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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 17 September 2015

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments.

Consideration of Legislative Council's amendments set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

DAMS SAFETY BILL 2015

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

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to Section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of a Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled "Albert 'Tibby' Cotter Walkway: Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services", dated September 2015, received this day and authorised to be printed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments

Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 16 September 2015

No. 1 Government No. 1 [c2015-073D]

Page 13, Schedule 2. Insert after line 26:

[16] Section 15 Assessment of applicants and holders

Insert after section 15 (4):

- (4A) The Children's Guardian must not determine that an applicant does not pose a risk to the safety of children unless the Children's Guardian is satisfied that:

- (a) a reasonable person would allow his or her child to have direct contact with the applicant that was not directly supervised by another person while the applicant was engaged in any child-related work, and
- (b) it is in the public interest to make the determination.

No. 2 Government No. 2 [c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29], line 31. Insert "and the person is a person who satisfies subsection (2)" after "adult".

No. 3 Government No. 3 [c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29], line 33. Insert "61B, 61C, 61D, 61E, 61F," after "section".

No. 4 Government No. 4 [c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29], line 33. Omit "or 80A". Insert instead ", 61K, 61L, 61M, 61N, 61O, 61P, 63, 65A, 66, 66F, 76, 78A, 78B, 80A, 80D, 80E or 81".

No. 5 Government No. 5 [c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29]. Insert after line 35:

- (iii) the common law offence of rape, if the person against whom the offence was committed was a child,

No. 6 Government No. 6 [c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29], line 36. Omit "or 66EA". Insert instead ", 66B, 66C, 66D, 66EA or 66EB".

No. 7 Government No. 7 [c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29], line 37. Insert ", 68, 71, 72, 72A, 73, 74 or 76A" after "section 67".

No. 8 Government No. 8 c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29], line 38. Insert ", 78I, 78K, 78L, 78M, 78N, 78O or 78Q" after "section 78H".

No. 9 Government No. 9 [c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29]. Insert after line 38:

- (vi) an offence against section 91D, 91E or 91F of the *Crimes Act 1900*,
- (vii) an offence against section 91G, 91H, 578B or 578C (2A) of the *Crimes Act 1900*,

No. 10 Government No. 10 [c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29], line 39. Insert "272.8," before "272.10".

No. 11 Government No. 11 [c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29]. Insert after line 41:

- (vii) an offence against section 272.9, 272.10 (if it relates to an underlying offence against section 272.9), 272.11, 272.12, 272.13, 272.14 or 272.15 of the *Criminal Code* of the Commonwealth,

No. 12 Government No. 12 [c2015-073D]

Page 15, Schedule 2 [29]. Insert after line 45:

- (viii) an offence against section 273.5, 273.6, 273.7, 471.16, 471.17, 471.19, 471.20, 471.22, 471.24, 471.25, 474.19, 474.20, 474.22, 474.23, 474.24A, 474.25A, 474.25B, 474.26 or 474.27 of the *Criminal Code* of the Commonwealth,
- (ix) an offence against section 233BAB of the *Customs Act 1901* of the Commonwealth involving items of child pornography or of child abuse material,

No. 13 Government No. 13 [c2015-073D]

Page 16, Schedule 2 [29], line 8. Insert "and the person is a person who satisfies subsection (2)" after "paragraph (a)".

No. 14 Government No. 14 [c2015-073D]

Page 16, Schedule 2 [29]. Insert after line 12:

- (2) A person convicted of an offence specified in subsection (1) satisfies this subsection if:
 - (a) the person received a sentence of full time custody for the offence, or
 - (b) any of the following orders was imposed on the person in respect of the offence and the order is in force:
 - (i) a home detention order, intensive correction order or community service order under the *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999*, a good behaviour order under section 9 of that Act or an order under section 12 of that Act,
 - (ii) a conditional release order or recognizance release order under section 20 of the *Crimes Act 1914* of the Commonwealth, or
 - (c) a prohibition order under the *Child Protection (Offenders*

Prohibition Orders) Act 2004 is in force against the person.

No. 15 **Government No. 15 [c2015-073D]**

Page 16, Schedule 2. Insert after line 14:

[30] Section 30 Determination of applications and other matters

Insert after section 30 (1):

- (1A) The Tribunal may not make an order under this Part which has the effect of enabling a person (the ***affected person***) to work with children in accordance with this Act unless the Tribunal is satisfied that:
- (a) a reasonable person would allow his or her child to have direct contact with the affected person that was not directly supervised by another person while the affected person was engaged in any child-related work, and
 - (b) it is in the public interest to make the order.

No. 16 **Government No. 16 [c2015-073D]**

Page 16, Schedule 2. Insert after line 41:

[35] Section 42A

Insert after section 42:

42A Expert advisory panel

- (1) The Children's Guardian may appoint an expert advisory panel to provide advice to the Children's Guardian about matters relating to offenders for the purposes of assisting the Children's Guardian in carrying out risk assessments and exercising functions under this Act.
- (2) The advice provided is not to relate to particular individuals.
- (3) The Children's Guardian may make advice provided by the expert advisory panel available to the Tribunal, on the initiative of the Children's Guardian or at the request of the Tribunal.
- (4) The Children's Guardian and the Tribunal may, when exercising functions under this Act, consider any advice provided by the expert advisory panel.
- (5) The terms of the appointment and any remuneration of members of the expert advisory panel are to be determined by the Children's Guardian and must be approved by the Minister.

No. 17 **Government No. 17 [c2015-073D]**

Page 19, Schedule 2 [43]. Insert after line 3:

16 Matters for consideration

Sections 15 and 30, as amended by the amending Act, do not apply to an application that was made before the amendment of the section concerned.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [10.11 a.m.]: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendments.

Various amendments to the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 were dealt with in the Legislative Council. The Government, obviously, does not oppose the amendments; they were moved by the Government. I think it is fair to say it was a very good debate, with good discussion. Each of the members who contributed spoke genuinely to the issues of child protection. It is pleasing that on occasions we can have in this Parliament debates that rise above the political affray. I want to say a few words about the amendments.

Amendment No. 1 introduces a reasonable person and public interest test so that Working With Children Check clearances will be granted by the Children's Guardian only if she is satisfied that: first, a reasonable person would allow his or her child to have direct contact with the applicant that was not directly supervised by another person while the applicant was engaged in any type of child-related work; and, secondly, granted the clearance is in the public interest. The rationale is that this amendment will ensure that the Children's Guardian's decisions are in the public interest and reflect the community's expectations. The test is modelled on the Victorian Working with Children Act 2005.

Amendments Nos 2 to 14 inclusive remove the right to appeal to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] for a Working With Children Check clearance for people convicted as adults of one of the following categories of offences, each one of which is a very serious offence: murder, indecent or sexual assault of a child, child pornography-related offences, and incest where the victim is a child. Where persons received a sentence of full-time custody for the conviction, they will be permanently excluded from appealing. Where the person, by virtue of that conviction, is subject to an order that imposes any control on the person's conduct or movement, or excludes the person from working with children, he or she also will be excluded from appealing for the duration of that order.

The rationale for those changes clearly was the concerns held by the community about the protection of our children. Some of those concerns were highlighted in the media a few months ago. It is unusual to thank journalists, but I do thank the journalists for raising some of those concerns. Obviously, the concerns, more broadly, were about Working With Children Check clearances being granted by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to people that the community expects should never be able to work with children because of the seriousness of their past offending. That was what brought this whole issue to a head.

As a former Attorney General, I put on record that the NCAT was doing what the NCAT should do within the confines of the law that it was given by the Parliament. Certainly, there is no reflection on the members of NCAT themselves; but it is incumbent upon this Parliament, on behalf of the community, to make clear what we want; and what we want is a common-sense approach to ensuring that our children are kept safe. The Government thinks that these amendments reflect the community's concerns; and members on both sides in the upper House endorsed the amendments. The proposed amendments also implement the approach recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse in its Working With Children Checks report. The duration of the period during which a person cannot appeal to NCAT for a Working With Children Check clearance clearly will be linked to the seriousness of the sentence he or she received.

I turn now to comment briefly on amendment No. 15. This introduces a reasonable person and public interest test so that NCAT can grant enabling orders only if the tribunal is satisfied that: first, a reasonable person would allow his or her child to have direct contact with the applicant that was not directly supervised by another person while the applicant was engaged in any type of child-related work; and, secondly, granting the clearance is in the public interest. If NCAT were not to apply that principle, that would be an error of law, and, as members would be aware, there are rights of appeal to the Supreme Court. Those rights are not often relied upon, but that appeal process to the Supreme Court provides a final check.

Amendment No. 16 relates to the Expert Advisory Group. This amendment allows the Children's Guardian to appoint an Expert Advisory Group, and enables the Children's Guardian and NCAT to consider the advisory group's advice in assessing applications for Working With Children Check clearances. This group will provide the Children's Guardian with the additional assistance of specialist guidance to assist in assessing whether an applicant for a Working With Children Check clearance poses a risk to children—children that this Parliament obviously wants to safeguard. The experts, which will include specialists such as forensic psychologists, psychiatrists, mental health experts and criminologists, will bring a good and broad dimension to the information that will be available to the Children's Guardian in making decisions about particular types of offenders, and what additional matters ought to be considered in assessing whether an applicant is a risk to children.

I thank all members in relation to this matter. It was a difficult one. Obviously, we progressively learn more about how best to keep our children safe. All members—first of all Government members but also members of the Labor Opposition, The Greens and other Independents—contributed to this issue being resolved very well and in the interests of children. It is a good case study of how to introduce legislation in this place in response to community concerns, allow it to be considered over a reasonable period, and engage and listen to members from all quarters. I thank the staff in my ministerial office, in particular Dara Read, who had carriage of the legislation in my office, working with Emma Gittoes and my chief of staff, Kath McFarlane. They did a really good job. Many of the members who engaged with Dara would have found that she was fair and reasonable in her approach and in listening to their concerns.

I thank in particular the Children's Guardian, Kerryn Boland. The Children's Guardian was happy to have discussions—which Dara was happy to arrange—with members who wanted to address particular concerns. All round it is a good piece of legislation, introduced as a result of community concerns and the media highlighting community concerns. I thank members in this place, the Children's Guardian, my staff and staff at the Department of Family and Community Services who did an excellent job supporting us and enabling us to achieve what we needed to achieve to ensure that our children are as safe as they can be. I commend the amendments to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendments agreed to.

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

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PUBLIC
HOUSING—ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR) BILL 2015**

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 September 2015.

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [10.21 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the Residential

Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015, which aims to make social housing a much safer place for the many vulnerable people who live in it and to address antisocial, illegal and fraudulent behaviour. Antisocial and criminal behaviour has been a challenge for the social housing system, as identified by the Public Accounts Committee in 2014. The primary goal of this bill is to improve the behaviour of a minority of tenants engaging in antisocial, illegal and fraudulent behaviour and, importantly, to create safer communities for the majority of law-abiding tenants, including those who are ageing and vulnerable. The proposals are an election commitment as well as a key element of the Government's reform of social housing.

In speaking to this bill, I will highlight why it is important to improve the social housing system to protect law-abiding residents and to focus on those who do the wrong thing and who demonstrate complete disregard for their neighbours and society's expectations of our fellow citizens. In my electorate, as in all others, the vast majority of people are doing the right thing most of the time. The community generally believes that too often laws are made that support minorities. It is clear that with this bill the Government is proposing to enact laws that support the majority.

Unfortunately, we also have a small minority of people who feel it is somehow acceptable to run illegal businesses such as drug dealing and manufacture. Additionally, police in the Hunter Valley Local Area Command tell me statistics show that in one area in Muswellbrook criminal activity is 435 per cent higher than in other parts of the town, with break and enter, malicious damage and domestic violence comprising the significant majority of reported criminal activity. I recently spoke with a police officer about the local statistics. His comment to me when I told him what the bill was proposing was as follows:

It is about time. We are wasting time and public money and getting nowhere.

When compared to other areas in the same town, these figures are quite alarming. People flout community expectations and taxpayer support for appropriate housing and are frightening for local residents who simply want to have a good life and bring up their children in a safe, happy and supportive environment regardless of whether they are in social housing. Importantly, we know that only a minority of people are causing the problem. We must focus our efforts on weeding out those people in order to provide a safe and secure environment for the majority. I grew up in a Housing Commission home in Lalor Park. I spent my first 15 years there and have never forgotten the caring nature of the majority of people in that community.

I have great memories of a childhood where people looked out for each other, supported each other and shared experiences in a productive and fun way. My parents knew that I could play in the parks, visit my friends and neighbours and spend all my time outside in the knowledge that I was safe and I was not exposed to undue influences. So I can relate to the frustrations of the majority. Although one aspect is not part of the bill as it does not require legislation, Family and Community Services [FACS] will also introduce a policy of probationary tenancies for new tenants who would otherwise be given five-year or 10-year leases. This will provide new tenants with the time they need to demonstrate that they can meet their tenancy obligations before securing longer leases.

The bill seeks to amend the Residential Tenancies Act and the Housing Act to introduce a one strike policy that will require the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] to make a termination order for breach of a social housing tenancy agreement where an occupant has been charged with illegally storing firearms or show cause offences under the Bail Act, particularly drug supply or manufacturing and violence involving grievous bodily harm; require the NCAT to terminate a social housing tenancy in certain other serious cases, unless there are exceptional circumstances; introduce a three strikes policy to deal with repeated low-level antisocial behaviour by recording strikes against tenants for breaches of social housing tenancies and where three strikes occur within a 12-month period to seek a termination order.

The bill also seeks to introduce neighbourhood impact statements to assist the NCAT to

understand the effect that antisocial or illegal behaviour has had on neighbouring residents and other persons; reinstate the previous arrangement overturned by a recent NCAT decision that, where a tenant has fraudulently claimed a rent subsidy, the debt arising is treated as rent arrears and not a separate civil debt, as this makes it easier to recoup the money; limit the period within which an order for possession of social housing premises is to take effect to 28 days, except in exceptional circumstances; ensure that the actual cost of damage caused by tenants is recouped; provide FACS with powers similar to those given to other agencies to gather information for the purposes of investigating fraudulent claims for rental subsidies; and extend the prosecution period to 12 months following detection of rental fraud.

One of those points is aimed at ensuring that the actual cost of damage caused by the tenants is recouped. Let us put this into some perspective. In the 2013-14 financial year \$10.5 million worth of tenant damage was paid for by New South Wales taxpayers. That \$10.5 million could have provided many more homes and safer housing for a lot of decent people. In the Hunter-New England area more than \$1.8 million was spent on repairing tenancy damage which had nothing to do with maintenance or anything else—just wilful damage essentially caused by people who, unfortunately, are antisocial and who could not give two hoots about their neighbours or their friends.

Society says enough is enough when we talk about those who do not care for others. It is time that we said enough is enough to those who blatantly treat our neighbours, friends and families with disrespect. We will support those in need, but we will not tolerate the behaviour of those in our communities whom we find unacceptable and downright dangerous to our wellbeing. As I said earlier, my first 15 years were spent growing up in Lalor Park. My parents knew I was in a safe environment among caring people. It was a sign of the times. My parents and neighbours knew that we kids could play in the parks and socialise without being in danger or subjected to undue influence. Everyone deserves to live in a harmonious environment. We must weed out those who are abusing our rights and privileges. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) [10.30 a.m.]: The Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015 proposes that various amendments be made to the Residential Tenancies Act. Labor supports the bill in principle, but with some amendments. It will enable social housing providers to terminate tenancies in response to antisocial behaviour and other incidents where appropriate. I commend the many members who have spoken constructively on the bill, and they have raised some legitimate points. The member for Upper Hunter highlighted some key factors. Antisocial behaviour must be addressed and legislation must provide authorities with the power to hold those responsible to account. People who live in public housing areas are entitled to lead an enjoyable life without being impacted by a minority who do not abide by the law. We must focus on the crucial areas when we talk about these matters; our attention must be directed to the minority who are causing the problem. The majority of people who live in public housing are good citizens who look after their homes appropriately.

I mentioned in my inaugural speech a young lady I met when I was doorknocking in Claymore in the Campbelltown electorate. She invited me into her house to show me the maintenance problems, and it was evident that the house was in need of immediate repair. She was a well-presented single mum with two children, the eldest of whom is autistic. The following Monday I rang Housing NSW and, to its credit, the issues were addressed and the young lady and her children were moved to more appropriate accommodation. What she said stayed with me. She told me that her parents had passed away and she had no family in Sydney. Her only option was to live in public housing. However, she said she would rather live in a place that needs repair than in a mansion with a husband who enjoyed beating her up every second night of the week. Many similar stories could be told, but because they are private they are not. This lady's story was about someone who needed public housing and it highlighted to me the importance of considering each circumstance on its merits.

The amendments in the bill will allow the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to maintain its discretion not to terminate a social housing tenancy if the individual accused of antisocial behaviour is an

occupant or joint occupant who has been charged with a one strike offence under proposed section 154D. This is an appropriate amendment because the focus is on specific perpetrators. In certain circumstances the tribunal should retain its discretion to ensure that vulnerable tenants such as victims of domestic violence, children or the disabled are protected from mandatory eviction from their social housing accommodation. That provision is consistent with community understanding and it is important that it is reflected in the bill.

Returning to the Campbelltown electorate, 97 per cent of residences in Claymore are social housing and 1,500 residences in Airds are social housing. Thirty per cent of housing will be social housing as part of the Airds Bradbury Renewal Project. This legislation will allow the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to evict any social housing tenant charged with one strike offences. The Opposition's amendments will allow the tribunal to use its discretion not to evict in exceptional circumstances. It is important to have those provisions in the legislation. Crime statistics indicate that breaking and entering is approximately 40 per cent higher in Airds and Claymore than the New South Wales average, property damage is approximately 30 per cent higher, and motor vehicle theft is approximately 40 per cent higher.

We need to have certain measures in place to address those issues. Labor is supporting the bill to ensure that those measures are in place and so that the appropriate authorities have the necessary powers to take action. There are 6,100 Housing NSW residences in the Campbelltown local government area, which represents 7 per cent of all public housing in New South Wales. More than 220,000 people are now waiting for social housing in Australia. The waiting list has increased by almost 10 per cent since 2008. A 2008 research paper from the Griffith University named Claymore as the most disadvantaged community in Australia. The ABC recently reported that those figures indicate that it is second only to Wilcannia.

The 2011 census shows that the average Claymore wage is less than half the average wage in the greater Campbelltown area. These are the social issues confronting our community. Therefore, it is important that we have measures in place so that the relevant authorities can take action. The member for Upper Hunter made some valid points about focusing on the issue. I have fond memories of growing up in a public housing area in Central West New South Wales. I could not have asked for a better place in which to be brought up, and I am sure my two brothers would agree. However, I am also mindful of the issues that confront those communities.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Where in the Central West?

Mr GREG WARREN: In Dubbo. I had a great upbringing living in a wonderful community. However, I am aware that some individuals take public assets for granted and they may be damaged as a result of their antisocial behaviour. We must remember that those tenants pay rent. I am saddened when the media or politicians of all persuasions use public housing as a political battering ram. Generally speaking, the vast majority of social housing tenants are good people and they need support. The bill, with amendments, will provide those families with support so that they can live in a safe and secure community alongside their neighbours. I thank the House for its indulgence.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) [10.38 a.m.]: I support the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. I acknowledge that the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Social Housing is present the Chamber and I thank him for his work on the bill. I welcome this bill, which aims to make social housing safer for many vulnerable people and to address the management of antisocial, illegal and fraudulent behaviour. All members are well and truly aware of the challenges facing social housing tenants and the importance of having a safe and secure home where there is no fear of danger or violence.

In the past four years I have met with many different people who, for a multitude of reasons, have ended up in social housing. Many are simply grateful to have a roof over their heads and somewhere for

their families to live. Unfortunately, I am also aware of a minority of tenants who bring antisocial elements with them and who make life difficult for their neighbours. The primary goal of this bill is to improve the behaviour of that minority of tenants engaging in antisocial, illegal and fraudulent behaviour. Furthermore, the bill will provide better protections for tenants who are doing the right thing—particularly those most vulnerable, such as the aged or those with young children. I have heard firsthand stories of social housing tenants who are afraid to leave their homes for fear of coming into contact with neighbours who are prone to violent or illegal behaviour. In one particular case, residents were scared to access the complex car park because someone had set up a makeshift home in one of the parking spaces and was regularly intimidating other neighbours.

There was also a father who was concerned about the repeated domestic disputes of a neighbour—involving yelling and furniture and other belongings being hurled over the balcony at all hours—and the effect it was having on his young son. Regardless of the reason a person needs social housing, they still deserve to feel safe in their home. That is why I support the measures in this bill that will help to deal with troublesome tenants. This bill will introduce a one strike policy that will require the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] to make a termination order for breaching an existing social housing tenancy agreement—for example, if the tenant is found to be illegally storing firearms, or supplying or manufacturing drugs, or threatening violence to other tenants. This measure demonstrates that this behaviour will no longer be tolerated and that swift action can now be taken. In serious cases, NCAT will have the power to terminate a social housing tenancy.

Once tenants who repeatedly commit low-level antisocial behaviour have three strikes recorded against their name within a 12-month period, action can be taken in the tribunal to terminate the tenancy. The three strike policy is designed to act as a warning system for those at risk of losing their tenancy. Hopefully it will encourage them to modify their behaviour so that they can maintain the tenancy. Tenants will also have the right to appeal the decision through an independent review panel when they receive their first or second strikes. On the third strike, a tenant will have the chance to put their case to the tribunal. I take this opportunity to reassure the House that this bill is not designed to put our most vulnerable back on the streets. That is never a first resort when dealing with difficult tenants. Children, elderly residents and those already facing a number of challenges in life also deserve to be protected.

Fear of retribution or other untoward behaviour makes it difficult to have supporting evidence heard by the tribunal. In response, the Government has introduced neighbourhood impact statements, which can be considered by the tribunal once a breach has been proven. It is a confidential process, where neighbours can speak to a Family and Community Services officer to provide a statement about the situation they are experiencing. That will make it easier for tenants to make statements about offending neighbours. It is important that the cost of repairing any malicious damage done during a tenancy be charged to the tenant rather than leaving the State Government to cover the cost. In 2013-14, the cost of repairing tenant damage in south-western Sydney totalled more than \$1.8 million.

This policy is in line with a standard agreement in the private rental sector, and it makes sense that it is the responsibility of the tenant to pay for any damage they have done to property. Tenants will still be able to dispute those costs and whether they are truly liable for the damage. This bill demonstrates that the Government is listening to our tenants and our communities. It also demonstrates that this Government is committed to improving the quality of life for people living in social housing. Social housing should not be a dumping ground for people who indulge in antisocial and criminal behaviour, especially at the expense of the majority of responsible and law-abiding tenants. I thank the Minister again for his work in developing this bill and commend it to the House.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) [10.43 a.m.]: The Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015 proposes various amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and the Housing Act 2001 to enable social housing providers to terminate a social housing tenancy for antisocial behaviour and for other purposes. My electorate of Mount Druitt has the highest concentration of social housing properties in the State, with more than 8,000

properties. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of representations I make relate to social housing. Whilst the Opposition does not oppose this bill, because it believes that law-abiding residents need to live in a safe and secure environment, it will move some amendments designed to protect innocent and vulnerable parties who could be the subject of unnecessary eviction. For example, if one member of a family deserves to be evicted having committed offences listed in this bill, the entire family—including the good tenants—may also be evicted.

There should not be a one-size-fits-all solution, which could result in good tenants facing eviction due to the actions—unknown to other family members—of another member of the household. I have no problems with the bill's intention to evict tenants who commit an offence and who should be evicted. However, it does not address the core issues facing Housing NSW tenants. According to information I have obtained from Housing NSW, the majority of evictions that occur in the Mount Druitt area are the result of rent arrears; that is, the tenant is not able to meet the conditions of the payment agreement. The second most frequent reason for eviction is a conviction for a serious crime. That type of eviction is consistent with the one strike provisions introduced in this bill. The third most frequent reason for eviction is fraudulently obtaining a Housing NSW property.

It is recognised that antisocial behaviour, particularly between neighbours, is a major concern in my electorate. Housing NSW normally resolves the situation by relocating the victims rather than dealing with the root cause of the problem. I recently received a request for help from a constituent seeking to be relocated to another housing property because she had been the subject of abuse and assaults by a neighbour, having her house egged and her car maliciously damaged. The situation had been going on for five years, yet instead of trying to address the cause of this antisocial behaviour, after five long years the department found it easier simply to relocate the victim. In not addressing the root cause of this type of behaviour, the Government has failed in its duty of care because the problem persists for the neighbour. Under this bill, the offender may be evicted, which is a good result for the innocent party.

However, have we resolved the social problem or have we simply shifted it somewhere else or even created a bigger problem? Evicting an offender to nowhere will probably create an out-of-control, homeless offender, who may cause more damage to society. The point I am making is that eviction should not be the only solution. The Government needs to address the root cause of the antisocial behaviour and not shift the problem from one neighbourhood to another. A recent research paper produced by the University of Technology Sydney entitled, *Research, Development and Innovation: The case of social housing in Mt Druitt, NSW* contains a very interesting analysis of the cause of social problems. The paper states:

Mt Druitt housing estates were built in the 1960s and, at the time of their construction, were the largest ever built, with capacity to house 32,000 people in 8000 dwellings.

The design of Mount Druitt's housing estates was based on the American Radburn model, the main features of which include aligning houses with the rear facing the street while the front faces communal areas. It also incorporates in the urban layout a network of laneways for bicycle and pedestrian use. Radburn planning and design principles were developed under the assumption that people would behave in a predetermined way. These designs assumed that people would want to share open spaces and that this would stimulate a sense of community and belonging. However, when combined with low urban density on the outskirts of cities and poor connection to major community facilities, these housing estates have isolated communities and have had negative impacts.

Mr Brad Hazzard: It was good in theory.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: It was good in theory, but not in practice. Radburn designs not only are unresponsive to people's needs but also generate further needs. Literature on social housing shows consensus on house-disadvantaged communities and poorly designed neighbourhoods having cumulative social problems. The point I make is that we need to invest in addressing the core issues that

create antisocial behaviour rather than simply shift the problem elsewhere by making eviction the only solution. According to Housing NSW, 50 per cent of social housing occupants are under 25 years of age and approximately 50 per cent are single-parent families. The unemployment rate among social housing tenants in Mount Druitt is between 29 per cent and 35 per cent. There also is low educational attainment, with 12 per cent to 17 per cent completing year 12 or equivalent. They are the real issues that need to be addressed.

The Government should become proactive in addressing those social problems. If those issues were addressed, we may not need this bill at all. It is for this reason that I have called on the State Government to address the intergenerational poverty that exists in my electorate by investing in education. Closing down TAFE courses in Mount Druitt will not assist in addressing those core issues. The Government needs to invest in programs that will assist the most vulnerable people in the Mount Druitt community to get them out of the cycle that is leading them to despair, which in turn leads them to resort to antisocial behaviour. To ameliorate the effect of the bill potentially targeting innocent bystanders, the shadow Minister has introduced a number of amendments to assist the Government by ensuring that the protection of innocent people is maintained.

Mr Brad Hazzard: She has not yet. She has not introduced them yet. She is going to introduce them. I have not seen them.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA: I hope the Minister will address those amendments during his reply. I support this bill because I believe that people who live in social housing have a fundamental right to feel safe in their homes and to enjoy an environment that is free from antisocial and criminal behaviour. While this bill goes some of the way towards achieving that outcome, it does not extend far enough to address the core issues that I have outlined. I thank the House for allowing me to make this contribution.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [10.52 a.m.]: My contribution to debate on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015 will be brief. Like many other members, I have a large public housing estate in my electorate, Bellambi, with which the Minister is very familiar. I acknowledge that the Minister has worked with local housing officials and the Illawarra Housing Trust on a number of issues in my electorate, for which I thank him. Just as we do not tolerate bad behaviour in private dwellings, no-one should ever tolerate bad behaviour in public housing properties. Men and women have a right to enjoy peace and quietness, regardless of whether they live in social housing or in private dwellings. It will be a sad day if any member of Parliament resists that proposition and reduces the right to peace and quiet of the vast majority of people who live in public housing.

The Department of Family and Community Services [FACS] runs a program in Bellambi which has demonstrated merit and which could be implemented in many electorates in New South Wales. Natasha Scully in the Department of Family and Community Services is running a collective information program to bring the community together and to examine all the pieces of the puzzle to ascertain why Bellambi is so very disadvantaged, as evidenced by statistics published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] and other organisations. The program is about real actions, real outcomes and organising wraparound services. I thank departmental officers for briefing me about that program, and I am taking a keen interest in its implementation. I believe the program has merit. As I told departmental officials, I am prepared to work very closely with them to do all we can to address high levels of disadvantage.

I do not think previous Labor and Liberal governments can be pleased about what has occurred in Bellambi, which is a traditional housing estate. Hundreds of families are located within a small geographical area. Unfortunately, some have suffered great disadvantage and great dislocation. It is time that all of us who hold public office realised that we cannot turn a blind eye to what is happening in public housing estates. I have walked the streets of the estates while doorknocking and walked through some mews that are more or less enclaves within the housing estate. I know the fear that exists in that community when things go wrong. I have mentioned a very simple maxim to staff in my electorate office:

If they would feel uncomfortable about their own mother, father, grandmother or grandfather living in that type of environment, they have a duty to work as hard as possible to improve the situation for those who live in that area and who do the right thing.

I hope this legislation sends a very clear message to the few people, who think that occupancy in public housing gives them a right to cause mayhem in their local community, that members of this House, on behalf of the vast majority of good hardworking people who contribute to their local community and who also occupy public housing, will not tolerate that behaviour. Social and public housing is provided for people who find themselves in need of housing: That is what it is for. However, I will never defend bad behaviour that has occurred and currently occurs in some public housing estates. Other members who preceded me in this debate and the Minister have made the point that the problem is multifaceted and that simply evicting people is not a solution. We all realise that when people are evicted they do not simply disappear. Unfortunately, someone else, some other agency and some other part of government must intervene and pick up the pieces.

I will take a keen interest in how the collective approach works in Bellambi. I am very excited about that innovative and unprecedented project. I look forward to working in a bipartisan manner and achieving good results. The Bellambi community deserves the very best. I hope this debate sends a very clear signal to people in my electorate who do nothing but cause trouble for those who do nothing but the right thing that no member of Parliament will tolerate their behaviour. I also look forward to continuing to work with the Government and the Opposition to ensure that public housing is delivered and that it is fair and accessible. But I urge people to understand that public housing is provided on the condition that the behaviour of occupants is of the same standard that is expected of everybody in society. If that standard is maintained, there will be a reduction in the adverse impacts of bad behaviour on others in the community.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [10.58 a.m.]: I support the intent of the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, which is to crack down on antisocial and criminal behaviour evinced by a small minority of social housing tenants who, through their wanton actions, make life difficult for and in extreme cases threaten the safety of the vast majority. Many of my constituents live in social housing; up to 40 per cent of housing in one suburb of my electorate falls into that category. While most of the tenants of those homes are law-abiding people and good neighbours, complaints to my office of violent criminal and antisocial behaviour, unfortunately, are not uncommon. Generally speaking, people who live in social housing are not there by choice. They are people who in most cases work hard to make the best of limited means or whatever circumstances that have prevented them from entering the private housing market. They are raising families, working, training, studying and participating in their communities or frequently they are retired.

People in this situation should not be forced to endure threatening or intimidating behaviour from troublemakers who do not respect other people's homes and rights. I have spoken with the Minister about the substance of this bill—an opportunity for which I thank him and his staff. I understand why he seeks to take a strong stand on this problem. I appreciate that some hard decisions have to be taken that may impinge on the liberty of those alleged to have been involved in persistent serious criminal or antisocial activity in order to tip the balance back towards the law-abiding majority. I support this approach. I have had some concerns, but I am pleased that a number of them will be dealt with in the amendments foreshadowed by the Government. I understand also that the shadow Minister has foreshadowed amendments, and I will be interested to see how they fit into the intentions of the bill.

The main tenets of the bill are the creation of one strike and three strike policies to deal respectively with serious crime and repeated lesser breaches of tenancy agreements. Serious crime is defined as offences that constitute grievous bodily harm under the Crimes Act 1900, a show cause offence within the meaning of the Bail Act 2013, or the illegal storing of firearms. Show cause offences are those at the most severe end of criminal activity and include sexual offences against children, weapons-related crime and the manufacture, cultivation and supply of illegal drugs. The offences that will

apply under the three strikes rule are lesser offences which, on their own, would not constitute a breach severe enough to warrant automatic eviction.

The Minister maintains that these amendments will provide a more transparent approach that will give firm guidance to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal on how to deal with offenders. Again, I agree with this principle. I note that some stakeholders have expressed concern that the proposed legislation will remove the tribunal's discretion to rule against an eviction for one strike offences, but I understand the Minister's desire to draw a line in the sand when it comes to serious offences. I am pleased that amendments will be moved to ensure that for some categories of crime a tenant will not be evicted automatically due to the offences of another occupant of the House. I note that drug offences are not part of that exclusion.

I have spoken with the Minister's office about my concerns that, for example, a minor who becomes involved in even low-level drug selling could cause the other occupants of his or her household to be evicted. I have been assured that this will not be the case if the offender is under 18; rather, support services would be mobilised to address the young person's behaviour and offending. I had also been concerned about what would happen in the hypothetical case of a female tenant who finds herself in breach due to the actions of a controlling or violent partner. Would she, and perhaps other children in her care, be subject to eviction through no fault of their own? The Minister discussed this scenario with me and assured me that in cases where a tenancy had to be terminated due to the actions of people other than the registered tenant, the innocent party or parties would be rehoused in another property within the same area.

The Law Society is concerned that one strike action can be taken on the basis of a criminal charge that does not ultimately stand up in court. Notwithstanding the seriousness of the crimes to which the one strike rule applies, the potential exists for a miscarriage of justice if the offender is evicted on the strength of a charge of which they are subsequently cleared. Concern has been put forward by the Tenants Union, the Law Society and other parties about the provision of a minimum 14 days for a tenant to raise an objection to a strike notice issued by the landlord. It rightly points out that this may be difficult for tenants who have low literacy skills, limited understanding of English, mental health problems or even just limited access to the materials or resources required to lodge such an objection. I understand the Government is amending the legislation to extend this appeal period to 21 days, and I welcome that change.

In the interest of fairness, I believe the department should provide some facility to assist people with this process, if they need help, and if the assistance is not forthcoming within the given time frame an extension should be granted automatically. It would be prudent to address this either in the legislation or in regulations. I mention the introduction of neighbourhood victim statements—an initiative I support. While it will remain the discretion of the court to decide what weight it gives these statements in making determinations, the provision of an avenue whereby aggrieved tenants can make a statement to the courts in confidence, rather than having to appear at a hearing as a witness, is welcome.

I also recognise the potential deterrent effect of the three strikes rule, and I note the member for Tweed's comment that a similar policy in Queensland has resulted in 80 per cent of first strike offenders not reoffending further. This is obviously the outcome we want: to prevent antisocial and criminal behaviour from occurring in the first place, rather than to punish after the event. I think we all agree that there is a need for a practical ability for action to be taken against people living in social housing who seek to intimidate or bully their neighbours, make the lives of those living around them a living hell or engage in criminal behaviour.

I accept that this legislation covers complex situations and that the Minister has decided to err on the side of protecting the safety of the innocent, rather than extending the benefit of doubt to alleged serious offenders in cases where the interests of each conflict. I realise there are no easy solutions for some of the scenarios this legislation seeks to address. In understanding the complexities of the

legislation and the scenarios, once again I thank the Minister for his assistance with the briefings provided by his office, in particular Lee Dickson and Emma Gittos. On balance, and in the interests of those who are at present frustrated and frequently frightened by the antisocial behaviour of their neighbours, I fully support the bill.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) [11.06 a.m.]: I speak on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. The bill will instigate a three strikes rule that enables landlords to evict social housing tenants for antisocial behaviour. It also introduces a one strike rule requiring the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to automatically terminate the tenancy agreement of social housing tenants involved in specific behaviours, including drug dealing and possession, owning unlicensed firearms or causing damage or injury.

Access to housing is a basic human right. All Australians deserve the security and certainty that comes with having a roof over their heads. Regardless of whether one is homeless, lives in a boarding house, is a renter, lives in social housing or is a buyer looking to purchase a home in a property boom, security and certainty are becoming increasingly harder to find. The housing market is often described as a ladder, an easy metaphor that suggests that if people work hard enough they can pull themselves up. But as Sydneysiders know, the reality is very different. In New South Wales in 2015 people are left with fewer options; the rungs are moving ever further apart, stranding more and more people at the bottom of the ladder. Young renters feel that they will never own their home; the homeless exhaust their access to emergency housing and are sent back to the streets; for those living in social housing, there is often nowhere else to go.

It is all well and good for the Government to impose mandatory terminations for antisocial behaviour, but given the depth of the State's housing affordability crisis I believe this is tinkering at the edges. We need to go beyond punitive measures and address the real issues underlying our housing crisis. And we must meet the challenges facing social housing in particular. As members know, people move into social housing for many reasons. They are sick, injured, escaping domestic violence, living with a disability, are elderly or unable to find work. They are the vulnerable, often dealing with complex intersections of marginalisation. The vast majority of social housing tenants want a fair go and they do the right thing.

They understand that the Government provides housing because it is a basic right, but that every right entails a responsibility. They pay their rent, take care of their homes and look out for their neighbours. Too often, they are let down by Government. Many have waited for years or decades to get into housing in the first place—victims of the critical shortage of public housing that leaves far too many in crisis. Slowly but surely our public housing stock is being sold off and not replaced; the money being used to fund the ever-growing maintenance backlog, so that the stock itself is cannibalised over time. Waiting lists continue to grow. In the CS3 allocation zone, which covers most of my electorate, the general waiting list for housing stands at more than 10 years in all but one category. As with most members in this place, many come to my office desperate for help in seeking a home for themselves and their families.

One constituent, a woman with complex mental health concerns, has been on the general waiting list for nearly four years. Another has survived child sexual abuse, waiting years to get onto the priority list to secure safe and ongoing accommodation. I have met parents with young children doing their best to provide the kind of life for their kids they themselves could only have dreamt about. Only secure and safe social housing can provide that and at the moment it is out of reach for many who need it. Most people on that list know that 10 years is a bureaucratic way for the Government to say it is never going to happen. They do the best they can to get by, many accessing other housing products offered by the Government, but often piecing together housing by living with friends, couch surfing, or moving from shelter to shelter. Some will live in their cars; others will end up on the street.

Those in housing wait for basic maintenance to be carried out. Each of us in this place has met with social housing tenants who tell horror stories of collapsing ceilings, rising damp, doors or windows

that will not close, or rooms they cannot live in. One of my constituents, an elderly woman, has waited months for basic repairs to her windows. Another woman with young children described to me a litany of problems—doors that will not close, water pouring through her living room, mould so bad in her toddler's bedroom that she cannot use it anymore. For many in public housing, this is the reality of everyday life. On top of this, governments continue to cut payments and support to those who need it most. The gap between rich and poor widens, with fewer community supports to help bridge it.

Despite the decks being stacked against social housing tenants, the vast majority do their best to make strong communities. Antisocial behaviour occurs in a minority of cases, but antisocial behaviour impacts upon everybody in a community. A drug dealer not only harms themselves but also harms those they live with and their neighbours. Social housing tenants deserve to live without the fear of violence or antisocial behaviour. But I believe this bill goes too far. Amendments to the bill must be made if we are to preserve equal treatment under the law. I am concerned by any measure that seeks to apply a one-size-fits-all rule to justice. These problems are nuanced and require a nuanced solution. The tribunal must retain discretion not to terminate tenancies, particularly when the alleged offence is caused by a joint-occupant or third-party. People's lives are complex. They have relationships and not all of these are healthy or simple. We have to ensure that innocent people are not thrown onto the street.

Again, we must be clear about this: Many in social housing have nowhere else to go. We cannot expect everyone in a home, potentially including children, to be made homeless through the actions of one person. A mother whose child is dealing drugs should not be evicted because her son or daughter commits a crime she knows nothing about. Angela lives in my electorate. She has been a Housing NSW tenant for 20 years. Angela has lived in the property with her 14-year-old son, Daniel, who is still at school. Angela's ex-husband does not live at the property, but Angela has an adult son, in his twenties, who no longer lives at the property but visits regularly. There has been a history of family violence involving both Angela's ex-husband and her older son, Jimmy. Angela has a chronic medical condition for which she receives a disability pension. Angela has never been behind in her rent, which was paid automatically each fortnight out of her disability pension payment. Angela's older son, Jimmy, visited the property regularly.

Although Jimmy had a history of being quick to anger, Angela was worried about him so she often cooked meals for him so that she knew he was eating properly. Jimmy was a user of marijuana and took to growing some marijuana plants in the laundry of the property. Angela knew they were there, but did not want to ask Jimmy about them because he often lost his temper, as she knew he would if she asked him to get rid of the plants. A short time later the police came looking for Jimmy at the property and found the marijuana plants. There was no evidence that the plants were being sold, but the police charged both Jimmy and Angela with cultivation of a prohibited drug. Angela cooperated with police, entered a guilty plea and was given a good behaviour bond. Jimmy had other outstanding charges and was sentenced to a period in prison.

In Angela's case the tenancy tribunal declined to terminate the tenancy due to her good tenancy record, the fact that the breach was unlikely to recur and the devastating impact that being made homeless would have on Angela and her 14-year-old son, Daniel. Under this bill, Angela would have been made homeless. One size does not fit all. Maintaining the independence of the tribunal is the only way to deliver this. I support the amendments foreshadowed by the shadow Minister and ask that the Minister guarantee that discretion is retained. The tribunal remains the best way to deliver just decisions. It is able to take into account tenants' actions to remedy situations. It should be allowed to continue to provide objective arbitration between landlords and tenants, and not simply be forced to accept the word of the landlord as uncontested proof.

The tribunal retaining discretion means we can better protect the most vulnerable, including victims of domestic violence, children and the disabled. Maintaining the tribunal's discretion also ensures that social housing tenants are subject to the same laws as those in private housing; we all deserve to be treated equally under the law. We must embrace innovative solutions that address the root causes of

poverty and violence, not just those aimed at ending up on the front pages of newspapers. I commend the amendments to this bill, with the understanding that it is essential the tribunal retain discretion when it comes to terminating social housing tenancies. By doing so, we can preserve fairness and equal treatment under the law, and ensure we have a system that deals with antisocial behaviour, but one that also puts people's needs first.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [11.16 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. At the core of this bill is the safety of residents in social housing. The Baird Government is delivering on its election commitment to reform social housing and ensure vulnerable members of our community feel safe, secure and confident in their homes and neighbourhoods. I acknowledge the Minister for Social Housing who is doing an outstanding job delivering on our commitment for more public housing. Unfortunately, we are playing catch-up because of 16 years of inaction by the previous Labor Government. During that time there was a reduction of almost 9,000 public housing properties available to the people of New South Wales. This Government is delivering additional public housing homes, with 100 built in the past financial year.

Importantly, this bill seeks to introduce a one strike policy for serious offences and breaches of the law. The one strike policy will make it mandatory for the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] to terminate a tenant or tenants who, among other things, illegally store firearms, supply and sell drugs, run a brothel, or use violence resulting in grievous bodily harm. This sort of behaviour is totally unacceptable and will not and should not be tolerated by any government, or the New South Wales police, who are frequently called to deal with these issues, or by the tenants who wish to go about their daily lives free from fear and abuse. The bill also seeks to introduce a three strikes policy to manage and deal with tenants who repeatedly display antisocial behaviour over a 12-month period.

In my electorate of Oatley antisocial behaviour by social housing tenants has been an ongoing issue in one or two blocks of units where there have been disputes with neighbours and alleged theft. Unfortunately, the authorities have been powerless to move these tenants on. This antisocial behaviour includes using obscene and threatening language, bullying and harassing, making excessive noise, graffitiing, abandoning vehicles in yards and leaving large amounts of rubbish about. These are all examples of what has occurred in one or two blocks in my electorate that we have had to deal with over the past four and a bit years. This three strikes policy reinforces the core aim of this bill, which is the safety of residents in social housing.

Recently I visited the Riverwood North Urban Renewal project, which is just outside my electorate in the electorate of Lakemba, also known as Washington Park, to see firsthand how a successful social housing project can benefit residents and the community. This urban renewal project includes 123 new social housing units for people over the age of 55 years, with a further 27 units to be delivered next year. Sitting alongside those social housing units are 500 private apartments that make up the Washington Park precinct. The residents I met, all of whom are over the age of 55 years, stressed to me the importance of safety and security in a social housing complex. That is why this bill also introduces neighbourhood impact statements to allow residents to express the effects that antisocial behaviour has on them and provides NCAT with this information.

I know that tenants in the Washington Park precinct will welcome a bill such as this, and that they are committed to ensuring their community is safe and free from antisocial behaviour. St George Community Housing does a wonderful job, not just in my electorate but in electorates across the St George region and out west. It runs the Washington Park precinct, and it is to be applauded for its work in developing and creating a socially mixed community that fosters a sense of belonging and ownership through well-planned open spaces and shared community facilities. Members might be interested to note that a library, barbeque areas, a park, a cafe and walkways have all been included as part of this development.

Another important measure in this bill is to extend the prosecution period to 12 months following

detection of rental fraud and to provide Family and Community Services with powers to gather information and investigate fraudulent claims. This reinforces the message that the system only works when fairness and honesty are upheld. It is good news that government departments are talking to each other again. Coupled with ensuring that the actual cost of damage to social housing properties is repaid by tenants, the bill supports residents and also acknowledges the significant cost of providing and maintaining social housing across New South Wales. This is a common-sense bill, which will go a long way to reducing public housing waiting times.

The member for Summer Hill spoke about waiting lists in her neck of the woods. Waiting lists for social housing in my community are up to 16 years. That is unfair to those who are desperate to get into some form of public housing. We need to provide this form of housing for those who need it, and the bill will help in that regard as it targets those who do the wrong thing and create havoc in their communities. The Government is aware that some residents in social housing have complex mental health issues that can lead to antisocial behaviour. Where this is the case, Family and Community Services will work with the tenant's healthcare team and, if appropriate, move the tenant to more suitable accommodation to limit the negative impact of their antisocial behaviour on other tenants. That is probably welcomed by members on both sides of the House. In the event that a tenant is evicted because of antisocial behaviour, existing services will be available to help them find accommodation in the private rental market, including loans for rental bonds.

As I stated when I first addressed the House, this bill is about the safety of residents in social housing and that means all residents regardless of their circumstances. The three strikes policy is designed to assist people to modify their antisocial behaviour in order to keep their tenancy. The bill promotes safe and inclusive communities and ensures that tenants who demonstrate antisocial behaviour are identified, managed and, if required, removed from Family and Community Services properties. I strongly support the bill as it will ensure that those most in need—but particularly those living in my electorate who may be on the waiting list for 16 years—are accommodated in a socially inclusive environment that is safe and free from antisocial behaviour, an environment that provides opportunities to those who are able and willing to have a go. I support the bill.

Mr Alex Greenwich: Mr Deputy-Speaker—

Mr Nick Lalich: Mr Deputy-Speaker—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Cabramatta.

Mr Alex Greenwich: Mr Deputy-Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Mr Brad Hazzard: What? Why?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! A quorum has been called for.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Why was that?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! No problem.

Mr Alex Greenwich: I have been denied the opportunity to speak by three speakers in a row.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Call off the quorum. The member for Sydney will be able to speak in the debate. Will he withdraw his quorum?

Mr Alex Greenwich: If I can speak next.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have directed that a quorum be called.

Mr Mark Coure: You were next.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is a list.

Mr Alex Greenwich: I have been told that my name is not on the list.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I ask the member for Sydney to resume his seat.

Mr Alex Greenwich: I withdraw my call for a quorum.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! It is too late; it is running.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Mr Deputy-Speaker, if the member withdraws his call for a quorum, it is within your purview to accept that the member is satisfied.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have allowed the quorum to run, and I will continue to do so; I will not be held to ransom by anyone.

[The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.]

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [11.26 a.m.]: I contribute to the debate on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. I understand the Government proposes to amend the Residential Act 2010 and the Housing Act 2001 to require the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal, also known as the tribunal, to issue an automatic termination order for a breach of a social housing tenancy agreement. This bill has a slate of purposes with respect to termination notices, based on the offences that are committed by housing tenants or any person who is occupying or jointly occupying the premises. As I understand it, termination notices will be administered by the tribunal for serious one strike offences in which a tenant or an occupant is in receipt of a firearm without a licence or permit, involved in the manufacturing or soliciting of drugs, engaged in violence that has led to serious damage or injuries and has a show cause offence under the Bail Act 2013.

Moreover, should this bill pass, the tribunal can issue an automatic termination order for serious offences if it is proven that a tenant or occupant is charged with inciting serious damage or injury, even if the violence did not involve grievous bodily harm; uses the premises unlawfully as a brothel; is found to be in possession of child abuse material; or engages in organised car or boat rebirthing, along with other unlawful use of the premises. I echo the sentiments of my parliamentary colleague the member for Fairfield, who spoke about the concerns residents have regarding social housing neighbours who are troublesome. My office constantly receives calls from tenants about a raft of issues concerning tenancy. Some of these issues range from behavioural issues to property damage. To an extent, it is also completely unfair for housing applicants who are in desperate need of accommodation.

I have met many constituents in my area who have been waiting 10 to 15 years for housing and who over time have become frustrated and are unable to cope. I understand the frustration and angst of residents. No-one should tolerate such behaviour on a daily basis. As a matter of fact, it is not uncommon for residents to seek accommodation elsewhere due to what they are experiencing day to day. However, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that this proposed legislation fails to address innocent parties, whether tenants or occupants. There are cases in which a tenant or an occupant is unaware of any illegal activity or wrongdoing that is occurring on the premises. For example, a grandmother allows her grandson to move in with her. Grandma of course loves her grandson to pieces and believes he can do no wrong. The grandson moves in with grandma because he is having problems at home with his dad—his dad does not understand him. He is dealing in drugs with his mates.

Grandma is totally unaware that the grandson is carrying out this illegal activity. The grandson is caught by the police. We have to be careful when crafting such legislation and the Minister has to be mindful of the fact that the grandmother is an innocent party in all this; she is just doing it for the love of the person she has allowed to move in—in this case, her grandson. We have to be careful and ensure that the legislation does not impact on innocent parties such as this. I am particularly concerned about the vulnerability of tenants, especially those who are law abiding and who are not troublemakers. I support this bill, albeit that this Government needs to consider Labor's amendments. We are of the strong view that if our amendments are adopted this bill will protect tenants and occupants, as they do not—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Have you seen the amendments?

Mr NICK LALICH: If the amendments are not moved in this Chamber they will be moved in the upper House. Tenants and occupants do not deserve to be punished for an offence for which they are not at fault. A perfect example of that is domestic violence which, sadly, is an epidemic that is prevalent throughout this State—something of which this Government should be extremely mindful. Should a complaint be made by a neighbour about a domestic dispute in a household I believe it is right that the perpetrator be penalised and not the tenant or occupant who has been victimised. Domestic disputes can be complex and extremely dangerous, in particular, when they are ongoing and there is no chance of resolving them.

Residents and occupants subject to domestic violence have nowhere to turn and no-one to turn to and they cannot afford to pay high rents elsewhere. Sadly there are many domestic violence cases and that number is on the rise. These parties should not be neglected; they need to be heard and looked after. I call on this Government to heed the Opposition's foreshadowed amendments. It is important to listen to vulnerable parties within the social housing system and they should not be victimised. The Opposition does not oppose this bill.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I recognise in the gallery students and teachers from Inaburra School, Bangor, from the electorate of the member for Heathcote, Mr Lee Evans.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [11.33 a.m.]: I commence my contribution by putting on the record the Minister's willingness to listen to community concerns and to make improvements through amendments to the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. I also acknowledge in general the time that he spends meeting with public housing tenants from my electorate and a number of other electorates. I understand the rationale for this bill—it is based on a number of meetings and discussions that the Minister has had. However, I still have concerns about the bill. While the overwhelming majority of social housing tenants are law abiding and good neighbours who care about their homes and community, I have seen instances of dysfunction and intimidation of vulnerable tenants and agree that the Government must work to ensure safety in social housing estates and to protect all tenants.

The current system already provides for the eviction of tenants who cause serious problems—at the discretion of the tribunal based on specific circumstances. Under the original bill, the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] was to lose discretion to refuse an application to evict a tenant when the tenant or someone living in his or her home uses the premises to conduct certain serious offences including storing firearms, manufacturing or dealing in illegal drugs, or causing grievous bodily harm. The relevant offences are serious but removing the tribunal's discretion is not appropriate or needed. Fairness can be guaranteed only if the tribunal can make a decision after considering all relevant circumstances and the merits of the case.

We cannot predict all the circumstances surrounding offences on social housing properties. Undoubtedly there will be situations when it would be unfair and unsafe to evict a tenant if premises are being used to commit serious offences. I am pleased that once the bill is amended tenants will not

automatically be evicted for the actions of someone else living in their home. The highest risk will be to tenants who are victims of domestic and family violence, whose English is limited and who are elderly, and who could get evicted for the actions of a spouse, boyfriend or child. Even when the tenant knowingly permits the activity, it may be due to intimidation by the offender. I am aware of constituents in this situation and of neighbours reporting tenants being stood over by unwanted visitors or residents.

Redfern Legal Centre tells me about cases where women have been forced by an abusive partner to permit drug dealing and would likely lose their homes if the tribunal were unable to consider their record of paying rent on time, getting help for any addiction and having a family to care for. I understand that the tribunal often uses discretion in cases where an eviction will impact on other members of a household who are not the offender, especially dependent children, and this is appropriate. The tribunal's discretion is a safeguard against unfair termination. If a housing provider is unhappy with a decision by the tribunal, it can apply to the appeal panel, which has the power to evict a tenant if the tribunal has chosen not to and the evidence supports this. Amendments clarifying the definition of brothels will help to ensure that these provisions focus on neighbourhood impacts or risks to other tenants' safety.

I acknowledge commitments from the Minister that evicted tenants will be rehoused either in another social housing property or in the private rental market, but this will be a difficult task. There is a long queue for social housing and the private rental market is tough on people with past evictions. Evicted tenants are likely to experience homelessness and disruptions to medical treatment, employment, rehabilitation, education and training. The bill will require the tribunal to take into account impact statements with summarised reports from neighbours on the impacts of a tenant's behaviour. I welcome the amendment which provides for this to occur only when the tribunal has found that there is a tenancy breach.

I share the Government's aim to give neighbours who are too frightened to testify the opportunity to state their case. However, tenant advocate groups are concerned that this will allow malicious or unwell people to make mistaken, false and misleading statements, while reducing an accused person's ability to challenge claims against them. I have seen situations in which tenants accuse their neighbour of wrongdoing based on personal disputes or motivations, including cases where a neighbour hopes that the unit next door will become vacant for a family member on the waiting list. In large estates, tensions among tenants due to historic enmities, mental illness and prejudice can be common and these should not be allowed to become the catalyst for easy evictions. I understand that while the tribunal will be required to consider impact statements, amendments will allow the tribunal to exercise discretion over the weight to give them. I hope that this balances giving fearful neighbours a voice and protects against vexatious claims.

The bill creates a strike system where a breach of a tenancy agreement incurs a strike and three strikes within a 12-month period result in eviction proceedings. The tribunal will have discretion to refuse an application for eviction in such cases. The Minister's office has provided information that in Queensland and Western Australia where three strike systems operate, more than 80 per cent of tenants who get a first strike notice do not go on to get a third strike. While this is positive, how does it compare with behaviour changes achieved under the existing New South Wales system of behaviour agreements and antisocial behaviour orders?

Not all tenants who are subject to strikes will be able to change their behaviour and they must be given procedural fairness. I am concerned that the bill does not provide for this. I understand that the bill requires the tribunal to take a strike as evidence of a breach, regardless of whether there is evidence. This makes it essential for tenants to be given the opportunity to appeal a strike against them. I am pleased that the Government has responded to tenant advocacy groups who called for a longer time to do so—from 14 days to 28 days. There is concern that social housing providers may not bother with other potentially more time- and energy-consuming but more productive conflict resolution and early intervention strategies because the strikes process provides housing providers a quick and easy way to

deal with tenants who create challenges.

Making eviction the easiest option to deal with problems undermines the core purpose of having a social housing system. I ask that the Minister monitor this process to ensure that it does not occur. The bill contains provisions that require the tribunal to accept the cost provided by the Department of Family and Community Services for repairs for damage that a tenant must repay. I share the concern of tenant groups that this removes the option of competitive quotes to ensure that the tenant pays a fair price. People live in social housing because they do not have the means to secure housing in the private market due to social disadvantage, trauma, mental and physical illness, and disability. The increasing concentration of tenants with complex and longstanding health and welfare concerns in social housing increases the likelihood and difficulty of addressing conflict and problems.

Dysfunction can occur, particularly in larger estates and concentrated low-economic areas. I am concerned that a legalistic response does not ensure adequate mental health, trauma, drug and alcohol services are provided to people with high levels of need. I regularly hear of tenants with serious health problems getting help only after a crisis has been reported, sometimes repeatedly, because the services are limited, especially those programs designed to reach people in the community. I urge the Government to increase prevention and early intervention services because it would help a great deal to prevent those difficulties. My concerns about the bill remain. However, I commend the Minister for Social Housing for the approach he has taken to ensure improvements have been made.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) [11.40 p.m.]: On behalf of The Greens I make a contribution to debate on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. I acknowledge the work done by the Minister for Social Housing, in particular, his visits to public housing areas and most recently the opening of the RedLink Integrated Services Hub in the Newtown electorate. Antisocial behaviour is a real problem in public housing. It is unfortunate, but I do not believe that the bill addresses the serious concerns that the Minister and other members recognise are serious concerns associated with antisocial behaviour in public housing.

The bill purports to improve the ability of social housing landlords to manage antisocial behaviour and evict tenants who engage in criminal or other behaviour. However, there are problems with the legislation and that is why The Greens oppose it. The bill purports to address antisocial behaviour but, instead, it is discriminating against those living in public housing by creating special rules which will result in tenants in public housing being treated differently from others in the community. Our legal system has existing laws that deal with criminal and antisocial behaviour. We cannot support the creation of special rules that isolate public housing tenants with a different form of justice. The Greens recognise the importance of ensuring safety and wellbeing for all social housing tenants, but this legislation will not improve the capacity of a social housing provider in most cases to address illegal and antisocial behaviour and will undermine justice in cases where the tribunal's discretion is removed.

We recognise that antisocial behaviour is a huge problem. Since being elected as the member for Newtown, I have had many public housing tenants raise serious concerns about antisocial behaviour in public housing areas. However, it must be acknowledged that submissions have been received from the Tenants' Union of NSW, the Law Society of NSW, the NSW Women's Alliance, a coalition of community legal centres, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, and Community Legal Centres NSW and they have raised significant concerns that the bill does not allow tenants to be treated fairly under the justice system. I will outline the specific concerns of The Greens, which have also been raised by a number of those groups. They are matters that must be taken seriously. We are concerned that public housing tenants, who are already in vulnerable situations, will be more at risk because it is unclear what will happen to them when they are kicked out of the public housing environment. Members in this place have raised concerns about the removal of the tribunal's discretion over the termination of leases.

Another concern is the impact on tenants when an occupant has engaged in criminal or antisocial behaviour or conduct. I draw the attention of the House to the story of a family who came to see me

recently. There were three generations living in one house—the grandparents, parents and children. One of the children was a teenage boy. Teenagers often engage in behaviour in which parents do not want them to engage. Such behaviour might involve them engaging in conduct that could be interpreted as illegal or problematic under this legislation. If parents are aware that their child has an addiction to drugs or may have been partying a little hard and playing with something they would not condone, the family's tenancy in public housing would be put at risk. Parents in our community who discover that their children are using illegal substances or growing a bit of pot in a cupboard would not kick their children out as their housing tenancy would be threatened.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Is he dealing? The people we are after are the ones who are dealing and causing disruptions.

Ms JENNY LEONG: What happens to a family in those circumstances? Are the parents of that child to take action that is different from what we would expect from the most compassionate parents when they find out that their child is involved in any wrongdoing? The impact of antisocial behaviour on those living in public housing and their community is a huge problem. Concerns have been raised about the removal of the tribunal's capacity to consider and make determinations based on evidence and the difficult processes for challenging strike notices. A move has been foreshadowed to extend the period for challenging a strike notice from 14 days to 21 days. Public housing tenants who are in the most vulnerable of circumstances and rely on community service advocates to assist them often do not have access to emails and often do not have a regular phone number on which they can be contacted. Therefore, the idea of putting strict time limits on the ability to respond to or challenge strike notices is a serious concern. It also appears that tenants cannot dispute the costs of maintenance work. The Greens and others who have provided submissions have flagged that issue as a concern.

I will refer to a specific case relating to one constituent who raised concerns about the impact that antisocial behaviour was having in his public housing area as it demonstrates the compassion that public housing tenants have when dealing with antisocial behaviour. A gentleman came to my office and raised concerns about a female neighbour who was suffering from mental illness. She had an addiction problem and she was yelling and screaming out obscenities in the night. He was nervous about raising the issue with us. He knew that the woman needed help and support but he was worried about raising the issue as she would be evicted and he did not know where she would go. One question has not yet been answered. What happens to people when they are evicted? Public housing tenants are often the most vulnerable people and our public housing service should afford them the right to safe and secure housing.

Although some of those people are suffering from addiction or mental health issues, or they are engaging in criminal or antisocial behaviour, they have still been allocated public housing. If they are thrown out where do they go? More pressure will be put on community services that deal with crisis accommodation and more people will be sleeping rough on our streets. We must address this serious concern. It is important also to look at other ways of resolving those concerns. The Shelter NSW 2012 report entitled "We look after our neighbours here" stated that while tenants knew there were real concerns about antisocial behaviour and drug and alcohol issues, they saw that the solutions needed high levels of support for both the tenants with certain behaviours and those dealing with the behaviours. There was little focus from the tenants on evicting problem tenants. The 2007 Good Practice Guide of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute stated:

Disciplinary approaches ignore the effects of poor health, low skills and poverty on self-esteem and coping skills. They also rely on the threat of eviction for their success and to be effective the threat must be real... The assumption is that forcing them into crisis they will be more responsive to requests to change their behaviour. This argument must also be rejected since the unresponsive tenant faces a genuine risk of eviction with all its deleterious effects.

Shelter NSW's 2015 report highlights the need for good support services to address issues such as mental illness and drug addiction that are behind much of the antisocial behaviour. Antisocial behaviour in

public housing is a real issue but The Greens cannot support this bill because we do not believe it takes the necessary steps. Like many in the community who made submissions while the bill was being debated in this place, The Greens support the idea of further consultation and of working with tenants in public housing. After consultations with public housing advocates we must come up with solutions to address antisocial behaviour while ensuring that we do not impose different rights and different forms of justice on those who live in public housing. The Greens have listened to the concerns of the community and the sector. We acknowledge and thank the Minister and his advisers for providing us with briefings and with details of the bill. We hope there will be an opportunity to work collaboratively to address the concerns that have been raised by the sector as this bill goes through this House and the other place.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Attorney General) [11.50 a.m.]: I strongly support the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Anti-social Behaviour) Bill. I have served as Minister for Family and Community Services. I have listened to debate in the House. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the current Minister for Family and Community Services, the Hon. Brad Hazzard. In my time as Minister for Family and Community Services, I made a point of speaking with people living in social housing right across the State, as does the current Minister. The member for Coogee and I visited Lexington Place in Maroubra and I spoke to a woman who was happy with her circumstances in social housing. She had stories to tell about illegal behaviour in public housing units that she had formerly inhabited. That behaviour made a big difference to her life.

She lived in Ballina where I met her and the candidate for her electorate in the lead-up to the last State election. Over the past year I had an opportunity to understand a little better the problems associated with social housing and to gain an insight into it. I heard about the challenges facing people living in social housing and about the challenges affecting their lives. Some of those challenges are clear to all members of this House. It takes too long to obtain housing and some of the houses are not up to scratch. This Government has worked hard to formulate a plan to reform social housing. The current system was at best managing the disadvantage that we see in our social housing communities but sometimes it entrenched that disadvantage.

It was clear to me that there was a strong negative impact on social housing communities across the State caused by a minority of people. The vast majority of good social housing tenants sometimes have to live with and tolerate the bad behaviour of other social housing tenants. The behaviour of a minority affects the majority of good social housing communities across our State. I visited those tenants and I talked with them. We need to help them. We need to speak up for those people. They deserve an opportunity to live in a good social housing community where they do not have to put up with the impact of a neighbour's illegal activities and bad behaviour. The antisocial and often illegal behaviour of a few affects the quality of life of many social housing tenants, which is simply unacceptable. This unacceptable behaviour, which might require police to attend, diverts resources away from other areas of great need, such as support for people in social housing. Every cent that is spent on cleaning up after bad tenants is money that could be better spent building more and better homes for people in need on our social housing waiting list.

It has been contended in this House that more support is needed. We support those who, under this legislation, are moved out of social housing properties to create a better environment for the majority. There are many ways in which we support those people, for example, by way of bond and rental guarantees to enable them to access private housing. The bill before the House will make it possible to move these tenants on because they have been making the environment bad for the majority of people who deserve better life experiences. This Government wants to ensure that social housing is a safe and positive environment for people and their families. We have a clear plan to do that. I commend Minister Hazzard for doing a difficult job in balancing competing interests and in formulating a plan that will provide better social housing across our State. The social housing plan will help the majority of tenants and give more people an opportunity to access social housing.

This legislation introduces a one strike policy for those who seriously breach their tenancy

agreement and it will implement a three strikes policy to deal with serious and repeated antisocial behaviour. Family and Community Service officials will be able to issue a notice of termination if a tenant has received notices of three breaches of a tenancy agreement within a 12-month period. The bill introduces confidential neighbourhood impact statements so that neighbours are protected from recriminations or reprisals that may occur when there is bad social behaviour, sometimes by people who are committing illegal acts in social housing properties. The bill introduces changes which, by classifying the debt as rent arrears, will increase the likelihood that tenants who fraudulently claim a rental subsidy pay the money back.

These are practical ways in which this Government is responding to the voices of the majority of social housing tenants in our public housing system. These are reasonable and sensible solutions to the problems facing many social housing communities. I commend the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing for introducing the legislation. I have no doubt that he will continue to work to ensure that the people of New South Wales have a social housing system that they need and deserve—one that serves many more people than we are currently able to serve. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.57 a.m.]: Ann, who is always in tears, has been contacting my office for many years. She has lived in public housing all her life and is, by all standards, a fine and generous woman, who causes no trouble for her neighbours. She calls my office because some of her neighbours have taken it upon themselves to try to force her out. They tell her that she is being evicted, they frighten her and they taunt her. She calls my office for support and she seeks reassurance. Staff members in my office reassure her by telling her that she is safe, that the process for evicting a tenant from public housing is a lengthy one with necessary checks and balances, and that she would know if the process had been started. Ann is a vulnerable tenant.

Opposition members are cognisant of the need to provide a safe and secure environment for people like Ann. We worry that this legislation in its current form might endanger Ann and other innocent and vulnerable tenants who, through no fault of their own, are impacted by antisocial behaviour. It is the duty of a government to support and protect the most vulnerable amongst us and this bill must ensure that they are protected. When it comes to the issue of public housing, however, a broader issue must be discussed. We simply need more public housing in my electorate and around the State.

According to data from Family and Community Services published last year the expected waiting times for public housing in the Newcastle zone vary from between two and five years for a one-bedroom residence to 10 years and more for a three-bedroom residence. The situation is hardly any better in the surrounding zones of East Lake Macquarie, Lake Macquarie, Kurri Kurri, Maitland and Port Stephens, and in some areas people are finding life marginally harder. Even in areas where life is easier, there is still a long waiting list of 10 years. The ABC quoted Nicole Grgas from the Hunter Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service as saying that tenants need more support from the Government, not less. In reference to the numbers I have cited, she said:

I think that what it really indicates is that there is a need for investment in social housing and affordable housing to be able to give people affordable, safe and reliable housing and so it really is about investment. The stock of three bedroom houses I think has probably been reduced as well, which does not help the situation. When there has been developments of new social housing stock they tend to be smaller, so one and two-bedroom properties. Extra housing stock is urgently needed.

I am sure all of my colleagues have heard stories from public housing tenants in their electorates that would curl our hair. I am sure many of those stories have come from vulnerable people who are facing enormous disadvantages. That is simply not good enough. These are the most vulnerable people in our society who often are caught up in the scourge of domestic violence or substance abuse. I applaud the attention that domestic and family violence has been given in recent times at all levels of government, but

dedicating a ministerial portfolio to this issue is not enough. There needs to be a whole-of-government approach to addressing not only the consequences of domestic and family violence but also the events that occur in private as well as public housing.

It will come as no surprise to members that housing pressures contribute to those issues. A woman stuck in a dangerous home could be forced to remain there because she cannot live anywhere else. What happens to her when she needs to access public housing? We certainly need to protect our public housing tenants from antisocial behaviour, but we owe a duty to vulnerable and innocent people to keep them safe from eviction. We owe a broader responsibility to ensure that safe and affordable public housing accommodation is available when people in our communities need it. It is one of the foremost responsibilities of government to provide adequate public housing. What we are seeing in Wallsend and around the State is just not good enough.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [12.03 p.m.]: I participate in debate on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015 as the member for Charlestown and as the shadow Minister for Women and the shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. The Housing NSW staff in the Department of Family and Community Services [FACS] office in Charlestown, which is next to my electorate office, oversee the tenancy of more than 2,000 properties in the Lake Macquarie area, predominately in the electorate of Charlestown. The nature of social housing in my electorate has changed over time; no longer do whole suburbs exclusively comprise public housing. I am confident that dispersing social housing properties among privately owned housing has and will have a positive influence on communities in those suburbs.

I have spent time with residents of social housing and toured the diverse range of properties that Housing NSW manages. From boarding houses to five-bedroom properties for large families, the range of properties reflects the diversity of clients. I recently knocked on every door of an over 55s public housing complex and was encouraged by the sense of community in the facility. The tenants were almost exclusively women, mostly widows, and the care of their property and their gardens was equal to that in any other home in the electorate. In fact, during tours of Charlestown, Mount Hutton and Windale in my electorate, I have seen many streets in which it is the privately owned properties that are the poorly kept, with unkempt gardens and buildings in need of repair. Let us never assume that private ownership of itself leads to a better standard of care for properties.

I recognise the impact that the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015 will have on my community. However, as I said, I also speak in my role as the shadow Minister for Women and the shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. When I speak to women who have experienced domestic violence and to the people who support them, I hear how common it is for the perpetrator to have all the housing documentation in their name, to control all sources of income and to isolate women from their support networks. It is concerning that the majority of issues identified by non-government agencies and community members are matters of grave concern for the families of tenants who have been charged under the proposed one strike or three strike offences. There is equal concern about the impact of this legislation on people experiencing domestic and family violence.

Fundamentally, this bill is about removing the discretion of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] to consider the individual circumstances of a person who is accused of committing a one strike offence or a three strike offence and the impact of eviction on their family. The one strike offences in this legislation include the sale, manufacture or supply of drugs, storing an unlicensed firearm, and serious assault or grievous bodily harm. They are all offences that rightly offend the community. No-one is disputing the seriousness of the offences listed in the bill—I certainly am not—or that people who have committed those offenses should reasonably expect to be evicted from a Housing NSW property. But what is a concern is the mandatory eviction of people convicted of those offences and removal of the tribunal's ability to examine the individual circumstances of a case—as all courts do—and to determine

the most appropriate punishment.

In addition to the one strike rule, the proposed bill allows a social housing provider to seek the termination of a social housing tenancy on the grounds that three or more strikes have occurred within a 12-month timeframe. Importantly, the strikes will follow the tenant, including if the tenant were to change their property or social housing landlord. The offences that will allow for a strike to be recorded under this three strike policy include any breach of the tenant's social housing tenancy agreement, which is a very broad category of offence. In considering the one strike offences, and given the violent nature of those offences, I have great concern for any partner or family member experiencing domestic violence being caught up in those laws and facing eviction. Domestic violence is fundamentally about control, and the control of a person's housing is a common aspect of violent behaviours. I note the advice of the New South Wales Women's Legal Service, which states:

The Bill does not take into account the nature and dynamics of domestic violence and its impact on tenants who are victims of domestic violence. In some cases a victim of domestic violence may be coerced into participating in criminal behaviour. In other cases, a victim of domestic violence may have no knowledge of the criminal behaviour or no ability to control the behaviour of the alleged criminal and fears for the safety of herself and her children should she challenge such behaviour. A victim of violence should not be blamed and held liable for the behaviour of a violent perpetrator.

Furthermore, regarding the three strikes offences, the Women's Legal Service notes that:

It is very common for our clients to report that their violent partners or family members cause serious damage to their rental properties. Damage may include smashing windows to gain access to the premises; punching holes in walls; or throwing possessions within the property which causes serious damage. Under proposed s154D(2)(a) the woman's tenancy could be terminated in such circumstances unless she can show exceptional circumstances.

Recent media attention has revealed that domestic violence is more common and more pervasive than anyone would like to admit. Whether the presence of domestic violence in a relationship can be classified as "exceptional" will be a matter for the tribunal to determine for those defences for which the tribunal will still be able to consider such matters. In these circumstances, a partner or member may be caught up in criminal activity of which they were aware. In the second reading speech the Minister noted:

Family and Community Services currently has tenancies where a serious crime such as drug dealing is carried out by a violent partner against the tenant's wishes. In these cases, if the partner cannot be forced to leave, Family and Community Services will rehouse the innocent tenant.

While the Minister noted that this is the current approach, the bill does not guarantee that the partner of a person convicted of a one strike offence will be offered the same protection. I believe it would be prudent to amend the bill so that that intention is made clear. Without trivialising the seriousness of offences under the one strike and three strike rules, I point out that people can be swept up in the offending of a family member without their knowledge or consent. Therefore, it is important that family members and partners who are affected by the offending of a tenant are protected.

New South Wales is not the first State to implement a strike system for social housing tenants. Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory all have systems in place. We have a responsibility to ensure that any system offers appropriate safeguards which prevent unintended consequences for innocent people who happen to be bystanders. I welcome several aspects of the bill. Law-abiding social housing tenants should be able to live safely and securely in their homes. However, more should be done to ensure that there are no unintended consequences for people who are part of the fallout of someone else's acts but who need the safety net of social housing.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [12.11 p.m.]: I support the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. The core aim of the bill is to protect public housing tenants by dealing with a small number of people who cause problems for law-abiding citizens by their antisocial behaviour or by committing illegal and other fraudulent offences. This is an important step, and it was a key Government election commitment. I note the presence in the Chamber of the Minister responsible—I commend him for his hard work—and the former Minister.

The bill seeks to do a number of things. It introduces a one strike policy that will require the NSW Civil and Administration Tribunal [NCAT] to make a termination order where an occupant has been charged with illegally storing firearms or show-cause offences under the Bail Act, particularly drug supply or manufacture and violence involving grievous bodily harm; requires the NCAT to terminate a social housing tenancy in certain other serious cases, such as running a brothel; introduces a three strikes policy to deal with repeated antisocial behaviour and, when three strikes occur within a 12 month period, to seek a termination order; introduces neighbourhood impact statements to assist the NCAT to understand the effect that antisocial or illegal behaviour has had on neighbouring residents and other persons; and reinstates the previous arrangement, overturned by a recent NCAT decision, that where a tenant has fraudulently claimed a rent subsidy the debt arising is treated as rent arrears, not a separate civil debt. That makes it easier to recoup the money.

The bill limits the period within which an order for possession of social housing premises is to take effect to 28 days, except in exceptional circumstances; ensures that the actual costs of damage carried out by the tenant are recouped; provides Family and Community Services with powers similar to those given to other agencies to gather information for the purposes of investigating fraudulent claims for rental subsidies; and extends the prosecution period to 12 months following detection of rental fraud. I was shocked to hear members opposite say that they have issues with aspects of the bill. Let us be clear about this: We are talking about these issues today because Labor vacated this space for 16 years and did nothing to protect law-abiding tenants. Labor under-invested in maintenance stock and did nothing to tackle criminal or antisocial behaviour. Members opposite have the gall to say that something should be done, but at the same time they will move amendments to oppose the intent of the bill.

All members, whether in government or in opposition, have relayed stories of constituents and how criminal and antisocial behaviour has impacted on them. I too have those stories to tell, from bullying to theft by neighbours, from drug dealing to other illegal activities. However, unlike many members, I have firsthand experience; not only was I a tenancy officer in a former life but I have also lived in public housing. I can attest that the majority of people who live in public housing do the right thing, get on with life, are proud of their homes and look after them and help their community. They are no different from anyone living anywhere else in this great State. However, I have seen the impacts when someone is bullied, when people run illegal businesses at all hours of the night and in some cases throughout the entire night, and the like.

Members in this place can say that the people who commit these acts have rights, but only one person intimidating good community citizens, inviting other illegal activity and elements into those streets, ultimately creates a living hell for people who are doing the right thing. I have seen the impacts of people living in fear for years or decades—it is a sad sight—to the point that an individual's health has deteriorated and they now suffer from a mental illness or have physical health conditions. What about their rights? I agree that housing is a universal right, but so is the right not to suffer detrimental interference. I support the one strike rule for serious issues and three strikes for other acts.

Under the three strike system, some of the behaviours that could count as a strike include obscene or threatening language towards neighbours and visitors, bullying and harassment towards neighbours and visitors, noise and causing nuisance, for example, loud and uncontrolled parties, excessive shouting and screaming or excessive noise from music or television—that is a regular occurrence—and there are so many other things. These are simple things to which most people would

say, "Of course they shouldn't be doing those things." But every day of the week these things are done by a small number of people and they have devastating impacts.

When I was a tenancy worker I knew that the tribunal would not evict someone who committed terrible acts in their community. That was simply the reality. As a member of Parliament I have been told by housing officers that it is useless to act because the tribunal makes it hard and it has no powers whatsoever. At times the police have also told me that they feel hamstrung to do anything productive other than deal with the current situation. Often by the time the police arrive the inappropriate behaviour has ceased. We have long waiting lists for people seeking public housing and we should be prioritising those people who are doing the right thing, not the wrong thing, not the criminals, not the people committing these terrible acts. For some reason the current system does not take that approach, and that is what the bill seeks to address.

I have seen people with two public housing homes, one for everyday use and one as a holiday home. I have seen people sublet their homes and never actually live in them. I have seen a lot, and this must stop. As I said, the majority of people do the right thing and we need to support and protect them. People have raised concerns about people with mental illness. When I was the Minister for Mental Health I had a lot to do with those elements of the bill that deal with people with a mental illness living in public housing. We must protect the vulnerable. If a tenant who experiences mental health issues is involved in antisocial behaviour, Family and Community Services will first work with mental health services and may also offer to move the tenant to a different location where there may be less tension with neighbours and greater access to support services to assist them. We need to appreciate that sometimes mental health problems are exacerbated by the environment people live in and a change can make a world of difference.

Tenants evicted under these reforms will have access to the same types of support services that currently exist when people are evicted from public and social housing. Where appropriate they may be provided with assistance to enter the private rental market, such as being given loans for a rental bond. In addition, the Government last year adopted the Living Well strategy, which is a roadmap for dealing with mental health over the next 10 years. When I was Minister for Mental Health, I was proud to announce additional accommodation packages for people suffering from mental health issues under the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative [HASI]. This ongoing initiative ensures that people with mental health issues have access to housing and the care and support mechanisms they need for their wellbeing.

I support this bill knowing that it will protect our tenants. I have spoken to many public and social housing tenants in my electorate and I have heard only positive feedback about the bill. I have many friends and family members who live in public and social housing and they say this legislation is long overdue and will be their saviour. I thank the Minister for listening to the many stories from tenants across New South Wales. Some of these stories were given under difficult circumstances, but those voices count. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) [12.20 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. The role of a good government is to protect the innocent, to shelter the vulnerable and to help members of our community to live better lives regardless of their complex personal circumstances. Our parliamentary process—that is, the introduction of legislation and its subsequent amendment—is the tool that we in this House use to achieve these aims on the basis that the public interest should always trump political partisanship and ideology. Like many other members in this House, significant numbers of my constituents live in public and social housing. They are decent and honest people who care very much about their neighbourhood and who care just as much about their neighbours who make up their local community. I think of Gary and his family from Macquarie Fields; I think of Harry and Iris, whose small cottage makes one feel so welcome; and I think of Anne, whose family pictures adorn the walls and shelves of her lounge room. Decent, honest and caring people, all are social housing tenants.

With Sydney rents being what they are nowadays, more and more people are turning to social housing providers out of necessity for assistance and as a transitional step in times of personal difficulty. Of course, great improvements have been made over the years on many of the so-called estates that were based on the now infamous Radburn design. Improvements are focused not only on changing the physical makeup of the houses and streets but also on changing the social fabric of our neighbourhoods. Incidentally, this program of improving the estates was primarily started by my predecessor in Macquarie Fields, the Hon. Craig Knowles, when he was Minister for Housing. The program, known then as the Neighbourhood Improvement Program, was, as I recollect, largely funded by the Building Better Cities program under Federal Minister Brian Howe. It is timely in the context of the bill to point out Craig's work in formulating the Good Neighbour Policy—a policy aimed at creating and promoting harmonious communities in public housing areas.

It is appropriate for me to add here that I was most pleased to see Craig recognised for his outstanding contribution to public life with the awarding of a Member of the Order [AM] in this year's Australia Day Honours List. It is a most thoroughly deserved award and recognition for his many years of public service. While great improvements have undoubtedly been made in terms of the physical appearance of public and social housing properties, it is of course just one aspect of a tenancy. For example, there is the issue of ongoing maintenance. Now is not the time for me to list the litany of complaints that flow into my office about this issue. Suffice to say at this moment I cannot work out why the old "techno officers" and the local offices have so little control over or input into maintenance issues. This issue is a continual source of frustration for many of my constituents.

The other major aspect of a tenancy, apart from maintenance, that arises is addressed in the bill before the House—antisocial and illegal behaviour. In general terms, the principles underlying the bill are well intentioned. However, amendments are required to ensure that the innocent and the vulnerable are protected and do not become collateral damage as a result of a flawed and failed administrative process. The shadow Minister for Housing, the member for Bankstown, will shortly move those amendments. I urge the Government to join Labor and to adopt these amendments so that the innocent and the vulnerable do not suffer from a flawed bill in which the practicalities of complex and complicated personal circumstances have not been thoroughly thought out.

I receive my fair share of complaints about tenancy issues, including those relating to poor behaviour and illegal activities. The very small minority can ruin an otherwise peaceful and quiet neighbourhood. These are the peaceful and quiet neighbourhoods I see regularly around my electorate of Macquarie Fields. Let us be clear: There is no excuse for tenants behaving in a way that is contrary to their tenancy agreement or the law. They need to be dealt with in a way that is both firm and fair. However, it must be stated that being a good neighbour, respecting the rights of others, fulfilling one's obligations under a tenancy agreement, and obeying the law should not apply only to those in public or social housing. It should apply to all tenants, everywhere.

Many who are in public and social housing are there because of complex personal circumstances. Let us not simplify the issue by saying that bad behaviour, illegal activity and nuisance neighbours are found only in our more disadvantaged areas, because they are not. The other main issue I have with the bill is its bluntness. I always get a little concerned when political catchphrases like "one strike and you are out" are rolled out. They are great for the five-second media grab and the media release, but they often fail to recognise the complexity of situations. However, that is what our Parliament is for and that is what Labor's amendments are aiming to achieve. We want better protection for the innocent and greater understanding for the vulnerable. I urge the Government to work with Labor always to put the public interest ahead of its political strategy.

Other speakers on this side of the House have addressed how this approach might fail the parent who is unaware of their child's illegal activities, the grandparent in the same situation and the mother involved in a difficult relationship. The list of possible innocent victims of this approach is long and the

personal and emotional consequences of incorrect decisions will endure even longer. The truth is that many in public and social housing have the most complex needs—and this is increasing, with the scarcity of public housing and the level of rents only adding to the pressure. As I have previously stated, I recognise the Minister's good intentions in this bill.

However, I cannot help but think that with a little fine-tuning those tenants who are doing the wrong thing can be appropriately dealt with, while at the same time protecting the innocent and vulnerable. That is why the discretion and the tribunal's role to review decisions are so important. It is a balanced approach to ensure that those evicted are the culprits and not innocent carers and children. Having another oversight body is good governance, especially when it involves complex circumstances for which no law and no legislation can possibly placate the real world of people in our community. Let us listen to our social housing community. Let us understand that simple one-sentence one strike administrative rules do not help the needier in our community to live better lives. Let us adopt Labor's reasonable amendments so that good government can continue to protect the innocent and shelter the vulnerable.

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) [12.28 p.m.]: I contribute to the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015, although I am concerned that its implementation may be problematic. The Granville electorate has significant numbers of social housing dwellings, with more than 5,000 Housing NSW properties across the Auburn-Granville and Holroyd allocation zones, as well as hundreds of community housing homes; and the waiting time for all but one-bedroom homes is more than 10 years. Given this demand, it is important that once people are housed, they do not take things for granted and make life hell for their neighbours. But this is not the norm and should not be overemphasised. If every public housing tenant who vandalised their home or engaged in serious criminal activity at their home or other antisocial behaviour was evicted tomorrow, we would still have a statewide social housing waiting list of well in excess of 50,000 people.

In fact, the situation has much improved in recent years as Housing NSW has tried harder to avoid conflicts between neighbours by avoiding putting noisy, active young people in complexes full of older people, as well as being more proactive in ensuring that tenants with mental health problems are receiving support from other agencies. The department does not do this as well as the community housing sector, which by its very nature is smaller and provides more holistic support for its tenants. A particular challenge for managing public housing apartment blocks, townhouses and estates is that only people on very low incomes with complex needs live there. People are home for much of the day and in some cases spend their day annoying their neighbours. Tenancies are lengthy and disputes between neighbours can go on for years. So it is perhaps appropriate that there be different eviction procedures for antisocial behaviour in public housing.

This bill proposes to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and the Housing Act 2001 to require the tribunal to issue an automatic termination order for a breach of the social housing tenancy agreement. This would occur where the tenant or an additional occupant is being charged with serious one strike offences while using the property for one of the following offences: drug manufacture, sale or supply; storing a firearm for which a licence or permit is not held; serious damage or injury by a tenant or other occupant and the violence involved grievous bodily harm; and a show-cause offence under the Bail Act 2013.

In addition, an automatic termination order would be issued should the tenant or an additional occupant be charged with one of the following offences and the tribunal is not satisfied that exceptional circumstances justify the termination order not being issued: serious damage or injury by a tenant or other occupant; premises being used unlawfully as a brothel; premises being used to produce or disseminate, or the tenant is found to be in possession of child abuse material; or the premises being used to facilitate car or boat rebirthing activities. Such offences will be sufficient to justify the termination.

Like many members, people come into my office for assistance in applying for social housing,

seeking maintenance or seeking transfers; and the main reason for seeking transfers is not the antisocial behaviour of neighbours but medical conditions that mean the tenant can no longer climb stairs. That being said, changes are needed. I have had concerned neighbours come to see me about transfer applications when their neighbours have been manufacturing ice at home and they are worried about fires, not to mention the scary and unpredictable people living next to their block of units. When those neighbours were arrested, charged and bailed, they returned home and resumed their business, much to the concern of their neighbours. That is not to say the current legislation does not allow them to be evicted for non-tenancy related matters, but eviction requires a conviction, which can take months. This should not be the case with something as obvious as using your home as a drug lab.

But this is an isolated and extreme example. I do not want to demonise public housing residents. Most of them live peacefully and respectfully alongside their neighbours. It is also a rare example of criminal activity that would be obvious to everyone in the household. If a teenage child is selling drugs, their parents and siblings may have no idea and should not be made homeless as a result of it. Similarly, the whole household may not be aware that one of them is storing an illegal firearm on site, and they should not be made homeless as a result. While the proposed three strikes process takes into account the capacity of a tenant to change, the one strike offences have less discretion. There are other distressing situations that the legislation will not address, such as a home I am familiar with where the tenant's daughter's boyfriend was involved in a bikie gang. He spent a lot of time at the house, stayed there regularly and intimidated the neighbours. He was not a tenant and was not listed as an additional occupant.

To what extent should that tenant be held responsible for the behaviour of his daughter's boyfriend, whom the tenant is probably also intimidated by? The legislation also seeks to empower Housing NSW to evict tenants for malicious damage, for intentionally damaging their homes. While this may seem reasonable, what redress will tenants have if they are already struggling to assist a family member who is an ice addict, if their ice-addicted family member smashes up their home in a fit of rage? This is becoming increasingly common. Homelessness is not an appropriate punishment for the whole family, which is already suffering when one of them is addicted. Homelessness is likely to make addiction and the antisocial behaviour associated with it worse, and homelessness is likely as it would be really hard to secure a home in the private rental market if they have been evicted.

While we have all had complaints about people damaging their social housing properties, I have seen far more social housing properties that are equally damaged, not by any action of the tenants but by wear and tear over time, and by lack of maintenance. I have seen homes falling apart, with holes in the walls and floors, and kitchen cupboard doors missing, where furniture is mouldy and rotting due to water pooling underneath the house—a problem that could be fixed. What redress do tenants have when their home and belongings are destroyed by neglect, by maintenance not being carried out? I have seen one house where five missing roof tiles were lying on the ground. The tenant is in a wheelchair so obviously he cannot climb a ladder to fix it himself.

He has called Housing NSW repeatedly to fix the roof to no avail. He told me that every time it rains, water gets in and damages the ceiling, and makes his home mouldy. So what would be a one- to two-hour maintenance job has caused thousands of dollars worth of damage and it will take days if not weeks to fully repair. Those tenants cannot evict their landlord for the damage to their homes. I am not suggesting people who damage their homes should not be held responsible; but it would be fair if the department was also held responsible for poor maintenance, or at least funded adequately to meet their maintenance backlog.

As a local member, many people who are on the waiting list have told me about vacant social housing properties they have spotted, in the hope that "finders, keepers" applies. Fortunately it does not; the next person on the waiting list will receive the home. But often they are vacant for months while maintenance is carried out. This contributes to the length of time people are on the waiting list and this should be addressed. Social housing should be safe and tenants should have the quiet enjoyment of their

homes, free from fear or harassment from their neighbours. But the extent to which severe and exceptional criminal or antisocial behaviour exists in public housing should not be overstated, and the use of the sanctions outlined in the bill must be employed cautiously.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [12.36 p.m.]: I make a contribution to debate on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. In so doing, I endorse the remarks made in the second reading speech of the member for Bankstown; and nothing I will say should be seen to be, either directly or by implication, inconsistent with the views that she expressed on behalf of the Opposition. It is said that, prior to the redistribution, the electorate of Heffron had the densest public housing of any electorate in the State. The Redfern-Waterloo part of the electorate has probably the most difficult and socially complex problems associated with public housing. I very much suspect that the problems associated with Redfern-Waterloo are the genesis of this bill.

Since I was elected as the member for Heffron, I have spent considerable time on location in Redfern-Waterloo public housing areas, not only speaking with tenants but also inspecting their properties and witnessing firsthand the significant social problems associated with living in what could only be described as an example of public housing failure in this State. This Parliament lies in the shadow of these enormously high public housing buildings that have such significant criminal problems. There is at least one drug dealer located on every floor of the high-rise in Redfern-Waterloo.

I must acknowledge the work of both Housing NSW and the NSW Police Force in trying to address these significant problems. I am aware that the Local Area Commander, Superintendent Freudenstein, and his police officers conduct many operations and have been involved in a significant number of arrests. But there are just too many problems. The problems and crimes associated with living in the Redfern Waterloo area are the product of a number of causes. They are the product of having to house people who are mentally ill but who are not supported. Once we get the medication of the mentally ill right, they can live productive lives and make worthwhile contributions to society. But getting the medication right has its difficulties. Until they get the medication right, the side effects are such that they prefer to be mentally ill because they do not know what the consequences will be if they take their medication.

If people are not supported—as they are not supported properly in the Redfern Waterloo area—they end up engaging in what could be said to be antisocial behaviour and the commission of crime. Corrective Services are paroling people back into the Redfern-Waterloo area, the very area where they have been arrested for drug distribution. If they have any hope of rehabilitation, it will not be through sending them back to the drug nests of that particular area. Many of my public housing constituents face problems as they go to their mailbox. I have photographs of 80-year-old people who have bruised necks or their heads are split open from being assaulted by a variety of individuals in this public housing estate. One old man told me he always takes \$5 with him when he leaves his place so that if he is robbed he has \$5 to give to the robbers. The problems are enormously complex.

Over the past few years, thanks mainly to *A Current Affair* prodding the New South Wales Government and the Government responding a lot of the maintenance issues have been addressed in the Redfern Waterloo area, for which I am very grateful. I am also very grateful for the police operations and the multitude of arrests, but they cannot keep up. Housing is frustrated in its inability to move on antisocial tenants—if you call them antisocial, I call them criminals—who are operating from many of those complexes. Some action is needed by the Legislature to empower them to try to give some of these people who have lived such a terrible quality of life some sort of benefit. The Law Society of NSW made a submission to the Minister, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, in its letter of 11 August 2015. It says it also made earlier submissions on 17 June 2015. The Law Society has serious reservations about this bill from a rule of law and human rights perspective. It says:

The Government has demonstrated neither the necessity for the Bill in its current form, nor its proportionality to the objectives of the Bill. The Committees are ... concerned that the

amendments are not consistent with the rule of law and human rights.

As members would know, to suggest that somehow or other I would support an action that is either inconsistent with the rule of law or human rights would be most unusual. I am generally regarded as being to the left of the member for Liverpool when it comes to human rights and I suspect the Minister is probably to the left of me. However, a balance to address complex problems must be struck. Whilst the Law Society might think that the Government has not demonstrated in the current form of the bill the proportionality of the objective, I have seen the objective and the necessity to enable Housing to deal with some of the atrocious behaviour that occurs.

In some of those high-rise buildings, people throw television sets off their balconies onto the ground some 10 or 12 floors below, almost striking people—apart from assaulting people. Antisocial conduct in public housing tends to attract other people who do not necessarily live there but who are involved in the same criminal conduct, not to mention the customers of drug suppliers. In the past 12 months, Housing NSW has evicted 42 tenants in Waterloo for illegal behaviour, but the complexity of the process through NCAT and the time it takes to address the social problems is a matter of considerable frustration. As critical as I have been of the Department of Housing, that criticism has waned substantially due to the efforts it has made in my electorate. Whether that is because it feels for my public housing tenants or because it was beaten into submission by a local member aided by *A Current Affair* matters not. The fact is that the issues are being addressed.

I say to the Law Society of NSW that I do not think the bill in its entirety is a disproportionate response. I am somewhat concerned, though, about two scenarios. One scenario is contained in the letter from the Law Society of 11 August 2015. The other scenario I drew the Minister's attention to some weeks ago, and it is common: An 80-year-old grandmother has a 25-year-old grandson living with her and she is oblivious to the fact that he is engaging in the supplying of drugs. An order against the occupier is fine, but not against the grandmother. You cannot throw out the grandmother, who may well have been living there for 40 years. Simply relying on the exceptional provisions within the bill is not sufficient protection.

The other issue of concern that the Law Society referred to is that of victims of violence or domestic violence who do not want to report, say, grievous bodily harm for fear that they might lose their tenancy and their rights. It is not good enough for the Minister or a representative of the Executive Government to say, "We will take that into consideration and we will look after them," because the Parliament is then giving the Executive the right to determine what is otherwise someone's lawful right that should be determined by the law either through the courts or by a tribunal. I support the sentiment of the bill, but it requires some pretty significant amendments.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [12.46 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to make a brief contribution to debate on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. I echo the comments of the member for Newtown, who led for The Greens on this matter very eloquently and put forward our serious concerns with this bill. She highlighted, as I will, the improvements proposed around this bill; improvements that may not have been needed if there had been widespread consultation on the matter.

When it comes to public housing—social housing—a lot of the antisocial behaviour is a function of the crisis in social housing. In 2013 the Auditor General's report outlined very clearly the crisis in public housing. Between 1945 and 1995 social housing as a proportion of all housing was increasing, so there was investment in public housing. That investment was well received by the public and meant that people such as my parents, for example—a working-class family—were offered public housing many, many years ago. They chose not to take public housing. Instead they chose to enter the rental market. Today a working-class family with one person working and four kids would never have an opportunity to enter public housing in any reasonable time frame.

Over the past decade in particular we have seen public housing properties decrease as a proportion of all stock of housing—public housing is reducing as part of the total stock of housing. We know that the Land and Housing Corporation is selling twice as many properties as they are building. There is a crisis in public housing and it is getting worse because of the increase in the cost of housing. Those who are financially unable to commit to a rental property or to buy their own property are finding it harder and harder to find somewhere to live. We also know from the Auditor General's report that the number of tenants being housed is falling and is at one of its lowest figures in many, many decades.

The source of so much tension in public housing is that the people who are entering into public housing as new tenants are the most needy, with the most complex needs and in the most challenging situations, and we are loading those high-needs people into a smaller and smaller amount of public housing as a proportion of all the housing in this State. So it is no surprise that we often see people with mental health issues and people who have gone through a great deal of trauma and had difficulty in their lives housed next to people who also have very serious issues. The lack of the wraparound services that we need to support these tenants is at the heart of the problem around public housing.

We hear a lot of people talk about public and social housing. I still call it public housing, because when I speak to public housing tenants they talk about the Housing Commission. Public housing makes sense to many people when talking about Government-owned housing. A lot of people are criticising the Coalition Government. Let us not forget that when the Liberal-Nationals Government came to office there was a \$300 million backlog in maintenance. This is not something for which we kick only the Coalition Government.

Mr Brad Hazzard: They kick me.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: Or the Minister. There has been a history of a lack of support for public housing. It goes to the heart of what kind of Australia and State we want to live in. We are one of the wealthiest countries in the world and we should be able to support public housing. It means we need to invest in public housing. We are dealing with the symptoms of the bill. Its problems are generated because there is a lack of investment in public housing. The Premier announced a \$1 billion housing fund but we have not seen what it is. The Government is not investing the proceeds of privatisation into that fund. We need different models to provide public housing but the bottom line is: Where is the money coming from?

Mr Stephen Bromhead: The Greens.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: Do not worry, we could find the money.

Mr Glenn Brookes: Whereabouts?

Mr JAMIE PARKER: The first thing we would not do is give the poker machine industry a \$300 million tax reduction, so there is \$300 million for public housing. We could talk about that for a long time. The issue is a pressing one. We have the challenge of supporting public housing tenants. I refer to the area tenants group, which is a fantastic initiative. I attend regular meetings of the area tenants groups. They have expressed to me their concerns, which include antisocial behaviour. The Glebe Area Tenants Group, particularly Kerrie Bartholomew, Maree White, Gaylene Harkin and Marla Priest, are public housing tenants who are working as advocates and supporters for members in their community. Their model has been rolled out and is well supported in my area. Michael Reeves from the Alexander Dwelling Advocacy Group has worked with Margot Rawsthorne from the Glebe Community Development Group. They have done a great job in ensuring that public housing tenants get support from their local community when they have highlighted problems.

People may know that there are hundreds of single bedroom apartments in one block in Johanna O'Dea Court in Camperdown. That area has a lot of issues and it is important that its tenants are active

about antisocial behaviour. The Inner West Tenants Group—Sara Mitchell, Susan Hawkeswood, Natalie Star, Matthew Liotta, Malcome Waldron, Deidre Hokin, Mare-Christine Sancho, and Lisa Smajlov—on behalf of the Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre, is working collaboratively to address antisocial behaviour positively. They are working hard to supply the services people need when they are having problems, or they work with the police, as I have done, to take action against antisocial behaviour.

We know there is a crisis in social and public housing. It needs investment. We need a more diverse range of housing opportunities. Investment of time is an important step, but it must be done properly so that contracts are correct and so that we see an increase in the overall amount of public housing. Our view on affordable housing is that multi-unit developers should be forced to provide a proportion of their developments to affordable, social housing. I thank those in my community who work to support social and public housing. I commit to continuing to work with them. I look forward to amending the bill so that it can be as good as possible.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [12.53 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015. They are the member for Parramatta, the member for Blue Mountains, the member for Clarence, the member for The Entrance, the member for Coojee, the member for East Hills, the member for Prospect, the member for Mulgoa, the member for Canterbury, the member for Drummoyne, the member for Strathfield, the member for Davidson, the member for Maitland, the member for Swansea, the member for Miranda and the member for Lakemba.

I also thank the member for Londonderry, the member for Coffs Harbour, the member for Fairfield, the member for Upper Hunter, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Holsworthy, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Keira, the member for Lake Macquarie, the member for Summer Hill, the member for Oatley, the member for Cabramatta, the member for Sydney, the member for Newtown, the member for Vacluse, the member for Wallsend, the member for Charlestown, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Macquarie Fields, the member for Granville, the member for Heffron, and the member for Balmain.

The fact that approximately 40 members of Parliament spoke in debate on the bill indicates a high level of commitment and support to ensuring that this Government and the community is getting public and social housing right. I thank the staff from the Department of Family and Community Services for their contribution to bringing the legislation to this point—Paul Vevers, Chris Valacos, Kay Elphick and Amanda Young. I also thank my own staff Emma Giddows and Dara Reid, Lee Dixon and Kath Farland for their work and input. I received a number of written comments from consumer advocates about the bill. The Department of Family and Community Services ran a consultation session with a number of representatives of non-government organisations, including a number of legal services. As a result of the representations, the Government has considered several amendments, which I will seek to move in globo at the Consideration in Detail stage.

I listened intently to a number of Labor members, including the member for Cabramatta. They told me that I should have been aware of the amendments from the Labor Party. I put on record that those amendments were not circulated until just over an hour ago. It makes it rather difficult for members of Parliament to properly consider legislation when the Labor shadow Minister for Social Housing wishes to move amendments but produces them more than halfway through the debate. It is not fair to members of Parliament, particularly her colleagues, who were relying on the fact that she had produced them. The protocol and practice of this place is that if members wish to move written amendments that they circulate them. She is not doing herself or her party any favours by producing amendments so close to the end of the debate.

As I said, as a result of the various representations the Government is moving amendments, which were circulated to the shadow Minister, The Greens and others yesterday so there has been ample

time for those amendments to be considered. The amendments relate to limiting the scope of one strike provisions in certain cases, the definition of a brothel, the minimum time period for a tenant to make a submission or ask for a review of a strike, and the tabling of neighbourhood impact statements. The Government will continue to talk to stakeholders and to listen to their concerns as the bill progresses in the other place. Furthermore, as the Department of Family and Community Services develop policy guideline reforms, it will undertake consultation with stakeholders, including the Ombudsman, legal services, tenants, and their advocates.

However, I will address the concerns that have been noted in debate. First, I turn to people with mental illness being caught up in the antisocial behaviour provisions. Concerns have been raised about social housing tenants who have a mental illness being unfairly evicted. I understand those concerns and I am responsive to those concerns. I note that a different approach is used, however, by the Department of Family and Community Services where antisocial behaviour arises because of mental illness. Those people are not the target of this legislation. This legislation targets those who make life unbearable and unsafe for other public housing tenants. This legislation has been introduced because, as members on both sides have acknowledged, tenants have spoken of their concerns about what goes on in their housing complexes and it is simply not fair for this Government or any government to fail to respond to those concerns. The Department of Family and Community Services is experienced in dealing with people with mental illness or those who have complex needs.

[Business interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion by Mr BRAD HAZZARD agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to permit the consideration of the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill to continue until concluded.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PUBLIC HOUSING—ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR) BILL 2015

Second Reading

[Business resumed.]

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [1.00 p.m.]: As I was saying earlier, Department of Family and Community Services [FACS] staff are experienced in working with clients with complex needs and will continue to engage with health and support services to assist tenants wherever possible. It is amazing to think that the Opposition would even entertain the idea that FACS staff do not have that capacity and are not capable of recognising people with complex needs. Last night at Parramatta I was at a pop-up housing office. I commend the FACS officers there who were talking to homeless people—those who do not have a place to sleep. I witnessed FACS staff engaging with these people and listening to their stories. One young Aboriginal lady who was only 18 years old had just been released from Juniperina Juvenile Justice Centre. She had been out on the streets for a month. Another 28-year-old woman was expecting a baby on the day before Australia Day. A 48-year-old gentleman I saw there who had suffered from addictions all his life was facing all sorts of challenges.

Last night I witnessed FACS staff working with those people. When Labor members say that they think FACS might not be able to deal with those who have complex needs I reject it out of hand. I

understand their concerns but that is not an issue that should entertain too much of their time or their thoughts. In the majority of cases FACS staff members do a fantastic job working with people with complex needs. I note that FACS has 104 dedicated senior client service officer and specialist staff located across the FACS districts. In every district there are formal arrangements for liaison between local health district mental health services and local housing staff of FACS districts. FACS's first response is always to engage health and social support services to assist tenants. When a neighbourhood dispute has arisen as a result of a tenant's mental health condition and mediation or referral to support services has not resolved the situation, FACS will explore other options such as relocating the tenants, rather than applying to terminate a tenancy. All members know that to be true; that is what is happening.

Members from both sides of this House have written to me about these issues. Members of the Labor Party have acknowledged that the actions of FACS have been first class. They have acknowledged what is going on and staff have been out there working with people. Obviously FACS does not get it right all the time—that is not possible—but FACS staff get it right in the majority of cases. They certainly make a huge effort to try to address the most complex cases. By definition the people who end up in public housing often have the most complex problems. There will be cases when FACS may have no choice other than to take action through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to terminate the tenancy, usually when the tenant will not accept mental health or other services. However, if the tenant accepts help at any time during that process, FACS can and will still help to relocate the tenant if it is clear that the offending behaviour will cease. I say with absolute certainty that that is the policy that FACS applies. It is certainly the policy that the Government wants FACS to apply but in individual cases, when we are dealing with more than 140,000 tenancies, there are some challenging moments and very challenging circumstances.

Concerns have also been raised regarding other vulnerable people such as victims of domestic and family violence. In these cases, FACS will take a different approach and ensure that the safety of the victim is the priority. I remind members that FACS stands for Family and Community Services—the role of its staff on a daily basis. It is a tough job that in many cases requires commitment and much love. I have seen that firsthand as shadow Minister and over the past five months as Minister. FACS staff members do an amazing job. FACS staff will seek to refer tenants experiencing domestic and family violence to the senior client service officer or specialist. The role of the specialist is to ensure that case coordination of service provision is in place for the client. When a family decides to separate, FACS has a policy that either the victim or the perpetrator can choose to relocate to another property. If the property is damaged due to domestic and family violence and it is evident that the damage is a result of the perpetrator's violence, it is FACS policy to take that into account. There is an intense willingness by FACS staff to try to engage.

Changes were made under this Government to bring the Housing and traditional Community Services portfolio together. That was done because there is a substantial crossover of clients. Those changes have had a profoundly positive effect. Last night I was talking to a young woman who has had to face all sorts of issues and who, at the moment, is on the streets—she will give birth in the not too distant future. I introduced this young woman to a FACS officer who got another officer to come and chat to her to ensure that she knew that perinatal programs were available to people in similar circumstances. I saw the enthusiasm of those officers who were trying to locate services other than housing for that young woman.

The traditional approach adopted by Labor for many years frustrated me both as shadow Minister and as a local member. The policy of the Labor Party was to have housing as a separate, standalone department, which was utterly ridiculous. We now have a combined and comprehensive service and FACS officers, whether or not in the area of housing, work together to provide supportive or wraparound services. It is not easy but we are changing the culture in the department. Many members said in debate today that supporting people is not at the forefront of the minds of FACS staff or Government members, which is ludicrous. It is very much at the forefront of our minds but we must ensure that tenants in public housing have a safe and positive experience.

Concerns have been raised about appropriate legal safeguards in the legislation for all social housing tenants. The bill includes those safeguards. Natural justice and procedural fairness are important to the process. A tenant who is taken to the tribunal under the one strike policy still has the right to appeal through the tribunal's appeals panel, which can review a tribunal decision. Under the three strikes policy, when a first- or second strike notice is issued against tenants they will have the right to make a submission to the social housing provider outlining why they disagree with the details in the strike notice. If they are still not happy with the response they get from their social housing provider they can apply to have the strike notice reviewed by an independent review panel.

For a third strike, tenants will have the opportunity to put their case before the tribunal. The breach must be proven in the tribunal and the tribunal has the discretion not to terminate a tenancy if that is the most appropriate response. I think the member for Newtown said a little while ago that there was no discretion for the tribunal which is wrong. The tribunal is able to exercise that discretion in the context that I have just outlined. One proposal sought to take every strike notice issued to a tenant to the tribunal. However, that is not the best approach for tenants. The three strikes policy is about keeping people out of the tribunal, not taking them into it. I turn now to the issue of support for evicted tenants. After listening to some of the Labor members one could be forgiven for believing that they thought if people were evicted that would be the end of the matter. That is not the case.

Even though some of those people are committing offences and doing things that they clearly should not be doing—thereby making other people feel unsafe—as a Government, a community and a Parliament we have an obligation to ensure that individuals who cannot house themselves are provided with housing. The Department of Family and Community Services will continue to support people who are evicted under either the one strike policy or the three strikes policy. But sometimes we have to move persons from a property in which they have been dealing in drugs or committing offences that are under the show cause provisions of the Bail Act, or where they are harbouring guns or committing any one of the array of offences that cause great grief to tenants—in other words, very serious offences. There has to be some action.

This legislation represents a balance but in the circumstances to which I have just referred a line has to be drawn. We have to say, "Okay, that is what has been occurring in this complex. You have to leave." However, that does not mean that the department will not support those tenants in other ways. Tenants who are evicted can be given support to access assistance from the private rental market in locations that are affordable. They also will have access to private rental assistance products such as a no-interest loan to enable them to put down a bond, or assistance with locating properties through real estate agents. The Department of Family and Community Services also will refer those people to support services. The Department of Family and Community Services also offers an incentive, in circumstances in which the tenant's behaviour is not in the most severe category and they are able to establish a good rental history, whereby they will be able to reapply for social housing assistance in the future.

Some issues were raised in relation to the three strikes policy. I acknowledge that a number of similar schemes have been introduced in other States and there is evidence to support their success in addressing antisocial behaviour issues. For example, in Queensland and Western Australia more than 80 per cent of first strikes do not proceed to a third strike. In other words, having a clear warning system works. Tenants will have two opportunities under the bill to challenge each strike. The first is to challenge the facts under which the strike was issued and the second opportunity is through the appeals process, to which I have just referred. Tenants always will be offered the opportunity to respond to allegations of antisocial behaviour. Support services will be contacted when tenants are engaged with existing agencies, or referrals will be made to link people to services to assist them to meet their tenancy obligations, if they are engaging in behaviour that places their tenancy at risk.

Concerns were raised about the 28-day order of possession period handed down by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal as being an insufficient period in which tenants may make alternative

housing arrangements when their tenancy has been terminated. In the past few minutes when I was quickly reading the Labor Party amendments, I noticed that that is certainly one of the Labor Party's preoccupations and it is the subject of one of Labor's amendments with which the Government will not agree. If there are exceptional circumstances the tribunal will be able to delay vacation of the property for a longer period. However, tenants should not generally need more than 28 days to make alternative arrangements for themselves—by, for example, finding accommodation with family or friends, or renting a property in the private market—especially as they will be provided assistance to do that.

Concerns also were raised with me about the lack of consultation in relation to the bill. I advise the House that more than 700 public housing tenants were engaged in a phone survey specifically related to antisocial behaviour. I also heard tenants' concerns raised during the extensive consultation process about the future of social housing in New South Wales. The consultation process attracted hundreds of written submissions from tenants who detailed the negative impacts that antisocial and criminal behaviour is having on their lives. FACS also has met with a large range of organisations, including legal centres and other interested stakeholders to discuss concerns about the bill.

As I mentioned earlier, when the policy implementation guidelines have been developed, FACS also will be consulting with stakeholders to address operational concerns that do not require legislative consideration. I assure the House that I will be taking more than a passing interest in ensuring that the guidelines reflect the issues that have been raised during this debate by members of the Labor Party and The Greens. They may not require legislation—in fact, I believe they do not—but many of those issues will be taken into account in policy initiatives through FACS. I turn now to discuss a matter that was raised a few times during debate—the costs associated with damage caused by tenants and the schedule of rates that will apply.

I note that tenants still will be able to dispute whether they are liable for a stated cost and whether the work was actually necessary. However, once liability and necessity are established, it is right that they should pay the actual cost of the damage. All social housing providers have a process to secure services at a competitive rate. This is a safeguard to ensure they are not overcharged and pay only the correct amount. I particularly point out that the cost does not relate to fair wear and tear. The cost relates to damage caused by antisocial behaviour that is the subject of the bill before the House. It is important that NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal members accept the social housing providers' schedule of costs. Tenants should pay the actual cost of repair for the damage they have negligently caused so that it is not left to the taxpayer to pick-up the tab.

It is fair to say that each of the matters raised by Government and non-government members principally was driven by a genuine sense of concern about social housing tenants. I accept that that concern may be influenced slightly by philosophical positions, but nevertheless I say that the Government wants social housing tenants to be safe. That presents a huge challenge because a variety of people live in social housing. However, as quite a number of members stated, by far the majority of people who live in social housing are absolutely fantastic people who arrived in social housing because of a variety of reasons. There but for the grace of God go all of us. At different times of our lives, many of us are confronted by challenges and find that things go out of control. In many instances social housing tenants reflect those circumstances, which often are brought about by the actions of others. Many social housing tenants have particular disabilities that include mental health issues.

The Parliament—and the Government, certainly—respects our need to ensure that social housing tenants have a safe environment in which to live and that they have adequate and proper housing where services can be provided to safeguard future generations having every opportunity. I was pleased to hear during the debate a number of members referring to their own experience of having been brought up by their families in social housing. As members of this House, we must ensure that each person and each young child who is brought up in social housing has every opportunity. A significant point made by members who spoke about their life in social housing was that they enjoyed relative safety when they were being brought up. The Government needs to get back to the position of social housing being a safe

place in which to bring up our children. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail requested by Ms Tania Mihailuk.

Consideration in Detail

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith): Order! By leave, I will propose the bill in groups of clauses and schedules.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.17 p.m.], by leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 13 on sheet C2015-043C in globo:

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

No. 1 Tribunal must have regard to steps taken by tenant to remedy breach

Page 4, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154B. Insert after line 5:

- (2) If the Tribunal has regard to a breach of a social housing tenancy agreement as referred to in subsection (1), the Tribunal must also have regard to any steps taken by the tenant to remedy the breach.

No. 2 Longer minimum period for tenant to make submissions about strikes

Page 4, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154C (2) (g), line 32. Omit "14". Insert instead "28".

No. 3 Extension of time for submissions about strikes

Page 4, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154C (2) (n), line 35. Insert "within the period specified in the strike notice or such longer period as the landlord allows" after "submissions".

No. 4 Extension of time for submissions about strikes

Page 4, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154C (4), line 40. Omit "as set out in a strike notice". Insert instead "within the period specified in a strike notice or such longer period as the landlord allows".

No. 5 Longer minimum period for tenant to make application for review of strike notice

Page 4, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154C (4), line 46. Omit "14". Insert instead "28".

No. 6 Extension of time for application for review

Page 5, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154C (5), line 1. Insert "within the period specified in the notice or such longer period as the landlord allows" after "tenant".

No. 7 Requirement for complicity of tenant or equivalent for proposed section 154D to apply

Page 6, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154D. Insert after line 37:

- (3) However, subsections (1) and (2) do not apply:
 - (a) if an application for a termination order is based on an intentional or reckless act of a person who although not a tenant is occupying or jointly occupying the social housing premises, unless the Tribunal is satisfied that the tenant knew, or ought reasonably to have known, that the person committed the act and was complicit in the act or failed to take reasonable steps to prevent or report the act, or
 - (b) if the Tribunal is satisfied that a termination order would be likely to result in undue hardship being suffered by a child, a person in whose favour an apprehended violence order could be made, a person suffering from a disability within the meaning of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*, or any other person, who is occupying or jointly occupying the social housing premises.

No. 8 Ensure neighbourhood impact statement does not identify neighbours

Page 7, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154F (2) (b), line 25. Omit "should". Insert instead "must".

No. 9 Neighbourhood impact statement to be provided to tenant

Page 7, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154F. Insert after line 25:

- (3) If the landlord submits a neighbourhood impact statement to the Tribunal, the landlord must provide a copy of the statement to the tenant and the Tribunal must give the tenant a reasonable opportunity to respond to the statement.

No. 10 Orders for possession to be minimum of 60 days in certain cases

Page 7, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154G (1), line 34. Omit "28". Insert instead "the prescribed number of".

No. 11 Orders for possession to be minimum of 60 days in certain cases

Page 7, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154G (2), line 38. Omit "28". Insert instead "the prescribed number of".

No. 12 Orders for possession to be minimum of 60 days in certain cases

Page 7, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154G. Insert after line 40:

- (3) In this section:

prescribed number of days means:

- (a) if the termination order is made under section 87 (other than on the grounds of non-payment of a pecuniary sum), 90, 91 or 92—28 days,
- (b) in any other case—60 days.

No. 13 Evidentiary certificate not conclusive proof if tenant satisfies Tribunal of certain factors

Page 8, Schedule 1 [9], proposed section 156A. Insert after line 20.

- (4) However, subsection (3) does not apply if the tenant satisfies the Tribunal that the failure to make the submissions was the result of factors outside the control of the tenant or that there is some other reasonable explanation for the failure.

I will state the Opposition's position in relation to each of the amendments. Amendment Nos 1 and 2 relate to new section 154B in item [8] of schedule 1 to the bill, which states that a tribunal must have regard to previous breaches of prior social housing tenancy agreements when determining whether to terminate tenancy under section 87 of the principal Act. Amendment No. 1 proposes that if the tribunal were to have regard to a prior breach of a social housing tenancy agreement, which is referred to in new section 154B (1), the tribunal also must have regard to any steps taken by a tenant to remedy that particular breach.

We know that termination of a social housing tenancy is the most serious of outcomes. The Minister should ensure that a fair balance is struck by stipulating that any remedy of a prior breach is taken into account by a tribunal when considering the application of section 87. This amendment would ensure that social housing tenants, who can demonstrate they have taken steps to change prior behaviour and who no longer commit antisocial behaviour, are not continually punished for their prior misdemeanours.

Amendment No. 2 would provide a longer minimum period for tenants to make submissions about strikes. It seeks to extend from 14 days to 28 days the period in which tenants can make submissions. As the Minister decreed, this will allow for natural justice; individuals will have an opportunity to remedy and respond to breaches. Amendments Nos 2 to 6 would amend proposed section 154C with respect to the scheme for recording and issuing strikes against tenants for breaches of their social housing tenancy. In my contribution to debate on the second reading I noted that the New South Wales Opposition is concerned that 14 days are not sufficient and not practicable. It is insufficient time for a social housing tenant to make a submission against the issuing of a strike notice. I note the Government's amendment to extend that to 21 days. We support that amendment, but I submit that it should be 28 days.

I reiterate for the Minister's convenience that this view is supported by many stakeholders who have made submissions to me and to the Minister. I understand that after introducing the bill the Minister sought a briefing with various legal centres, the Tenants Union and other interested stakeholders. I believe the stakeholders advised the Minister that the time frame should be extended and that 28 days appeared to be most appropriate to give individuals an opportunity to respond to specific breaches. The Minister should be cognisant of the following submissions. The Law Society stated that 14 days is a short time frame in which to respond to a strike notice, particularly as many social housing tenants are vulnerable, are unlikely to have easy access to legal assistance and are likely to have low literacy skills, speak English as a second or third language, have poor mental health and perhaps be victims of violence.

A coalition of community centres, including the Illawarra Legal Centre, the Eastern Area Tenant Service, Kingsford Legal Centre, Marrickville Legal Centre and Redfern Legal Centre, stated that

vulnerable tenants would face extreme difficulty in challenging strike notices within 14 days. In that time they will have to contact a legal service, obtain legal advice and write a submission. It is unlikely that vulnerable tenants such as older people, people with little English or low literacy, domestic violence victims, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants, or tenants with physical or intellectual disabilities or mental health conditions will be able to comply with this short time limit. The consequences will be serious and have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable tenants, who lack the capacity to challenge such strike notices. If a third strike is issued an application is made to the tribunal for termination, and tenants will not be able to challenge the strikes if they did not initially challenge them. Women's Legal Services NSW stated:

We are also concerned that if issued with a strike notice for breach of the tenancy, a tenant only has 14 days to respond.

It also raised issues relating to victims of domestic violence who are faced with additional barriers as a result of complex trauma. If the three strikes policy proceeds, tenants should have a minimum of 28 days to respond. I am not sure why, despite this advice—the Minister was given critical advice—the Minister will not support 28 days. Clearly, experts who provide support to tenants know that the time period must be extended from 14 days to 28 days. These comments were also endorsed by the NSW Women's Alliance, which recognises the difficulty that victims of domestic violence face and that the vulnerable tenants referred to by these stakeholders would be more adequately protected by extending the time period from 14 days to 28 days.

I make the following comments about amendment No. 7—requirement for complicity of tenant or equivalent for proposed section 154D to apply. The amendment addresses legitimate concerns raised by the Opposition that innocent and vulnerable tenants could be forced out of their social housing tenancies through no fault of their own. While the termination of a social housing tenancy for the serious criminal offences referred to in proposed section 154D and in existing legislation would be the appropriate course of action in some circumstances, it should be noted that the one-size-fits-all of mandatory eviction as proposed by the Government will create injustices for some tenants. I remind the Minister that, in relation to appeal rights, he commented that once the tribunal establishes that the alleged conduct took place, it will issue a mandatory termination order.

It is important to remember that in many cases the tenant in a household was not involved in a particular action and should not be punished. The Opposition does not support any type of antisocial behaviour in social housing tenancies. We want social housing tenants to enjoy a safe and secure environment in their homes. We certainly do not condone any antisocial or criminal behaviour. Often the solution is not simply black and white. In many circumstances it is difficult to distinguish precisely who is responsible for certain action and we must ensure that vulnerable tenants—for example, victims of domestic violence or people with a disability who are being taken advantage of—are not punished as a result of the actions of an individual whom they may not be able to control. As I said, the one-size-fits-all of mandatory eviction proposed by the Government will create injustices for some tenants, particularly when they have no control over certain actions or when an occupant rather than a tenant is responsible for the antisocial behaviour.

The Opposition's amendments will address these concerns by ensuring that the tribunal retains a certain degree of discretion to prevent unjust outcomes when determining whether or not to terminate a social housing tenancy. The amendments will introduce a requirement for complicity of a tenant or equivalent for proposed sections 154D (1) and 154 (2) to apply. If an application for a termination order is based on an intentional or reckless act of a person who, although not a tenant, is occupying or jointly occupying a social housing tenancy, before terminating the tenancy the tribunal must be satisfied that the tenant knew, or ought reasonably to have known, that the occupant committed an act of antisocial or criminal behaviour and was complicit in the act or failed to take reasonable steps to prevent or report that act.

Furthermore, the amendments would protect vulnerable tenants such as children, victims of domestic violence or persons with a disability from suffering undue hardship in the event of the termination of their tenancy. These amendments will ensure that the object of the bill is maintained—that is, to stamp out antisocial and criminal behaviour from social housing—the Opposition supports that—while providing much-needed safeguards and protections for vulnerable social housing tenants. I remind the Minister that I foreshadowed these amendments several weeks ago. The Minister introduced the bill without consulting the sector or a range of legal centres. Clearly he did not consult the Law Society and he has not accepted the advice from the Bar Association.

The Government had a choice about whether to introduce this legislation. The Government needs to take responsibility for that choice. It must ensure that it has considered every possible scenario. I reiterate the concerns of the Opposition about new section 154D. I urge the Government to support the Opposition amendments, which I worked with the Bar Association to draft. Amendments Nos 8 and 9 will amend new section 154F with respect to neighbourhood impact statements. The Opposition believes it is imperative that the confidentiality of such statements is not compromised. Therefore, a minor amendment to new section 154F (2) (b) will omit the word "should" and insert the word "must" to ensure that no details of a neighbour or other person are exposed.

It is particularly important to protect the privacy of those individuals. The Opposition agrees with concerns expressed by the Law Society of New South Wales about the lack of procedural fairness where a tenant does not have access to a neighbourhood impact statement or the opportunity to respond to an accusation concerning their alleged behaviour. Our amendment proposes that, if a landlord submits a neighbourhood impact statement to the tribunal, the landlord must also provide a copy of the statement to the tenant and the tribunal must give the tenant a reasonable opportunity to respond to that statement.

It is a common-sense amendment that will preserve the confidentiality of neighbours who bring to their social housing provider's attention their concerns about ongoing antisocial behaviour while at the same time offering a tenant the opportunity to test an allegation made against them. For instance, this would offer a safeguard to a tenant who is the subject of a neighbourhood statement that could have been motivated by an interpersonal dispute or the prejudice of another neighbour, not antisocial behaviour. Tenants should be afforded the opportunity to make a submission to the tribunal in response to an allegation made against them; hence the need for the amendments to new section 154F.

Amendments Nos 10, 11 and 12 propose a distinction between the minimum number of days required for an order of possession for reasons pertaining to antisocial behaviour and other circumstances, such as when a social housing tenant is in financial distress and does not have the capacity to keep up with rental payments. The intent of the amendments is clear. New South Wales faces a housing affordability crisis. It is necessary to differentiate between tenants who have displayed antisocial behaviour and tenants who are suffering undue hardship for financial reasons and seek appropriate alternative accommodation. The Opposition's amendment suggests 60 days notice, not 28, for those who have committed antisocial behaviour. Amendment No. 13 proposes to adjust new section 156A with regard to evidentiary certificates. I seek an extension of time.

[Consideration interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [1.32 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to permit:

- (1) The adjournment forthwith of the consideration in detail of the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015 and the further consideration of the bill in detail being set down as an order of the day for a later hour.
- (2) The member for Bankstown to speak for a further period of up to 15 minutes.
- (3) Consideration of committee reports forthwith.

I do not oppose the request for an extension of time by the member for Bankstown. I have moved the suspension of standing orders, with the prior agreement of the member's colleagues, to allow the matter to be adjourned to this afternoon, after question time. The Government will not oppose the member's request for an extension of time. The motion allows the consideration of committee reports to be proceeded with.

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

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to resolution debate adjourned and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

Pursuant to resolution Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) proceeded with.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 6/56

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

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [1.34 p.m.]: I thank members for the opportunity to update the House on the comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in its recent digest, which was tabled on 15 September. This was the sixth digest of the Fifty-sixth Parliament prepared by the Legislation Review Committee. A total of six bills were introduced in the sitting week commencing 8 September. The committee made comments on four of them. The object of the Alcoholic Beverages Advertising Prohibition Bill 2015 is to prohibit advertising and other promotional activities that aim to assist the sale of alcoholic beverages. To this end, the bill introduces a number of offences. The committee noted that the bill includes a number of clauses that reverse the onus of proof in proceedings for some offences.

The committee noted that provisions that reverse the onus of proof act contrary to the rule of law; however, there are circumstances where they may be justified. One such circumstance is where it would be particularly difficult for the prosecution to meet a legal burden. In one instance where this bill reverses the onus of proof the committee considered that it may be difficult for the prosecution to prove that a person received a direct or indirect benefit and thus made no further comment on the issue. In a second instance the committee noted that the reversal of onus of proof may trespass on personal rights and liberties. The bill provides that when a body corporate commits an offence under the Act, every officer of the body corporate commits the same offence unless they can prove otherwise. As mentioned, the committee noted that this provision may trespass against personal rights and liberties.

The Coal Seam and Other Unconventional Gas Moratorium Bill 2015 seeks to impose an immediate statewide moratorium on coal seam and other unconventional gas exploration while environmental and scientific work is undertaken. The bill provides that compensation is not payable because of the enactment or operation of the bill. The committee noted that this may impact on the rights

of those who hold production leases or other petroleum titles by providing that they are not entitled to compensation for possible losses as a result of not being able to act on those titles. However, the committee noted that the bill also provides that the State is not prevented from paying compensation voluntarily in appropriate circumstances. As such, the committee made no further comments.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2015 seeks to amend the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act to implement the recommendations of the independent panel established to review the jurisdiction of the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. The committee noted that the bill proposes a number of new provisions that, upon commencement, will have a retrospective effect. As noted in previous digests and in this one, retrospectivity is contrary to the rule of law, which allows citizens knowledge of the law at any given time so that they may adjust their behaviour accordingly. The Property, Stock and Business Agents Amendment (Underquoting Prohibition) Bill 2015 is part of a package of reforms aimed at promoting higher standards in the real estate industry. The bill introduces a number of strict liability clauses in relation to offences concerning underquoting.

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 provided to meet the criminal threshold and the Crown is not required to demonstrate intent, negligence or recklessness on the part of the accused. The committee did not find the strict liability provisions contained in this bill unreasonable in the circumstances. These types of provisions are not uncommon in regulatory settings where compliance with particular obligations is a key element of the regulatory framework. The digest is a weekly resource for members to participate in legislative debates. The committee works hard to ensure that each bill is reviewed and reported within days of its introduction. As chair of the committee, I congratulate the staff on their ongoing diligent work. The members of the committee greatly appreciate it. I trust that the digest is of continuing use to members. I commend the digest to the House.

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

Report noted.

[Temporary Speaker (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith) left the chair at 1.39 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome everybody to the gallery for question time this afternoon. It will be the last question time for three weeks, so we are all looking forward to it. I give a very warm welcome to Zoe Coles, the junior member for Lismore, who will be participating in the YMCA New South Wales junior parliament next week, guest of the Deputy Speaker and member for Lismore.

I also welcome representatives from the Gerringong Sunrise Rotary Club, including Margo Johnstone, Roger Drury, Patricia Crowhurst and Annie Heppell, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast, and member for Kiama. I also welcome Mrs June Temple, the aunt of the member for Albury, and Mrs Jill Aplin, whose birthday it is today—happy birthday, Jill. They are guests, of course, of the member for Albury.

Happy birthday to the member for Kogarah. Let us hope he stays for the entire question time so that we can enjoy his company. Can we ask how old you are?

Mr CHRIS MINNS: Thirty six.

The SPEAKER: I remember 36. I also welcome 10 members of the Young Greens from Macquarie and Charles Sturt universities, guests of the member for Balmain. I also welcome Dr David Rowe, a senior anaesthetist at the Armidale Hospital and his wife, Lisa Rowe, and their sons, Ben and Tom, guests of the member for Northern Tablelands.

I also welcome Mr Steve Dodd, principal at Berowra Christian Community School, guest of the member for Hornsby. I also acknowledge 50 students and their teachers in the gallery who are visiting Parliament as part of the Riverstone electorate school leaders program, guests of the member for Riverstone. I welcome Jeremy Travers, also in the gallery, a guest of the Minister for Education. Welcome also to Councillor Greg Cummings, Mayor of Holroyd. Finally, I welcome Mr Tony Gleeson, principal of St Leo's College, Hornsby, guest of the member for Hornsby. Welcome to all of our guests; I hope you enjoy the afternoon.

MEMBER FOR MAROUBRA, MR MICHAEL DALEY

The SPEAKER: Here is an important message—today marks 10 years since the Hon. Michael Daley was elected to the Legislative Assembly on Saturday 17 September 2005 in a by-election for the electorate of Maroubra to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Bob Carr. I think people should respect this announcement as it is a milestone.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Millstone.

The SPEAKER: I call the Minister for Education to order for the first time. Congratulations, Michael.

MR GREG KAY, PARLIAMENT PROCEEDINGS VIDEO PRODUCTION

The SPEAKER: In 1994 Mr Greg Kay began operating the camera system in the Legislative Assembly, with just a single camera on a tripod controlled and operated from the Speaker's gallery—believe it or not. This system has been developed over the years and today is now driven from a purpose-built multi-camera control room in the library. This broadcast is an invaluable resource for members, the media and the public and is webcast to the world through Parliament's website. Mr Kay has also covered the official openings of the House through the years and is responsible for the footage in the Parliament's DVD resource. Today, I announce that Mr Kay will be leaving us after 21 years of service to the New South Wales Parliament. The Parliament is extremely grateful for the work of Mr Kay and his staff in recording the House and its members on film. Farewell to Mr Kay.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.23 p.m.]

SCONE TAFE

Mr LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Skills. What financial assistance will be provided to Upper Hunter students, who will have to drive 120 kilometres to Kurri Kurri to undertake their studies after the Government sells off Scone TAFE?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Goodness gracious! It is now Thursday and the Opposition are just reacting to a story in the *Sydney Morning Herald* last Sunday. I have been sitting in the Chamber at question time waiting for a TAFE question. I think they have only got to it now because The Greens member Dr John Kaye has decided to make it his agenda item; and Labor has asked this question in order to get on the bandwagon about TAFE. As I have said in this House consistently, the greatest threat to TAFE in this State is posed by those opposite. They have lurked in the shadows of our campuses. They have talked down our teachers, talked down our courses, talked down the great people within TAFE. The question is actually in relation to the assets of TAFE in New South Wales. I get that. They try, by asking the question, to suggest that somehow the Government has been hiding this matter. It makes me laugh. If you look at the State Infrastructure Strategy—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! It is very early in the Minister's response to the question, but I will hear the point of order of the member for Maroubra.

Mr Michael Daley: The Minister says it makes him laugh. It should not make him laugh. This is a disaster for the bush, and the Minister thinks it is funny. It is a disgrace.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The member for Maroubra makes me laugh. Opposition members come into this House and talk down TAFE. In our State Infrastructure Strategy, which was announced as a centrepiece in this Government's election campaign, we talk about the need to look at the assets of this State.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

Mr JOHN BARILARO: For those who know how to read the budget—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury takes a point of order. The Minister will resume his seat.

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order is relevance. This is the leaked list, and Scone is on it. How does the Minister explain that to the people of Scone?

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: We did not try to hide what we are doing with TAFE assets in the budget papers. The infrastructure statement in the budget papers talks about how we are looking at all the assets of TAFE NSW. Finally, at budget estimates hearings a few weeks ago, did I try to hide the fact that TAFE NSW would look at its assets? We have a responsibility to utilise our assets to the maximum to provide resources for our students and for TAFE NSW. We need to recycle assets and reinvest those assets back into TAFE. This Government has the responsibility—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister's response has been relevant and he is answering the question. Does the member for Keira have a different point of order?

Mr Ryan Park: It is under Standing Order 129. The Minister has been talking for three minutes and has not mentioned the Upper Hunter.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have already said that the Minister's response has been relevant. The member does not have a point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Sit down, you fool. Sit down; don't embarrass yourself.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will come to order. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time. He will cease shouting at the Minister.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: As has any organisation, whether business or government—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the second time. He will cease

shouting.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: —we have a responsibility to look at the assets of TAFE and make sure they are being utilised. Actually, right now—

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease shouting and interjecting.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Let us have a look at TAFE's assets: 2,000 buildings, 130 campuses and 10 institutes. Can I say that 25 per cent of our assets are under-utilised. We have a responsibility—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister's response has been relevant to the question he was asked.

Ms Linda Burney: Madam Speaker, with due respect, the question was about how Scone TAFE students will be compensated when they have to drive to Kurri Kurri.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister's response has been relevant to the question. Again, the member does not have a point of order. The member for Canterbury has taken a vexatious point of order. She did not have a point of order the first time.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I thank the member for Canterbury for coming down to Monaro on Sunday to visit my office. She drove past, but did not stop at, the TAFE in Queanbeyan. She decided to stand out the front of my office with a sign. Those opposite come to this place to play politics.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: They come in here to play politics with TAFE and to play politics with our community. I assure those opposite—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wyong will come to order. Opposition members will stop waving around lists, or they will be removed from the Chamber. The member for Lakemba will come to order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I assure those opposite that the investment we are seeing in TAFE right across regional New South Wales, like the continued investment in Muswellbrook, is evidence of what this Government is doing in relation to TAFE in New South Wales. [*Time expired.*]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will stop waving around the lists that they have been given. I suggest they put them in their folders, or they will find themselves removed from the Chamber.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: My question is addressed to the Premier. How will the delivery of the Government's State priorities ensure the people of New South Wales have the infrastructure they need and deserve?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question and his outstanding service to his community. He is an outstanding local member doing a great job. All those opposite could look at him and learn something, because what he is interested in delivering is infrastructure for this great city and State. We are very proud as a Government to be continuing to rebuild New South Wales. We went to the election and said, "This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild this State," and that is exactly what we are doing. Those opposite were against it; they opposed it every step of the way. Every day in the election campaign was a day those opposite came out and cancelled another piece of

infrastructure—that is what they did. They were against infrastructure; they were against public transport; they were against more hospitals; they were against upgrading sports facilities and cultural facilities—that is what they were against.

They did not want to rebuild New South Wales. Well, the great news for the people of New South Wales is this Government wants to rebuild New South Wales—that is what we want to do. We want to rebuild this great State and we are going to get on and do it. We have outlined a number of projects to do exactly that. We are underway with the WestConnex, the NorthConnex and the duplication of the Pacific Highway. We are actually building hospitals from one end of the State to the other, including the Northern Beaches. There is the light rail project that the day of the election those opposite were for and going to build then the day after the member for Keira read some serious reports and said, "No, actually we are against light rail."

This Labor Opposition, in terms of history, is the political party that is against public transport. Aren't you proud of that? That is something of which you should be very proud. We continue to deliver. The WestConnex project is going to transform delivery and travel times across New South Wales. I think I see the shadow Minister for Roads, the former member for Newcastle or the current member for Newcastle—I am not sure, but there she is. We had a bit of a case study recently on the shadow Minister for Sport—remember his effort? He had nothing to say but he went on and said it anyway. We remember that.

Well, I have to say I was a little bit concerned about what the shadow roads Minister said about the WestConnex—I think the House should know about this. We are getting out and building the WestConnex and we know the difference it is going to make. For those travelling from Parramatta to the airport it is going to save 40 minutes. For those who want to go from Parramatta to the city it is going to save more than 20 minutes. We think that is a great thing. But I will tell you what the shadow Minister for Roads said—this was her contribution; it was a wonderful contribution. She said, "Today in Sydney if you are sitting in traffic you're going to be experiencing congestion. What we need is a comprehensive plan to fix our roads."

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: It is under Standing Order 52. I think the Premier should be heard in silence. I am really concerned because the Minister for Finance, Services and Property is talking across the Chamber. He is really distracting me and I cannot hear.

The SPEAKER: Order! I also think the Premier should be heard in silence. That is a good point of order. The member for Maitland will resume her seat. Next time she interjects, I will remind her of that. I call the House to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: This is not going to surprise you. It disappoints me to tell the House this, but the week before—after we had started construction of the M4, which means that we were going to need some trucks to get in there to do work such as taking away soil and delivering for construction activities—the shadow Minister for Roads, who wants a plan to fix roads, then said:

The Baird Government cannot expect Sydney's motorists to sit back and accept ... more trucks—onto the M4 while we fix it. She does not want us to actually go and fix the M4. That is—

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: It is under Standing Order 129. This is a question about State priorities, even though there are not many. I would ask—

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

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The debate is over. There it is right there: The shadow Minister for Roads comes out one week and says, "We want a comprehensive plan to fix our roads," we go out and start doing exactly that and she says, "We don't want it." You want a plan, you do not want a plan; you do not want a plan, you want a plan—what on earth is it?

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: I think this is about me; this actually is not about the State priorities. I am not a State priority.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will resume her seat. There is no point of order. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There is nothing truer than that: You are not a State priority. That is absolutely right. They were your words, not mine. I note that it is very difficult to engage with the Opposition when one week they say they want a plan to build the roads—well, we are building the roads—and the next week they say, "We do not want to build the roads." How on earth can you be consistent?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Happy 10 years to you, member for Maroubra. That is a very nice tie in your tenth year. We are very proud to be delivering the infrastructure that this State needs. It is about time; it is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. We have a range of priorities that are going to take this State forward. What is very clear, if they ever get back into government, is that the Opposition have no plans, they have no priorities and the people of New South Wales deserve much better than what they have dished up. That is why when we went to the people of New South Wales and said, "We are going to rebuild New South Wales; we are finally going to get the funding to do it," they voted us in. The reason they have given us that privilege is that we are going to make a difference to their lives through infrastructure across the State. We are very proud to be delivering that for the people of New South Wales.

WILLIAMTOWN LAND CONTAMINATION

Ms KATE WASHINGTON: My question is directed to the Premier. What immediate support and long-term compensation is the Government providing to the businesses and families affected by the prohibition on commercial fishing and oyster farming in Fullerton Cove and Tilligerry Creek?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Minister has outlined a range of processes underway in respect of that. We understand that there are concerns across the community and we will be engaging with the community. It is a reasonably fair question but this is my advice to the member: the important thing is that we make sure we actually look after the residents, look after the businesses and do not look for political points. We are very happy to work with you. Obviously we are going to need to engage with the community and we will be engaging with them and/or businesses. We will be doing that regularly. The community absolutely deserves all the support they can get in this, all the information that is required, and that is the process that the Minister has outlined. We will be doing everything we possibly can to support the community and the businesses. I ask the good member that she engages in that spirit as well.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations.

Ms Linda Burney: Why am I such a goose?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. Those kinds of personal comments that I often hear directed across the table are a reflection on the intellect of the person who is

making them.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: How is the New South Wales Government prioritising the delivery of strong budgets and a strong economy?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Drummoyne for his question. I acknowledge that he and all members of the House, especially those on this side, appreciate how important a strong economy is for the people of New South Wales. This Government came to office in 2011 promising to make New South Wales number one after Labor's failed years, and that is exactly what we have done. We also said that we would ensure that New South Wales was a stronger State, a healthier State and a safer State. Of course, a strong economy is necessary to deliver all those priorities. It is no surprise that we pride ourselves on the priorities that the Premier outlined, such as maintaining strong budgets and a triple-A credit rating and creating jobs. This State will continue working to achieve those priorities. After 4½ years of hard work, we have made sure that ours is the leading economy in the nation.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. If members wish to have a private conversation, they should do so outside the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I know members opposite are not interested in the Australian economy.

The SPEAKER: Apparently they are not.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When Labor was in government, this is what the economy looked like. The member for Maroubra does not want to be reminded about this on his tenth anniversary. The media headlines reported "NSW is the worst State of all", "NSW economy the worst", "NSW letting nation down", "NSW still nation's basket case". Unfortunately, some things do not change. This one states, "No dollars and now no sense". By contrast, in August alone members on this side of the House created 9,200 jobs, which accounts for more than half of the jobs created around the nation.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: For the year to August, we created 118,000 jobs.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Interestingly, we have extended the payroll tax in the Jobs Action Plan. Even though the member for Maroubra does not want to listen, I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his 10 years in Parliament. I also take this opportunity to ask him why he opposed the Jobs Action Plan. Why did the member for Keira oppose the Jobs Action Plan?

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. They are not helping the Treasurer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Why did the member for Maitland oppose the Jobs Action Plan? It is very disappointing that only members on this side of the House care about jobs. Members opposite have a lot to say about jobs, but when it comes to the crunch, they have let down the people of New South Wales. In contrast, we are focused on maintaining our triple-A credit rating. We are focused on delivering the services that matter most to the people of this State. For the first time in a long time we have been able to forecast surpluses in the forward estimates, and that is after Labor left us with a hole in the budget worth more than \$5 billion and a \$30 billion backlog in infrastructure. Labor left us with a massive debt. We are proud that New South Wales is now leading the nation.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has the call and will be heard in silence.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Our nation is now holding up because of the strength of the New South Wales economy. I give an assurance to the people of New South Wales, because we know what happens when the Labor Party is in office. We also know that the Labor Party does not care about strong budgets, a triple-A credit rating or jobs.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Rockdale will resume his seat. Opposition members seem to be permanently dehydrated.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Members opposite will do anything they can to stop us talking about the economy. [*Time expired.*]

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: They should bring their own water bottles. I think I will ban the water. The Parliament cannot afford jugs full of iced water. Bring your own water.

Mr Anthony Roberts: I draw your attention to the behaviour of the House. This is question time, not canvass time. The member for Maroubra was doing the numbers on the front bench during the last question and answer. The current leader is doing the numbers on the backbench and something strange is going on between the member for Strathfield and the member for Maroubra. They should take their canvassing back to the caucus room. This is question time.

The SPEAKER: Does the member for Cessnock wish to address the point of order?

Mr Clayton Barr: I thought this was an opportunity to make a speech.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House has made a valid point. The standing orders deal with members wandering around the Chamber. While some discretion is given to the Leader of the House, members should not be wandering around generally, getting water and canvassing their friends. Members will resume their seats and will remain there. Members will come to order.

MEMBER FOR KIAMA COMMENTS

Ms JODI McKAY: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Police. Will the Minister join me in condemning ill-informed commentary made yesterday that police officers love nothing more than getting out their book, issuing infringement notices and raising revenue?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Prospect to order for the second time. All members on one or two calls to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order. Any further interjections from members will result in their being removed from the Chamber. The member for Rockdale will remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

[*Pursuant to sessional order the member for Rockdale left the Chamber at 2.46 p.m.*]

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier has the call. I am waiting for members to come to order so that the Deputy Premier can be heard in silence. The member for Canterbury will remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

[*Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 2.47 p.m.*]

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the shadow Minister for Justice and Police for her question. However,

before answering it I point out to the people in the gallery that the members opposite want to run New South Wales. It is disgraceful behaviour.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The Deputy Premier knows he should address his comments through the Chair and not behave like a lair to the gallery.

The SPEAKER: Order! The point of order is upheld. The Deputy Premier should address his comments through the Chair.

Mr TROY GRANT: On behalf of the Fifty-sixth Parliament, I apologise to the people in the gallery for the behaviour they are witnessing today. It is not the sort of behaviour we would expect from a responsible government that has their interests at the heart of every decision it makes. I thank the shadow Minister for her question. I know how supportive she is of our NSW Police Force, as she knows how supportive I am of the NSW Police Force. I am not sure of the source or the exact content of that commentary. I am happy for the shadow Minister to clarify that for me.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: It was Gareth Ward.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order and the member for Strathfield knows it.

Mr TROY GRANT: As I was saying, the shadow Minister knows how supportive I am of our Police Force—as are all members on this side of the House. I know you, Madam Speaker, support the Police Force and the valuable contribution that it makes. Although the member has identified who made the comments, I am not aware of the specific language used.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is answering the question.

Mr TROY GRANT: I do not support the alleged comments nor understand the context in which they were made, whether they were frivolous or otherwise. Our police officers know that they have the total confidence of every member of the New South Wales Government because of the wonderful work that they do to protect and serve our community.

PLANNING

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning. How will the New South Wales State priorities for the planning system promote confidence, certainty and sustainable growth for New South Wales?

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

Mr ROB STOKES: I take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Hornsby on his thirty-fourth birthday yesterday. I understand that the member for Kogarah turns 36 today. That means the member for Hornsby can still go on Contiki tours while sadly the member for Kogarah cannot. In a few years the member for Kogarah will be able to join the Minister for Community Services on Trafalgar tours.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: That was clearly in breach of Standing Order 73.

Mr ROB STOKES: Confidence, certainty and sustainable growth are all essential elements of a great planning system, and each of these elements is reflected in the New South Wales Government's central priorities for our State. We aim to boost confidence and certainty by increasing housing supply with 50,000 new homes being approved each year across the State. This target is necessary to address a historical undersupply of new homes, to provide opportunities for the thousands of new residents coming to New South Wales every year, and to address the changing nature of households in our great State. This Government believes that access to well-designed and well-located housing is a fundamental

objective of any civilised society.

Our priority reflects our determination to meet our community's need for more homes. A related priority is for 90 per cent of housing developments to be assessed within 40 days. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act is predicated on the assumption that 40 days is a reasonable time in which an ordinary development application should be assessed. Yet across this State councils have consistently lacked the resources, processes and scale to meet this assessment timeframe—a weakness that costs billions in unnecessary delay. That is why stronger councils and simpler laws will be supported to ensure that the new homes required are not delayed by unnecessary bureaucracy.

While new homes are necessary, homes are not alone sufficient to provide for sustainable growth in New South Wales. While we prioritise the need to provide people with a decent place to live, we also prioritise the need to provide opportunities for employment, which, together with housing, can be a central ingredient to support human dignity. That is why we are determined to halve the time taken to assess major employment-generating State-significant developments. While many State-significant development proposals are complex, it is simply unacceptable for the assessment of a clear and complete project application to take more than 1,000 days. Yet that is the assessment processing time experienced for many State-significant developments.

Excessive assessment timeframes can create ongoing uncertainty and stress for communities and local businesses, and can raise serious management issues for proponents. For example, it is impractical for businesses to hold capital for more than 1,000 days on the expectation of an approval that may or may not be granted. How can a business make other investment decisions while a project is being assessed for nearly three years? This Government is committed to streamlining the development assessment process and reducing timeframes, whilst ensuring that assessments are rigorous and balanced. Already we have initiated reforms for State-significant developments to reduce assessment timeframes by 170 days, including the introduction of standard environmental assessment requirements, and tighter benchmarks for government agencies and case managers across government who are responsible for ensuring that assessment processes are strong, robust and timely.

These three priorities for our planning system are designed to promote confidence in investors, from first home buyers to large companies, and to provide the predictability that people need to make an investment in our State. All of this is not simply about more homes and faster approvals; it is fundamentally about people, and making people's lives better. This Government prioritises homes and jobs because they are critical to meeting the basic needs of our community, and that is why homes and jobs are a focus of reform in the planning system. As we grow, we need to ensure that this growth is as much about quality as it is about quantity.

Yesterday, we heard heartfelt tributes across the House for cricketing great, Arthur Morris. That name is shared by an urban reformer from Britain at the turn of last century. He saw, as we do now, the need to ensure that growth translated into human progress that improved people's lives through good design; thorough, strategic planning; and through thoughtful, ongoing consultation with the community. Through reforms like the Greater Sydney Commission, the Apartment Design Guide and urban transformation projects in decayed or disused parts of Sydney and elsewhere, this Government is committed to using our planning system to prioritise action that will make people's lives better.

The SPEAKER: I advise the House that former Attorney General John Dowd has been in the gallery. He was probably wondering what had happened to the place since he left.

DARKINJUNG LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Mr DAVID HARRIS: My question is directed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Given her ministerial responsibility for Aboriginal economic development, was the Minister consulted on the Government's decision to terminate negotiations with the Darkinjung community on the location of the

new interurban stabling facility after three years of good-faith negotiations?

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: Transport for NSW and RailCorp had discussions with Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council regarding the potential use of their land for a train stabling yard. That proposal was not pursued and the chief executive officer of the land council, Mr Sean Gordon, was advised. The Government subsequently identified a need for maintenance and stabling facilities for the new intercity fleet. The requirements for a maintenance and stabling facility are significantly different from the requirements for the stabling yard that was previously discussed with Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council. Transport for NSW met with Mr Sean Gordon in March 2015 to discuss whether the land council's site may be suitable for the facility. On 17 June 2015, Transport for NSW wrote to Mr Gordon to advise that development of the site was not being pursued.

STATE PRIORITIES

Mr MARK COURE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing. How will delivery of the Government's State priorities protect our children and our most vulnerable residents?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I note that everybody is noting people's birthdays. I think the member for Oatley's birthday was last Monday. I wish him happy birthday; at 37 he is still on the right side of 40 and he does a great job. I thank the member for Oatley for his question. I know he is passionate about ensuring that the young people of New South Wales have every opportunity to be housed and to live safely while they grow up. The Premier has focused on children and youth homelessness in two of his 12 priorities. That is a good indication that this Government is firmly committed to ensuring that young people are safe and also are provided with opportunities to reach out and to achieve whatever they possibly can in their lives.

The Department of Family and Community Services [FACS] budget was increased in the recent budget to \$6.1 billion, which will allow all social disadvantage to be addressed. The former Government left the Baird Government with many challenges, and it has faced those challenges. The Government is determined to improve the lot of as many young people as possible. The Premier first addressed the number of young people who repeatedly are reported as being at risk of serious harm. That is an issue that should touch every member. A reduction in the number of children reported to be at risk would be an excellent outcome for our young people. The Government is doing a great deal already, but it will do much more.

Reducing the number of children who find themselves in difficulty is a challenge, but the Government is endeavouring to combine traditional methods of government funding with private funding to intervene earlier and to ensure that families have the support they need. By doing so, we hope to ensure that young people and children receive the support they need. A few weeks ago I was in the Doonside community with our excellent Treasurer. As part of the private funding initiative the Government has introduced, my department now is dealing with State funding, or taxpayers' funding, and private funding. The Treasurer and I think that the Newpin Social Benefit Bond is unbelievable. The scheme is being conducted by UnitingCare.

People whose families are dysfunctional because of mental health issues, addiction issues associated with alcohol and drugs, poverty, domestic violence and a whole range of other disadvantages stand every chance of not knowing how to parent. If they have a child, it is likely that that child will not experience the benefit of good parenting skills. Under the Newpin model, private funding will support young people to achieve their full potential through good parenting practices. The Treasurer and I sat with some young mums and dads who had had children removed, but who later had their children restored to them. That is a great initiative, but it is not the only Government initiative being implemented. Last night the member for Parramatta and I were at Parramatta.

Dr Geoff Lee: Thank you, Minister, for coming.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank the member for Parramatta for inviting me to visit Parramatta. We had a pop-up Housing NSW office so that we could reach out to people in their own environment. Many homeless people experience the problems to which I referred earlier. They may have mental health issues or other dysfunction issues caused by disability or addiction that lead to a whole range of disadvantages. Last night while talking to some young people, we heard from a young mum who had already had one child removed from her care. She was a very nice person and she told us that she was worried about her second child, who will be born in January next year, also being removed. The Department of Family and Community Services has introduced a whole new program that will provide support for people like that young woman.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: As a result of that program, that young mum is already receiving support through some of the initiatives that the Government has implemented through the department. One such support service with which the department is hoping to connect that young woman is typical. The service is being trialled at the Blacktown Hospital, where there are perinatal services for young women who are at risk of having their child removed from their care when it is born. The program already is showing that if intervention is undertaken early enough and if the necessary support is provided earlier to address risky behaviours, young women have a much greater likelihood of their children remaining with them. Therefore, those children have more chance of growing up in a supportive environment. With private money and government money, this Government is taking appropriate action to ensure that we can attack the very issue that the Premier has targeted—ensuring that fewer newborns are likely to be reported to be at risk of significant harm.

The Premier has also made it a priority to increase the number of young people moving out of specialist homelessness services and into secure housing. That is a grand ambition to which the Government is very committed. This year alone the Government has committed \$182 million to specialist homelessness services. We expect that approximately 15,000 young people will access those services, which represents an increase of 3 per cent. I thank all of the service organisations with which the Government is working, such as Homelessness NSW and Twenty10, which looks after young people who are experiencing gender issues and a range of other challenges. The Government is willing to listen and, irrespective of the issue, it is willing to work with partners to endeavour to provide a better outcome for young people and to ensure that youth homelessness is reduced substantially during this term of government.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: My question is directed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. How is the Government addressing the fact that up to one in three couples who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer [LGBTIQ] experience domestic violence?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for Sydney for his question and commend him for his work on behalf of his constituents. He is a hardworking member and he is someone who supports the Government's efforts in preventing domestic violence in our communities. The New South Wales Government is working closely with the non-government sector to deliver services and supports to victims and their families in a way that meets their needs. I know that governments, whatever the amount of money they invest or the legislation they enact, cannot alone improve the lives of the people they serve, and they never could. The challenge for governments, policymakers, service providers, educators and consumers is: How do we work together? How do we partner like we have never partnered before to deliver a twenty-first century service system? It is partnership that will be crucial going forward.

Given the complex nature of domestic and family violence, our work together across the

government and non-government sectors and the broader community is the only way we will provide people with the support they need and make their lives better. Recently I joined the member for Sydney in announcing that the AIDS Council of New South Wales [ACON] would receive one of four grants under the New South Wales Government's It Stops Here Prevention projects initiative. Funding of \$115,000 will allow ACON to deliver activities that focus on primary prevention initiatives for the LGBTIQ community and to develop strategies that are tailored to prevent domestic and family violence in those contexts. People within the LGBTIQ community are less likely to identify the abuse as domestic and family violence and they are less likely to seek support or to find appropriate services that meet their specific needs, or the needs of their family.

Domestic violence is a crime. It is about power and control. It is a crime that means too many women and children suffer and tragically die as a result of violence. In every community, in every one of our electorates, it can reach any household, any street, and any suburb. People are suffering at the hands of perpetrators and many keep suffering at the hands of repeat offenders. Domestic violence has one of the highest reoffending rates—21.5 per cent—of all offence groups, according to data published by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR]. What does this mean?

It means that between 2012 and 2014, 9,612 domestic violence offenders reoffended within 24 months. That cannot continue. That is higher than the property crime reoffending rate at 20.3 per cent, higher than the driving offence reoffending rate at 14.8 per cent and higher than the violent crime reoffending rate at 14.5 per cent. That is why the Premier has made it a priority to reduce the proportion of domestic violence perpetrators reoffending within 12 months by 5 per cent. It is a bold target, and we are under no illusion that it will not be an easy task. But we have to make that change happen and we must set that target in order to drive change.

The Government is delivering on those commitments. I previously updated the House on how the Government is delivering on our election commitment to pilot a domestic violence disclosure scheme—an Australian first—which is another valuable tool that can be used to prevent domestic violence. A critical component in holding perpetrators to account is an effective justice process for dealing with these cases throughout New South Wales. That is why the Government has implemented groundbreaking domestic violence evidence-in-chief reforms. This evidence can be collected when police are called to a domestic violence incident. Last month the Attorney General and I announced a review of domestic violence sentencing.

This analysis will help identify any gaps in the criminal justice system. The Government is also improving its service system to support victims through It Stops Here. A key part of It Stops Here is Safer Pathway, a new approach to victims safety assessment, referral and service coordination. It was launched in Orange and Waverley in September last year, and as at 1 July this year we have expanded to four new sites, Tweed Heads, Parramatta, Bankstown and Broken Hill. Shared knowledge is a powerful thing, and that is what those safety action meetings are based on.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Government is also investing \$5.28 million over three years to pilot the delivery of community-based men's behaviour change programs across four locations in New South Wales. This puts the focus back on perpetrators to take responsibility for their violent and controlling behaviours. Changing these behaviours is critical. That is why the Government also supports the Men's Referral Service, a 24/7 men's telephone counselling and referral service to provide support for men who recognise that violence is unacceptable. Our Government has heard the call and recognised that we need to educate our young people about domestic violence.

On 3 July I was pleased to announce that young people will soon be empowered with the knowledge, understanding and skills to help recognise and prevent domestic and family violence under new changes to the school syllabus. From the start of the first school term in 2016 the mandatory New

South Wales years 7-10 PDHPE syllabus will be updated to explicitly include domestic and family violence prevention. We are able to do all of this because we have a vision, a drive and a determination to see through what will be difficult. I am proud that the Premier and the Government have made domestic violence prevention a priority.

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

STATE PRIORITIES

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy. How will delivery of the Government's State priorities protect our children and our most vulnerable residents?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his question and for his interest in the matter.

The SPEAKER: Order! Is there a ball in that box?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I cannot tell you what is in the box.

The SPEAKER: Order! If you play with your balls this afternoon I will be very upset.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I have made it clear to the Government frontbench and members opposite that there will be no playing with any balls. The Liberal-Nationals Government has made enormous strides in rebuilding the State's economy, supporting the creation of jobs and making New South Wales number one again. Not only have we officially put the economic doldrums of those depressing 16 years under Labor behind us; under Premier Baird and Deputy Premier Grant New South Wales is surging ahead. In the words of the great singer-songwriter Van Morrison, we have crossed, "from the dark end of the street to the bright side of the road", or in our case the bright side of WestConnex or NorthConnex. And we are not finished yet. Not only will this Government ensure that New South Wales leads the nation; we are determined to make our State a regional leader.

One cannot help but notice the beauty of cranes dotting the harbour city's skyline and the hordes of workers in their high-visibility clothing driving this State forward. And this is being replicated in regional centres across the State. These are the obvious signs of change in New South Wales—signs that confirm our status as the economic powerhouse of the nation; first in every economic indicator. Under the regime of members opposite, crane operators and high-visibility clothing manufacturers were going out of business. The Labor Party does not respect workers. It only sees them as a potential revenue stream to prop up its Sussex Street headquarters. The bright side is that since this Government came to power more than 251,000 additional jobs have been created due to our policies and initiatives.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: It is a matter of work health and safety. The box on the table with unidentified contents is moving. I seek an assurance that it is safe for the brains of this State and members opposite to stay in the Chamber.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It is currently safe.

The SPEAKER: Order! The box is moving slightly.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Let us flash back to the dark days at the end of the street under Labor. It gives me no pleasure to remind the House that back in April 2009 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that workers in New South Wales were losing their jobs at the rate of 500 a day. Last week the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that New South Wales added an additional 9,200 jobs in August.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members should not worry about the box. It is okay. All that matters is that it is not a bomb. It is not a cat, a kitten, a fox or a bird. It is a battery-operated toy.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The figures also showed that New South Wales has added half of all new jobs in Australia over the past year. Rather than having the highest unemployment rate in the country—the situation that existed in those dark Labor days—New South Wales now has the lowest rate of unemployment in the nation. But wait—there is more good news to report. The work participation rate for New South Wales is now more than 64.2 per cent—the highest level on record. It has now been growing for seven consecutive months. These jobs statistics are backed by surveys that show that businesses in this State are enjoying record confidence levels. It does not stop there. According to the latest CommSec State of the State's economic performance report, New South Wales has gone from being a pathetically poor performer to the nation's number one State. We have proudly held that position for a year now.

The report also indicates that small and medium enterprises [SME] regard the New South Wales Government as the most supportive State or Territory government in Australia, alongside the Northern Territory. Under Labor, support was something worn as undergarments. The SMEs gave the New South Wales Government a positive rating in the latest Sensis report, which highlighted infrastructure development and good policies by this Government as the key reasons for their support. That is vastly different to what the Sensis Business Index found in its February 2011 quarterly report, which indicated that the then Labor Government was rated by SMEs as the least supportive in the country. These outcomes are at the heart of what the New South Wales Government is trying to achieve for the economy—laying a fertile environment for businesses to thrive, with these businesses in turn creating jobs.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: We have delivered, and continue to deliver, record levels of investment in infrastructure—\$68.6 billion over the next four years to ensure the long-term viability of our State. We have committed a further \$20 billion through our Rebuilding NSW plan, which will boost the economy by almost \$300 billion in just over 20 years. The Government is supporting the engines of economic growth—small businesses—by reducing red tape and reducing the costs of doing business. We are focussed on creating the right environment for those businesses to thrive. We have laid solid foundations but we will not rest on our achievements. Indeed, we are ramping up our efforts to foster jobs creation. And not just any jobs—jobs for the future in established industries and emerging technologies; jobs that New South Wales, as Australia's leading knowledge economy, is well positioned to create.

We all recall when the then Labor Premier, Bob Carr, announced to one and all that Sydney was full—another typically pessimistic proclamation from the Labor Party. This Government has taken precisely the opposite approach. When we came to office, we inherited the lowest housing starts in 50 years and on 1 September our great Minister for Planning, Rob Stokes, announced that some 61,000 building approvals were recorded in the 12 months to July; the highest result in 41 years. In August the Premier and I announced Jobs for NSW; a business-led initiative to create a further 150,000 new jobs in New South Wales over the next four years with a minimum of 30 per cent of the Jobs for NSW Fund allocated to rural and regional areas outside Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. I am pleased to announce this initiative is progressing and was passed in Parliament on Tuesday. But what did Labor want? It wanted to stack the jobs on the board with, you guessed it, union mates; one from Unions NSW, one mate from the South Coast Labor Council and one mate from Newcastle Trades Hall. I remind members that on this side it is jobs for New South Wales, not jobs for the boys. [*Time expired.*]

Question time concluded at 3.20 p.m.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

Reference

Mr JAI ROWELL: I inform the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has received a referral from the Premier, and the Minister for Western Sydney to conduct an inquiry into the Political Donations Final Report and the Government's response, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

PETITIONS

The Speaker announced that the following petitions signed by more than 10,000 persons were lodged for presentation:

Council Amalgamations

Petition opposing the amalgamation of Holroyd local government area and requesting that it remain independent, received from **Mr Luke Foley**.

Port Kembla Steelworks

Petition calling on the Government to protect jobs at the Port Kembla steelworks by specifying that quality Australian steel is to be used in New South Wales infrastructure projects, received by **Mr Gareth Ward**.

Discussions on petitions set down as orders of the day for a future day.

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

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Edgecliff Railway Station and Interchange

Petition requesting that the New South Wales Government upgrade the Edgecliff railway station and interchange to provide full access, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Inner-city Social Housing

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

Same-sex Marriage

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

Pet Shops

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

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 petitions signed by more than 500 persons were lodged for presentation:

Rail Services

Petition opposing changes to the Transport Administration Act which would allow the disposal of rail lines and the downgrading of rail services, received from **Mr Tim Crakanthorp**.

Edgecliff Railway Station and Interchange

Petition requesting that the New South Wales Government upgrade the Edgecliff railway station and interchange to provide full access, received from **Ms Gabrielle Upton**.

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

The Hon. Andrew Constance—Woodford Railway Station Lifts—lodged 12 August 2015 (Ms Trish Doyle)

The Hon. Andrew Constance—Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Services—lodged 12 August 2015 (Ms Tamara Smith)

The Hon. Troy Grant—Licensed Premises Trading Restrictions—lodged 13 August 2015 (Mr Kevin Anderson)

Pursuant to sessional order Government business proceeded with.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PUBLIC HOUSING—ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR) BILL 2015

Consideration in Detail

Consideration resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [3.21 p.m.]: Earlier when I was discussing amendments, I was at the point of referring to Opposition amendment No. 13, which is "Evidentiary certificate not conclusive proof if tenant satisfies Tribunal of certain factors". The Opposition is proposing an amendment to section 156A with regard to evidentiary certificates. Under new section 56A (3), if the tribunal is satisfied that a strike notice was issued and that a tenant did not make a submission within the minimum time period, then this omission would constitute conclusive proof that the matter referred to in the strike notice has indeed occurred.

This amendment will give tenants the opportunity to satisfy the tribunal that their failure to make a submission against the issuing of a strike notice in that time period was the result of factors outside of their control or some other reason. This would ensure that a vulnerable tenant, such as a victim of domestic violence, who did not have access to their mail due to a controlling partner, or a tenant with an intellectual disability, or a tenant from a culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] background who would have had the opportunity to contest a strike notice would not have held against them as conclusive proof of that allegation their failure to respond if they did not have a legitimate reason for their omission to respond. I hope the Minister understands that this amendment will be critical in dealing with vulnerable tenants with disabilities, for example, or victims of domestic violence unable to meet that time period.

In his speech the Minister asserted that there would be an appeal process for termination orders, but if this law is applied correctly, in the case of mandatory terminations the appeal panel will have its hands tied by the mandatory application of these laws. I put on record some of the views of legal centres that are in a position to try to explain this. I am a little bit lost for words as to why the Minister made his earlier statement, and it concerns me that perhaps there is not a full appreciation or understanding of the appeal process at the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT], and the type of appeal that a tenant can seek from NCAT. In reality the Act is what the tenant will have to rely on when attempting to appeal a decision regarding a mandatory termination order.

No matter how unjust the outcome, the appeal panel could not overturn a mandatory termination unless the tribunal was wrong in finding that the conditions requiring mandatory termination were met. Once those conditions are met, the legislation requires the tribunal to terminate. There is no option to do otherwise. The appeal panel would be limited by this requirement in the legislation. Nothing in the legislation proposed by this Government allows the tribunal or the appeal panel to consider the individual circumstances of the case or the appropriateness of the outcome. While the appeal panel could consider a decision on the basis that it was not fair and equitable, the legislation requires the tribunal to mandatorily terminate once the conditions are met, regardless of the outcome.

I hope the Minister can respond to that because the Minister made that statement. It is important that while we are considering this in detail that we be clear about the type of appeal process that exists for tenants. The concern that has been reiterated by many on this side of the House is that while we are utterly opposed to people residing in housing who are conducting criminal activities within the premises—we know it is wrong; we do not condone that kind of behaviour—it is important that, whilst we are trying to provide a safe and secure environment for housing tenants, innocent parties are not evicted from their premises due to the actions of others that they are unable to control.

I reiterate that the Opposition supports the work of Family and Community Services staff. I know these staff often deal with very difficult cases. All members of this Chamber deal with housing matters, and our staff become very stressed when dealing with some types of housing matters that are brought to our offices. The Minister, who is a former Attorney General, has made a decision to enact certain laws. In doing so it is important to make sure that we get those laws right. I suspect the Government will not accept the Opposition's amendments. Earlier I heard the Minister argue that those amendments were provided to him only today. I remind the Minister that I foreshadowed all of these amendments several weeks ago.

When the Minister conducted his consultation, as he should in preparing this legislation, I am sure he would have received advice from the Law Society, the Bar Association, legal centres, the tenants union and others on how best to draft this legislation with safeguards to ensure that individual tenants, and potentially co-tenants, who are not guilty of any criminal acts whatsoever are not evicted from their tenancies. That is a very important distinction. If the Government does not consider reviewing section 154D in this House, I certainly hope the other place will give proper consideration to this section and will better understand the need to enable the tribunal to satisfy itself that any eviction does not create undue hardship, for example, and that any termination orders will not unnecessarily make life harder for a tenant who is innocent of any criminal behaviour or activity.

The Opposition has thought long and hard about these particular amendments. We do not oppose the bill; we want to provide a safe and secure environment for our housing tenants. I note that the majority are law-abiding citizens who enjoy, and want to continue to enjoy, living in a secure and safe environment. But, as is always the case, it is not all black and white; there are always grey areas. That is why this State has a tribunal, and that is why the tribunal should be able to consider extenuating circumstances. I note in particular section 154D. I hope the Opposition's other amendments are supported in this House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [3.33 p.m.]: I appreciate that the member for Bankstown has consulted, but I am not sure she has consulted the 139,960 tenants who would not be affected by this, except if the amendments that she has moved were to be carried. There are a handful of cases each year, about 40 out of 140,000, involving tenants who actually create havoc for other tenants and will be the subject of mandatory provisions, that is, the category of show cause offences, and categories that relate to drug matters and others that I addressed earlier. It would seem that the Labor Party has prepared its amendments based on about 40 cases a year, trying to give those tenants the right to stay in their public housing and continue to cause misery for other tenants. The Government will not accept these amendments.

We will agree to some amendments when we move our amendments that strike a compromise. But, first of all, I address Opposition amendment No. 1. It proposes that tenants who have taken steps to try to remedy a breach can have that considered by the tribunal. The problem with that is that we are dealing with mandatory issues for a handful of people who cause absolute grief through their involvement in the most serious of crimes. The Government does not accept that amendment because it would reintroduce discretion. By Opposition amendment No. 2, the member argues that the submission date should be increased to 28 days. The Government will not agree with that amendment; but we will compromise and propose 21 days, as the Government's amendments indicate. We have listened to people's concerns on that front.

As to Opposition amendments 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9, they relate to issues that I indicated in the second reading speech will be dealt with by way of policy approaches by the Department of Family and Community Services. Appropriate consideration will be given to people with particular needs, and we will make sure that fairness and equity prevail. But we are looking after the 139,960 tenants who do not cause those major problems. Admittedly, there are a greater number of people involved in issues around 21-day submissions and so on, and particularly the three strikes issue. But all those issues can be dealt with by way of policy directions from the Government. I advise the member and others members in the House who are concerned about those issues that we will make sure they are given appropriate directions, so that people who have particular issues are given every opportunity not to have any action taken that results in them being removed from their properties.

This is all about making sure the good tenants—as members, one after another, said—have a safe environment. But there is clear delineation for those who behave very poorly and indeed involve themselves in criminal matters that could see criminal charges brought against them. The Government rejects the Opposition's amendments. In due course, we will move further amendments to our bill, as was indicated approximately 36 hours ago to the shadow Minister, her party and other members in this place. That should be sufficient time for all members to become familiar with those amendments. I understand, from talking with various members, that most members agree with the amendments that the Government intends to move.

Question—That Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 13 [C2015-043C] be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 35

Ms Aitchison
Mr Atalla
Mr Barr
Ms Burney
Ms Car
Ms Catley
Mr Chanthivong

Mr Greenwich
Mr Harris
Ms Harrison
Ms Haylen
Mr Hoenig
Ms Hornery
Mr Kamper

Mr Minns
Mr Parker
Mr Robertson
Ms T. F. Smith
Ms Washington
Ms Watson
Mr Zangari

Mr Crakanthorp
Mr Daley
Mr Dib
Ms Doyle
Ms Finn
Mr Foley

Ms Leong
Mr Lynch
Dr McDermott
Ms McKay
Mr Mehan
Ms Mihailuk

Tellers,
Mr Lulich
Mr Warren

Noes, 48

Mr Anderson
Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Mr Barilaro
Ms Berejiklian
Mr Brookes
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Coure
Mr Crouch
Mr Dominello
Mr Evans
Mr Fraser
Mr Gee
Ms Goward
Mr Gulaptis
Mr Hazzard

Mr Henskens
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Humphries
Mr Johnsen
Mr Kean
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 Rowell
Mr Sidoti
Mrs Skinner
Mr Speakman
Mr Stokes
Mr Taylor
Mr Toole
Mr Tudehope
Ms Upton
Mr Ward
Mr Williams
Mrs Williams

Tellers,
Mr Bromhead
Mr Patterson

Pairs

Ms Hay
Mr Park
Ms Smith

Mr Baird
Mr Elliott
Mr George

Question resolved in the negative.

Opposition amendments Nos 1-13 [C2015-043C] negatived.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [3.45 p.m.], by leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 to 6 on sheet C2015-049D in globo:

No. 1 Time for submissions extended from 14 to 21 days

Page 4, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154C (2) (g), line 32. Omit "14". Insert instead "21".

No. 2 Time for application for review of strike notice extended from 14 to 21 days

Page 4, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154C (4) (b), line 46. Omit "14". Insert instead

"21".

No. 3 Exclusion of section 90 applications based on conduct of occupier other than tenant from absolute requirement for termination order

Page 6, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154D, insert after line 6:

- (2) Subsection (1) (a) does not apply if the application for the order is based on an act of a person who although not a tenant is occupying or jointly occupying the residential premises and not on an act of the tenant.

No. 4 Inclusion of section 90 applications based on conduct of occupier other than tenant in requirement for termination order unless exceptional circumstances established

Page 6, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154D (2) (a), lines 12–14. Omit "(and, in the case of section 90 (1) (b), the injury does not constitute grievous bodily harm within the meaning of the *Crimes Act 1900*)". Insert instead "(and subsection (1) of this section does not apply)".

No. 5 Alteration of reference to brothel

Page 6, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154D (2) (b) (i), lines 22 and 23. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

- (i) as a brothel within the meaning of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, or

No. 6 Neighbourhood impact statement only to be submitted if Tribunal finds tenant has breached tenancy agreement

Page 7, Schedule 1 [8], proposed section 154F (1), lines 18–20. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

- (1) If the Tribunal finds that a tenant under a social housing tenancy agreement has breached the agreement and the Tribunal is considering whether to make a termination order, the Tribunal is to give the landlord an opportunity to submit a neighbourhood impact statement and is to have regard to any such statement that is submitted.

Referring to Government amendments Nos 1 and 2, concerns have been raised that the minimum time period of 14 days for a tenant to make a submission to ask for a review is too short. The Government understands that 14 days may not be sufficient time for those who may have a mental illness or other issue to organise themselves and seek assistance. As a result I am moving an amendment to increase the minimum time frame for a tenant to make a submission or ask for a review to 21 days. Obviously that is not quite as much as the Labor Party was proposing, but it is having in mind the need to act reasonably quickly in order to safeguard other tenants. We think 21 days is reasonable.

Amendments Nos 3 and 4 address the issue of the tenant not knowing that illegal behaviour is taking place. During our consultation with stakeholders, concerns were raised that the tenant may not know that illegal behaviour is taking place or may be acting under duress. In certain circumstances the Government considers that a tenant should not be subject to the one strike provisions of the bill where the illegal conduct was committed by an occupant. That is why I have moved an amendment that, in the case of bodily harm or damage to a premises, seeks to amend the criteria for terminating a tenancy under the

one strike provision. The criteria will apply only if a tenant has intentionally or recklessly caused or permitted the harm or damage.

Amendment 5 relates to individual sex workers being caught by the one strike provisions. Representations were also made on behalf of sex workers who pointed out that the definition of "brothel" used in the bill could result in sex workers who are causing no inconvenience to their neighbours being subject to the one strike provisions. The Government accepts this point and seeks to amend the bill to use the definition of "brothel" set out in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 rather than the Restricted Premises Act 1943. This would exclude from the one strike criteria those premises that are used or likely to be used for the purposes of prostitution by no more than one sex worker. Of course, under normal circumstances that would be a person living in her own home who is involved in such activities.

Amendment 6 relates to neighbourhood impact statements. I have also heard concerns regarding the tabling of a neighbourhood impact statement in NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal proceedings. It was always the intention that such statements be tabled at the tribunal only when a breach is proven and the tribunal is considering whether to make a termination order. To put the matter beyond doubt I have moved an amendment to clarify that position. The Government has listened, it has consulted and it has made amendments to its own bill as per its undertaking. I commend these amendments and, in due course, the bill to the House.

Question—That Government amendments Nos 1 to 6 [C2015-049D] be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Government amendments Nos 1 to 6 [C2015-049D] agreed to.

Schedule 1 as amended agreed to.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Consideration in detail concluded.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2015-16

Debate resumed from 10 September 2015.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [3.50 p.m.]: I note at the outset that the member for Kiama said he is glad he is seated at the table. I hope I will be able to deliver my speech in peace and without interruption. When I spoke last time, I was outlining how important Western Sydney's economy could be to the Illawarra region. I made the point that Western Sydney is the third largest economy in Australia after the Sydney and Melbourne central business districts [CBDs]. Over the next decade, the Western Sydney region will also be home to an international airport. It is forecast that up to 30,000 jobs could be located at this airport alone and that by 2050 economic activity could be increased by \$9 billion. The

region is a major contributor to exports and imports.

It is long overdue that the political, business and community stakeholders of the Illawarra consider the enormous potential of the Western Sydney economy. We need to partner with it and leverage it to our mutual advantage. This means linking our region directly to Western Sydney by completing the Maldon to Dombarton rail freight link. Western Sydney does not have its own port, but we do. The Port of Kembla is a regional asset and it can become the port of choice for Western Sydney. It also means upgrading Picton Road to dual carriage status. It means serious engagement with investors, which was one of the key points that Labor introduced in its 10-point plan to secure jobs for the Illawarra on 4 September. The complacency that has beset the Illawarra and its continued focus on just linking up with the Sydney CBD must change. It is time to broaden our regional economic outlook to include Western Sydney.

On 24 August BlueScope Steel finally put its cards on the table. We now know it is seriously assessing two options, both of which are bad for jobs in the Illawarra. It has not taken off the table the option of shutting down the Port Kembla steelworks. We cannot continue with a relaxed business-as-usual outlook in the Illawarra and we should not tolerate any level of government having this attitude. Today Illawarra State members of Parliament from both political parties received a 15,300 signatory petition from organisers of Save Our Steel group, led by Ian Waters from K and R Fabricators. It is no small achievement to organise thousands of signatures for a petition. I congratulate Mr Waters and his colleagues on their tremendous efforts. On Saturday a mass community rally will take place in the Crown Street Mall in Wollongong to show widespread community support for the region's steel industry.

As part of Labor's 10-point plan to secure jobs for the Illawarra, I take this opportunity to call on the State Government to commence the \$250 million upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital from 1 July 2016. I also call on the Government to commence construction of the Albion Park Rail bypass from 1 July 2017. Those two projects alone represent an \$800 million investment that the Illawarra region requires immediately. It is now up to the State and Federal governments to outline a long-term plan to ensure the steel industry in the Illawarra survives and is made sustainable in a challenging global marketplace. I urge both the State and Federal governments to do so as a matter of urgency.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.54 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak in debate on the Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2015-16 and to highlight some of the outstanding things that are happening across the Kiama electorate. Without the reforms of this Government, there is no doubt that we would not be in the position in which we are today. When this Government came to office 4½ years ago, New South Wales was ranked last—number eight; we were at the bottom.

Ms Anna Watson: We have heard this speech.

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection from my friend the member for Shellharbour.

Ms Anna Watson: He is like a budgie. Somebody should give him a mirror.

Mr GARETH WARD: The member for Shellharbour will hear it time and again because Labor left this State at the bottom of the list—number eight. Today, this State is number one again.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: This is tedious repetition. I ask that the member for Kiama tell us something we have not heard before.

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

Mr GARETH WARD: I will continue to come into this Chamber day after day to remind members opposite of their failures during their 16 years in office.

Ms Anna Watson: When is your Government going to start the Albion Park Rail bypass? When

is your Government going to start the Shellharbour public hospital?

Mr GARETH WARD: The member for Shellharbour is so wonderful. When it comes to self-deprecation the member for Shellharbour has volume. The member for Shellharbour just referred to the Albion Park Rail bypass. She had an opportunity at the 2015 election to promise the Albion Park Rail bypass. It was not in Labor's 10-year infrastructure plan. The member for Shellharbour talks not only about a project she did not promise; she voted against it three times in motions that have come before the House. She also voted against the asset leasing plan that shifts capital from one side of the balance sheet to the other, and the member for Shellharbour also voted against the long-term lease of poles and wires.

Ms Anna Watson: We want a start date.

Mr GARETH WARD: I again acknowledge the member's interjection. We made it clear in the 2015 election campaign that this project will start in this term of office. When I became the member for Kiama no work had been done on this project.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Shellharbour will come to order. I cannot hear the member for Kiama, which is unusual.

Mr GARETH WARD: We only had an outline in the local environmental plan for the Shellharbour and Wollongong areas and we had to start the work. Nothing was done about the Albion Park Rail bypass during Labor's 16 years in office. Labor voted against the very means of funding the Albion Park Rail bypass, which the member for Shellharbour spoke about.

Ms Anna Watson: We just want the start date. We want to start in 2016.

Mr GARETH WARD: Every time the member for Shellharbour opens her mouth, she subtracts from the sum total of human knowledge. If her constituents witnessed her behaviour in this House today—voting against infrastructure, voting against jobs—they would be appalled at her performance. Why did the member for Shellharbour not promise the upgrade of the Shellharbour Hospital at the 2015 election? Why did the member for Shellharbour not promise the Albion Park Rail bypass?

Ms Anna Watson: We promised planning money just like you guys did.

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection. Planning money is not going to upgrade the hospital. The salmon just jumped on the hook. The member for Shellharbour promised planning money. That is not going to fix congestion and hospitals. The member for Shellharbour deserves a gold star; she has been absolutely wonderful. All Labor does is talk, hold committees and have conversations with the trade union movement. Labor members will fix it. They will come up with a plan.

Ms Anna Watson: You are in government now.

Mr GARETH WARD: Yes, thank goodness we are. If we were not in government, New South Wales would have lost its triple-A credit rating and that would have cost the taxpayers \$3.75 billion, which we did not have.

Mr David Harris: We would not have lost it.

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Wyong. We were on negative outlook.

Mr David Harris: And we had a surplus.

Mr GARETH WARD: No. The Labor Party did not meet a single spending target in 16 years.

Members opposite left us with a \$30 billion infrastructure backlog. They left us with a \$5.2 billion deficit and the member for Shellharbour has the gall to talk to me about fiscal rectitude. I would rather go to the Greek Government than receive financial advice from her. What would the member for Shellharbour know about fiscal rectitude? When we came to office it was all over the budget papers. Like a dog returning to its vomit, members of the Labor Party go back to debt and back to deficit—back to the same sort of Labor government. It does not matter where they are; members of the Labor Party form the same type of government. It is a real shame that Mark Jones did not win the seat of Shellharbour at the last election as he would have been a much better member.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: I remind the member for Kiama that I had a 9 per cent swing to me. There was a 5 per cent swing against the member for Kiama.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Shellharbour will resume her seat.

Mr GARETH WARD: At times like this I am reminded of Winston Churchill's words, "Democracy is the worst system of government, except for all the others." The election of the member for Shellharbour is emblematic of that. I would rather have had a member for Shellharbour who supported jobs and investment. Mark Jones would have done that. The member opposite has voted against every measure that the Government has tried to introduce into this Parliament in order to create jobs and investment. I ask the member for Shellharbour why she voted against our Jobs Action Plan to support small business.

The member for Shellharbour took to the last election a policy that would have meant a \$5.1 billion increase in taxes on small business to pay for infrastructure in Sydney. She went to the last election, after talking about the Albion Park Rail bypass for four years, without promising it. Why did she not promise it? The member for Shellharbour comes into this House and says, "Bring it forward." We have this great visionary plan. The member for Shellharbour said we should bring it forward but she will vote against the means of funding it and she will vote against the plan. How can she say we should bring something forward that she keeps voting against?

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I cannot hear the member for Kiama. The member for Shellharbour has already contributed to the debate.

Mr GARETH WARD: Light travels faster than sound. It is in that vein that some people appear bright until one hears them.

Ms Anna Watson: Why doesn't he want jobs in the Illawarra?

Mr GARETH WARD: Is the member listening to herself? Waffle, waffle, waffle. Where is the Labor Party plan for the Illawarra? The member for Shellharbour had an opportunity at the last election to promise jobs and investments but the only job she is interested in protecting is her own. The member for Wollongong is after the job of the member for Shellharbour but the member for Shellharbour is so hopeless and incompetent that her own branch was not going to endorse her at the last election.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: I ask that the member for Kiama be brought back to the issue that we are debating.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I cannot hear the member for Kiama over the noise that the member for Shellharbour is making. If the member for Shellharbour ceases interjecting I will be able to hear the member for Kiama and then I will rule on the point of order.

Mr Adam Marshall: To the point of order: I draw attention to Standing Order 74. Members on all

sides of the Chamber should listen to the member for Kiama with due courtesy and in silence. I think his contribution is not only erudite but also educational.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): I think the idea of listening in silence is wonderful. I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing that standing order to my attention.

Mr GARETH WARD: The member for Shellharbour is not a fan of Simon and Garfunkel and certainly not *The Sound of Silence*. This budget has delivered record investments for the Illawarra. Never before have we seen the sorts of investments that we have seen lately in our region—\$106 million for the upgrade of Wollongong Hospital plus \$27 million to increase car parking at that hospital, doubling the number of car parks. Funding for that was provided through the budget process. When my mum had breast cancer I remember travelling backwards and forwards through the Shoalhaven and Wollongong. The last thing that anyone wants to happen is to have people struggling to find a car park when there is a sick parent or sick loved one in the car.

This Government is delivering the sorts of investments that make a real difference in people's lives. There have been improvements such as the additional elective surgical beds, and improvements to car parks in Wollongong. Those things were promised by members opposite but they were never delivered. Those things represent a major investment in our region. I wish my friend the member for Keira was in the Chamber. The Labor Government, after 16 years in office, did nothing about the Albion Park Rail bypass. Labor members talked about it for four years but when it came time for an election—Labor could have told us what it intended to do about this project—there was no project. There was no commitment or promises for the Illawarra.

For a long time the Illawarra has been considered a Labor stronghold. Is it any wonder that we are seeing the results we have seen lately with the changes to our demographics? When people look around the region they are asking whether these projects are being delivered and who is delivering them. With respect to the Princes Highway the Gerringong upgrade was recently completed. I thank the Government for its provision of funds for the Princes Highway—the lifeblood of my community and so important to our region. Too many people have lost their lives on the Princes Highway. That \$340 million investment from the O'Farrell and Baird governments has made a real difference to people's lives. There is no point in being a member of Parliament if one does not use one's time to take tough decisions and do things that make a difference in people's lives. It is in that vein that I support the decision to lease 49 per cent of the State's poles and wires. That has shifted capital from one side of the balance sheet to the other, just as we did in relation to ports.

Today I want to speak about ports as the Government trialled the asset recycling program at Port Kembla, at Botany and in Newcastle. As members would know, assets depreciate. The Government took assets off the State's balance sheet and put them onto somebody else's balance sheet. The Government used that capital for new assets for the public—an ingenious idea put forward by the Premier of New South Wales in his former role as Treasurer. He was able to invest in regions like the Illawarra and the Hunter. The Illawarra Infrastructure Fund is benefiting projects right across our region that would never have been funded. I am thinking of things like the iAccelerator project.

Recently, when I was at the University of Wollongong, it was wonderful to see that project get off the ground. I commend Dr Elizabeth Eastland, the University of Wollongong Council and its Vice-Chancellor Paul Wellings for bringing this project to the fore. It is based on the business incubator model of the University of Waterloo. Young people who have graduated in IT are asked, "How can we give you the skills, coupled with your knowledge, to develop a business proposal?" It might interest members to know that Blackberry evolved from the model of the University of Waterloo. The University of Wollongong is trialling that model, with a new building and all the support that is required to make that happen. Funds for that project came from the long-term lease of Port Kembla.

There is something that I need to correct. Members opposite forget that the Berry bypass would

not have happened without the long-term lease of Port Kembla. That is a \$580 million project supported by \$107 million from the long-term lease of Port Kembla. It was made clear to me that unless that asset leasing program went through the Parliament we simply would not have had that road upgraded. Like Gerringong, the areas of Berry and Foxground are notorious for accidents, injuries and loss of life. By taking an old asset and investing in new assets the Government has made a real and smart difference. The alternative offered at the last election was to have higher taxes for small business. In many cases people have sold their houses and cars in order to get into small business. Those people have taken a chance or a risk. The Opposition said to those people who are generating jobs in businesses, "We want to make it harder." The Opposition wanted to put up the taxes that those people were paying in order to pay for its plan.

At the last election members opposite said, "We are taking a modest plan to the election." Modest it was, because they were not prepared to do what every Labor Premier in this State has known was necessary for the past 25 years—to lease the poles and wires and invest that money into new infrastructure. During the election campaign it was telling to hear from Labor luminaries like Paul Keating, Michael Costa and Morris Iemma. We heard from Martin Ferguson—a man for whom I have the highest regard. He was a good Labor Minister. Those Labor luminaries simply told the truth about the impact of the long-term lease of the poles and wires. At that time the Labor Party did what it does best—it protected the union movement. It might interest members to note that in the poles and wires industry current arrangements allow, in some parts of the business, 26 per cent superannuation contributions to employees and half an hour shower time—when they have not shovelled coal in years.

The arrangements allow for 85 vehicles for every 100 employees, and some of those vehicles found their way to Darwin on fishing trips. All these arrangements meant that additional charges were going onto household bills. Every person who had a contract was paying additional moneys to subsidise these lucrative arrangements. I do not think that is acceptable. Not even the union movement thought it was acceptable. It turns out that the superannuation fund for these employees has purchased shares in the privatised electricity industry in South Australia and Victoria. Even they know it is a good deal. What upsets me most is that the greatest donations for deals happened in the Labor Party. It is not the largest political donation ever received by The Greens in the history of this nation from www.wotif.com; it is the arrangements that the union movement has with the Labor Party. Some would say that Labor is calling the shots on its own decisions, but recently we heard Martin Ferguson say what happens when there is a preselection.

Mr Adam Crouch: You get the phone call.

Mr GARETH WARD: The member for Terrigal is correct: The union heavies get on the phone. Union heavies used to decide seats in the upper House and the Senate, but now they are calling the shots on lower House seats. I have every respect for anyone who decides to be a member of the union movement. If they choose to do that, that is their choice; but it should also be their choice not to be a member of the union movement. I do not believe that a political party—an alternative party of government—should have the right to listen to a very small minority of the workforce that dictates to the Government of the State or the nation based on that percentage.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Eighteen per cent.

Mr GARETH WARD: I hear the member for Myall Lakes cite a percentage, but it depends whether we are talking about the public sector or the private sector. The figures vary and it is difficult to get accurate figures. Why would people be a member of a trade union movement these days when we have the likes of old "Tap and Go" Craig Thomson, who is out there with his credit card and who is abusing some of the poorest workers and their funds? In all fairness to members of Opposition, they would not endorse that type of behaviour. I believe that no member of this House would endorse that type of behaviour. What we need when it comes to the union movement are laws that operate similarly at a Federal level dealing with union transparency of decision-making and accountability.

Mr David Harris: Would you include Eight by Five in that?

Mr GARETH WARD: I include any inappropriate activity, such as the activity of Eddie Obeid, about whom I have spoken in this House in relation to misconduct.

Mr David Harris: Eleven of your guys?

Mr GARETH WARD: I would include people like Ian Macdonald and Joe Tripodi—all of the friends of the member for Wyong.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I call the member for Wyong to order for the first time.

Mr GARETH WARD: I point out to the member for Wyong that there is one thing that should unite all members of this Parliament and that is a campaign against corrupt behaviour. It does not matter whether the corruption occurs among members on the Opposition side of the House or the Government side of House.

Mr David Harris: I agree. But you are only mentioning one side of the equation.

Mr GARETH WARD: I say that both political parties and both sides of Parliament have an obligation to raise the bar. I do not care whether it is on the Opposition side of the House or the Government side of the House. No-one has a monopoly on good people.

Mr David Harris: I am just bringing it to your attention.

Mr GARETH WARD: I thank the member for Wyong for doing so. He is such a wonderful friend. I could not do without his support. The unions need to operate at a State level in the same manner as they operate at the Federal level with respect to the law. They should also be bound by laws applying to company directors so that they are required to exercise fiduciary responsibilities and demonstrate due diligence when they make decisions. Some of the unions have considerable wealth. I do not see why we do not have continuity between State and Federal levels. Of course we will not hear the Labor Party call for that because that would upset its union masters—those who get on the phone and make decisions about preselections and so forth.

I commend the Minister for Health for her support for the Shoalhaven Hospital, which has received a second linear accelerator. I am pleased that an additional linear accelerator will be installed in the hospital. A linear accelerator was installed following a great grassroots community campaign, but it has reached 93 per cent capacity and the hospital needs another one. It is a tragedy that cancer services and the needs of my community for those services and treatment have reached the point at which we need a second linear accelerator. During the campaign both sides were committed to the acquisition of a second linear accelerator. I thank the Opposition for making the provision of cancer services a bipartisan issue, as it should be.

All members of this Parliament—those who serve in opposition or in government—know that the challenges presented by healthcare will be constant. Regardless of which political party occupies the Treasury benches, for many years to come the increased cost of health spending will be an issue with which the Government will wrangle. Over the past four years there has been a 20 per cent increase in the Health budget. Recently I read that by 2050, if Tasmanian health expenditure continues to increase at its current rate it will consume the entire Tasmanian budget. Additional future health expenditure is coupled with the cost of an ageing population that will result in a greater demand for healthcare services.

I commend the Premier for having the intestinal fortitude to say that we need to do something

about tax gifts to work out how we will fund increased health expenditure and deal with future challenges. So often politicians look at the next election or the next electoral cycle, but we should start looking towards the next 30 or 40 years and start thinking about the future. It is not as though that has not happened in this House on previous occasions. People such as George Fuller, who is a former member for Kiama, built the harbour bridge with eight lanes, despite there being only 11,000 registered motor vehicles in Australia; yet we built a tunnel under the harbour with two lanes. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

We need the type of long-term vision that we are getting from our current Premier and this Government. I could not be more proud to be part of a government that is investing in infrastructure, ranging from cancer care centres and health and hospital services that are required in my electorate through to major infrastructure that will fix many of the problems we face. I take the opportunity of this debate to discuss roads in more detail. Before doing so, I thank the best Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight the State has ever had in the Hon. Duncan Gay. In my electorate alone \$1.5 billion has been invested in roads. That includes the Gerringong upgrade at a cost of \$340 million, the \$558 million upgrade of the Berry bypass, and the \$550 million Albion Park rail bypass. Despite the fact that the Albion Park rail bypass was not a Labor Party commitment and that members opposite voted against it in this place, they now wish to bring the project forward. The expenditure also includes a \$62 million upgrade at South Nowra, which was a product of the hard work of the Speaker and member for South Coast. As a result of her efforts, that bottleneck was addressed and the project was delivered.

I take this opportunity to ask for more funding for my electorate. As I am sure members appreciate, it is important to use opportunities to highlight areas that require increased funding. I know that is something that the member for Northern Tablelands, the member for Terrigal and the member for Myall Lakes—the man who is 100 per cent for Myall Lakes—do extremely well. The Berry to Bomaderry section of the highway upgrade will be the final stage in the Princes Highway upgrade between Gerringong and Bomaderry. That section needs to be duplicated to prevent accident and injury. I know that Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] is working hard to develop that plan. I look forward to seeing that plan so that I can continue to advocate for such projects. As the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra, I look forward to seeing the other projects along the highway corridor delivered—road projects at Batemans Bay and other areas farther south of my electorate that are in desperate need of upgrades.

I also look forward to continuing to work with my good friend and Federal member for Gilmore, Ann Sudmalis, on the Shoalhaven River bridge, which is 134 years old. It was built as a railway bridge. In fact, Station Street in Nowra was named Station Street because the train was meant to go across the river. I hope no-one was waiting for that, because they will have been waiting for quite some time. That bridge has served our community well, but it was never built to withstand the average of 55,000 vehicles that travel across that section of road every day. Together with the Commonwealth Government, the New South Wales Government is working to secure the required funds to continue to develop the planning that needs to occur for that project.

I must also use this opportunity to advocate for the F6 extension. Every day an average of about 22,000 people travel between Wollongong and the Illawarra and through to Sydney. Anyone who has travelled through St George and the Sutherland shire knows the number of traffic lights confronting motorists. The time lost waiting for traffic lights to change reduces the earnings of businesses and the time that people would otherwise spend with their families instead of being stuck in congested roadways. We need to invest in the type of infrastructure that has been a feature of development in other parts of the State. Western Sydney has great advocates, and that is all too obvious from the investment that is occurring in that region. However, regions such as the Illawarra also require investment so that we can bring the State's capital city closer, so to speak, to the Illawarra. In this context, I acknowledge the contribution to this debate made by the member for Shellharbour.

She suggested improvements to connect the Illawarra with Western Sydney. I think that is an excellent suggestion and I commend her for making it. We should be working with every economic area of the State to protect the Illawarra. For quite some time I have been saying that the second airport in

Western Sydney represents a great opportunity for the Illawarra. I suggest to the Government that it be called the Lawrence Hargrave Airport based on the achievements of arguably one of the greatest aviators—after Kingsford Smith—that this State has ever seen. That is a great opportunity that the Illawarra can take up. As the member for Shellharbour rightly pointed out, it is important to upgrade Picton Road and those other pieces of infrastructure. I will continue to advocate for those sorts of projects, including the vital F6 project, to take advantage of what we have in the Sydney area.

I am pleased that the Government has invested record sums in public transport. It is important that people have access to public transport. As country members know, it is difficult to have good public transport systems in regional areas. However, there have been huge advances in public transport in the Illawarra. Albion Park and Gerringong stations have been upgraded, and parking has been improved at Oak Flats, Kiama and Moss Vale stations. In fact, improvements have been made up and down the network. Through the Transport Access Plan an investment has been made in Dapto station and advances have been made along the line to Thirroul.

I recently opened the new Thirroul car park with my friend the member for Heathcote, who was a staunch advocate for improving services on that line for commuters. Of course, we always can and always should do more. I am looking forward to continuing to advocate for local communities. I commend the hard work of community groups at Unanderra and my friend the member for Wollongong in calling for the installation of lifts at Unanderra station. I know that the member for Wollongong will continue to argue for that upgrade, and I will join with her to press the Government for a solution to improve access at that station. Some things are beyond politics.

If we worry less about who gets the credit and more about getting things done then everybody in New South Wales is better off. That is the political culture we have in this State. We will continue to have that climate under the leadership of the person whom I consider to be one of the greatest Premiers of New South Wales. The budget papers provide opportunities for small business, but more needs to be done. I cannot understand why we levy taxes on payrolls. Why do we have a tax on jobs? I commend the NSW Business Chamber's campaign to get the Government to look at the issue. During the conferences the Premier will attend on the tax mix review and the way in which we collect revenue we must look things such as payroll tax, which could be retired to encourage more investment and growth in the New South Wales economy. I know businesses would appreciate it.

The average rate of GST in OECD countries is around 20 per cent. We pay 10 per cent. The only caveat I would place on raising the GST is that we must look at providing compensation for the people who would be disproportionately affected. The State and Federal governments will need to have a conversation to resolve that issue. However, it is essential that we examine the way in which we collect revenue to fund services. Education is also an important portfolio. I acknowledge the shadow Minister for Skills, who is in the Chamber. I am proud that the number of positions in vocational training courses has risen to 63,000 under this Government and that the Government has increased the budget by 11 per cent over the past four years. I am also proud that the Government took up the Gillard Government suggestion of going to the private sector to facilitate training places.

Mr David Harris: We've changed our minds on that. It didn't work.

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection from my friend the shadow Minister for Skills. Labor members have changed their minds on that. That is convenient. The Prime Minister is no longer there and they have changed their minds. Actually, they change their minds a lot. They were in favour of asset recycling, but the unions told them they could not do that. They liked privatisation of training, but now they are in opposition so they do not like it. They know they need to get the unions on side to help them get re-elected, so they do not like that idea anymore. I want there to be a future for young people in trades and traineeships. All Labor members want is a future for the union movement. We need investment to provide greater opportunities, such as the 200,000 free scholarships that will be offered over the course of this term to young people from public housing and disadvantaged backgrounds. Do we

not want a government in this State which gives opportunities to young people and which encourages every individual to reach their full potential?

Mr David Harris: Absolutely.

Mr GARETH WARD: I note the interjection from my friend opposite. He said, "Absolutely." I ask him please to join us. Instead of opposing our measures, please join us in supporting our record levels of investment in education. I am proud that this Government signed up to Gonski. I call on the Federal Government and the Federal Opposition to agree to fund the full six years of Gonski so we can have a workable resource allocation model. I am also proud that New South Wales was the first State to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. As someone with a disability, I could not be prouder that we were the first at the table to discuss the ways we could give opportunities to people who need them. The deal was signed in Canberra this week. This is a great budget because this is a good government that is committed to fiscal rectitude and making the tough decisions that this State needs to be made. I commend the budget to the House.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [4.25 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to contribute to the Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2015-16 debate. My first observation is that since I was last a member of this place the budget papers have become less informative about what is going on around the State. Whereas once upon a time the budget papers provided breakdowns of key programs and outlined where money would be spent, the current budget papers are very superficial. It is almost impossible to find out what is going on in an electorate. I know that is done by design, but it is a shame that in an era of supposed open and transparent government this Government is making it harder for people to work out where, when and what it is funding.

In 2007, when I was first elected as the member for Wyong, I was pleased to secure a lot of investment for my electorate. It included a \$95 million upgrade to Wyong Hospital, a new Wyong police station, \$45 million for the Casuarina Grove aged-care facility, a new Tuggerah railway station and transport interchange with extra parking, the upgrade of Tuggerah Straight, the Pacific Highway upgrade at San Remo, a new fire station at Hamlyn Terrace, a new primary school at Warnervale, an upgrade of Wyong courts and an upgrade to Wyong station as well as a new car park. That was in my first 3½ years. Going into the last budget during my time, I was also able to get \$5 million to add lifts to Tuggerah railway station under the Easy Access program and a new fire engine for Wyong fire station.

Lo and behold, in 2011 in a landslide election result I was not re-elected. We now know where much of the funding came from to help in my demise. That has been a matter of interest to the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. I had the third lowest swing in the State. We could not work out why for every poster we put up my opponent was putting up 30 posters. Now we know how they did it—through a little scheme called Eightbyfive. I await with intense curiosity ICAC's findings about that matter. Although I took up the post of principal of the fine Point Clare Public School, I was drawn back to politics because I thought I had done a pretty good job as the local member.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Kiama and the member for Oatley will come to order.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: When I ran again I had a 9.6 per cent swing back to me, giving me a bigger margin than when I was elected the first time.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Wyong has the call.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Let us look at what happened in Wyong during the four years that the seat was held by a Liberal member. The \$5 million investment for the Tuggerah lifts disappeared. They dug the holes for the lifts and then had to fill them back in. That was a major achievement of the former

member for Wyong, Mr Webber. The new fire engine arrived at Wyong. As they were taking it off the back of the truck, it rolled down the hill and was written off before it even got into the fire station. They replaced it with a second-hand one. That was pretty good as well. The Sparks Road intersection was upgraded, and there were some small hospital upgrades. Overall, comparing the four years under the Liberal Party and my previous four years as the member for Wyong, it is no wonder people turned back to Labor in huge numbers.

Mr Gareth Ward: You're a good bloke but this is not your best work.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I am setting the context. It is important to note that the Wyong electorate is a high-growth area. Across the northern part of the electorate there is a housing boom; houses are going up everywhere. All that land was rezoned for building during my previous time as the local member, and it is good to see that, now I am back, building has started. Obviously they were waiting for me to return. However, there are some significant problems that the Government should note, in particular the high youth unemployment rate.

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.

NSW LOTTERIES AGENCY AGREEMENT

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [4.30 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of the 125,000 people who signed the petition and on behalf of the Newsagents Association of NSW and ACT [NANA]. The treasurer of NANA, Sharon Moloney from Tamworth, who also runs the West Tamworth Newsagency, coordinated the 125,000 signatures across the State. This discussion gives me an opportunity to speak about the action the New South Wales Government has delivered for lottery agents and newsagents in New South Wales. The licence to operate the NSW Lotteries was sold to the Tatts Group on 31 March 2010. As part of the sale process a protected period to freeze the establishment of new types of agency agreements was put in place and shops were not obligated to fit out stores or upgrade signage.

This period of protection came to an end on 30 March 2015. The Government and Tatts met and agreed that Tatts would not allow major grocery chains to become agents for a further five years. Tatts will require agents to become franchisees and to comply with the fit-out and signage provisions in their agreements. Small business is the backbone of our economy. Helping small business operators to run an efficient and rewarding business is a priority for the Government. Labor sold off the lotteries in a 40-year deal worth \$1 billion without a care in the world. It did not consider the implications for the State economy or local business owners when it signed a legally binding contract to give the Tatts Group a 40-year lease. Labor did not care about watching this problem with a long wick slowly burn down and eventually go off.

The Coalition initiated the five-year memorandum to ensure that newsagencies were not left in the lurch by the government of the day. The Liberal-Nationals have helped them prepare for the changes ahead. The Government has had to work tirelessly to clean up another diabolical mess left by members opposite. It is typical old Labor, which does not care and which created a policy with absolutely no consideration of the impact on small businesses and how much it would cost taxpayers. If supermarkets are allowed to carry lottery tickets, the impact on small businesses will be critical. These mum and dad businesses employ local people, and the sale of lottery tickets is a significant percentage of their income.

If that is taken away, what effect will that have? It will reduce service and result in job losses. One newsagent in my electorate has a gross turnover of 71 per cent as a result of lotteries. That will drop 25

per cent to 35 per cent if big business gets its hands on lottery tickets. There is genuine concern about the ongoing viability of newsagents and their business if Woolworths and Coles get their hands on the lotteries, particularly for one-newsagent towns, the smaller towns, which rely on the business. If the lottery tickets are taken away from them, it will be of significant concern. I will talk about those smaller centres and the impact on local businesses.

Larger supermarkets are already biting into the business of bakeries, butchers and greengrocers, and now they want to tackle newsagents. That will have a significant impact. The Government is doing all it can to ensure that newsagents are supported going forward. It is looking at ways to transition and to use technology better. It is looking at better opportunities and technology to assist newsagents as we move forward. This issue is serious. I thank the treasurer of NANA, Sharon Moloney, who also runs the West Tamworth Newsagency. Newsagents in the Tamworth electorate and across New South Wales have my support. The Government is doing all it can to minimise the impact of the Lotteries sale and will continue to provide ongoing support to newsagencies throughout New South Wales.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [4.35 p.m.]: I support the 125,000 people who signed the petition in support of newsagents across the State. That is a significant number. It must be acknowledged that in communities across New South Wales people have been warning that newsagents face annihilation if lottery ticket sales are opened up to big players such as Coles and Woolworths. As a condition of privatising NSW Lotteries in 2010 there was agreement to a five-year moratorium with new owners Tatts that prevented supermarkets and other big retailers from selling Lotto tickets and scratchies. Tatts confirmed its intention for a new agreement for retailers.

During the election campaign the Opposition spokesman on small business, Adam Searle in the other place, created a new plan to try to protect newsagents from competition from the major supermarkets. The proposed franchise agreement by Tatts included increasing the number of agents in the distribution network and allowing big businesses such as the major supermarket chains into the network; not providing any geographic or other form of exclusivity to the lottery agent; imposing expensive fit-out requirements on all lottery agents, costing up to \$25,000; and the sweeping of lottery agent bank accounts on multiple occasions per week, seriously disrupting cash flows.

The NSW Lotteries business was built by small business and Labor's plan would be to ensure that they remain the cornerstone of the franchise in a fair, commercial agreement with the private operator. Labor's plan to protect local newsagents included enacting laws that preserved the current agency protections until such time as the parties reached agreement on new terms; continuing to restrict outlets selling lottery products to newsagencies and other small businesses; and working with local newsagents and the private operator to ensure that a sensible commercial agreement is established that is fair to all parties.

Labor wants to see thriving and successful small businesses in our suburbs and regional towns. It was Labor's plan to ensure that local newsagents are protected by enacting laws to support a fair deal on the sale of NSW Lotteries products. I was pleased to meet with the Newsagents Association to reinforce that Labor continues to support that plan, and I ask the Government to consider implementing those things as well. Newsagents are frequently the beating hearts of local shopping villages, especially in regional communities. We do not want to see them disappear because of a commercial decision that could cause the financial ruin of these family-run businesses.

Thousands of young people have been given their first job and their first taste of adult responsibility by their local newsagent, either behind the counter or on a newspaper delivery route. This important role in the community should not be put at risk. We have seen in Queensland that lotteries can be run effectively through local newsagents and small businesses to the economic benefit of both the private operator and the agents. Labor supports the intention for newsagents to continue their traditional role as the primary retailer of lottery products. Income from lotteries is typically around 40 per cent of turnover in a newsagent and can reach as high as 90 per cent. A loss of that business would place

newsagencies across the State in financial jeopardy if action is not taken by the Government.

Under the Labor Party's plan, the protection period would be extended until a fair deal could be hammered out by the parties concerned and an agreement made that would allow the operator to grow the business but maintain local newsagents as the primary retailer of lottery products. The Labor Party is also committed to enact small business protection laws that give the sector new legal protections from unfair contracts and business practices. This would include giving the Small Business Commissioner real teeth and the authority to compulsorily mediate disputes between small and big businesses and government agencies.

I note that the shadow Minister for Small Business in the Australian Capital Territory, Andrew Wall, presented a bill this week designed to ensure small businesses retain the ability to sell and promote lottery products. We would encourage this Government to introduce similar legislation, which would have the support of the Opposition. The legislation I refer to will prevent the sale of lottery products in petrol stations and full-line supermarkets in the Australian Capital Territory. We will continue to talk to newsagents associations and support our local newsagents and we will make sure that the Government at least considers Labor's plan to save them.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.40 p.m.]: Now I have heard it all. The member for Wyong has more front than Myer. The member for Wyong was part of the Cabinet that decided to flog this asset.

Mr David Harris: Point of order: The member for Hornsby is very kind, but I was never in Cabinet. I was a parliamentary secretary, I was never a Minister.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr MATT KEAN: Did the member speak up once in 2010 when his factional ally and good mate Eric Roozendaal decided to flog NSW Lotteries to the highest bidder? He was not concerned about the Tatts Group taking over; he was not concerned about newsagents in 2010. What was he concerned about? He was concerned about propping up the dying days of the dismal political carcass which was the Labor Party. Eric and the member for Wyong were joined at the hip when it came to destroying small businesses and local newsagents. No-one cares less about small business than the Labor Party because they are not members of the union movement. If this was an issue affecting the Teachers Federation, the member for Wyong would have been the first one on his feet. But for small business, the silence was deafening.

When Labor delivered an economic wrecking ball to every newsagent in the State he sat there silently. Yet today he pretends to care. We will not let the member lecture us. Hypocrisy, thy name is Labor. The issue here is one of grave concern. Newsagents do so much for our communities. They work 80-hour weeks and employ local people. They make a difference to our communities every single day. The member for Wyong sits there with his crocodile tears and pretends that he cares. He never cared.

The five-year moratorium that was delivered to newsagents was argued for by the Coalition in 2010. Only the Coalition stood up for small businesses then and only the Coalition is continuing that moratorium in 2015. In the time that I have available, I put on the record my view that we need to make amends for Labor's dodgy deal with its mates at the Tatts Group. Giving this product to big business like Coles and Woolworths will not increase competition; it will disseminate competition. We need to protect small business and our newsagents, and that is what the Coalition Government will continue to do.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) [4.43 p.m.]: I support this petition and the member for Wyong, as well as some of the comments of the member for Tamworth and the member for Hornsby. I agree with much of what they had to say. The 125,000 signatures on this petition show the depth of feeling for this issue in the community. Newsagents are fantastic small businesses and are a key part of

many local small shopping centres in the suburbs. These agencies are run by hardworking families who get up early in the morning and work hard to make an important contribution to our communities. Newsagents should not be driven into liquidation because of a small and unnecessary policy change by the Government which could be reverted at any time. I also did not agree with the previous policy of the Labor Party. I think it was wrong. I agree with the Government members about that, as do many members on this side of the House. But we now have a chance to fix it. The Government could introduce legislation to address this problem.

The Government members talk about the issue, but we need to take a combined approach to it. The Lotto products are the lifeblood of many family businesses. I do not want to see families losing their homes because they cannot compete with the supermarkets in lottery ticket sales. In my electorate of Prospect there is a newsagency owned by Joseph Romandios, whose whole business is based around lottery sales. Some 85 per cent of his family's income comes from lottery sales. If that newsagency closes down, it will have a major impact on every small business in that small shopping centre. I met with Mr Romandios, together with the Hon. Adam Searle, the shadow Minister for Small Business, some months ago and saw firsthand the problems that the newsagency and the family business would have if the supermarket chains had the right to sell Lotto tickets.

Back in January 2015, the then Treasurer identified this problem and, through a memorandum of understanding between the New South Wales Government and the Tatts Group, extended the exclusive right of newsagents to sell lottery tickets to 2018. The Treasurer would not have done such a thing unless there was a clear problem with the original proposal. However, under the current deal signed by the New South Wales Government, there still remains the issue of supermarket chains being allowed to sell lottery tickets through fuel retailers. It is important that newsagents be protected in their exclusivity to sell lottery tickets. Preventing the change in regulations will ensure that newsagents stay in business and avoid the promotion of gambling by huge supermarket chains. I commend the petition.

Discussion concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! I remind members that pursuant to the changes to the standing and sessional orders adopted earlier this week, community recognition statements will proceed for 20 minutes and no extensions will be permitted.

TRIBUTE TO DEAN WHITLAM

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.47 p.m.]: I inform the House of the achievements of an outstanding young man, Dean Whitlam, from the town of Wingham in the electorate of Myall Lakes. I note that his mother, Linda Whitlam, is in the gallery. Dean went to the University of Newcastle and completed degrees in Bachelor of Business and Bachelor of Commerce. He had attended Wingham High School where he was captain in 2010. He was on the Distinguished Achievers list for the 2010 Higher School Certificate and received the Vice Chancellor's Scholarship for Academic Excellence in Year 12. Also in 2010, he received the Caltex Best All Rounder Award and the Young Leaders' Representative Award at a conference with the Governor of New South Wales.

Dean's employment whilst completing his educational studies was at Bunnings Warehouse Home Improvement, Taree. He won a number of awards in his employment, including Team Member of the Month awards for January 2012 and January 2013. He has worked as a teacher's assistant, giving back to his school, Wingham High School, between 2012 and 2014, assisting with year 7 to year 12 students. His responsibilities and duties included teacherless personal tutoring within the classroom, ensuring that

students who had records of non-completion of assignments completed their assignments, and providing assistance for assignment completion prior to the due date [*Time expired*].

PAUL SHARMAN, 2015 PARALYMPIAN PROGRAM COACH OF THE YEAR

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [4.48 p.m.]: I offer my congratulations on behalf of our community and the Hunter swimming community to local Paul Sharman, head coach of the NUSwim Swim Club at the University of Newcastle, on recently being bestowed the prestigious title of Paralympic Program Coach of the Year at the 2015 Hancock Prospecting Swimmer of the Year Awards. Paul is the popular coach of the NUSwim athlete and delightful Paralympic gold medallist Maddie Elliott, who was named the Paralympic Program Swimmer of the Year at the same event.

AMY MARTIN COMMUNITY SPORT VOLUNTEER AWARD

MAVIS SCOTT 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [4.49 p.m.]: Congratulations to Amy Martin of Albury, who was awarded a highly commended plaque in the category of Coach of the Year at the Community Sport Volunteer Awards held at Parliament House. Amy is a level 1 coach with the Albury Wodonga Football Association [AWFA]. She has led the association, Melrose Football Club and Xavier High School to victories. Amy, who is a devoted teacher and highly regarded mentor, who has won the AWFA best and fairest senior women's player, promotes good nutrition and sporting behaviour to her athletes. Well done, Amy, this is great recognition for your contribution to the sport of football in our border region.

Congratulations to Mavis Scott of Albury who on 1 September celebrated her 100th birthday with her family and friends at the Murray Gardens Retirement Village, East Albury. Mavis grew up in Wauchope and worked as a teacher before her marriage to Bob. She helped run the cattle stud they owned whilst bringing up her five children before moving to Henty. Mavis loves her sport and was a keen lawn bowls player. Happy 100th birthday, Mavis.

TIMOR CHINESE ASSOCIATION OF NSW

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.50 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about an event held on Saturday 21 August organised by the Timor Chinese Association of NSW. It was called the "40th year Reunion Party". This was an event to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the events of 1975 in East Timor. The history of invasion, occupation and genocide is obviously one of pain and sadness. On the other hand there was eventual liberation of East Timor and the successful story of so many refugees from East Timor building their lives in Australia and contributing to the vibrant multiculturalism of south-western Sydney, especially in the Liverpool area. The masters of ceremony for the night were association vice president Paul Jong and Hian Sing Lay. Speakers at the event included association president Nie Feng Leong and Mr Dos Santos from the consulate of the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste. Many figures from the Timorese community were also present, including Carlos Pereira and Filomena de Carvalho.

KOGARAH MAYORAL CHARITY BALL 2015

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [4.51 p.m.]: On 15 August I attended the Kogarah Mayoral Charity Ball 2015, which raised funds for the Centre of Advanced Research Liver, Pancreatic and Biliary Surgery, referred to as CARLS. I am delighted to inform the House that \$46,000 was raised to support research into liver and pancreas disease. CARLS is working on developing a diagnostic test to identify markers of pancreatic cancer before the cancer is clinically evident. This non-invasive test will allow for early detection and ultimately reduce the number of deaths from pancreatic cancer. I congratulate Mayor Michael Platt, Kogarah City Council and all the sponsors involved in organising this event. I look forward to learning about improvements in the detection of liver and pancreatic diseases, and cancer.

AMBER COTTAGE EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) [4.52 p.m.]: I ask the House to join me in acknowledging Campbelltown City Council's Amber Cottage Early Learning Centre, which this year celebrates 30 years of service to families in Campbelltown. Since the centre opened in 1985 it has been there to support and care for generations of children in the Campbelltown area. The occasion was celebrated a few weeks ago with an opening of a time capsule, which was first sealed in 1995. It contained photographs, samples of work and educational resources that offered a glimpse into the long and rich history of the centre. The centre is renowned for its innovative learning programs and, as we pass this milestone, I look forward to seeing the centre continue to work for the families of Campbelltown. I congratulate Anna and all staff, from the beginning to now, who have helped to make this centre the great learning environment it is today.

COMBOYNE VILLAGE FAIR 2015

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) [4.53 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about the magnificent Comboyne Village Fair 2015. What started with a community effort to save a crumbling community memorial hall 25 years ago has blossomed into an annual achievement for a fantastic rural community. The first fair, in 1990, was a true community effort, with all sorts of donated goods auctioned, and I am reliably informed the flower display was amazing. Since 1990, the legen-dairy fair has grown to become one of the region's premier events and brings together the best of the Hastings community. From cars to clydesdales, cows to crumpets, there is something for everyone. This year there were floral arrangements to celebrate the Gallipoli landings and a plethora of live music performances. The 4B3 art exhibition, themed "Let there be light", brought together the works of local artists from right across the Hastings Valley. I am truly privileged to represent such a community that prides itself on its community spirit and proud dairying heritage. In particular I acknowledge the hard work of Marion Ricketts, Margot Anderson, Angela McPherson, Nola Stumm and the many others who helped make this year's fair legen-dairy.

LIFE EDUCATION NSW

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) [4.54 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to Life Education NSW and its head office team that I visited recently in Colyton, in my electorate. Members will be aware of the fantastic work Life Education NSW does in preventive education to encourage children to make healthier and safer choices. It forms part of the primary school experience for more than 640,000 children across Australia, with more than 100 mobile learning centres and 95 specially trained educators. Life Education NSW is an important part of school for many children in my electorate of Londonderry and across New South Wales.

I was very grateful to meet Healthy Harold, the well-known ambassador for Life Education. I was pleased to provide the head office staff at Colyton with a New South Wales flag. I congratulate Kellie Sloane on being appointed the new Chief Executive Officer of Life Education NSW and for taking me on the tour. I look forward to working with Life Education NSW and supporting its continued work with children to support healthy and safe lifestyles.

SALVATION ARMY GOSFORD CORPS

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) [4.55 p.m.]: In 1905 the Salvation Army located its first officers to the Central Coast, where their initial meeting place was a large tent erected on the northern end of Gosford township. It was not all smooth sailing; a number of locals threw bottles and a homemade bomb at the Salvation Army officers, causing disruption and mayhem. But, as is their way, those officers persevered and went on to talk to people in their homes, in pubs and public areas rather than coerce them into going to church. Over the years the Salvos grew from a handful to thousands, all giving and working with the poor and less fortunate. I recall as a child seeing the Salvos beating on their drums and calling on people to listen to their teachings. This year the Salvation Army is celebrating 110 years on the Central Coast. As the member for Terrigal I congratulate the Central Coast Salvation Army on its good

work and wish all well in their endeavours.

AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF EDUCATION

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) [4.55 p.m.]: I began speaking to the graduating year 12 cohort from the Australian International Academy with these words:

There is no passion to be found in settling for a life less than you are capable of living.

I was invigorated by the young women and men who were finishing their school education, lives full of hope, proudly extolling their dreams of making our world a better place. They are supported by their parents and teachers as they begin to forge their own way in the world. As always, I was inspired to listen to these young people because they spoke not only of their school experiences but also of the way they had grown as individuals and a collective. School captain Joumana delivered an outstanding valedictory speech, encouraging her peers to make a difference in the future and to be the best person they could be. I extend my congratulations to the principal and many outstanding staff I met that night. I wish every student who is sitting for the Higher School Certificate the very best for their examinations and future.

CASINO HIGH SCHOOL

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.56 p.m.]: Tonight I offer my congratulations to Casino High School on celebrating 50 years of education at its current location. The school celebrated this milestone with a special school assembly, a fete and tours of the school. The day finished with an informal gathering at the Casino Golf Club and a fireworks display. I was privileged to attend both the fete and the assembly. I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with many past students, teachers and principals. They had fond memories of the school and could not speak more highly of the quality of education delivered at Casino High School. It is a terrific example of the quality education provided in our public school system. I wish them all well for the next 50 years. I look forward to the excellent opportunities that this wonderful school will provide to students and staff in the future.

WYONG PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [4.57 p.m.]: Tonight I recognise Wyong High School for its recent Principal for a Day program. Bring a principal is pretty tough. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Wyong High School Principal Rodney Hill. Recently Te-Whaea Tamihana took on the role of running Wyong High School for a day. This program, which is coordinated by the Principals Australia Institute, aims to raise the status of the profession among pupils within the school. It serves as a catalyst to showcase the important leadership role principals play not only in schools but also within the wider community. It is great to see that Wyong High School is taking the lead in introducing its pupils to the world of leadership in my electorate of Wyong. Indeed, I look forward to many other schools letting their students enter the world of school leadership programs. I hope to see Te-Whaea Tamihana working as a principal or in an educational position at some time in the future.

MICHAEL FARRAWELL, MID NORTH COAST VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [4.58 p.m.]: In August I recognised the volunteers from REAP Food Rescue. One of those volunteers, Michael Farrawell, has been named Mid North Coast Volunteer of the Year. Mr Farrawell volunteers for up to 45 hours a week for REAP, providing enough fresh ingredients for several hundred meals. Food from participating retailers is saved from landfill and given to local community organisations to provide meals to the needy, which enables their funds to be used for other care and services. Mr Farrawell will represent the Mid North Coast at the New South Wales Volunteer of the Year Award finals in December. I offer my thanks to Michael, his team of volunteers, REAP sponsors and all the businesses in the Port Macquarie-Hastings area that assist with food.

ODE TO PEACE CONCERT

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) [4.59 p.m.]: Popular history leads many to believe that World War II began with Hitler's invasion of Poland in September 1939. However, the most destructive conflict in human history actually began two years earlier on the Marco Polo Bridge as the Japanese Army prepared a full-scale invasion of China. It seems historically improbable that with no Western allies until 1942, no supply routes and a divided opposition, China could withstand one of the most deadly war machines the world has known. Australia owes a great debt to Chinese resistance in World War II: 800,000 Japanese soldiers would have been reallocated to the conflict against Australia in other parts of the Pacific if the Chinese had capitulated. I was privileged to attend the Ode to Peace concert on 26 July with Consul General Li and other members of the Chinese community as they celebrated the anniversary of victory in the Pacific, remembered by the loss of more than 15 million Chinese lives in that devastating war.

DARREN ZENG, NRMA AND SES COMMUNITY CONNECT AWARD

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.00 p.m.]: I acknowledge a young man with an incredible heart—a young man with a bright future and a member of my community who sets a great example for his peers. Darren Zeng recently gave up his twenty-first birthday party to work with the New South Wales State Emergency Service [SES], helping local flood and storm victims in Wyong. Darren has been an avid volunteer throughout his youth and was recently awarded the NRMA and SES Community Connect Award for his inspiring community liaison work. Instead of partying his twenty-first away, Darren helped local residents of the Wyong area through a tough time in their lives with his compassion and care. It is youths like Darren who give me great hope for the future of both my local area and the country as a whole.

Darren's SES unit, Ku-ring-gai, has been operating in the area for almost 60 years and trains volunteers in all the skills needed to assist the public in times of storms and floods. With the countless families that Darren has helped, I have no doubt that the training the SES offers is helping to positively shape the community as a whole. With the combined efforts of volunteers like Darren and the SES, I am confident in the safety of my local area, no matter what adversity comes our way. On behalf of the very grateful community, I thank Darren and the Ku-ring-gai State Emergency Service for their incredible work in my area and across New South Wales.

GRANVILLE BOYS HIGH SCHOOL YEAR 12 GRADUATION

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) [5.01 p.m.]: I have been invited to a number of year 12 graduations in recent weeks, but I make special mention of the Granville Boys High School year 12 graduation. It has been a tough year for the school, with a wildly exaggerated and damaging media story that appeared after a problem had been resolved, as well as former student Mahmoud Hrouk being tragically raped and murdered. Mahmoud left school at the end of year 11, but many of his friends are completing their Higher School Certificate this year. The celebration was vibrant and lively, with an inspiring speech by former student and ABC journalist Mohammed Taha, along with great musical performances including Arabic drumming and a Pacific Islander choir. There was also a moving presentation to Mahmoud Hrouk's mother of a specially framed year 12 jumper that would have been Mahmoud's had he stayed on and completed year 12. He was loved by many and is really missed by the school. The wonderful celebration was a great credit to the entire school community and the principal, Linda O'Brien.

KRISTIE ESSON MINISTER'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.02 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the fact that a marvellous Orange teacher, Kristie Esson, has been awarded a 2015 Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Kristie is the head teacher for Teaching and Learning at Orange High School. She also teaches English. Kristie is a worthy recipient of this award for her outstanding

contribution to education in our area. She is widely acknowledged in education circles in Orange as the guru of professional engagement, and it is fantastic to see this recognition of her achievements and fantastic work. David Lloyd, the principal of Orange High School, was on hand to see Kristie presented with her award. Kristie's husband, Tim, also was on hand. Tim is a highly respected viticulturalist in the Orange area. I was pleased to welcome everyone to Parliament House earlier this week and to give them a tour of the House. I pass on the congratulations of the House to Kristie on a job well done. I congratulate Kristie on her contribution to education in the Central West.

IRENE ANESTIS ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) [5.03 p.m.]: Last Friday I had the outstanding privilege to escort Mrs Irene Anestis to Government House to receive her Order of Australia Medal. Mrs Anestis is a mentor of mine, a much loved member of the Rockdale community and a very dear friend. Irene Anestis has dedicated her life to helping others, and while she was recognised for her service to the Greek community of New South Wales, Irene is somebody who has improved our State for all Australians. In the field of aged care, Mrs Anestis has been instrumental in promoting Greek nursing homes in New South Wales, overcoming cultural and religious barriers to ensure older Greek Australians are able to live in peace and comfort. Most importantly, Irene has devoted much of her life to AHEPA, the Australasian Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, and OEEGA, the Organisation of Hellene and Hellene-Cypriot Women of Australia, incredibly worthy charities for which Mrs Anestis has personally raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for a great range of causes, particularly children's cancer research. There are so many more achievements to Irene's name, but they are far too numerous to mention today. [*Time expired.*]

TAREE PCYC GYMAROOS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.04 p.m.]: I inform the House that the Taree PCYC Gymaroos recently performed their gymnastic routines at the 2015 Gymnaestrada in Helsinki, Finland. The Gymaroos participated in a special performance at the Midnight Sun Special Evening, with 3,000 international performers, which celebrated the nightless nights of Finland. The Gymaroos were complimented on their authentic performances, which included local Biripi stories and choreography from the Bangarra Dance Theatre. The Gymaroos coach, Sarah Hayes, and the Chief Executive Officer of Gymnastics Australia, Mark Rendall, attended the performances. I congratulate 82-year-old Doreen Rayward, who started the Taree PCYC Gymaroos in 1988, who held the Australian flag at the opening ceremony in Helsinki and who is also a life member of Gymnastics NSW. I congratulate all those who performed at the Family Fun Day at Tuncurry on Father's Day, when \$7,000 was raised for prostate cancer research.

HUNTER WOMEN'S CENTRE

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [5.05 p.m.]: I note the continuing good works of the Hunter Women's Centre, a non-government, not-for-profit organisation that works to improve the health and wellbeing of the women of the Hunter. In the 40-plus years that the Hunter Women's Centre has been operating, it has sought to prioritise services to women who are marginalised, experiencing disadvantage or having difficulty in accessing services elsewhere. The staff at Hunter Women's Centre recently shared some accounts from women who use their service. The shocking acts of domestic violence that bring women to centres such as these reaffirm the need for all levels of government to prioritise action in this area. The centre receives funding through Hunter New England Health and is a member of Women's Health NSW, the peak body for non-government women's health services. I commend the dedicated work of the Hunter Women's Centre and will continue to draw on the knowledge of staff most connected to women in need.

MURRAY OAKLEY AND HORNSBY STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.06 p.m.]: Today I recognise an extraordinary individual who has dedicated the past 11 years to helping others. Murray Oakley, a member of the Hornsby State Emergency Service [SES], is the epitome of community spirit. It is local heroes like him that transform neighbouring households into tight-knit communities. Computer programmer by day, the Normanhurst local takes up the mantle of a superhero when others are in need. During the April storms that ravaged the Hornsby shire, Murray took time off work and chose to spend his days helping storm victims. Even his 17-year-old daughter helped, despite having the stress of the Higher School Certificate looming over her.

I recognise Murray not to take away credit from other SES volunteers but to show my appreciation of the organisation as a whole. Without every brave hero and heroine in every SES unit across the country, countless lives would have been lost. It is my honour to acknowledge the bravery of Murray Oakley and every other member of the Hornsby SES. We have faced storms and even tornadoes, but with these local heroes, no-one in my community has anything to worry about. These people represent not only what is best about the Hornsby community; they represent what is best about our country. I thank them sincerely for their significant efforts across New South Wales.

GERMAN-AUSTRIAN SOCIETY

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.07 p.m.]: I inform the House that on Saturday 12 September 2015 I was honoured to attend the fifty-ninth anniversary of the German-Austrian Society in Cabramatta. I take this opportunity to thank the club's president, Mr Walter Schmeid, and his board of directors for extending the invitation to me. Throughout its history, the German-Austrian Club has been an icon in my electorate. It has done remarkably well in preserving its rich culture, customs and traditions, which have been reflected through a number of large-scale events that it has organised and hosted, most notably Oktoberfest, which for 34 years has attracted thousands of attendees from all walks of life. I wish the German-Austrian Society all the very best for the future.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WESTCONNEX

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) [5.08 p.m.]: I am deeply concerned about the Government's rollout of the WestConnex M4 widening project and its impact on my constituents in Granville who live close to the construction site. Having lived on A'Beckett Street and living nearby now, I know this area very well. I walk under the motorway to Granville station to catch the train to Parliament House, and I appreciate the impact that the motorway has on the daily lives of residents and businesses. There have been a series of worrying incidents since the construction crews arrived in January, and they are getting progressively worse.

At that time, they were driving around on the cycleway where children were playing during the school holidays; this was before they installed hoardings to fence off the construction area. Then they closed off the cycleway, despite the Minister's assurance that it would remain open during construction, forcing cyclists onto busy streets, with poor visibility and having to pass parked cars. Early last week, I was contacted by local residents complaining about being woken at 2.00 a.m. by chainsaws lopping trees as part of the project. I tried to find out what is going on.

My colleague in the other place the Hon. Walt Secord, MLC, asked the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight about residents being woken at 2.00 a.m. by chainsaws chopping down trees as

part of the project to widen the M4. The Minister's reply was evasive, although he later told the House that the work met the requirements under its environmental protection licence. He also claimed that it was in an industrial area hundreds of metres from anyone's home. So how was it that it was so noisy it woke up people who live next to a noisy on-ramp?

It is clear that the Minister has little understanding of what is happening on the ground with this project. The Minister should be embarrassed about the way the project is being rolled out. There is poor communication with residents. Things have gone from bad to worse for them. Last week WestConnex contractors failed to advise residents about the discovery of asbestos. It was reported that the area was being sealed off, with tarpaulins placed on mounds of earth. I examined the mounds from the nearby footpath and noticed they were not completely covered. The base of the mounds of contaminated fill was exposed, showing golf ball sized lumps of dry clay. The mounds are located next to people's homes yet the Government chose not to notify residents about the asbestos. This is a disgrace.

This morning I visited the site again, after being advised that earthmoving equipment had arrived before 6.00 a.m., in breach of the conditions of the development application. I was concerned to see that the mounds were uncovered and being removed. Workers on the site were not wearing any protective equipment for asbestos removal. No apparent measures were being taken to suppress dust and possible impacts on residents near the site. Pedestrians were not diverted from the adjacent footpath. The mounds contain bonded asbestos, but when broken up in landfill it can easily become airborne. My constituent Mrs Sharon Murphy, who lives nearby, told the ABC last Friday:

What can I say, it is appalling. This has been a two-year-long nightmare ... [they are] not adequately protecting their workers, if they have asbestos in there. They are not wearing the correct gloves or suiting.

It is even worse that the contractors told residents that they were not obliged to inform them of the discovery of the asbestos because it took place within the boundaries of the project. Residents contacted WorkCover—I am not sure if Leighton Contractors did—and it directed Leighton Contractors to remove the asbestos as soon as possible because it was stored next to people's homes and was causing alarm. WorkCover's website identifies several health risks from asbestos. One is asbestosis, which is a chronic chest disease that can develop 10 to 20 years after initial exposure. Asbestos fibres initially damage cell membranes in the lungs and, as a result, the lung tissue becomes hardened and scars.

Mesothelioma is a cancer of the lung lining which can result from low-level exposure to asbestos and can take 30 to 45 years to develop after initial exposure. It is an aggressive and painful cancer, and sufferers rarely live longer than 12 to 18 months after diagnosis. Asbestos exposure is a significant health risk. That is why this State has laws and regulations to protect the public from exposure. Nearby residents and workers have the right to expect appropriate protections to be put in place at the site, in accordance with the law. The Minister needs to act now. He needs to ensure there is better communication with residents. There are many questions to answer.

Why are workers not wearing protective equipment when dealing with asbestos on the site? Even if it is bonded and they are monitoring for airborne particles, once particles are detected it is too late. There is no cure for asbestos diseases; there is only prevention. Why not take precautions? Does the Minister think it is appropriate to expose workers and residents to asbestos without adequate protective equipment, especially when the Government is abolishing the Dust Diseases Board? Why have measures not been put in place to protect members of the public from the impact of asbestos removal? These are important questions, and residents deserve answers, not insults and contempt. This bodes badly for the entire WestConnex project. [*Time expired.*]

MATER DEI ANNUAL BALL

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.13 p.m.]: Last week I attended the annual fundraiser ball

for Mater Dei school with my wife, Vicki; Jai Rowell, MP; and Russell Matheson, MP, and his wife, Sharon. It was hosted by my good friends Jim and Marion Marsden. Mater Dei is a coeducational school for students from kindergarten to year 12 who have been assessed with mild to moderate cognitive impairment as their primary disability. It is in the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong, under the auspices of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. The sisters have always made sure each student is offered a holistic education in a safe, non-threatening environment.

Mater Dei was established as an orphanage by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in 1910. In 1957 the Bishop of Wollongong approached the sisters to establish a school for girls with intellectual disabilities. The rest, as they say, is history. The sisters are still involved with Mater Dei. Sister Jeanie Heiningner received one of the 2015 New South Wales Government Local Women of the Year awards. What a wonderful woman Sister Jeanie is. She gives immeasurable support to families when times get tough. She is an angel. Mater Dei has always promoted inclusion for all and that is exactly what the students, parents, carers and teachers have achieved for many years.

Year 12 students participate in the work experience program, which gives them confidence and helps them to relate to others in the workforce. My office participates in this program. Currently a student named Lexie is doing general office work for me. Over the past term Lexie has certainly come out of her shell. She is an asset to my office. Todd, another student who worked in my office, was fascinated by future transport. He completed a project on the subject, including magnificent drawings, and I sent it to the former Minister for Transport, now Treasurer, Gladys Berejiklian.

Minister Berejiklian was so impressed that she organised Transport for NSW to give a talk at the school about the North West Rail Link. The staff and students were overwhelmed by the gesture. I thank the Treasurer for organising that talk. Lourens, another student who worked in my office, showed us that he could write the New Zealand Haka in Maori and English perfectly. The students gain so much from their work experience and I am thrilled each time a new student arrives. The students give much more than they receive. It is wonderful.

I had the opportunity on the night, with the member for Wollondilly, to present a cheque to Mater Dei. The funds raised will go towards the purchase of two vehicles, to enable the school to take its early intervention program to children in their homes. This means that they can begin learning earlier, rather than waiting until they start school. I thank the Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, for his support of Mater Dei. Principal Tony Fitzgerald asked me to pass on his heartfelt thanks for the support the school receives.

I thank the hardworking members of the ball committee who achieve so much for the school: Jim Marsden, OAM, John Adam, Martin Cascarino, Tony Fitzgerald—the wonderful principal—Kevin O'Keefe and Luisa Penman. The stars of the night were the wonderful students who sang so beautifully: Kayla Anderson, Breeana Bruin, Justin Buda, Ebony Capitani, Mischa Castaneda-Abalos, Saul Castaneda-Abalos, Jett Charlton, Harry Dickinson, Jade Di Girolamo, Breanna Durrant, Ciaran Ellis, Reilly Galway, Adriana Gattellari, Gracie Giltrow-Gorrie, Kaylee Glassington, Harrison Golden, Rachelle Hadchiti, Matthew Hunter, Olivia Leadbeatter, Trey Maclou, Eliza Madeley, Shae-Lea Mally, Sommer McClelland, Chelsea Morris, Ryan O'Keeffe, Thomas Perrin, Daniel Prout, Bethany Raymond, Benjamin Savich, Lachlan Simon, Beth Simpson, Charlotte Skinner, Sarah Vassallo, Olivia Veneran, Daniella Violentis, and Alexia Vitale. It was a wonderful night. I thank all who were involved.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.18 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Camden on his outstanding work in support of people living with a disability. I know that he is passionate about the issue. That has been demonstrated by his invitation to students to participate in work experience in his office, to foster their learning and development. The Mater Dei annual ball is known throughout Sydney. It raises much-needed funds for the school and supports people living with a disability. I place on record my thanks to the organiser of the ball, Jim Marsden. If there is a good cause that Jim is not involved in, I am not aware of it. On behalf of the Government, I thank Jim and all those

involved in organising the Mater Dei ball for their efforts. Their fundraising to support people living with a disability makes a tremendous difference.

WALK FOR WILLIAM

GREAT LAKES CARERS' ACTION NETWORK SPRING DEBUTANTE BALL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.19 p.m.]: I inform the House of several events that I attended on the weekend. The first event was the Walk for William. The communities of Forster-Tuncurry and Taree walked to remind people and to raise awareness of the fact that William Tyrrell is out there—someone in Australia knows what has happened and any piece of evidence or information, no matter how small, may be the missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle that will show the police what has happened. The family was at Parliament House this week and we heard the sad story. It was very touching. I am sure communities throughout New South Wales and Australia are remembering William's picture and what is going on and that information will be forthcoming. The police are confident that they can find out what happened and that William may be located.

We walked. Some of us started at the Forster surf club. The Mayor of Great Lakes, Jan McWilliams, was with me, as were a number of other people, dressed in red and with Spider-Man masks. We walked across the Forster bridge over to a park in Tuncurry to meet another group that had started at the Tuncurry Rock Pool. The two groups then joined together and walked across the bridge to Forster. There were about 150 people there. At the same time at Taree there was another walk, from the rowing club along the riverbank. People were also dressed in red and blue, raising awareness and showing support for the parents and for the Kendall community—showing that we all care and we are out there spreading the message. I have to say what a magnificent day it was at Forster-Tuncurry. The weather was absolutely beautiful. Going across the bridge and seeing the water really reminded us what a special place we live in. At the same time it points to the fact that in these little towns and communities on the coast children should be protected. Children should be able to play in their yards safely and not have to worry about predators and other ratbags preying on them.

The next event I went to was the Get Ready Weekend, to get ready for bushfire season. Rural Fire Service brigades throughout the electorate of Myall Lakes had an open day on Saturday and again on Sunday. Then that evening I went to the Great Lakes Carers' Action Network Spring Debutante Ball, where there were eight couples—some would say with a disability but we like to forget about the "dis" and just talk about the ability. And what a fantastic night that was at the Tuncurry bowling club. About two years ago the president of that action group, Michael Power, came to see me. He and some other parents of disabled children were aware that there is insufficient accommodation for people with a disability. As they age, they want to know: Where are their children going to go?

He wanted some advice and to see what we could do. I told him that in many regional areas accommodation is started by communities getting together and forming action groups and that maybe he should consider forming a group and becoming incorporated. At the same time I suggested he talk to an organisation called Dundaloo. Dundaloo is a disability accommodation service supplier in Taree. It has been in existence for about 60 years and was started by John Machin, the father of Wendy Machin, who was formerly a member of this House. In 2015 Dundaloo was the business of the year for the Manning-Great Lakes and Gloucester regions chambers of commerce. It provides an excellent service, so I said that he should go and talk to the people there.

On this night the chief executive officer of Dundaloo, Shelly Sabey, was the master of ceremonies. Since those early discussions, they have joined together. Dundaloo is nearing completion of a detailed submission, which will be presented to the Minister, about the need for accommodation for children with disabilities. They are forecasting that within the next 10 to 20 years there will be 150 children with disabilities possibly looking for accommodation. I am certainly willing to work with them to open the doors to the Minister's office and to work with the department to find solutions for these children.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.24 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Myall Lakes on the stand that he has taken in joining his community and all those who share the concern about William Tyrrell. This week, thanks to the Deputy Premier and the shadow Minister for Corrections, Jodi McKay, we had the devastating and heart-wrenching opportunity to meet the parents of William Tyrrell, who have lost their little angel, their beautiful boy—a beautiful boy who was taken by pure evil, by the most vile of creatures that walks this planet. But one thing we do know is that someone knows something; someone can make a difference to help solve this mystery and bring closure to this family. I reiterate my thanks to the member for Myall Lakes for joining people in his community to do their bit, but I urge every member of the community in New South Wales to join the campaign to bring William home—if they know something they should call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000. They may be able to make a huge difference.

TRIBUTE TO ELAGUPILLAI VIJAYARATNAM

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) [5.25 p.m.]: It is with sadness that I bring to the attention of the House the passing of one of Strathfield's most loved and respected residents, Elagupillai Vijayaratnam. This is not the first time his name has been mentioned in this place. In my first address as the member for Strathfield I spoke of Vijay. Tonight I wear a sari as a show of respect to Vijay and to the Tamil community. I also give this address on the birthday of Ganesha. Vijay was born in Sri Lanka in 1932 and he passed on 7 July 2015. He is dearly missed by his family, friends, and the Homebush and Tamil communities.

Vijay's contribution to our community began in Sri Lanka. The terrible injustices that were perpetrated on the Tamil people shaped the way Vijay saw the world. He had a vision of a fairer, more tolerant society and he realised the power of education and language in safeguarding his community. It was Vijay who had the Tamil language included in the Higher School Certificate syllabus, and at his funeral his granddaughter told us of desire to keep the language alive. He told his grandchildren, "Speak in Tamil with your relatives—it is your identity. This is who you are and it is up to you to preserve it." Vijay was therefore a strong supporter of the Tamil Study Centre at Homebush, where every Saturday the Tamil language is taught and the Tamil culture celebrated.

As well as being an advocate for education, Vijay held numerous positions at the Sydney Murugan Temple, including that of president. He negotiated Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] land for the temple's use and had a signalised pedestrian crossing added on the Great Western Highway leading to the temple. The current temple president told the congregation at Vijay's funeral, "When devotees cross the road we feel proud of him." Vijay was also an active member of the Saiva Manram and spoke at all meetings. The last meeting he addressed was on 28 June, and that speech will long be remembered.

He was actively involved in the Tamil Senior Citizens' Benevolent Society and the Sydney Tamil Resource Centre. He was kind and generous with his time. As Samy Pasupati said at his funeral, "He was caring and noble. It would perhaps be correct to say that he saw people with his heart." Vijay was also a member of the Labor Party and in particular attended the Strathfield branch. He represented everything that is good in our party. He helped successive members of Parliament and never asked for anything for himself, only for his community. On behalf of the community of Strathfield and the Labor Party of New South Wales, I offer my sincere and heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and the Tamil community. He will be missed by us all. Nandri, Vijay.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.28 p.m.]: I too pass on my condolences to Vijay's family. Vijay's story is one that represents what is best about our country—someone who has left their homeland, travelled across the seas, come here and made a huge contribution to building modern Australia. His role in seeking to preserve and enrich the Tamil language and culture through making sure that it was included in the Higher School Certificate, his participation in things like the Tamil Senior Citizens' Benevolent Society and, dare I say, even his involvement in political life as a member of

the Australian Labor Party are representative of someone who has made a rich and diverse contribution to modern Australia. On behalf of the Government, I too acknowledge that contribution and pass on my sincerest condolences to his family.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! I remind members of the rules of the House in relation to the taking of photographs. During the speech by the member for Strathfield the member for Charlestown and the member for Shellharbour were using their phones to take photographs of her. Out of courtesy to the member for Strathfield, I did not interrupt her speech. However, such behaviour is disorderly and contrary to the rules of the House. I know no offence was intended, but I remind members of the rules of the House in relation to taking photographs.

ROTARY OCEANIA MEDICAL AID FOR CHILDREN

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) [5.29 p.m.]: On 28 August 2015 I attended the ROMAC Showcase held at the premises of Johnson and Johnson Medical, North Ryde. ROMAC, or Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children, is an organisation of which we should all be proud. ROMAC provides life-saving and dignity-restoring surgery to children from developing countries. These children have horrendous disfigurement and deformities. During the evening Rob Wilkinson, ROMAC deputy chair, and Gavin Fox-Smith, ROMAC ambassador, both spoke of what a privilege it was to be part of ROMAC.

Use of the word "privilege" struck a chord. Politicians constantly and appropriately talk about the need to look after the vulnerable. When it comes to the world's most vulnerable I cannot think of a group in greater need. Imagine the small shoulders of a child. Place on those small shoulders the heavy burden of being born in poverty, then place on those small shoulders the challenges of living in a developing nation, and then place on those small shoulders the unimaginable burden of living life with a profound deformity or disfigurement. These children carry a heavy cross.

Simon of Cyrene is a biblical figure to whom I was drawn as a child. Simon was the man who was compelled by the Romans to carry the cross of Jesus as Jesus was taken to his crucifixion. As a child I thought idealistically that Simon offered voluntarily to assist Jesus. I thought what an extraordinarily great privilege it would have been for Simon to relieve in any small way the burden of carrying the cross. If one believes in the saying that God only gives us what we can handle, then surely the greatest amongst us are those who carry the greatest cross. When ROMAC helps to restore some form of dignity and life to some of the most disadvantaged in our world I can readily understand why this is seen as a privilege.

One of the greatest privileges of my life is to represent the 80,000 people who live in the Ryde electorate. This privilege enables me to advocate in Parliament for their causes. This privilege enables me also to place on *Hansard* for all eternity my gratitude, on behalf of the people I represent, to the men and woman of ROMAC. These people are: Brendan Porter, Rob Wilkinson, Bruce Robinson, Barry Wilson, Dr Eric Horne, Peter Maitland, Angela Bowey, Margaret Hayes, Ron Delezio, Gaynor Schols, Alun Hughes, Peter Snell, Bryan Mason, and many others on the committee.

On the night in question ROMAC recognised the following people for assisting and supporting it throughout the years: Johnson and Johnson, for its ongoing support of ROMAC for over 11 years; the Rotary clubs of North Ryde and Macquarie Park; Bryan Mason, Steve Perrin, Phill Isaacs, David Moussa, Reverend Bill Crews, Dr John Harvey, Professor David Croaker and Rosie Lowata. Rosie was from Fiji and was ROMAC's fifth patient in 1990. She is now living in Newcastle. Since 1988 ROMAC has treated more than 400 deserving and underprivileged children. Their compassion towards others points to a service beyond our mortal coil. ROMAC is a reflection of our better selves. I congratulate it and thank it for its service.

ILLAWARRA JOBS CRISIS

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [5.33 p.m.]: Members will be aware that the Illawarra is facing a jobs crisis. There is tremendous uncertainty and a crisis of confidence, the like of which I have not seen for many years. It is therefore disturbing when a major company tries to pile on the uncertainty. I speak of Wollongong Coal, which has just sacked 44 coalminers at its Russell Vale colliery located in the electorate of my parliamentary colleague, the member for Keira. Wollongong Coal also owns a coalmine in my electorate, located at Wongawilli. Like Russell Vale, it was placed into care and maintenance last year—102 coalminers were punted at that time.

Wollongong Coal has been one of the most chaotically run companies in the Illawarra. The workers have copped the consequences of management chaos for years. In 2013 the company, then known as Gujarat NRE, could not pay its workers because of this corporate mismanagement. The then 500-strong workforce could have shut down the mine operations, but instead they united, went without pay for weeks on end, and saved the business. Yesterday workers were rewarded with the sack as further mismanagement has caused the Russell Vale colliery to be placed into care and maintenance. Instead of standing by the very workers who stood by the company at its most difficult time, they have been given the flick. All workers have been treated very poorly.

Wollongong Coal is using the fig leaf of its own corporate chaos and incompetence to sack its permanent workforce. It hopes to install a new, casual-based workforce in its place. The company has refused to commit to re-employing retrenched workers as a first priority once, and if, the mines are restarted. This is not the way to do business in the Illawarra. Wollongong Coal should not expect to get away with hiding behind the fig leaf of planning approvals to dud its existing workforce. The workers stood by Wollongong Coal when it was in strife, and I request that the company repay their loyalty now.

I strongly support the coal industry in the Illawarra region. Our coal is used primarily to keep the steel industry going. But I will not stand by and watch in silence as Wollongong Coal tries to dud its workers and exploit a situation where it wants to introduce a new Right industrial relations agenda. Wollongong Coal needs to appreciate that, increasingly, it must satisfy a social licence to continue operating in the Illawarra region, as well as other obligations it has to regulators and its shareholders. Part of that social licence relates to—like it or not—the treatment of workers.

As a Labor member I came into this Parliament to protect and fight for workers, their families and our communities. In the past when Wollongong Coal has faced difficulties, like my other Labor colleagues, my door was always open. I made appropriate representations on its behalf to the Government and to bureaucracy. I indicate to Wollongong Coal that it must abandon publicly its plan to introduce a casual workforce. It must publicly submit to re-employ its retrenched workers as a first priority at both its Russell Vale and Wongawilli coalmines. It must undertake its obligations as stated in its enterprise bargaining agreement [EBA] with the miners' representatives, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU], Mining Division.

Unless these commitments are made by the chaotic management of Wollongong Coal I will withdraw my support for its continued operation, especially in relation to its Wongawilli mine in my electorate. I will not deal with the company in any way, shape or form. I will not lift a finger, as I have done in the past, to assist it with the Government or bureaucracy. I have had enough of workers being treated like rubbish by some of the Illawarra's big employers. I know times are tough but the treatment of workers by companies like Wollongong Coal is simply unacceptable to me. I say to Wollongong Coal's management: Workers stood by your company and its shareholders as you faced financial trouble. It is time you did the same, both in spirit and in letter.

RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.38 p.m.]: I congratulate Richmond Valley Council for winning the NSW Training Award for Large Employer of the Year. This small country council from northern New South Wales defeated corporate giants McDonald's and Westpac to

win this award. More often than not we read about councils in the daily newspaper for all the wrong reasons—corruption, maladministration, wasting ratepayers' money, special rate variations and so on. But in this case it is an absolute pleasure to read about the success of the Richmond Valley Council at the NSW Training Awards ceremony last week.

The Richmond Valley Council took on corporate giants such as McDonald's and Westpac, which have 100,000 and 40,000 employees respectively, plus financial resources—and it won. The NSW Training Awards recognises excellence and outstanding achievements by organisations and individuals in a variety of training and employment-related disciplines. It is a wonderful lesson for all other councils or businesses across New South Wales. It is not about how big a business is or how much money it turns over; it is about innovation, passion and dedication. Council General Manager John Walker said the council's submission was based around a scholarship, apprenticeship and traineeship program, with strong emphasis on the youth employment strategy that was introduced recently. He stated:

We decided to tackle social issues in the town such as youth unemployment and losing the best and brightest out of Casino. We didn't want that to continue so we thought we would take a leadership role, so we organised a program where we took 17 kids from high school in one go. We found the best and the brightest 17 people we wanted to employ and who wanted to work for council and we found the jobs for them.

Each new employee was assigned a senior mentor, which changed the council workplace dynamic. Mr Walker said, "That was a critical element, giving them meaningful jobs and helping to change our workplace." This is a clear demonstration of the dedication of the staff and their passion for learning and development and council's determination to address youth unemployment and development. This council is doing something positive to address youth unemployment; it is not just talking about it. Richmond Valley Council has recognised its social obligations amongst the normal council services it delivers, and it is doing everything it can to ease youth unemployment and to keep young people in the town. The council is leading by example and the community is starting to see the tangible benefits of council's planning and the implementation of its greatly improved employment strategy.

The Richmond Valley Council is a shining light at a time when the spotlight is on councils across the State. It is a terrific example for other councils and businesses across New South Wales in the way it works collaboratively in the best interests of the community. It is strategic, compassionate and dedicated to its task. I congratulate Mayor Ernie Bennett, General Manager John Walker, and councillors Daniel Simpson, Robert Hayes, Sandra Humphrys, Steve Morrissey, Robert Mustow, Col Sullivan and all the staff at Richmond Valley Council on demonstrating that local government can be innovative, effective and focused on its community. Richmond Valley Council will go on to represent New South Wales in the Australian Training Awards, and I am sure it will do its community and its State proud.

TRIBUTE TO GEORGE TASKER

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [5.42 p.m.]: I congratulate Mr George Tasker, who recently celebrated 50 years as a member of the Muswellbrook Rotary Club. On 21 May 1953 George Tasker married Margaret Allum. Shortly after, they moved to Singleton, where George worked in a local pharmacy. Eight months later, George accepted the position of pharmacy manager at M Campbell and Company in Muswellbrook. It was George's and Margaret's intention to stay in Muswellbrook for only two years to accumulate enough funds to open a pharmacy in the northern suburbs of Sydney. However, this was not to be. Such was the measure of this charming young man and his adorable wife that they were quickly embraced by the local community, gaining the admiration and respect of folk wherever they went. Their exit became almost impossible as they became firmly entrenched in the local society and its events.

In 1965 George was invited to join the Muswellbrook Rotary Club and on 26 August that year he was inducted as a member with the vocation of pharmacist. George was a keen and active member from the start, never to be branded a "knife and forker". He was the odd show pony who turned up every now

and then but he never thought he was destined to fulfil 50 years of tireless service in Rotary. Apart from his constant presence at local fundraising events, working bees, barbecues and the like, George made a major contribution to Rotary Health, taking on the responsibility of organising the annual Rotary Bowel Scan Project. His devotion and dedication to this cause has no doubt contributed significantly to saving many local lives over the years.

In 1981 and 1982 George was president of the Muswellbrook Rotary Club and a director of the club on numerous occasions. However, George's most significant contribution to the club and the community at large has been far more subtle but it has had a profound impact over many years. As was his chosen profession, George dedicated his life to healing people and reducing their suffering. Often a chemical reaction that produces a medicine requires a catalyst to help it along. So too has George been the catalyst for forging harmony, happiness and joy within a club dedicated to helping its community and those in need of assistance further abroad. George was, and remains, master of the ability to bring many people together. He did this for many years in Rotary by producing many hilarious skits and parodies over the years. I finish with a poem that was written for George and Margaret to celebrate the evening:

George and Margaret once happily married,
The bride, 'cross the threshold was carried.
George adored his wife
But Marg knew there'd be strife
If his habits were not dealt with disparage.

See, George often strayed to the pub
Marge said, "George, can't you please join a club
Where the people you'll meet
Won't be straight off the street?"
And there, my good friends, lies the rub.

In a valiant attempt to go straight
George joined Rotary to alter his fate.
But little did he know
That in an ultimate blow
He'd simply just opened the gate!

Rotary offered a whole new appeal
There were members so quick to reveal
That throughout Rotary Life
There was no need for strife
Should your wife simply join Inner Wheel.

So George and Margaret survived
Upon trust they truly relied
And over the years
Despite a few beers
Marg remains George's beautiful bride.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE AWARDS NIGHT

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.47 p.m.]: Last Friday night I attended the Shoalhaven State Emergency Service [SES] and Rural Fire Service [RFS] awards night, representing the Minister for Emergency Services, with my colleague the member for Kiama. The event was hosted by Shoalhaven City Mayor Joanna Gash and Federal member for Gilmore Ann Sudmalis. I have been attending this event for more than 20 years, first as a member for council and now as the member for South Coast. It is always an immense pleasure for me to meet the hardworking volunteers in the SES and

RFS to acknowledge the work they have done for our community. I pay tribute to attendees SES Deputy Commissioner Greg Newton, SES Regional Controller Greg Murphy, and SES Local Controller Ian Borrowdale and others, not only for their attendance on the evening but also for the support and assistance that was provided to the people of the South Coast during the recent flooding events. I also thank RFS Chief Superintendent Ken Hall and Inspector Paul Gooley for their attendance, and wish them and their crews well for the upcoming bushfire season.

The hardworking men and women of the SES and RFS are always available for the community on the South Coast in times of need. It is therefore most appropriate that I acknowledge the dedication of those wonderful volunteers. I congratulate the following SES personnel on receiving their awards for five years of service—Fred Grima, Cheryl Bentley, Ann Britton, Ronald Innes-Will, Douglas Aldred, Pauline Kitto, Alexander Kitto, Denise Jorgensen, Jodi Barkman, Wayne Franks, Kathleen Lenton, Anneke Lette, Anne-Maree Kitchener, Christopher Kelf, Gregory Lahiff, Anthony Davies, and Terence Clarke. I commend Scott Wheway and Matthew Willis for their 10 years of service with SES Nowra; Robin Cantrill and David Easterbrook for 20 years of service with SES Ulladulla; and John Rigoni for 30 years of service with SES Nowra.

Bradley Davis, Scott Wells and the late Cliff Harris of SES Nowra were recognised with the awarding of unit citations. I also congratulate Robert Hanslow, John Jones, Sonia Payne and Jacqueline Gilmore who received the National Medal and were recognised for their 15 years of service. Special mention must go to William Curtin, a great friend of mine, who was recognised for an incredible 45 years of service to the SES. He received the National Medal clasp 3. These awards recognise the combined 280 years of service by the South Coast men and women devoted to protecting and serving the community of the South Coast. There were also 22 recipients of medals and clasps from the Rural Fire Service, with a combined total of 527 years of dedicated service.

I acknowledge National Medal winners Jacqueline Cox, Samuel Thompson, Jennifer Lawther; as well as Long Service medal winners Alan Cooke, Luke Marshall, Ken Dagger, Garry Brown, Geoffrey Phillips, Gregory Mitchell, Mark Wroe, Kelvin Bowers, John Hives, Neil Breeze, Bruce Magin, Gerard Noodermeer, Julie Walker, Nicole Beaumont, Stuart Thaler, Isabel Turnbull, Allan Barter, Robert Alexander and Lyle Sawyers. I wish I could spend a great deal more time acknowledging the commendable efforts of each of those individuals, all of whom have dedicated decades of their lives in all our electorates throughout the State to the service of their communities—in my case, to the South Coast community. I am honoured to have known many of them personally for many years and I cannot speak highly enough of the professionalism they display in times of crisis, particularly during bushfires and the storm events that we experienced recently.

Members of the 35 New South Wales RFS brigades and various SES units in the Shoalhaven protect around 94,000 residents from the ravages of fire, storm and flood that we experience on the South Coast, like most other electorates. They all understand the value of community spirit and the importance of looking out for their neighbours. The people of the South Coast are indeed blessed to be home to these wonderful volunteers. They do their job quietly and are always modest. On the awards nights they never ask or look for praise—they do not even like having their photograph taken—but they are certainly deserving of all the accolades we can give them. All the members of the RFS and SES in my electorate and across the State should be very proud of the work they do; we are extremely proud of them. We all know that their families make sacrifices. Very often the volunteers are absent from their homes on Christmas Day, as they were in the Shoalhaven in 2000 and 2001 during the bushfires we experienced then. They did not enjoy Christmas Day or even the next two weeks and their families had to make that sacrifice and be without their family members.

It is very rare and special to have a service of such dedicated professionals who often give up their own livelihoods to help others in times of emergency. I congratulate them all on their dedication and commitment to our community and to the service. I also congratulate Shoalhaven City Council, which always hosts a wonderful event for the RFS and SES volunteers every year. It is a dinner and it is very

special. It is not just stand around; it is a beautiful gala event. The Shoalhaven City Council is continuing this fine tradition of acknowledging the volunteers within the Shoalhaven and South Coast community.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.52 p.m.]: I thank the Speaker for her contribution and for the outstanding work she does for her community. One would struggle to find a more dedicated politician in this Chamber. She represents one of the most beautiful electorates in the country, renowned for its pristine bush and beautiful waterways. But that brings with it its own challenges: The community faces the ever-present threats from bushfires and floods. That is why the role of the Shoalhaven Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service is so critical. I understand why the Speaker is so supportive of what they do—they are heroes. They do not always get sufficient accolades or recognition, but today is their day and it is appropriate that this Chamber recognises them for their outstanding service. They represent what is best about the community of Shoalhaven, they represent what is best about the State of New South Wales and they represent what is best about our country. I thank them for their service and I thank the Speaker for acknowledging them.

WYONG DRAMA GROUP

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [5.53 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about the fantastic Wyong Drama Group in my electorate of Wyong and its recent musical, *Ruthless*. Beginning in 1952, Wyong Drama Group Inc. has been entertaining the Central Coast for more than 60 years. But it is more than a group of people bonded by a love of all things theatre. Wyong Drama Group mounts three major annual productions and, since its inauguration in 1994, it has hosted the Central Coast Theatre Festival—a festival of one-act plays and home of the Woscars, which is the Wyong version of the Oscars. Wyong Drama Group is also the force behind other special events such as drama workshops, bush bashes—country dance and play—music halls, birthday celebrations and fashion spectacles. The Wyong Drama Group's next production will be *Lend Me A Tenor* by Ken Ludwig. It will open on 12 November at the Wyong Grove Theatre. Currently the Wyong Drama Group is performing its work in the Wyong Grove Theatre, formerly the Wyong Grove Public School hall. But this will change from 2015-16, when the group will perform in the highly anticipated new Art House being built by Wyong Shire Council.

Amateur dramatics go back a long way in the Wyong shire, with the first recorded performance of the twentieth century taking place on 27 July 1907. Staged by the Wyong Musical and Dramatic Society, it took place in the local School of Arts hall. According to a review in the local press, "the programme was an attractive one and its production marks the newly formed association a success". The performances were of *Hook and Eye* and *Mr Joffin's Latchkey*. Turning to more recent times, in 2012 the Wyong Drama Group celebrated its sixtieth birthday with a huge rock and roll party, inviting everyone it could find who had ever been involved with the group, as well as extending an open invitation to the community. It was a special evening followed by a more subdued but also delightful get-together at Wallarah Bay Club. In August 2014 the memorial hall that had been the home of Wyong Drama Group was demolished to make way for a new Art House incorporating a state-of-the-art theatre and other performance spaces. Meanwhile, Wyong Drama Group has moved to a new green room on the site of the former Wyong Grove Primary School. The Grove Theatre will be the group's performance space until the Art House is completed.

The Wyong Drama Group meets at 7.30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of the month in the new green room at the former Wyong Grove Primary School. The Wyong Drama Group's most recent show was called *Ruthless*, and I could not have been more pleased with the amount of talent and enthusiasm the actors put into giving such an outstanding show. I had never heard of *Ruthless* before and I went to the performance with some trepidation, but I cannot speak highly enough of such an amazing show with some great local performers. The Wyong Drama Group's production of *Ruthless* is directed by Josh Maxwell and was written by Marvin Laird and Joel Paley. *Ruthless* is an all-female, off-Broadway musical, which won the New York Outer Critics Circle Award for best off-Broadway musical. The show was full of witty one-liners, bright, brassy show tunes and ingenious plot twists. The story revolves around an eight-year-old girl who wants to be the star of the show and who ends up killing everybody else in the cast

so she can be. It is rather a black comedy but it was very enjoyable.

I take this opportunity to thank Josh for the invitation to see such a wonderful and quite hilarious musical—despite its black theme—and I congratulate all the performers and the backstage crew who helped out on the night and with the rest of the performances. I look forward to seeing the group's next show, *Lend Me A Tenor*, in November. Hopefully it will be a little more uplifting than *Ruthless*. Wyong Drama Group has won many awards for its shows in the past and I am always particularly pleased to attend the youth theatre performances. The young people do some wonderful things, and I saw them recently perform *Ghosts of Wyong*, which they wrote themselves. It is good to see young people and other talented people in the community being well directed in some very high-quality performances. I thoroughly recommend that all members, if they are up Wyong way, catch a performance of the Wyong Drama Group.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.58 p.m.]: I thank the member for Wyong for his ongoing support of such a great outfit, the Wyong Drama Group. I note the group's very interesting productions, *Ruthless* and *Ghosts of Wyong*. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend any of the performances. However, I take this opportunity to make a commitment tonight to the Wyong Drama Group on behalf of the New South Wales Government. If the next production, *Lend Me A Tenor*, is looking for a star tenor, who better to approach than the member for Wyong himself? I hear that he has an outstanding voice. If the member is given a singing role in that production I will get in my car, drive up the F3 and personally go and support the Wyong Drama Group and my friend the member for Wyong in his performance. I am sure that if the member for Wyong gets up to sing he will make the rest of us look good. I congratulate the Wyong Drama Group. I congratulate the member for Wyong and I thank him for his ongoing support of this great outfit.

KU-RING-GAI ELECTORATE SCHOOL LEADERS

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) [5.59 p.m.]: I wish to speak about leadership and the importance of leaders in our community. Since becoming the member for Ku-ring-gai earlier this year, I have happily been introduced to many of the leaders around us. I have met police chiefs, chiefs of commerce and industry, champions of our environment, sporting leaders, heads of government departments and those showing the way in crucial community organisations—organisations like Lifeline, Rotary and Meals on Wheels. I have met religious leaders and school principals. A leader has been described as a person who influences a group of people towards the achievement of a goal.

Leadership is a bit like intelligence: It is partly innate and partly a developed skill. Over time, you learn judgement about when to lead and when to consult. A number of years ago my predecessor in the seat of Ku-ring-gai, a leader of this State, Barry O'Farrell, began a tradition that I was happy to follow. Each year he would invite the captains of the high schools in the Ku-ring-gai electorate to a dinner here at Parliament House in their honour. Just last week I was privileged to host, be seated amongst, and break bread with this group of high school leaders. I have no doubt, given their intellectual conversation and declared goals, that many will become leaders in their chosen fields.

I was pleased to host—in alphabetical order of their schools—Charlotte Stump and Sarah Kelland, the head prefects of Abbotsleigh School for Girls; Sophie Murray-Walker and Nicholas Chang, the captains of Barker College; Tian Du and Sanjna Kalasabail, captain and vice-captain at Hornsby Girls' High School; Harry Chapman and Edward Fay, captain and vice-captain at Knox Grammar School, one of whom is a terrific rugby player; James Spence and Lyndsey Green, captain and vice-captain at Ku-ring-gai Creative Arts High School; Georgia McGinness and Olivia Dressler-Smith, captain and vice-captain at Loreto Normanhurst; Jethro Yuen and Lachlan Berry, captain and vice-captain at Normanhurst Boys High School, Roshana Kanagaratnam and Alexandra Hunter, head and deputy head prefect at Pymble Ladies' College, Sarah Haynes and Geena Tebbutt, captain and vice-captain at Ravenswood School for Girls; Lucy Crothers and Sam Batchelor, captains at St Leo's College; and Angus Macdonald and Jeanti Profaca, captains at Turrumurra High School. As they say, the world is their oyster.

In coming weeks, most of those who were there that night, and their fellow year 12 students, will be sitting their final high school exams, and we wish them all the best. These year 12 students are now sitting in the departure lounge of life, waiting for take-off. I urge all graduating students to make sure that they make the best of the opportunities ahead. I urge them to make sure that they depart the airport and not spend the rest of their lives waiting in the departure lounge without boarding the plane. In recent weeks, I had the pleasure of hosting another group of school students who are at an earlier stage of life. They were speaking at the annual Ku-ring-gai Electorate Schools Public Speaking Competition in this very Chamber, competing for the Federation shield. The standard of the speeches and the talent on offer that morning amazed me and all those gathered there.

The event was taken out this year by Emma Woodcock from Pymble Public School, with Hamish Lapsley, from Turramurra North Public School, runner-up. They all made imaginative speeches on the topic, "You get what you put in." The other finalists were Rose Guiffre from Warrawee Public School; Sophie Nolan from Wahroonga Public School; Alice Eldershaw from Gordon West Public School; Stephanie McArthur from Normanhurst Public School and Sachin Sirkari from Beaumont Road Public School. I thank 2GB radio newsreader Natalie Peters, leading barrister Alec Leopold, SC, and event founder Margaret Wick, who were the judges, and Aileen Wolf for her assistance and expertise on the day. There are endless quotes available pertaining to leadership, but I think two are very relevant to what we would all like from our leaders, whether they are in schools, the community or the political arena. French General Napoleon Bonaparte said, "A leader is a dealer in hope." Former United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once said, "The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been."

I think that that last quote has significance when it comes to the political events on the national stage this week. Tony Abbott came to the fore as Liberal leader and later Prime Minister when Australia was, quite simply, in a mess. Under Labor, our borders were porous and the economy was going backwards every day, drowning in debt. Other Prime Ministers had enjoyed the benefits of having been gifted thriving, healthy balance books, which were left to them by Liberal-Nationals governments. Tony Abbott had no such fortune, but took on the job with determination. This week he left that job with every right to hold his head high. Whether or not you support Tony Abbott and the Coalition, I believe all Australians should acknowledge his efforts as leader in many areas in righting the national ship.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.04 p.m.]: I thank the member for Ku-ring-gai for supporting young leaders in his community. He is one of the outstanding new leaders in this Parliament. He has had a very distinguished legal career and he is a great addition to this place. The job of any leader is to create new leaders, and that is exactly what the member for Ku-ring-gai is doing by encouraging and developing young people in his community to use their talents and what they have learnt at school to aspire to make a contribution to something bigger than them. The member for Ku-ring-gai is doing that every day of the week. Hopefully, some of those leaders that he hosted for dinner at Parliament House will, one day, step up and make a contribution to our community, our State and our country. The future of this country is in very good hands if that is the case.

HOMICIDE VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUP

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) [6.05 p.m.]: I support the Homicide Victims' Support Group. Twenty-nine years ago, in the suburb of Prospect, Anita Cobby, a young nurse, had her life tragically stolen. Six years later, Ebony Simpson, a nine-year-old schoolgirl, also had her life tragically stolen. Two innocent people were lost, for no reason at all. It was when the parents of Anita Cobby and Ebony Simpson met that the Homicide Victims' Support Group was founded. They recognised the need for an organisation to assist the families and friends of homicide victims, through counselling, support and information. They have been successful in lobbying this House for legislative reform—having transformed the role of victim impact statements in the New South Wales sentencing system and influenced the implementation of many other reforms.

The formation of the Homicide Victims' Support Group achieved the goal of providing the support that grieving families and friends desperately need. In the past, the families and friends of homicide victims expressed a feeling of powerlessness when dealing with their loss. To add to the sudden shock of grief, despair and sadness that comes with homicide, the powerlessness they felt compelled them to take action. Furthermore, through gaining the attention of the New South Wales Government under seven Premiers, they have stood up for the rights of victims—a feat unheard of before the formation of the Homicide Victims' Support Group. Time does not permit me to name all the services that it provides, but I would like to name a few that stand out. In 1995 the Homicide Victims' Support Group, with the support of Premier Bob Carr, were successful in establishing Ebony House, a recovery centre for people affected by the murder of a loved one. It is a place where these people can go when they feel overwhelmed by everyday life.

Ebony House is a great achievement and shows the continued relationship between the New South Wales Government and the Homicide Victims' Support Group. Since the creation of Ebony House, other houses have been established to provide support in more places around New South Wales. Recently, its annual Ride for Justice—a fundraising bicycle ride starting at the Prospect Reservoir, where Anita Cobby was taken from us—was completed with great success. The support networks that the group fosters are phenomenal. Regular meetings are held in various locations around New South Wales, and they assist the families and friends of homicide victims to deal with the grief they suffer. These networks can be tailored to best suit those who need them. There are specific groups for children, women and men, who all deal with grief differently.

As a member of Parliament I have been privileged to meet with the leaders of the Homicide Victims' Support Group. Prior to entering Parliament, as a member of Rotary International I also met members of the group. I especially want to mention Martha Jabour, Robert Taylor, Mary Cusumano, Rosalie Taylor, Tim King, Chantelle Pirotta and the entire Zamitt family. My commitment is to continue to support their great cause and to seek to gain the support of the New South Wales Government as well—no matter which party is in charge.

The Homicide Victims' Support Group is currently fundraising to build a new centre, to be called Grace's Place, named after the late Grace Lynch, the mother of Anita Cobby and founder of the group. Grace's Place will be there to provide support in a safe place where children, teenagers and their families, grieving from the death by homicide of someone they love can share experiences, receive counselling, be involved in programs and learn life skills on how to survive the trauma of the loss of their loved one. I look forward to working with the Government and the New South Wales Opposition in supporting the fine work of the Homicide Victims Support Group.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.10 p.m.]: I also acknowledge the outstanding work of the Homicide Victims' Support Group, an organisation that was set up in 1993 by the parents of murder victims Anita Cobby and Ebony Simpson. The murder of Ebony Simpson had a profound impact on me because, at the time she was murdered in 1993, she was exactly my age. Out of that terrible tragedy the Homicide Victims' Support Group has gone on to make a difference by supporting the lives of those who most need it at such a terrible time. The group does incredible work and I acknowledge and thank the founders and those who continue to do that outstanding work.

Their work has become vital to the criminal justice system in helping victims to negotiate the court process. A resident in my community recently had reason to call on the support of the Homicide Victims' Support Group. On behalf of that family and on behalf of the thousands of families and communities across the State and the country that have benefitted from the compassionate understanding and wonderful support of the Homicide Victims' Support Group, I say thank you. It does an incredible job and we should all stand behind it every step of the way.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I thank the member for Hornsby. Ebony House is in my

electorate and I know the group very well.

MURRUMBIDGEE TURF CLUB

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.11 p.m.]: The Murrumbidgee Turf Club [MTC] is the largest racing and training centre in southern country New South Wales. In the past 12 months the MTC has generated notable profit increases and continued to expand its prominence within the Wagga Wagga community, contributing to tourism and business revenue, as well as raising funds for local charity organisations. The club has enjoyed great economic success during 2014-15. It increased its operating profit by 52 per cent from the previous year, generating a total revenue of \$653,917. Total race meeting revenue was also up more than \$500,000 at a total of \$4,723,752, and the average TAB turnover per meeting was a record-breaking \$1 million. This paved the way for Wagga's total TAB turnover to reach \$27,190,279 for that 12-month period.

The MTC's major meet of the year is the Wagga Wagga Gold Cup, which also broke a record for its TAB turnover in 2015. During its 140 year history, the Gold Cup has never seen such high figures, with a total turnover of \$4,494,641, eclipsing the previous record by more than \$100,000. A contributing factor was an increase in crowd numbers, which grew substantially during 2014-15. Overall, 34,550 racegoers flocked to the Murrumbidgee Turf Club for Wagga's 27 meetings, in comparison to the 29,602 who attended the 23 fixtures in 2013-14. This resulted in an increase in gate takings of 10 per cent for the 12-month period and assisted in realising the pie-in-the-sky dream of reaching the \$3 million mark in prize money. The MTC distributed a total of \$3,015,989 at its 27 meetings, which exceeded the prize money generated by the 23 meetings conducted in the previous season by almost \$300,000.

The MTC's 100 Club sponsorship program plays a major role in fostering local business involvement and producing added profit. In 2015 the program celebrated its twentieth anniversary and continued to be as popular as when it was first launched in the 1990s. More than \$150,000 is collected through the 100 businesses that enter the draw for race naming rights throughout the year. Those involved are allocated a race name, race book, race day hospitality and advertising. Names are drawn out of a barrel, with the last business standing claiming the naming rights to the MTC's largest meet of the year—the listed \$140,000 Wagga Gold Cup. During 2014-15 the Murrumbidgee Turf Club continued to entice many big names in the racing industry to Wagga Wagga with its high-calibre racetrack, oncourse facilities and presentation. Trainers such as Waller, Waterhouse and Snowden and jockeys Bowman, Boss and Beasley have all visited within the past 12 months. The return of these powerhouse stables was testimony to the high regard in which the Wagga Wagga track is held.

The quality of the track is largely due to the dedication of the ground staff team, who uphold a stringent track maintenance program, as well as constant rail movements on the course proper to help keep the surface in top condition. In the past 12 months, the MTC has replaced the old crowd-control fencing and installed new rails. It has also completed the construction of The Deck, which offers a first-class entertaining area near the Trainer's Bar for both the race and non-race day functions. The Murrumbidgee Turf Club is a great asset to the Wagga Wagga community. The MTC provides local businesses with an estimated \$13 million multiplier effect from the annual Gold Cup alone, as well as spending approximately \$500,000 in wages per annum. Furthermore, the MTC is a strong supporter of local charities, providing a venue for charity fairs and hosting annual charity race days.

Kurrajong Waratah is a local organisation that assists people with a disability to lead the life of their choice. I am the proud patron of Kurrajong Waratah. Murrumbidgee Turf Club has hosted the annual Kurrajong Waratah charity race day for 27 years. It has raised more than \$1 million for the organisation in the past six years alone. This event has been one of the most popular meetings on the Wagga Wagga calendar since its inception, and in 2015 crowd numbers sky-rocketed with a 49 per cent increase on the previous year. A total of 5,080 racegoers attended, comprising both serious racegoers and families, including 2,300 children. This race day is special in its ability to appeal to a wide demographic. For many patrons it is their introduction to the racing world. I offer my sincere congratulations to the president,

Stuart Lamont and the board that he leads, on the outstanding achievements of the Murrumbidgee Turf Club.

REDHEAD MEN'S SHED

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [6.16 p.m.]: I speak this evening to give praise to and to recognise the members of Redhead Men's Shed located in Redhead in my electorate. The genesis of Redhead Men's Shed was in 2010, when six or seven men met for the first time in the Redhead Bowling Club, where they continued to meet for the following 18 months. The men's shed was incorporated on 28 June 2011. I am proud to say that Lake Macquarie City Council, of which I am mayor, offered assistance to find a home for the men's shed. A piece of land in O'Connor Park was originally considered, but it was decided that it was unsuitable because a shed would have had to have been built from scratch at a cost in excess of \$400,000. That was well and truly out of the league of Redhead Men's Shed at the time.

In 2012 council called for submissions from community groups and private operators for the proposed lease of former colliery buildings in Redhead. Council received three submissions, two from private operators and one that was put together by John McCall, the secretary of the Redhead Men's Shed at the time. In January 2013 council announced that Redhead Men's Shed was successful in being awarded the tender for the lease and would be offered a five-year lease for occupation of the whole site of the former Lambton Colliery. The lease was signed on 20 January 2014 and the official opening of the men's shed was held on 2 February 2014, with the official party consisting of me as mayor, the then State member for Swansea and the then men's shed president, Dave Perkins. All three of us had the privilege of cutting the ribbon for the Redhead Men's Shed site.

The site where the shed is located is known as Lambton Colliery and the building has major historical significance. The site has a European industrial history dating back to at least 1886. The brick buildings were constructed in the early 1890s to a design prepared by Thomas Croudace—a famous name in the area. He was the colliery manager of the Scottish Australian Mining Company. Croudace's design reflected what was then the best of English colliery practice. He planned the company's new mine as a model colliery and this group of Lambton Colliery buildings is the last nineteenth century group of colliery buildings to survive in New South Wales.

The colliery has been referred to by a variety of names. It has been known as Ryhope, Durham, Lambton No. 2, Lambton Colliery B Pit, and Lambton. Throughout the colliery's history it has been operated by different companies, such as the Scottish Australian Mining Company, BHP Company Limited, Pacific Copper, a subsidiary company of the Bond Corporation, and FAI Mining Limited. Under BHP's ownership, the Lambton Colliery became the first fully mechanised colliery in Australia and employed more than 300 people. During its life Lambton Colliery worked three seams—the Borehole seam, the Victoria Tunnel seam and the Burwood seam.

There have been at least 12 fatalities during the construction and operational life of the colliery. However, since the men's shed has had the lease, I am pleased to report there have been no fatalities in Lambton Colliery buildings and I am certainly not expecting that there will be. Indeed, Redhead Men's Shed has given great service to the community with projects such as circular seating, which was made for the Floraville Public School; octagonal seating for the Redhead Public School; and Anzac letters—each a metre high—which were made for the Redhead Public School to use at each Anzac commemoration. I was fortunate in being able to attend the Redhead Public School's Anzac Day commemoration and see those letters, which each contained a floral tribute arranged by the students.

The Redhead Men's Shed also provides great support for the mighty Butcher Boys, which is my local rugby league team and which plays for the Central Newcastle Rugby League Club based in Charlestown. I acknowledge the great work that the men's shed does in the community as well as the commitment and effort put into its activities and projects by its 65 members and past executive members. I acknowledge the work of current executive members: president, Phillip Lindsay; vice-president, Steven

Evans; secretary, John McCall; and treasurer, Ian Stansbury. I also acknowledge the 2015 committee members: Dick and Robert Hadden; Rodney Johnson; Ian Thickbroom; Ian York; and Ken Hancock. I commend the Redhead Men's Shed for the work it has done and continues to do for the local community. The men are proud of the work they have done with the Lake Macquarie City Council in keeping the old colliery buildings in tiptop condition and that is a credit to them. I commend their work to the House.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE RICHMOND BASE

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) [6.21 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the work done and the service carried out at the Richmond Royal Australian Air Force [RAAF] Base in the Hawkesbury electorate. The RAAF has operated from Richmond since June 1925, although the aviation roots in the Hawkesbury run even deeper—to 1912—when Parramatta dentist William Hart flew his homemade monoplane from a site known as Ham Common, which is the land on which the Richmond RAAF Base is situated. I pay special tribute to the RAAF's No. 35 Squadron, which was re-formed at Richmond in January 2013. To mark the squadron's return to the skies, on 8 August this year, a colour parade was held at the RAAF Base Richmond before the squadron's families, RAAF personnel, and special guests, including the Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Gavin Davies, and the parade's reviewing officer, a man with a close personal connection with 35 Squadron—the Governor of New South Wales, His Excellency General the Hon. David Hurley, AC, DSC.

The Richmond RAAF Base has a long and decorated history in our country's military past. During the First World War, the New South Wales Government established a military flying school at the base, preparing pilots for operations at the Western Front in Europe. In the last half century, RAAF personnel continued their honourable work from Richmond, without fanfare, supporting operations at home and abroad. Richmond aircraft were among the first to land in Darwin following Cyclone Tracy. They brought the last Australians out of Saigon during the Vietnam War. They sustained Australian troops on operations in East Timor, the Solomon Islands, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Today the base is the home of the No. 35 Squadron, which was formed in March 1942 as one of the RAAF's first dedicated air transport squadrons.

After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, No. 35 Squadron brought home Australian soldiers and liberated prisoners of war—some of whom had been held in captivity for more than three years. They saw their first sight of home through the windows of a No. 35 Squadron Dakota. The squadron remained dormant until Australia's commitment to the Vietnam War in 1964, when the newly delivered DHC-4 Caribou transport planes were deployed to Vung Tau in South Vietnam. When the Caribou arrived in South Vietnam, their United States Air Force liaison officer asked what to call them. They suggested "kangaroo", but the Americans found that hard to say. Another RAAF pilot suggested "wallaby", and the name stuck. To this day, No. 35 Squadron carries the moniker Wallaby Airlines. The wallaby forms the centrepiece of the squadron's crest and is carried on the aircraft's tail.

In February 1972, No. 35 Squadron completed its tour of duty in Vietnam—effectively being the first in and last out of RAAF units in the conflict. Returning home, the squadron was based at the Richmond RAAF Base. In May 2012 the Federal Government announced the purchase of 10 C-27J Spartan light transports—a battlefield airlifter that would complement the larger transport aircraft that already had demonstrated strong service in Afghanistan, Iraq, and on humanitarian missions around the globe. To fly the Spartan, Wallaby Airlines was re-formed. In January 2013, No. 35 Squadron stood up again at the Richmond RAAF Base.

Under the command of Wing Commander Brad Clarke, the unit sent its first personnel to train on the C-27J Spartan in Waco, Texas, in late 2014. In early 2015, after a 15-year hiatus, No. 35 Squadron flew its first Spartan flight. On 25 June 2015 a new shape appeared in the skies over the Hawkesbury—the first C-27J Spartan for No. 35 Squadron. I pay tribute to all the men and women who serve at the Richmond RAAF Base. They are shining exemplars of Hawkesbury service to our country. I pay special tribute to those attached to No. 35 Squadron. It was fantastic to be out at the RAAF base with

the squadron in August. I commend their dedicated service today and into the future.

HORNSBY RAILWAY FOOTBRIDGE

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.26 p.m.]: Hornsby's ageing and badly deteriorated railway footbridge will be replaced following a \$7 million funding commitment from the New South Wales Government and the Hornsby Shire Council. The 30-year-old bridge, which has well outlived its use-by date, will be knocked down and replaced with a new state-of-the-art bridge that will include two lifts and an undercover walkway. This is a great example of what can be achieved when a council and the State Government work together to deliver essential infrastructure projects for the public. Prior to my election as the member for Hornsby and Steve Russell becoming the mayor of Hornsby, for too long the State Government and the local council did not work together. That has been fixed and, rightly so, and the winners are the people of Hornsby.

The current bridge was built in 1984 and is no longer suitable for the growing needs of the Hornsby community. Local residents and commuters identified the bridge as one of the major public structures needing replacement. The bridge is used by 15,000 people every day of the week, but it is narrow, unsightly and exposed to weather conditions. The upgrades will be a fantastic result for residents who are in wheelchairs or who have mobility issues. Presently there are two steep ramps that are slippery when wet and very narrow, which means that disabled and elderly residents struggle to move across it. Plans for the bridge also include remediation works at the Florence Street Mall, which for the first time will allow users to walk unimpeded to Hornsby Westfield from Hornsby station and to avoid crossing Florence Street or Hunter Lane. This intersection is unsuitable for motorists attempting to drive through to Hunter Lane and pedestrians attempting to cross the road.

To complete the project, the Hornsby Shire Council will contribute \$2 million with the New South Wales Government committing the remaining \$5 million in funding. Works to replace the old footbridge site already are underway, with nearby sewer pipes being relocated to make way for elevators in the completed footbridge design. Once that is completed, a temporary ramp will be put in place so that pedestrians will not be inconvenienced. Then work to construct the bridge's new foundations will begin. The new footbridge structure is being constructed off site to minimise traffic disruptions. The new structure eventually will be lowered by cranes and put in place.

The new alignment of the bridge also will allow for construction. The upcoming works are expected to take 12 months to complete. Local residents, commuters, shop owners and motorists are all likely to benefit from this work, which will reshape Florence Street, improve traffic flow and provide a more user-friendly footbridge for public use. I have met with many business owners along Florence Street, including the staff from Tender Value Meats. I take this opportunity to acknowledge its owner, Adam Stratton, who recently was crowned the Sausage King for next year's Sydney Easter Show for his pork and truffle sausage, which won a special award.

Dr Geoff Lee: Did you buy any?

Mr MATT KEAN: I bought some the other day. I will try them this weekend. People like Adam Stratton have waited years for improvement works on the footbridge to commence. They all indicated to me that a better and safer walkway is needed to grow their businesses and to attract potential new customers. The upgraded streetscape design of the project also will benefit hospitality businesses, such as Pho Ngon Vietnamese Restaurant and Oliver Brown, with widened footpaths for outdoor dining areas and better shopfront access.

I congratulate Mayor Steve Russell on his outstanding work in delivering infrastructure to our community as well as the first Hornsby council surplus in more than a decade. I also congratulate outgoing General Manager Scott Philips and Director of Infrastructure Bob Stephens. Bob has a huge amount on his plate in delivering infrastructure projects across Hornsby and I thank him for his work. I

also thank the Hornsby council team for its hard work in making the project possible. The project was talked about for more than a decade but it was current Mayor Steve Russell and his backroom team who were able to make the vision a reality.

Mayor Russell understands the urgent need to rejuvenate the Hornsby central business district [CBD] and give residents the public infrastructure needed for the future. Mayor Russell has said in the past that the footbridge project is not just about access to Hornsby station; it is instrumental in linking the two halves of Hornsby and creating a single community. It is truly exciting to see the changing face of the Hornsby CBD as it comes of age. The council is revitalising Hornsby west side, and the upgraded footbridge will provide the twenty-first century link our community needs to better integrate the east and west sides of Hornsby.

The Hornsby commuter car park is another exciting development that will complement the new footbridge and Hornsby west side upgrades. The commuter car park will feature 230 extra parking spaces in a new multistorey development. The project will make a huge difference to the Hornsby CBD and to hundreds of commuters in the region. Labor ignored stations like Hornsby for 16 years, meaning commuters would either have to arrive at the station before 6.00 a.m. or miss out on a parking spot altogether. The New South Wales Government is also upgrading the Asquith station car park with an additional 40 new parking spaces because it understands that many Hornsby shire commuters prefer to use Asquith station to travel to work. Like Hornsby, Asquith is expected to grow over the next decade. We must act now to ensure that future needs of commuters and residents are met.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.31 p.m.]: I acknowledge the good member for Hornsby, who obviously cares about his community. The Australian Hindu community is a big part of his electorate and the Parramatta electorate. On behalf of members, I acknowledge that today is Lord Ganesha's birthday. Hinduism is one of the largest religions in the world. I pay tribute to the Hindu community throughout Australia and across the globe. As we know, Lord Ganesha is the lord of wisdom. That is especially important for politicians because the more wisdom we have the better decisions we make. Lord Ganesha is my favourite Hindu deity because he is also the remover of obstacles. I wish everybody in the Australian Hindu community all the best for Lord Ganesha's birthday and hope they enjoy the festivities over the weekend.

ALBERT (TIBBY) COTTER WALKWAY

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.32 p.m.]: Today New South Wales Acting Auditor-General Tony Whitfield slammed the Government's planning and delivery of the Albert Tibby Cotter Bridge in his report on that eyesore and obscene waste of taxpayers' money. The Albert Tibby Cotter Bridge is a pedestrian and cycle bridge constructed across Moore Park and is located within the Moore Park precinct in my electorate. When former Premier Barry O'Farrell first announced the bridge in February 2014, the Government claimed that it would only waste \$25 million on its construction. The then Premier promised that the bridge would be ready by February 2015 and open for the first Sydney Cricket Ground match of the 2015 Cricket World Cup. The date of the Cricket World Cup was about the only thing the Government got right in its announcement.

Not only did the Government fail to deliver the project on time—making New South Wales look utterly hopeless to the global community—but also it ran an incredible 52 per cent over budget. The final cost of the project ballooned to \$38 million. That is an extra \$13 million of taxpayers' money. The Acting Auditor-General's report is damning. It reveals the true inner workings of this chaotic and disorganised Government. It turns out that the Acting Auditor-General could not attribute blame to the relevant government department or Minister because the preliminary business case for the project was never signed. According to the Acting Auditor-General, the preliminary business case did not provide a rationale for the project. Nor did the Government provide an adequate time frame.

It was originally envisaged that the project would be constructed in line with the construction of

the CBD and South East Light Rail project. However, the construction of the light rail was delayed and no light rail station is anywhere near the bridge. The Acting Auditor-General points out that had the Government had the patience to wait the project may have cost considerably less. The report also notes that the typical time frame to build a truss bridge is at least 20 months—six months more than the time frame the Government determined it would need. That includes two months to complete the planning and two months to get a series of regulatory approvals, including approval from the Heritage Council as required by the Heritage Act. It took six months for the Heritage Council to give the project the green light and then the Heritage Council made the Government redesign the bridge. Even if the redesign had not been required, the report found that to receive the necessary regulatory approvals it was unrealistic for the Government to put aside anything short of four months let alone two.

How was the Government going to know that the Albert Tibby Cotter Bridge was heading for the proverbial iceberg? How could it know, when the Government did not allow its business case to be exposed to a gateway review? According to the report, a gateway review assesses the robustness of a proposal and contributes to improve its delivery. Indeed, Treasury requires agencies to submit a preliminary business case for projects with an estimated cost of more of \$10 million to the gateway review process, yet that did not happen. As a result, residents of New South Wales have been made to pay \$38 million for a pedestrian footbridge and cycleway that nobody uses. During the Cricket World Cup foot traffic figures tabled in Parliament showed that the bridge might have accommodated 22,000 trips. After a \$38 million spend, that values each trip at a cost of around \$1,700 per person. That is ridiculous.

The report found that the Government agreed to pay its alliance partners fees that are historically for Roads and Maritime Service [RMS] public-partnership ventures. The report states that the RMS did not allow for open tenders for possible alliance partners because it wanted to rush the project. The Government wanted to showcase its infrastructure prowess to the world and the Cricket World Cup was its stage. Instead the Government only succeeded to embarrass New South Wales. If the Government cannot deliver a footbridge, what confidence can the community have in its ability to deliver major infrastructure? I remind the House that the light rail project was costed at \$1.2 billion and is now at \$2.1 billion. The WestConnex was announced at \$10 billion and it is now at \$15 billion and workers have only just started widening the M4. I can see another Albert Tibby Cotter Bridge coming.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.37 p.m.]: I thank the member for Heffron for raising this issue affecting his electorate, but he neglected to mention that the cost blowout was due to the efforts of the Heritage Council to impose unrealistic, unfair and disgraceful restrictions. The reality is that the bridge has delivered for the 1.5 million spectators who want to access Moore Park easily and efficiently on a regular basis. It did that not only for the Cricket World Cup, for which the bridge was built in time; it will do so for all future events. There is a lot of talk about new sporting facilities being built at Moore Park. The bridge will justify itself when more sporting events are held there in future. This Government has the foresight to build in advance. This Government has the foresight to build full stop, which members opposite never did.

Private members' statement concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.38 p.m. until
Tuesday 13 October 2015 at 12 noon**
