getting to the bottom of the incident and for continuing to work with Bo-Peep Kindergarten.

Events such as these, which test our communities, more often than not also bring them together. Last year I praised my local community for the efforts to locate a young girl who had gone missing at Bondi. The way the community came together in great numbers and with determination was a demonstration of how they can mobilise in a very tough situation. The community response to what Bo-peep Kindergarten recently endured makes me very proud of my local community. We are generous, strong and resilient. I look forward to visiting Bo-Peep again soon to see how they are going from strength to strength.

Last night one of the real joys was coming home late after my ministerial duties and opening up my bag from my electoral office and finding a new card from the children showing pictures of themselves saying thank you to everyone in the community who had assisted them during this difficult time. The card shows some of the toy donations that my community has so generously given to them to restore the faith and fun that these children should always have. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

### **MACARTHUR BUSINESS AWARDS**

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [5.38 p.m.]: Last week the Macarthur Business Awards were held. The event is an opportunity to acknowledge our outstanding local businesses which go above and beyond to provide exceptional customer service and reach business excellence. As we know, small business is the backbone of our economy. The Macarthur region has a population of 270,000 people and is growing daily in the Camden area. There are 17,012 small businesses in the Macarthur region creating 81,100 local jobs. The Government supports small business, and one of the many great initiatives it has implemented to support them is the Small Biz Bus. The Small Biz Bus takes experienced advisers all over New South Wales to provide personal, face-to-face advice to small businesses.

The Small Biz Bus comes to the businesses in an area, knowing full well that time is scarce for small business owners. The bus enables local businesses to make an appointment at a convenient time to them and knowing that they will have only a five-minute commute to the bus rather than travel into the city. The Small Biz Bus will visit my area at Mount Annan next Monday, and I know many businesses will be visiting the bus to discuss any issues that they may have. The Macarthur Business Awards is one of the main events on the Macarthur calendar. The local awards are part of the Business Chamber Business Awards program, which celebrates business excellence in New South Wales.



Throughout 13 geographic regions local awards are held, culminating in the State Gala Awards which are held later in the year. With 29 finalists in the Macarthur Business Awards, the judges certainly had a difficult task in picking the winners of each category. I congratulate all the finalists: Alan Pickup of All About Pipes, Tim Bryan of Kelly Partners, the Fitzpatrick Group, the University of Western Sydney, Grabowski Financial Planning, Two Rocks Marketing and Communications, Tamlyn Creative, Youth Solutions, FI Moto, For Paws Sake, Macarthur Castles, the Macarthur Centre for Sustainable Living, Tony Wolf Printers, Wisdom Homes, CJD Equipment, Nisbets Express Catering Equipment, Nu-Tech Air Conditioning, Wakeling Automotive, Wisdom Homes, the Appin Chamber of Commerce and the Ingleburn Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Winners from each category were: Business Leader, Michael Lombardo of CJD Equipment; Business Leader highly commended, Ruth Pasi of African Theatres; Excellence in Innovation, Solutions Outsourced; Excellence in Business Ethics, Wakeling Automotive; Excellence in Small Business, Coutts Solicitors and Conveyancers; Employer of Choice, Media Hub Australia; Excellence in Business, All About Pipes; Regional Business of the Year, Media Hub Australia; Young Business Executive, Bianca Lemon of Nisbets Express Catering Equipment; Young Entrepreneur, Scott Bradley Rosen of Leisure Lounges; Excellence in Export, Western Sydney University; and Local Chamber of Commerce, Narellan Chamber of Commerce. Congratulations to all finalists and winners on this much-deserved recognition.

I acknowledge the hard work and dedication of not only an ambassador for small business but an ambassador for my local area, Adriana Care. Adriana is president of Narellan Chamber of Commerce, which won the Local Chamber of Commerce category, and principal solicitor of Coutts Solicitors and Conveyancing, which won the Excellence in Small Business award. Adriana works tirelessly for her business, her clients, her chamber of commerce, and her colleagues and their businesses. I am proud to call Adriana a very close friend. I go to her for mentorship and I run things by her, as I value her advice. Adriana will be hosting the Premier at her chamber's annual breakfast event, which this year will be held on 1 October. She will have another full house at this great breakfast business event. We are very lucky to have Adriana as a member of our community and I am very lucky to call her a very good friend.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.43 p.m.]: The member for Camden spoke of Adriana as a leading light of the local chamber of commerce and a great example to his local business community. I want to highlight that the member for Camden is an excellent example to other members of Parliament. Having a business background, the member for Camden understands the importance of the Macarthur Business Awards and the Small Biz Bus which the Government sends out across the State. I reinforce the Government's appreciation of him as a member of Parliament and thank him for highlighting how the Government is looking after and encouraging small business in this State.

## **TASTE ORANGE**

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.44 p.m.]: Taste Orange has returned to Martin Place in Sydney for the third year. It is operating right now and I invite all members to go to Martin Place and sample the best of what Orange has to offer in terms of food, wine and accommodation. The event will also operate tomorrow. Taste Orange is an expo run by Brand Orange under the able stewardship of Rhonda Sear. This year there is a stellar cast of stallholders. The winery stallholders include: Angullong Wines, represented by Bill and Hattie Crossing, James and Edwina Crossing, Ben and Heidi Crossing, viticulturist Tim Esson and winemaker Jon Reynolds; Bantry Grove, which is located on the rim of the Bathurst Valley to the very south of Orange, represented by Terrey and Barbie Johnson; and Brangayne, represented by David Hoskins.

Other winery stallholders are: Carillion, a subsidiary of Tallavera Grove, represented by the manager Nick Lander; Cumulus Estate Wines, represented by the director of operations and winemaker Pat Auld and senior winemaker Debbie Lauritz; Dindima Wines, represented by James Bell; Gilbert Wines from Mudgee, represented by Simon Gilbert; Heifer Station, represented by Phillip and Michele Stevens who do wonderful work in the Orange area raising the profile of cool climate wines; Highland Heritage



Estate Winery, represented by chief executive officer and chief winemaker John Hordern; Logan Wines from Mudgee, represented by Hannah and Peter Logan; Patina Wines, represented by Gerald Naef; Philip Shaw Wines, represented by Philip Shaw; Ross Hill Wines, represented by Peter and Terri Robson, James and Chrissy Robson and Phil and Rochelle Kerney; Stockman's Ridge, represented by Jonathan and Valerie Hambrook; and Tamburlaine Wines, represented by managing director and chief winemaker Mark Davidson.

The food stallholders are: The Old Mill Café or Sugar Mill, represented by Stacey Ewin and Darren Tracey; Origin Chocolate; Franklin Road Preserves, represented by Liz and Richard Dowling; the Agrestic Grocer, a wonderful Orange business represented by Lucas Martin; and the Union Bank, represented by Nick and Emma Bacon. Other stallholders include Orange Accommodation, Mission Australia and Stay Orange. I also mention the very hard work of the Brand Orange chief executive officer, Rhonda Sear, and marketing manager, Charlotte Gundry. Jane Arnott also has been an integral part of the team. Sarah Gillogly and Simon Rollin from Mojo Events will also be in Martin Place.

This year Taste Orange at Sydney did not attract Destination NSW funding. Funding by Destination NSW of regional events needs to be looked at. How could a flagship event like Taste Orange not attract Destination NSW funding? The answer is there is just too much red tape. When regional events such as this are staged outside the region, there needs to be more flexibility in the funding assessment. The good news is that the Minister for Regional Development has come to the party and has found regional funding for this event. That has enabled the reinstatement of certain attractions and features at Taste Orange at Sydney—for example, a big screen television which adds much to the event. I thank Minister Barilaro for his hard work. I know the whole team at Taste Orange at Sydney appreciates his work to secure that funding.

I thank the whole team at Brand Orange and Taste Orange and all the exhibitors for their hard work. Orange is making its mark as a destination for fine wine and fine food. Its cold climate gives its wines a unique flavour and unique characteristics. I would say our flagship drop would be the Sauvignon Blanc, but right across the board Orange wines are reaching new heights and gaining wide recognition. For example, Angullong Wines has a great range in Italian wines, including the Sangiovese which is one of my favourites. I congratulate everyone involved in Taste Orange and I encourage all members to go to Martin Place to Taste Orange.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.49 p.m.]: I thank the member for Orange for bringing Brand Orange and Taste Orange to the attention of the House. I will stop at Martin Place this evening on my way to the railway station to experience the food, wine and accommodation on offer. As Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism I wish to highlight that a review is underway to look into rural and regional funding from Destination NSW. I encourage the member for Orange to give input into that review. I am delighted that the Government has funded the excellent initiative which the member has brought to the attention of the House.

#### **BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE COMMUNITY SECTOR**

**Ms TRISH DOYLE** (Blue Mountains) [5.50 p.m.]: I commend the work of Blue Mountains community sector organisations for providing services to my local community. I also publicly declare my continued support of those services. I value my longstanding relationship with the sector and will use every opportunity I have to advocate on behalf of the best interests of the Blue Mountains community sector. Many of our organisations have evolved from the Area Assistance Plan, which was established during the Whitlam reforms to address unmet needs in local communities in the outlying suburbs and regions of New South Wales. The Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme [WSAAS], an initiative of the Wran Labor Government, laid the foundation for the community sector in the Blue Mountains. The success of the WSAAS model led to Labor expanding the model across other parts of the State. As a result of WSAAS, many of the Blue Mountains community sector organisations were established in the late 1970s and early 1980s.



The Blue Mountains community sector encompasses a wide range of services which include: a network of six local neighbourhood centres; family support services; child and family services; women's health and domestic violence court advocacy services; a domestic violence refuge for women and children; Aboriginal community organisations; community housing; community transport; and disability, youth and older people's services, to name just a few. The Blue Mountains community sector knows its community. They know the areas of disadvantage, they have established trust with our most vulnerable citizens, and they know the service networks and referral pathways. They are some of the most effective and passionate advocates one could meet. Collaboration is a key factor.

The sector works cooperatively with one another and is particularly effective in meeting the needs of vulnerable populations and those living on the fringes, such as women experiencing domestic violence, people living with mental illness, people with disabilities, and those who are socially isolated. The Blue Mountains community sector receives funding from a variety of sources. The New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services [FACS] is a primary source of funding for many of those organisations. Following the debacle and mismanagement of the Going Home Staying Home program, many community services have expressed serious concerns regarding their funding future. The recently published KPMG review of Going Home Staying Home noted:

The decision to open up funding for homelessness services to a competitive bidding process ultimately drove an outcome where there were clear winners and losers.

This is the aspect of reform that has attracted the most criticism. Before Going Home Staying Home, 27.5 per cent of the homelessness services in New South Wales were independent women's services. The reform caused this figure to drop almost 10 per cent. The loss of those specialist services will have a long-lasting impact on the sector and the communities that were affected. I urge the Government to learn from the mistakes made during the implementation of the Going Home Staying Home changes. The Government must also recognise that community services are not businesses. Competitive tendering processes do not necessarily achieve selection of the best and most appropriate service providers. Competitive tendering generally favours larger organisations, which may benefit from economies of scale and a greater cash flow that helps them to weather the vagaries of the funding cycle.

Contestability has undermined the longstanding trust and cooperation that existed between organisations. Instead of forming partnerships to deliver the best outcome, services are now in competition with one another. The Government must commit to ensuring that only true not-for-profit organisations are eligible to apply for government funding. For-profit organisations must not be eligible to profit from service provision to our most vulnerable citizens. Since the Government commenced its review of funding programs in FACS and Health, many community sector organisations have been funded through a series of annual rollover contracts. My community is concerned about the short-term status of funding contracts, the enormous difficulties and stresses it creates around service planning, the employment and retention of quality staff, and the impact on service delivery to vulnerable people.

The Government must commit to the establishment of longer term funding cycles that enable the sector to plan for the future so they can offer certainty for service users and staff. I challenge the Government to equal or better Labor's commitment to a sustainable five-year funding cycle. I also call on the Minister for Family and Community Services to consult with the community sector and to listen to what it has to say. Those organisations are the experts on these matters and they know best what our communities need. The Government must take a big picture view of the value of community services and the complementary nature of the programs provided. It has taken nearly 40 years to establish this network of services and they cannot be easily replaced. I commend the good work and support of the fabulous Australian Services Union, which supports its members—the highly valued workers in this vital sector—on a daily basis.

**TRIBUTE TO VERONICA ANNE OWEN**



**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE** (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) [5.55 p.m.]: I pay tribute to Veronica Anne Owen, who recently lost her five-year battle with cancer. Vonnie, as she was known, was a dear friend. She was a mentor and great support to me throughout my life and she also had an incredible influence on so many other people. I pay my deepest respects to Veronica's husband, Robin, and her children, Tristan, Skye and Luke, and their families. Bega is a close-knit community on the far South Coast and the communities of Candelo and Tathra are saddened by her passing.

Vonnie was involved in politics her whole life. As a child, with her grandmother in Ashfield in Sydney she handed out how-to-vote cards for the Liberal Party. She was involved in the Mona Vale branch of the Liberal Party throughout the 1970s and beyond. Vonnie was incredibly proud of the achievements of her brother Jim Carlton, who was the Federal Minister for Health in the Fraser Government. Vonnie has helped many State and Federal members in their success to become members of Parliament. She did so because she wanted to see Liberal governments achieve so much for the nation and the State. Gary Nairn, a Federal member of Parliament, like me, was helped and loved by Vonnie. She always supported the work we undertook for south-east New South Wales. But she was more than someone who was in the background supporting our campaigns or a friend who was always up for a chat about politics.

I met Vonnie when I was 28 years of age and she shaped my future life. I can only describe her as a true friend. Vonnie served as my campaign director for my first three election campaigns when I contested as the member for Bega. They were three successful election campaigns. She took great joy in seeing the Liberal Party attain Government in 2011. She wanted to see tremendous outcomes not only for her community but also for the State and the nation. She was always well supported by her husband, Robin, throughout my campaigns. I will always remember her tenacity and commitment during my first campaign. It was a colourful campaign and we worked day in and day out for the best part of 12 months. It was during that time that I formed a bond with Vonnie and she ultimately treated me as family.

I represent a large country electorate. Vonnie always had a door open, and when I was in the southern part of the seat she would always be there with a cooked meal, a good laugh and a glass of red. She took great delight in discussing politics. She loved her community and her family in a way that was tremendous and influenced so many with her kindness, generosity and spirit. She will be incredibly missed by her family, friends and community. I took great delight in talking about everything from cricket to politics with Vonnie. I would not be where I am today without her love, support and friendship, political nous, principled approach, care and dedication to liberalism, as well as her support as a friend. May she rest in peace. She will be sorely missed in her community.

#### **TRIBUTE TO JOHN RAYNER**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [6.00 p.m.]: I pay tribute to my constituent John Rayner, who is retiring this month after 33 years of faithful service with Sutherland Shire Council as Shire Clerk, later Shire Clerk-General Manager and then General Manager. His career in local government spans five decades. John has been a competent, forward-thinking and distinguished administrator whose tenure as Shire Clerk-General Manager has seen Sutherland Shire Council recognised at a national level for its exceptional level of progress and professionalism. The list of John's achievements in local government is extraordinary so my short contribution today is, at best, a snapshot. John brought extensive knowledge and experience in public administration to Sutherland Shire Council in 1982, having already been employed by Northern Rivers County Council, Ulmarra Shire Council, Mudgee Municipal Council and Lithgow City Council.

John was the first Town Clerk of the City of Greater Lithgow, formed in 1977 with the amalgamation of Lithgow City and Blaxland Shire councils. He is only the fourth Shire Clerk-General Manager of Sutherland Shire Council since 1929, the others being David Kirkby, 1929 to 1963; Mervyn



Howard, 1963 to 1968; and Athol Hill, 1968 to 1982. John Rayner's outstanding stewardship of Sutherland Shire Council was formally recognised in 2010, with council being awarded the AR Bluett Memorial Award—the most prestigious award in New South Wales local government. The judges' citation noted that Sutherland Shire Council had delivered to the shire a very wide range of services and facilities while providing strong local leadership in community development. It went on to state:

The Trustees were impressed with the Council's Community Strategic Plan and its focus on people, place, nature and governance.

The council was further lauded for its significant capital works project; an important regional environment project; an emerging leaders program for managers; a comprehensive Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy; an innovative Ageing Well Strategy; and a strengthened role in economic development. Specific projects and achievements for which council, under John's stewardship, received special recognition were completion of the \$20 million Cronulla Central project, incorporating a new library, community hall, central business district offices, car park and commercial offices; the Lucas Heights regional sports facilities and The Ridge Golf Course development; finalising a Voluntary Planning Agreement to allow 91.3 hectares of open space on Kurnell Peninsula to be transferred to council and the development of 10 playing fields; reconstruction of the Princes Street Cronulla seawall; construction of Engadine Rural Fire Service Station and Woronora Floating Bush Fire Station; expanding services at the council's Sutherland Shire Hub for Economic Development's business incubator; and embarking on an ambitious and progressive organisational change program.

The scope of the projects undertaken in recent years, and the pace with which they have been delivered, are due in no small part to John's ambition, dedication and vision. The Bluett award was deserving recognition of council's whole-of-organisation approach to significant local projects, but John's career achievements trace back much further. Since becoming Shire Clerk and then General Manager, John has been at the vanguard of best practice administration in local government. In 1988 he oversaw a major organisation restructure and established a corporate development unit to provide council with its own consultancy capacity. In 1989 he established the Property Fund to generate an additional source of income.

In 1992 John established the first Environmental Science and Policy Unit in Australian local government. Similarly, the nation's first Office of Internal Ombudsman was formed in Sutherland Shire Council in 1999, during John's tenure. The list goes on: construction of the Bicentennial Plaza in 1988; Sutherland Leisure Centre upgrades to include indoor and outdoor swimming pools and dry areas in 1992; establishment of a Small Business Accelerator now linked with Wollongong University; improved financial performance of commercial operations, including the Entertainment Centre, the leisure centre, golf courses and childcare centres; creation of the Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre; numerous new community buildings, childcare centres, parks and playing fields; and well-resourced bushfire and emergency services.

Importantly, John has significantly improved the council's customer focus through the leading edge customer service centre, call centre and electronic Customer Request Management System. John Rayner has transformed Sutherland Shire Council into a thriving, world-class organisation. Although I look forward to welcoming his replacement, Scott Phillips, I must stress to Scott that he has big shoes to fill. John, on behalf of shire residents, thank you for everything you have done for this wonderful part of Sydney, and I wish you all the best for a happy and fulfilling retirement.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON** (Charlestown) [6.04 p.m.]: I will continue the local government theme. Across New South Wales discussions about stronger, more sustainable local government began in earnest four years ago, and it is a journey which most councils are generally pleased to be part of. The subsequent establishment of an independent panel led to 65 recommendations to make councils



stronger, and the majority of those recommendations are good recommendations, including a stronger role for integrated planning and reporting, which I note was a local government game-changing initiative brought in by Labor in 2009. Other recommendations include improved performance management and increased accountability to the community.

This Government's focus has been on amalgamations. There have been large amounts of taxpayer dollars spent on television and print media advertising, intimating that local government is a machine that is broken. It is easy but simplistic to say that bigger is better. The Government pushes the view that anyone who does not agree with it on this issue is a philistine. That is certainly not the case. The evidence shows that amalgamated or bigger councils do not necessarily perform more efficiently or effectively. Despite the evidence, the Government's recommendation is for Lake Macquarie City Council, with the fourth largest population in New South Wales at 202,000, the council of which I am the popularly elected mayor, to amalgamate with Newcastle with a population of about 160,000. Meanwhile adjoining councils—Cessnock City Council with a population of 55,000 and Port Stephens Council with a population of 64,000—remain as they are. I fail to see the logic.

The Government has set ratios that are being used to determine whether a council is supposedly fit for the future, and the initial ratios and targets were strongly questioned and, indeed, criticised by local government and academics in the field. Since then the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] has become involved in the assessment of whether councils are fit for the future. IPART reviewed the ratios with some rigour, which is welcome. The submission by Lake Macquarie City Council to IPART has been reviewed and tested by PricewaterhouseCoopers, which shows that the council meets or will meet the required ratio within the five-year time frame proposed by IPART.

Not only does the evidence show that Lake Macquarie City Council is sustainable, the Lake Macquarie community believes that that is the case. Independent community satisfaction surveys conducted by Micromex Research consistently report a community satisfaction rating of more than 85 per cent. That is the experience of Lake Macquarie City Council. I turn now to the experience across the State in relation to amalgamations and their history, and whether this history does support the premise that bigger is better. The general manager of Lake Macquarie City Council used data from publicly available information from councils and the Office of Local Government, comparing 24 significant New South Wales regional city and town councils. I have referred to this research previously, but at a time when significant advertising is being done it is worthwhile reiterating.

The 24 councils in the study were Albury, Armidale, Ballina, Bathurst, Bega Valley, Broken Hill, Byron, Clarence Valley, Deniliquin, Dubbo, Eurobodalla, Goulburn-Mulwaree, Griffith, Kempsey, Lismore, Lithgow, Mid-Western Regional, Orange, Queanbeyan, Richmond Valley, Singleton, Tamworth regional, Wagga Wagga and Wingecarribee. The 24 councils undertake generally similar functions and have similar characteristics, so their performances can be properly compared. Each of the 24 councils is centred in a regional town or city. Their populations range from between 19,000 and 62,000, with one exception at about 7,300. Ten of the 24 councils have been amalgamated since at least 2004, so certainly comparative performance benefits should be readily identifiable within the data.

The study clearly identified that there is no better performance by the amalgamated councils over the non-amalgamated councils on any of the Fit for the Future performance indicators. The data also showed that there are no discernible economies of scale efficiencies in the bigger councils versus the smaller councils. I am firmly of the view that communities know what is best for them. This Government should listen to the communities across the State—including the community of Lake Macquarie—when making decisions about local government reform, structures and boundaries. I call on the Minister and Cabinet to make decisions regarding the future of local government based on facts rather than on spin.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.09 p.m.]: I thank the member for Charlestown for her private member's statement and reiterate that the Government has made no predetermined decisions on forced amalgamations. It is awaiting further independent advice from the



Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal before making relevant decisions on local government reform.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson):** I congratulate the member for Charlestown on bringing the important issue of local government amalgamations to the House. It affects each and every member in this place and the member has made a very worthwhile contribution.

### **TRIBUTE TO UNCLE LES ELVIN**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [6.10 p.m.]: It is with great honour but more than a tinge of sadness that I speak in this House of the people about a man who was a great leader in the Upper Hunter electorate and a role model for many: the late Mr Les Elvin, fondly known to all as "Uncle Les". Our Upper Hunter community reacted with sadness to the news that Uncle Les Elvin recently passed away. Uncle Les was a community leader and a proud Aboriginal Wanaruah elder as well as a prominent artist. It is not an exaggeration to say that Uncle Les Elvin was a resident of the whole Hunter Valley. He taught the ways of the Wanaruah people to each generation, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Although based in Cessnock, Les spent limitless hours crisscrossing the Hunter sharing not only his artistic skills but also the heritage of Indigenous Australian culture. He would often host workshops for young and old, sharing traditional techniques and the meaning behind the symbols used in Aboriginal artwork. As befits a respected and accomplished community leader, Les was a man of many achievements of which I will enlighten the House. Les won the NAIDOC National Award for Artist of the Year in 2008 and designed the Newcastle Knights Indigenous jersey in 2009. He was awarded the Freedom of the Shire in Muswellbrook in 2012—only the fourth person to have received the award—and was named Cessnock Citizen of the Year in 2012.

Les designed the mural for Muswellbrook High School and collaborated with George Anderson to create the Reconciliation Mural in Simpson Park, Muswellbrook. He also taught art and acted as a mentor for Indigenous inmates at the St Heliers and Cessnock correctional centres. It was a mark of the depth of his contribution that many of the inmates at St Heliers continued their artistic journey after leaving the facility. In 2005 Les was instrumental in the development of the Muswellbrook NAIDOC Week Aboriginal Art Prize and exhibition and sat on the Muswellbrook Aboriginal Reconciliation Committee.

As can be imagined, his passing leaves quite a void in the artistic and cultural life of our Upper Hunter community. According to Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre Manager Brad Franks, Uncle Les Elvin was one of the Hunter Valley's great artists. His works are represented not just in public collections but also in many private homes in the Hunter Valley as well as across the nation and overseas. Uncle Les Elvin's achievements will not be forgotten, and his dedication to the Indigenous community will be sorely missed by the people of the Upper Hunter and the wider Hunter Valley. Uncle Les's granddaughter recently wrote:

This is my Pop. Some people know him as Uncle Les, Aboriginal Elder. Some people know him as the Australian Aboriginal Naidoc artist of the year. But to me, he was just Pop. "Bloody Pop!" because he would tell you the worst jokes and that's what you'd call him after you heard one, I can guarantee.

I'm so lucky. God, I am so lucky that I saw you on Sunday, Pop. Almost as if the universe wanted to make sure I saw you on Sunday so you could tell me that last bad joke about the woman who could talk to elephants making a "trunk call". I know I'm lucky I got to give you a big hug and a kiss on your last day, but it breaks my heart we won't have our weekly yacks anymore and you'll never pick up the phone and say "Good Morning" in a voice as bright as the sun even though it's 830 at night. Or never tell me the stories of behind the paintings you've left in the shed. I'm sorry I forgot to ask about 'em on Sunday, but you taught me enough about the symbols I think I know. You can tell me all about it when I see ya next anyway.



Be at peace, Pop. Give Aunt Cheryl a big kiss from me and try not to talk the socks off Jesus. Love you, Poppy. Thanks for always making me laugh at bad jokes xo.

Uncle Les was a valued and beloved member of our Upper Hunter community who was particularly loved by his family. He was a great man, a wonderful leader and a teacher to us all. Vale Uncle Les Elvin.

### **ARNCLIFFE MEN'S SHED**

**Mr STEPHEN KAMPER** (Rockdale) [6.14 p.m.]: I acknowledge the fantastic work done in Rockdale and the greater St George area by the Arncliffe Men's Shed. Many members would be familiar with the tremendous social benefits that men's sheds provide to our communities. It is amazing to think that the organisation has only been operating for 10 years. Indeed, men's sheds have become so integral to our local areas that it is hard to imagine the situation prior to their introduction. The sad reality is that the valuable services that men's sheds provide were often just not met. We still find mental health and the mental health of older men in particular to be an unpleasant topic to discuss. That has to end.

With mental health related illness now representing one of the largest disability burdens in Australia, it is beyond the point where we need to get serious about tackling the issue. Middle aged and older men need to recognise that staying silent is not a sign of toughness. It is only through the tremendous efforts of organisations such as men's sheds that we will have any chance of changing ingrained attitudes. On a recent visit to my local men's shed I saw firsthand what a fantastic outlet it provides for many retired people who still have much to give back to society. Those people might otherwise have had difficulty finding space where they could learn valuable skills, engage socially with their neighbours and see the fruits of their labours as well as the flow-on effects of all those things. It truly inspires me that participants not only get so much out of their involvement with the men's shed but also eagerly pay the goodwill forward to other community groups.

Upon my recent visit to the men's shed I was confronted by a towering construction of steel and wood. It was a custom-made barbecue trailer that the men's shed is producing for the local RSL. Something like that would certainly be far beyond my technical expertise, but with the combined efforts of a group of committed amateurs and some retired tradesmen and engineers the local group is able to provide truly valuable community assets. The spirit of comradeship, the mateship and the sense of worth provided to a group of people who were previously overlooked by community services and government is heartening to see. We often hear about falling community participation in charity work, volunteering and membership-based organisations. The men's shed movement proves that if a program is run well there is a great demand for people to participate. I congratulate Mr Keith Boog and his entire team on their fantastic work at the Arncliffe Men's Shed and look forward to their continuing contribution to my community.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.18 p.m.]: I commend the member for Rockdale for bringing to the attention of the House the great work of the Arncliffe Men's Shed. We are all aware of men's sheds across our electorates that do a fantastic job in a similar vein. I acknowledge the significant funding that the Federal Government announced in association with Father's Day, which is very welcomed. It will add to State funding and particularly the Community Building Partnership program that many of us use to support men's sheds. Again I commend the member for Rockdale for an excellent private member's statement.

### **EPPIING ELECTORATE RAILWAY UPGRADES**

**Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE** (Epping) [6.19 p.m.]: Tonight I draw the attention of the House to the progress of the Epping to Thornleigh Third Track [ETTT]. Last week I visited Cheltenham station to inspect the new concourse, stairs and lifts being delivered as part of this project—and it forms part of the Northern Sydney Freight Corridor. The concourse had only been opened that morning and there were



plenty of staff on hand to ensure that everything was running smoothly. I was among the first to use the lifts and received a quick tour of the station. For those who have been to the area recently, the station itself is still very much part of a construction site. Only the functional part of the design has been finished so far—namely, the new access and concourse. The actual station opening is not expected until later in the year.

I for one am certainly looking forward to the landscaping and revegetation of the site. I am told that some great things are being done with the proposed artworks for the station and the team overseeing this has appointed a local art teacher, Lesley Snelgrove, to assist in choosing the final design. Interestingly, Lesley's husband, Peter, will be presenting me with a petition next week for a lift at Beecroft station on behalf of the Beecroft-Cheltenham Civic Trust. For a lot of people, the opening of the concourse would not seem all that significant, after all the station is not finished yet. But for me it was a great moment; it marks the beginning of the home stretch in what has been a long and challenging project to deliver. With the ETTT due for completion sometime next year, to see the concourse open made the finish line seem real.

In the coming months we will look forward to the installation of noise barriers and the revegetation along the train line, as trees have been such a sensitive issue throughout this project. Let me offer some background to explain why this is so significant. The ETTT was announced before my time as a member of Parliament. As I said, it forms part of the Northern Sydney Freight Corridor. The \$1.1 billion project is being jointly funded by the Federal Government, which has contributed \$840 million, and the New South Wales Government, which has contributed \$213.8 million. A fact sheet about the freight corridor program states that it will take up to 200,000 truck journeys a year off the road, with the side effect of improving the reliability of passenger services because freight trains will be sidelined, and station upgrades will also be provided along the route. The ETTT acts as a kind of overtaking lane for freight trains to pass slower passenger services. The fact that they are not sharing this section of track will make passenger services more efficient and reliable.

Key features of the project include construction of approximately six kilometres of new track on the western side of the existing track between Epping and Thornleigh, and an access upgrade to Cheltenham station to make it compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1982. The new design will include construction of a small concourse on the southern side of the existing overbridge to allow space for ticketing facilities; two new lifts and stairs to provide access to the existing platforms; modifications to the pedestrian underpass and commuter car park retaining existing numbers of parking spaces at Beecroft Station; construction of a new rail bridge crossing the M2 Motorway and Devlins Creek; extension of Pennant Hills station concourse, including a new lift and stairs and modifications to Yarrara Road footpath and roadway, and a replacement footbridge south of the station; widening of a number of cuttings along the alignment to accommodate the new third track; and modifications to existing services within the rail corridor and in some public areas.

These things all sound very good and worthwhile in the macro sense, but in the micro sense let us just say that building a new freight line through the suburbs of Beecroft and Cheltenham was not the most popular decision ever made. As members can imagine when I became a candidate I was confronted with a significant amount of local angst over the project, particularly with regard to the removal of trees. It is great to see it nearing completion. Our Government is doing some great things in my electorate, including delivering the Sydney Metro rail line and the NorthConnex tunnel under Pennant Hills Road. But with so much major infrastructure being delivered at once there is disruption and the inconvenience of construction. I am sympathetic to my constituents who are feeling the effects of construction fatigue, which is why they are currently particularly sensitive to the effects of construction.

With all this in mind, one can see what a challenge delivering the ETTT project has been, and why the beginning of the final stages of delivery carries with it the mixed emotions of achievement, finality, anticipation and relief. It is because of the ongoing effects of change and disruption endured by my constituents over such a long time that the opening of the Cheltenham station concourse is such a



significant and welcome milestone. I would like particularly to thank the project team of the ETTT for their assistance, advice and support, and for doing their best in delivering positive outcomes in the delivery of such a challenging project. I congratulate them on heading into the home stretch of what has been a difficult project, and I look forward to witnessing the replanting process begin and attending more milestones as the project is completed in the months to come, on schedule to finish in 2016.

### **MAROUBRA ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [6.23 p.m.]: Over the past 4½ years I have written more than 100 letters to various transport Ministers on behalf of the people of Botany and Banksmeadow about the 309 and 310 bus services to and from the city in relation to lateness, frequency and timetable issues. In response to each and every letter I have received a form letter from the transport Minister saying, "People of your electorate are wrong; there is nothing wrong with those bus services." The people of my electorate are not wrong; they know what they are talking about. But my pleas to the Minister have been ignored.

About five years ago, former transport Minister David Campbell was good enough to accede to my request to bring the M20 bus from Mascot to Botany. It was a hugely popular measure. I have asked this Government to extend that service a short distance, from Botany to Banksmeadow, and it has repeatedly said no to me and the residents of my area who have asked for this service for 4½ years. To add insult to injury, the people of Botany and Banksmeadow have been told that because of congestion in the central business district [CBD] due to the construction of the light rail, the 309 and 310 services will no longer terminate at Circular Quay but at Railway Square. On 17 July the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure put out a media release saying:

Buses in the city centre will operate predominantly along new priority routes on Elizabeth Street ... and will no longer operate on George Street.

The 309 and 310 services do not operate on George Street; they have always travelled to Circular Quay along Elizabeth Street. The Minister should leave those services running to Circular Quay on Elizabeth Street. There are many reasons for this. First, the people of Botany and Banksmeadow—indeed, people from all over my electorate—have only one means of public transport. There is no train line and they only have the option of using bus services. The people of Botany and Banksmeadow will not benefit from light rail because its route is nowhere near the electorate. These people are being told their bus service will no longer run to Circular Quay, so if that is their destination they will have to get on another bus and pay more or get on a train and pay more to get to their usual destination. In his media release the Minister is quoted as saying:

The new bus network will be simpler, connect well with other transport and offer new services.

No, for the people of Botany and Banksmeadow the new bus network will not be simpler. It will be more complicated as these people will have to change their mode of transport, unlike now. The new bus network will not connect well with other transport and offer new services to the people of Botany and Banksmeadow. The press release also says:

Most customers will be able to use a service that takes them close to their existing stop, while others may have to walk a little longer than normal to reach their usual destination.

Getting off at Central station and walking to the north of the city is not an option. I ask the Minister to reconsider this bus service change on behalf of the people of Botany and Banksmeadow. They will not benefit from the construction of the light rail. They have no other public transport mode to and from the city. They should not have to pay more to reach their destination because they have to change modes of transport. Their buses currently run along Elizabeth Street. On behalf of all the people of Botany and Banksmeadow I ask the Minister to reconsider this change. It is wrong and it should not be imposed on these people.



I have made many pleas to Premier Baird's transport Ministers on behalf of residents of my electorate and they have all fallen on deaf ears. If this plea is treated in the same way I ask the Minister at least to ensure that the people who use the 309 and 310 bus services, and who will be forced to get off at Railway Square, will not have to pay more to get to Circular Quay. Last week the NRMA said that during the construction of the light rail, and all the congestion and turmoil that will cause, train services within the city circle should be free. I agree. That is what I am asking the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure for today on behalf of the people of my electorate. But we will not hold our breath.

## **PRINCES HIGHWAY UPGRADE**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.28 p.m.]: I am delighted to advise the House that the Princes Highway upgrade at Gerringong was officially opened on Thursday 20 August 2015. Premier Mike Baird accepted my invitation to attend the official opening along with the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, Duncan Gay. I also thank the President of the Legislative Council, the Hon. Don Harwin, a South Coast resident and long-time campaigner for the Princes Highway upgrade, for attending. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight for his unwavering support for the upgrade of the Princes Highway.

He said on the occasion of the opening that he had two key performance indicators: finishing the project on time and overcoming my shyness. I say to the Minister in the other place that he is not without ambition but I think he should stick to building roads. I also acknowledge the contribution of a mentor and a friend, former Premier Barry O'Farrell. Without Mr O'Farrell's commitment, this project would not have happened. I have never forgotten him putting his hand on my shoulder at that February 2011 press conference and saying to the gathered media, "If he doesn't build it, don't vote for him." As he promised, we have delivered. Whenever Mr O'Farrell travels to the South Coast, he will be reminded of this important contribution to our community.

To officially open the project, Premier Baird and I, along with the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, removed a traffic cone each, which allowed the traffic to take up the full four lanes in each direction. With that one simple action, the mission was accomplished. Afterwards, the community was able to catch up with the Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] project team, including southern region manager Renae Elrington, to celebrate the highway opening. I acknowledge Ron de Rooy, Graham Birch, Debbie Blair, Renee Ridley and Carla Brookes, who provided outstanding communications to my electorate office during the project. I pay special tribute to RMS project director Adrian Rouse, who is a talented, hardworking and dedicated member of the New South Wales public service. Adrian will shortly be taking on the Albion Park Rail bypass project. I know that, in him, that important project will have not just a steward but also a great champion. I look forward to the completion of that project.

I acknowledge and sincerely thank the more than 100 residents from Gerringong, Gerroa, Werri Beach, Kiama and surrounding areas who attended the large community barbecue breakfast. In particular, I thank Pauline Thwaites, president of the Rotary Club of Gerringong Sunrise, and Bruce Ray, president of Gerringong Lions Club, along with all the Rotarians and Lions, for their dedication and hard work that made the event such a terrific and memorable community celebration. Too many people have lost their lives on this notoriously dangerous stretch of road. One of the main reasons I stood for State Parliament, to be a member of this place, was to fix the Princes Highway. I extend my thanks to residents across the region for their continued patience over the years that this important highway upgrade was carried out.

As members would be aware, there is much more to be done. Work to apply the final road surface will be carried out later this year, when the weather is warmer, to ensure the quality of the surface is not affected. General maintenance will be done until late 2015. Motorists accessing properties at the highway are advised to turn left in and left out and to use the temporary U-turn bay at Toolijooa Road and the new Belinda Street interchange. I acknowledge the work of the successful contractor, Fulton Hogan,



and its New South Wales General Manager, Industries, Paul DeBritt, on their dedication to this project after being awarded the tender. Fulton Hogan has also been awarded the tender for the Berry bypass project. I thank all the Fulton Hogan employees for the great job they have done on the Gerringong upgrade.

The project upgraded the Princes Highway between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road. The \$340 million project was 100 per cent funded by the New South Wales Government. The upgrade provides 7.5 kilometres of upgraded highway and includes two new interchanges, with access to Gerringong and Gerroa. The upgrade includes two lanes in each direction, with a median barrier and a 100 kilometres per hour speed limit in most sections. There is a new raised interchange at Belinda Street, with a service road connecting to Willowvale Road. There is also a new raised interchange at Rose Valley Road and a service road connecting to Fern Street. The upgrade has created a third lane for slow vehicles heading south from the Crooked River Bridge to the top of the Gerringong curves. A new bridge replaces the level crossing in Fern Street.

Further new measures include access roads in various locations to improve road safety for vehicles entering or leaving the highway. The upgrade provides improved flood immunity, meaning that the roads concerned, including Belinda Street, will be able to withstand a one in 100-year flood event. Two Moreton Bay fig trees at the Rose Valley interchange have been preserved. There is also a new bus facility at the Gerringong railway station. The project has not been without its controversy. I well remember the campaign fought by the PHASE Group to ensure that the design included service lanes, to better provide for the community. I commend the members of that group who took up the fight, which led to the delivery of the best possible highway upgrade. I also thank Darrell Clingan, chair of the South Precinct Committee and my representative on the traffic committee, for his stewardship and work with the community to facilitate community question and information sessions and to feed that back to me and to RMS. The South Precinct Committee played a critical role in the final design.

Any member who has seen major infrastructure projects constructed in their electorate is proud of those successes. I thank everybody involved in the upgrade project. I save my final thanks for members of the Gerringong community. They have had to contend with roadworks and construction. It has not always been easy, especially for those whose property was acquired. There was also an imposition on people travelling in the town. But there is no doubt that we experienced short-term pain for what, I am sure, will be long-term gain. I look forward to future projects: the Albion Park Rail bypass, the Berry bypass and the other exciting infrastructure projects in the Illawarra and the Shoalhaven. I will continue to fight hard for funding for the Princes Highway in the electorate of Kiama.

### **WORLD HEPATITIS DAY**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [6.33 p.m.]: On Saturday 15 July 2015 I attended the campaign launch for World Hepatitis Day at the Vietnamese Community Cultural Centre at Bonnyrigg, in my electorate of Cabramatta. The aim of the campaign was to encourage all Vietnamese men in south-west Sydney to be tested for hepatitis B. The event was titled "Hepatitis B and liver cancer: breaking the cycle with Vietnamese men in South Western Sydney". It alluded to the fact that Vietnamese men, in many cases, refuse to be checked for hepatitis B by a general practitioner or specialist. I take this opportunity to thank Dr Tri Pham, who invited me to the launch. Dr Pham has long been an advocate for generating awareness about the prevalence, cause and treatment of hepatitis B. If left untreated, hepatitis B can lead to liver cancer. Dr Pham holds serious concerns about the increase in hepatitis B cases among Vietnamese men.

My electorate of Cabramatta boasts a large Vietnamese community. It deeply concerns me that this infectious disease is not being taken seriously by that community. At the launch I had the opportunity to encourage everyone, particularly Vietnamese men, to get checked for this deadly virus that can have terrible consequences. Research has shown that those born in Vietnam or other parts of South-East Asia are at a greater risk of contracting hepatitis B than those born elsewhere. Hepatitis B is seen as a silent



killer, as many people who are infected show no signs of any symptoms. In south-west Sydney the rate of men tested for hepatitis B is much lower than the rate for women. Hepatitis B is a communicable disease. It can be transmitted from one person to another via bodily fluids, mainly blood. Adding to the seriousness of this disease, if a mother is found to be infected with hepatitis B, her newborn baby is at risk of contracting the virus. People fear that a positive diagnosis will cause them to be shunned by family and friends. That is why Vietnamese people and people from other South-East Asian communities refuse to be tested for hepatitis B.

The experiences of hepatitis B sufferers are also distressing for friends, families and loved ones. A friend of mine who was not Vietnamese passed away three years ago from liver cancer caused by hepatitis B. I spoke about him at the Vietnamese function. Three years before my friend passed away, he had a brain aneurysm. When he had an operation to repair the aneurysm, the doctors did not test him for hepatitis B. Another friend of mine, who is a doctor, said that if he had been tested for hepatitis B at the time of the operation, the disease could have been treated and he would be alive today. Six months after my friend passed away, his oldest son, whose wedding he had been able to attend, had a son. My friend never saw his grandson and the little boy never knew his grandfather. The sad thing is that a blood test three years earlier could have saved him.

Following my friend's diagnosis I thought, "If it can happen to him it can happen to me," so I had the blood test. In most cases the test is free and one can quickly find out if one has hepatitis B. My test was negative. I was clear. I was relieved to know that I did not have hepatitis B. I pointed out to the Vietnamese men at the campaign launch that I did not feel ashamed to have the test and that, if I had been diagnosed with the disease, my friends would have reacted positively. They would have said, "It is good that you were tested and can be treated. You will live a healthier life." I encourage not only Vietnamese men but all Asian men to have this hepatitis B test because any other option is not an option. I thank Dr Tri Pham for his kind invitation to me to be at this very important event. Hopefully, Vietnamese men and Asian men generally will take notice and get tested for hepatitis B.

### **CONCORD CANCER CENTRE HAEMATOLOGY CLINICAL RESEARCH UNIT**

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.38 p.m.]: This evening I inform the House of the groundbreaking work being carried out at the Haematology Clinical Research Unit at the Concord Cancer Centre. It is the largest clinical research unit for blood cancers in New South Wales and provides enormous support for the local as well as the wider community that it services. More than 300 cancer patients have participated in the research conducted at the unit and they have benefitted greatly from accessing many new treatments. But there are still many more cancer patients who need support.

It is essential that the Government provide greater funding to support the work of this unit, which currently relies on the generosity of the local community for most of its funding. I remind members that I am talking about a unit that is leading the world in blood cancer research. It conducts world-leading clinical trials to access and to develop innovative therapies for leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and other blood disorders. One of this year's fundraising activities will be a visit by one of the world's leading experts in blood cancer care and research, Professor Massimo Federico from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy. Professor Federico will visit Sydney in October and will lend his support to blood cancer research at Concord Hospital.

Professor Federico will visit the Concord Cancer Centre where he will conduct an open patient education forum on treatments for lymphoma. He will also be guest of honour at a fundraising dinner supporting the world-leading blood cancer research. Funds raised will contribute to the research undertaken at the Concord Cancer Centre. Funds will also go towards an additional clinical research nurse at the centre, which will help a further 15 patients with life-threatening blood cancers to participate in clinical research and to access innovative treatments that would normally cost more than \$1 million. I place on record the importance of the work carried out at the Concord Cancer Centre and that I will continue to lobby the Government to invest further in its funding.



## GREAT LAKES WOMEN'S SHELTER

### PALLIATIVE CARE TAREE

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [6.43 p.m.]: I inform the House about two extremely important causes in the Myall Lakes electorate: the Great Lakes Women's Shelter and Palliative Care Taree. I will first talk about the Great Lakes Women's Shelter. There is no women's shelter in the Forster Tuncurry area and there is a tremendous need for one. Immediately after the election I spoke to the Minister for Family and Community Services and members of the department. Following those discussions, I had a meeting with Annabelle Daniel, the chief executive officer of Women's Community Shelters, to discuss what her cause does and what she has set up in Hornsby, and to see whether such a shelter would be suitable for Forster Tuncurry.

I was extremely impressed with what her organisation was doing. Women's Community Shelters uses a three-party funding model involving community, business and government to establish women's shelters that provide short-term emergency accommodation for up to three months and support in a safe, comfortable and secure environment. Having worked previously as a nurse, a police officer and a solicitor and having worked with many victims of crime and victims of domestic violence, I could recognise the great benefits of such an organisation.

Currently, emergency accommodation in Taree is provided by the Samaritans, but more help is needed. I organised a meeting of stakeholders in my office, which included three members of the Department of Family and Community Services; Jan Irvine, a community representative; Senior Constable Lachlan Gunn, Domestic Violence Liaison Officer; Jan McWilliams, mayor of Great Lakes Council; Annabelle Daniel; Lynn Graham, director of the Samaritans; Louise Webber, Domestic Violence Coordinator; Trish Wallace, manager of the Forster Neighbourhood Centre; and Julie Brady, president of the Forster Neighbourhood Centre. We discussed the collaboration of services; enhancement of current services; community funding, cooperation, coordination and consultation; and where to from here.

The neighbourhood centre, which is driving this forward, was very thankful for that stakeholder meeting and it is asking for \$15,000. Its fundraising goal is \$125,000. It has raised \$90,000 in only a few months and has a further \$20,000 in pledges; so it is \$15,000 short of its target. If it can get that money the women's shelter can be up and running because two houses have been donated and will be rent-free for three to five years—only the outgoings will need to be paid. I am asking the Minister to come forward with \$15,000 to get that going. At the same time, Taree desperately needs enhanced palliative care. I have met with Yvonne McAlister several times—she is a tremendous advocate for palliative care—and I have also spoken to Judy Hollingworth, who wanted a community driven program to enhance the palliative care that is already provided in Taree.

They want to improve the quality of life for those in the Manning Valley affected by incurable illnesses. I told them the money that we raise from the two seniors concerts that will be run in Taree next year will go to palliative care. Their aim is to raise community awareness of palliative care and they plan to lobby for a better range of dedicated palliative resources for the area. They will fundraise so that they can provide financial and practical solutions for the incurably ill and their carers to enable them to stay at home. Their aim is to pick up the cost gap for people who cannot afford the right medication once they leave hospital, to provide emergency relief for carers when they flag, and to loan equipment to make in-home care easier. At the end-of-life stage sometimes that assistance is needed immediately and there is no time to wait for government funding.

They need \$15,000 to be able to achieve those aims. I am asking the Minister to provide that money to help with palliative and hospice care. A community group is already providing support in Forster, but it is not happening in Taree. We have tremendous nurses and the hospital is doing a fantastic job, but more is needed. More services, more volunteers and other people trained to help families and



those people at that stage of their life are needed. I am therefore asking the Minister for \$15,000 to get that service up and running.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.44 p.m.]: I commend the member for Myall Lakes, who is a great member who is always fighting for his electorate. He has been a nurse, a policeman and a lawyer, and he seems to do the work of three members of Parliament. He is certainly one of the most active members on the floor of this Parliament. He has highlighted today the Great Lakes Women's Shelter and enhanced palliative care in Taree. He is obviously strongly supporting those lobbying for increased resources and awareness in those areas. I wish him well and I certainly support his call for increased funding. I expect that the Government will seriously consider the worthy causes that he has admirably highlighted for the Parliament tonight.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.45 p.m. until  
Tuesday 15 September 2015 at 12 noon.**

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