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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 19 November 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.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the Auditor-General's Financial Audit Report, Volume Six 2015, received 19 November 2015.

ST VINCENT'S HOSPITAL GIVING TREE APPEAL 2015

The SPEAKER: I remind members that this morning between 11.00 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. I am hosting a morning tea in the Speaker's Garden in support of the St Vincent's Hospital Giving Tree Appeal. Each year St Vincent's Hospital, in support of various agencies across New South Wales, organises its Christmas gift appeal to provide children in the care of these agencies with presents on Christmas morning. I will be doing my part to ensure that the 2,063 children who require a gift this year receive one.

This year's gifts will be sent to 40 agencies including Amelie House, Come In Youth Resource Centre, Redfern Vinnies, Vincentian House, Gunawirra Ltd, Walla Mulla Family and Community Support and preschools and schools throughout New South Wales, in all members' electorates. Those wishing to participate should visit the Speaker's Garden, collect a gift tag and attend the morning tea, entry being a donated gift. For those who do not have a gift—and I acknowledge that members are away from stores and their electorates—please bring along a donation of \$10 or \$20. My staff in the Speaker's office will purchase gifts to make sure that as many children as possible receive them.

Representatives from Gunawirra agency and St Vincent's Hospital will attend the morning tea to discuss the joy these gifts will bring to the lives of these children on Christmas Day. I thank the Deputy Premier for his beautiful donation this morning of a gorgeous wombat, which will go to a three-year-old boy. I thank all other members who have been very generous today. I appreciate their support for this appeal.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

GAMING MACHINES AMENDMENT (CENTRALISED MONITORING SYSTEM) BILL 2015

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendment.

Schedule of the amendment referred to in the Legislative Council's message of 18 November 2015

Page 6, Schedule 1 [3], proposed section 136D. Insert after line 18:

- (4) The Minister is, as soon as practicable after approving under this section additional services by the CMS licensee, to cause a copy of the approval:
 - (a) to be published in the Gazette, and
 - (b) to be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) [10.15 a.m.]: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendment.

As mentioned in debates in the Legislative Council, the Government accepts the Opposition's amendment to this bill on the basis that it strengthens transparency. I acknowledge the significant contribution to this bill made by the member for Cessnock.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendment agreed to.

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

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS (CARE AND PROTECTION) AMENDMENT (PROTECTION FROM SERIOUS OFFENDERS) BILL 2015

Second Reading

Debate called on, and postponed on motion by Mr Nick Lalich, on behalf of Ms Tania Mihailuk, and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

WYONG SPECIAL AREA (PROTECTION) BILL 2015

Bill introduced on motion by Mr David Harris, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [10.17 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Wyong Special Area (Protection) Bill 2015 keeps an election promise made by NSW Labor and me during the 2015 State election campaign. Ironically it also keeps a promise made by the Liberal Party in the 2007 and 2011 election campaigns—a promise it was never to keep and about which I will speak later. I intend to deal briefly with the various aspects relating to this legislation in two parts. First, I will deal with the provisions contained in the bill and, secondly, I will deal with why the bill is necessary. This is a bill for an Act:

...to prohibit the granting, renewal or modification of exploration, prospecting and mining

authorities and titles for minerals and petroleum, and certain planning approvals, that relate to land at Wyong that is the site of the Wallarah 2 coal mine project; and for other purposes.

The bill defines "Wyong special area" in clause 3 as:

Wyong special area means land subject to the following current and former mining authorisations:

- (a) exploration licence number EL6514 renewed on and from 24 October 2011,
- (b) exploration licence number EL4911 dated October 1995,
- (c) authorisation number A405 dated 1995.

Clause 4 prohibits the grant or renewal of any mining authorisation in relation to land in the Wyong special area and the making of any changes to the conditions to which such an authorisation is subject. Clause 5 prohibits the grant or renewal of any petroleum title in relation to land defined in the Act and the making of any changes to the conditions to which such a title is subject. Clause 6 provides that a planning approval is not to be given under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 in relation to development for the purposes of prospecting and mining activities on the land in the Wyong special area and cancels any such planning approval already given.

I will now outline why this legislation is required and the history behind it. Essentially, the bill seeks to protect the Wyong water catchment area from destructive mining, thereby protecting the important water supply that services more than 300,000 people. Further, this bill is required to fulfil ironclad election commitments made by the Liberal Party in 2007 and 2011 and the Labor Party in 2015. The South Korean Government-owned mining company Kores submitted, under the Wallarah 2 Coal Project, a new application to build a longwall coalmine beneath the Dooralong and Yarralong valleys Wyong water catchment area. Those valleys provide the major drinking water resource for more than 350,000 people. Wyong Shire Council, Gosford City Council and the Joint Water Authority employed Professor Philip Pells to prepare the water section of their submission against the Wallarah 2 Coal Project. Using the mining company's own data Professor Pells proved that there would be a catastrophic loss of water in the catchment.

In 1999, when BHP Billiton owned the lease under its subsidiary Coal Operations Australia Limited, its well-credentialed and respected hydrology consultants, Mitchell McCotter, found in its report produced in 1999 that there were transient pathways in the geology that would enable surface water and aquifer water to travel to the mine workings should mining occur. Those facts were presented at the Chikarovski inquiry held in 2008 and were ignored by the panel members. In March 2011, prior to the last State election, then Minister for Planning Tony Kelly rejected the mine proposal. Mr Kelly said in a letter to the community group fighting against the mine, the Australian Coal Alliance:

The project does not adequately address potential surface water quality impacts, resulting in uncertainty around the ability of the project to meet acceptable water quality outcomes.

When rejecting the mine application Mr Kelly further said:

The project is not considered consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development, including the precautionary principle, and as a consequence is not considered to be in the public interest.

In the years leading up to that decision the Liberal Party in opposition championed the community's cause, particularly Chris Hartcher and Barry O'Farrell. The Liberal Party twice committed itself in writing that if elected it would not allow the coalmine in the water catchment valleys. I have a copy of a letter from

then shadow Minister Chris Hartcher saying exactly that. In January 2009 Barry O'Farrell stood before a crowd of more than 300 people at a rally and said:

The next Liberal-National government will not allow mining to occur here, will not allow mining to occur in any water catchment. Mining leases and mining permits will reflect that common sense. No ifs, no buts, a guarantee.

In an email to community leader Alan Hayes the day after the rally Barry O'Farrell said:

I especially appreciate the opportunity to reiterate the Liberal Party's opposition to the coal mining proposal and our determination, in office, to prevent it going ahead.

Prior to the March 2011 election the Liberal Party said in writing that it was now Liberal Party policy that there would be no coalmining in the Wyong water catchment valleys. Members of the Liberal Party ran their election campaign on the Central Coast on the back of the anti-coalmine campaign, engaged the community's assistance through the Australian Coal Alliance and proudly wore their "Water Not Coal" T-shirts and waved their "Water Not Coal" placards throughout the four State electorates on the Central Coast. The picture I have in my hand shows how serious they were about the campaign. Chris Hartcher said on ABC Radio after the 2011 election:

No candidate would have been elected [on the Central Coast] had they not opposed the coalmine.

Chris Hartcher also said in a press release sent to Alan Hayes in April 2011 and published in the local community newspaper:

Having attended a number of public meetings and having been fully briefed by the Australian Coal Alliance, in 2007, the Liberal Party (through its leader Barry O'Farrell) declared support for the community campaign against the coal mine and pledged to ban the coal mine (with legislation in the Parliament if necessary) if elected in 2011.

Chris Hartcher further said in that press release:

On the 4th March, the last day at law that they could make a decision, the Labor Party caved in to community pressure and the ACA's campaign and promised what the Liberals had promised 4 years earlier. Well ... not exactly. The Liberals promised to introduce legislation to ban mining beneath the water catchment area around Wyong.

Barry O'Farrell confirmed to local residents at the Community Cabinet meeting held at Gosford in December 2012 that the mine would not proceed. Despite the ironclad promises of the Liberals in writing and at public rallies, the Liberal Government has reneged on its promise and allowed the South Koreans to lodge a new application. The Liberals said that they would be sued if they did not allow due process. That was incorrect. Section 127 (1) of the Mining Act 1992 No. 29, which is currently in force, states:

The holder of an authority is not entitled to compensation merely because the authority is cancelled.

The term "authority" includes exploration licences and mining leases. Professor Pells was again retained by local government and the Joint Water Authority to provide a report in their opposition to the Wallarah 2 Coal Project when a second environmental impact statement [EIS] was submitted. He proved, once again using the proponent's own data in its new environmental impact statement, that there will be an unacceptable loss of the major drinking water resource of the Central Coast. The proponent admitted in the executive summary of its new EIS that the proposed mine will probably kill people—but not many—from fine airborne particles of coaldust. Pages 9 to 17 of the health assessment risks in the EIS

contain a full analysis of the possible increased deaths and sickness from the dust generated from the mine.

The possibility of even causing one death is an unacceptable risk. The mine surface facility is adjacent to the largest urban growth area in the region and the mortality figures in the EIS are, as quoted by the proponent, "conservative" and do not take into account the growing population of the area or the large volume of traffic travelling along the F3 expressway, now called the M1, or the link road past it. Which Central Coast families will have to sacrifice a loved one so that South Korea can extract coal for its energy needs? The Central Coast region already has the highest rate of avoidable respiratory-related deaths in the country. Dr Peter Lewis, the then Director of Public Health for the Central Coast and North Sydney, said in the report he prepared for the Wallarah 2 submission:

Increased particulate exposure (from the Wallarah 2 coal surface facilities) could cause deaths, require hospital admissions, and make children have more chest colds, night-time coughs and trips to the doctor.

He further stated that the mortality and morbidity figures would be sevenfold those estimated by the mine proponent. His report only became public after being uncovered by the Australian Coal Alliance, but it was still ignored by the State Planning Assessment Commission for the previous Wallarah 2 submission. Wallarah 2 further admitted in appendix H of the EIS that 245 homes would be subsided up to one metre, and in some cases up to two metres. That portion of the EIS states:

The overall movement predicted for the houses within the Study area are greater than those predicted to have occurred for the houses at Tahmoor, Teralba, West Cliff and West Wallsend Collieries. It is expected that impacts would be greater (for these houses in the Study area).

In addition, 755 rural structures and 420 rural dams will subside to varying degrees. Dooralong-Jilliby Road is predicted to fall 1.75 metres in places, as are Dickson, Durren and Smith roads. Many farms are predicted to subside 1.6 metres or more. This would make it worse than any other mine in the country. Sam Haddad, when Director General of Planning and Infrastructure, as part of the director general's requirements required the mining company in 2012 to consult individually with all subsidence-affected landholders during the preparation of the environmental impact statement [EIS]. This was not done.

During the 10 years that Kores has held the exploration lease it has never consulted directly with any of the 245 affected landholders. Dr Philip Pells, after spending many hours trying to work out the subsidence damage, concluded that the EIS, and in particular the Mine Subsidence Engineering Consultants [MSEC] subsidence impact prediction on houses, has been presented in such a way that it is impossible to determine the likely damage to any particular house. So it is impossible for a particular landowner to work out what is predicted for his or her house.

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

Pursuant to sessional order General Business Orders of the Day (General Orders) and General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) proceeded with.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.30 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the efforts of the Government to create more opportunities for the people of New South Wales to develop new skills that will help them get jobs, and secure their

livelihoods.

- (2) Congratulates the Government on its record \$60 billion infrastructure investment program, and \$190 million Jobs for NSW program, which will see at least 150,000 new jobs created by 2019.
- (3) Condemns the Opposition and The Greens for their campaign of scaremongering and misinformation against TAFE NSW, which is discouraging prospective students from enrolling in TAFE, and threatens its ongoing viability as the public provider.

This Government is committed to creating more opportunities for the people of New South Wales to develop new skills that will help them get jobs and secure their livelihoods. The objective of this motion is to highlight how the Opposition does not support students but instead prefers to protect the bricks and mortar of the institution. Opposition members are living in the nineteenth century; they are living in the past.

Mr David Harris: Do you talk to your local TAFE people?

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: As a matter of fact, I have talked to my local TAFE people. The North Coast Institute of TAFE is doing an absolutely outstanding job. One of the reasons that TAFE in south-western Sydney is not going so well is that members like the member for Wyong are talking it down. The glass is half empty in their view. Members opposite talk it down every day. It is no wonder TAFE in that area is failing—it is because the local member in that area is failing it. The North Coast Institute of TAFE is an absolute model of how TAFE should operate under the provisions delivered by this Government. It has moved into the twenty-first century. I spoke in this House on 15 October about the innovative program that the North Coast Institute of TAFE has invested in creating. It is getting people job ready for the Pacific Highway upgrade. It has refurbished shipping containers and transferred them to sites where there is equipment that people can use. We do not need bricks-and-mortar classrooms out in the bush—

Mr David Harris: You need teachers.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: There are teachers. The North Coast Institute of TAFE has partnered with Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] and with a construction company to deliver training. There have been 600 enrolments across the North Coast Institute's footprint, with a large number of existing workers learning on the job and a large number of jobseekers learning in real-life settings. We are not talking about an institution that has just three students. Of those 600, 180 are apprentices and trainees connected with the Pacific Highway upgrade, 174 are civil construction trainees and six are civil construction apprentices. Thirty-seven of the students are Aboriginal trainees. This is exactly what the TAFE in south-western Sydney should be doing. But instead of talking it up, members opposite are talking it down. That is why it is failing.

Every day those opposite come into the House and talk down TAFE. Those opposite should listen to the Prime Minister: It is a great time to be alive; it is an exciting time to be in Australia. Clearly, Opposition members go home every night and kick their dogs. I would hate to be the dog who lives in the house of the member for Wyong. This Government is about creating more opportunities for the people of New South Wales to develop new skills that will help them get jobs and secure their livelihoods. Building a skilled workforce to support the jobs of tomorrow, which will help deliver a record infrastructure program, is of the utmost importance to this State. The member for Wyong may not be aware of what is happening outside his electorate, but I can tell him that north of Port Macquarie 155 kilometres of highway are under construction. It is the biggest single project in regional Australia. The Opposition opposed the Federal Government funding for that project.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Clarence will direct his

remarks through the Chair. The member for Wyong will cease interjecting. He will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: Of course I will direct my comments through the Chair. Through the Chair, the Deputy-Speaker might like to inform the member for Wyong that some 3,000 jobs, including traineeships, have been created by our investment in the Pacific Highway. This is happening on our watch, and Labor opposed it. Let us look at what those opposite proposed in their policy document "A better way: Labor's fully funded infrastructure plan".

Mr Adam Marshall: Let's have a good look at that.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: Yes, let us have a good look at it. How was the Labor Party proposing to raise the money? It was going to defer business tax cuts to the tune of \$5 billion. How does deferring business tax cuts create jobs? How is that an incentive for employers to employ more people? Labor Party members would not know because not a single one of them has been meaningfully employed paying wages and salaries. All they have done is look after their union mates. They are just like those little birds sitting in the nest with their mouths open waiting for mama to drop in a dead fish. Unfortunately, that is what those opposite did to New South Wales—they dropped dead fish on this State for the 16 years they were in government.

So the answer from those opposite is to defer business tax cuts. Alternatively, Labor's A Better Way infrastructure plan—and it is certainly not a better way for New South Wales—suggested raising \$5 billion by using the uncommitted funds from Restart NSW. How innovative is that? Those opposite opposed the lease of Port Botany and they opposed the lease of the desalination plant, yet they want to spend the money. If we had not gone ahead with those leases, there would be no money. They would not have any money to spend in regional New South Wales, or in fact in the whole of New South Wales. I will come back to that point during my speech in reply. The fact of the matter is those opposite have no idea how to run this State.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [10.37 a.m.]: It is the last sitting day before Christmas and clearly the Government is trying to indoctrinate the troops and send them off on holidays with happy thoughts in their heads. We are discussing vocational education in New South Wales. Government members have come to see me privately and said, "Oh, we are not doing real good here; what you are saying is 100 per cent right." I urge all members opposite to take a closer look at what is happening in the sector. Outside the amount of money being spent, there should be two determining factors when assessing whether a program is successful: quality of delivery and accessibility for all stakeholders.

Merely saying that the Government spends record amounts of money is not an indicator of the quality of implementation. The evidence, not the rhetoric, points strongly to a system in crisis. Changes based on ideology not quality, a sharp decline in accessibility due to higher fees, and cuts to support staff and to courses have led to the problems that TAFE NSW currently faces. The Minister's propaganda machine—run by people such as the member for Clarence—points the finger at the Labor Opposition, The Greens and the NSW Teachers Federation for all the ills of TAFE and vocational education in New South Wales. But we are simply the messengers. Of the 278 submissions made to the upper House inquiry, only one was complimentary—and I will return to that point.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: You are a prophet of doom.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I urge the member for Clarence to read the submissions—it will open his eyes. A Senate inquiry highlighted issues in the sector and countless reports are being prepared in other jurisdictions, including in Victoria, which went down this path and, incredibly, the New South Wales Government now wants to follow its bad example. The Federal Auditor-General has also reported that the loan scheme is in crisis—namely, increasing from \$250 million to \$4 billion. It could go as high as \$7 billion, with a very low completion rate. That money will never be seen again. Is that good use of money?

In a year or two this Government will have to justify why those funds were given to a lot of shonky operators. Every week we hear more and more stories about how people are being ripped off; how providers are profiteering in this market and not doing the right thing. What do those reports say? I will enlighten the House. They say that there is less quality, less accessibility, more roting, fewer hours, bigger classes, safety concerns, loss of experience, course closures, higher costs, lower funding.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: I ask the member for Wyong to table the documents to which he is referring or to cite the source, as required under the standing orders.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I have given the source.

Mr Gareth Ward: What was it?

Mr DAVID HARRIS: The Victorian Education and Training [VET] Funding Review, "Concessional Funding in the VET Sector".

Mr Gareth Ward: Thank you for enlightening us.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Also the Sydney university report and the 278 submissions to the inquiry. I can give the member more references if he likes. He obviously has not read any of them or he would not be arguing about it. As I said, those reports say that there are fewer hours, bigger classes, safety concerns, loss of experience, course closures, higher costs and lower funding. If those opposite still do not get it, I refer them to documents produced by TAFE institutes. They cite the introduction of Smart and Skilled as the number one reason for cutting staff, cutting budgets, cutting hours and increasing class sizes. The Minister and backbench members know that is true—30,000 fewer students and 2,600 staff full-time equivalent positions lost. We already have a system in which, of the 8,000 teachers employed at TAFE colleges, 6,000—or about 75 per cent—are part-time employees. Surely it cannot get more flexible than that.

The Minister is now trying to save the situation by introducing "new initiatives"—which means restoring what was originally in place. That is code for "The whole thing is failing dismally so we have to find some more students before we have a total disaster." But the problem is that the whole model is broken, despite the Minister's efforts to save face. As Dr John Kaye said in the other place, it "is like having a limb cut off and trying to stop the bleeding with bandaids—the patient is still going to die". I could not agree more. Let us consider some examples. One submission to the inquiry was about welding. Previously certificate III course apprentices were required to do 108 days training, but under Smart and Skilled that training has been reduced to 65 days—a 40 per cent reduction. The submission states:

Trade training does not need a reduction ... but quite possibly an increase due to technology changes e.g. CNC Computer Numerical Controlled machines, inverter pulse welders.

It also referred to accounts of a video being shown to students, who were then passed as competent. Indeed, we are hearing more and more stories like that. For example, one company tells students it will tick them off if they can demonstrate their skills through a series of photographs. The head teachers at the Miller campus of the South Western Sydney Institute of TAFE gave the example of a plumbing pre-apprenticeships course with an 80 per cent success rate. That course was closed because it was running at 30 per cent below the cost of delivery, which was insufficient. Those 80 per cent of kids, who were case managed by teachers after leaving TAFE, now have nothing. The NSW Secondary Principals' Association talked about the effects of the competitive training market on student access to educational training skills. It says that students will be unable to access those courses anymore because they can cost up to \$15,000. The Government can defend its record all it wants, but the facts show the exact opposite. The Government will live by its record.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.44 a.m.]: Listening to the Opposition

spokesman on this topic is like listening to Chicken Little: The sky is falling; TAFE is falling apart at the seams. The sort of rhetoric we have just heard needs to be calibrated against Labor's policy in this area. The member for Wyong, and shadow Minister, took a policy to the last election that called for the private sector to be involved in the provision of vocational education.

Mr David Harris: Exactly. We always have.

Mr GARETH WARD: I will come back to the member for Wyong. He should be quiet. He got a great private education from a private provider—the private providers that he opposes in this place.

Mr David Harris: Under the previous system.

Mr GARETH WARD: I will come back to you; I will deal with you in a moment. Labor said, "We want to see the private sector involved" and it set a target of 30 per cent. Under Smart and Skilled what percentage of private providers are involved in the provision of vocational education in New South Wales? The answer is 20 per cent—10 per cent below the target Labor set. Labor members come into this House and say, "We want the Government to be the provider and the great socialist objective will be met." But they ignore the fact that 63,000 additional people have seized the opportunity to get a job through the private sector—just as the shadow Minister gained that opportunity through the private sector.

In addition, the Government will offer 200,000 fee-free scholarships for people in affordable and social housing to try to break the cycle of disadvantage. Do those opposite think the Government has got it wrong? Is it wrong that there are 63,000 additional places? Do those opposite ignore the finding of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, which said, "These are the skillsets that we have identified and these are the areas we need to invest in"? Do they say that is wrong? The reality is that the Labor Party will not accept any private sector involvement but, interestingly, former Prime Minister Julia Gillard suggested that this is how the system should operate. Those opposite walk away from that now—they ignore it as if it never happened.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Wyong will come to order. He has made his contribution to this debate.

Mr GARETH WARD: TAFE NSW in my community remains the backbone of vocational education and training. This healthy and highly respected institution is in great shape to support the Government's record infrastructure program. TAFE NSW has strong industry partnerships in the Illawarra region. TAFE Illawarra was selected to provide BlueScope Steel's trade training services, a program which delivers training to new applicants, cadets and trade staff. TAFE Illawarra is now BlueScope's trainer of choice. The partnership provides great benefits to the region by contributing to the skills base in the Illawarra. New models of delivery in high-quality engineering training facilities enable apprentices to be work ready earlier and to deliver best-practice training and training pathways that have been developed specifically for BlueScope. That is a fantastic vote of confidence in the public provider. I absolutely endorse the Government's actions in this regard.

We have seen across the Illawarra great investments in TAFE. I commend all our TAFE teachers and staff who work so hard at campuses such as Yallah, Shellharbour and Nowra, where young people are competing at the highest level and graduating as tradespersons and trainees of the year. They are winning awards and competitions not only in the region but also all over Australia. But those opposite are talking down the TAFE sector. There has been an 11 per cent increase in the budget over the past four years yet those opposite continue to mislead people. I understand that they need to satisfy the union, but they should be thinking about the thousands more people who now have places at TAFE. They should be thinking about using every taxpayer dollar wisely, which includes securing a job through a good training provider for every young person in New South Wales who wants one.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.48 a.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to make a contribution to

this debate. In particular, I will address paragraph (3) of the motion, which says:

- (3) Condemns the Opposition and the Greens for their campaign of scaremongering and misinformation against TAFE NSW, which is discouraging prospective students from enrolling in TAFE, and threatens its ongoing viability as the public provider.

The discouragement of prospective students from enrolling and the threat to the ongoing viability of the public provider is not coming from the Opposition and The Greens; it is coming from the policies of this Government. I will outline The Greens' concerns. The Parliamentary Secretary was correct that in 2012 the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals signed up to the Gillard Labor Government's National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform. That was the problem. The agreement created a set of training entitlements that students could cash in with TAFE or with private providers—many of which offered low-cost, low-quality education. That neoliberal, market-driven approach infected the Federal Labor Party, and the Coalition parties jumped at the opportunity to introduce contestability into the market and degrade the capacity of the public provider. The creation of the so-called Smart and Skilled competitive market has eroded TAFE's funding and threatened its role as the dominant provider of vocational education.

In 2015-16, \$750 million that would have been allocated to the TAFE budget will disappear into the competitive market. Under the competitive market model pushed by Federal Labor and adopted by the New South Wales Coalition, TAFE is being forced to compete against training companies that often exploit students and offer substandard qualifications. Even Christopher Pyne, during his tenure as Federal Minister for Education, agreed that there are problems with the provision of quality education from these providers. The Federal Government has been robbed of millions and millions of dollars of VET FEE-HELP by providers offering shocking incentives such as free iPads and saying to prospective students, "Sign up to the course; you do not really have to finish it." The graduation rates of some of the private providers are incredibly low. Their purpose is to exploit the VET FEE-HELP scheme. Their completion rates are around 20 per cent.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: They provide choice.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: Giving students choice through robust, good-quality providers would support the Government's argument. But we know that the quality of private providers is lacking. That is one of the major concerns raised. While TAFEs will win back some of the Smart and Skilled market, profit-motivated private providers will strip hundreds of millions of dollars from the public vocational system. I turn to employment. There is a large TAFE in my electorate and I visited many other TAFEs during the parliamentary inquiry into skills needs. We travelled all around the State. I am particularly concerned about rural and regional New South Wales. If 10 TAFE jobs are lost in my electorate it is critical, but it is not felt in the same way as when 10 TAFE jobs are lost in rural and regional New South Wales. Since 2011, 2,600 TAFE teaching and support staff jobs have been lost. Fees have gone up for many students. A leaked Cabinet-in-confidence document details 27 TAFE sites to be completely or partially sold, which will force many students to complete courses online.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: You are ignoring the jobs that have been created in the same sector.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I will respond to that interjection. There has been an increase in private providers, but they are not in the same locations as TAFE. TAFE campuses were situated throughout the State. We know that support for students with disability and language needs, Aboriginal students and second-chance learners has been significantly reduced in TAFE because TAFE has to compete against private providers who do not provide the same support. The private sector does not offer the support staff that TAFE did. TAFE has to cut those services to the bone to compete against the private sector. There are fewer students enrolling in TAFE. TAFE is an important provider in the community. In 2015 there were 83,000 fewer students than in 2012. The capacity of TAFE has been reduced to such an extent that it is unable to compete against the private sector.

The Greens' view on this is clear: We do not think any private provider should be funded for a course that TAFE can provide. TAFE should be guaranteed at least 85 per cent of the funds allocated to each course code. There should be full public funding of diploma and advanced diploma courses. There should be an end to the income contingent loan scheme. The Greens think private providers are a problem in the system. We support a strong and vigorous TAFE system. We want to see proper wages and conditions for staff. Most importantly, we want to see good-quality education for students so that they can contribute to our society.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [10.52 a.m.]: I speak in support of the motion moved by my colleague the member for Clarence. He represents an area where, despite the claims of the doomsayers opposite, TAFE is booming. There are record enrolments.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: North Coast TAFE is booming.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: It is a great example of a TAFE institute that has taken advantage of the reforms and partnered with industry. It has been innovative and is delivering on the training needs of industry and business in the region. Hence, it is the training provider of choice on the North Coast—and rightly so. I was interested to hear the comments of members opposite. I turn first to the remarks made by the member for Balmain. Where is the member for Balmain? He is not in the Chamber; he obviously had something better to do. In his contribution he painted a picture of great alarm and concern in rural and regional New South Wales, with people rioting in the streets over the reforms. I note that earlier this year his colleague in the other place Dr John Kaye visited TAFE New England institutes in my electorate.

Given the apparent enormous concern, alarm and upset experienced by everyone in the community, one would have expected a massive crowd to greet him. He issued a call to arms to protest the reforms, in Armidale, on the TAFE Day of Action. I am looking at a photo of that huge rally outside TAFE in Armidale on the TAFE Day of Action. One expected that hundreds of people would attend. Armidale is a city of 25,000 people. One would expect a 10 per cent turnout—2,500 people. There are eight people in the photo. There was a big build-up, a massive push. One of those people is Dr John Kaye and two of the others travelled from Sydney, so only five locals were involved in the protest.

Mr David Harris: Because they are too scared.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes, I am sure they were scared. Country people are really scared when people from city areas come to the bush. Country people shrink and curl into the foetal position. Get real. Country people can see through that rubbish. I turn to the investment program of this Government. If we are to drive jobs in rural and regional New South Wales, we need public sector investment to underpin that. Let us not talk only about what this Government is doing. We should turn our attention to the proposals put forward by those opposite. Labor has a 10-year fully funded infrastructure plan for New South Wales, called A Better Way. It allocates \$1.57 billion for infrastructure in rural and regional New South Wales over the next 10 years. Of that, \$810 million is allocated to the Hunter and \$280 million is allocated to the Illawarra. That leaves \$486 million for rural and regional New South Wales over the next 10 years. That is it. There is \$486 million for the rest of the bush over 10 years. It is an absolute disgrace. It is obvious that, in accordance with what is written in its own documents, the Opposition does not give a rat's about people in the bush. Shame on the Opposition.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) [10.56 a.m.]: For decades TAFE has been subjected to vicious attacks from State and Federal governments, by both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party. It is completely outrageous that this motion suggests that The Greens are part of a scaremongering campaign and are giving out misinformation about TAFE, which is discouraging prospective students from enrolling in TAFE and is threatening TAFE's ongoing viability as a public provider. The Greens are perhaps one of the strongest advocates of TAFE and public education, and have consistently been the loudest voice in protecting TAFE from funding cuts, job losses, privatisation and unfair competition with profit-driven corporations.

Mr Geoff Provest: Did you write this?

Ms JENNY LEONG: I did.

Mr Geoff Provest: Profit-driven corporations—really?

Ms JENNY LEONG: Is that where the member is going? Is that where the attack goes? We have seen across the board the massive campaign to stop TAFE cuts across New South Wales—hundreds of thousands of people. At the Newtown Festival just recently six people were collecting signatures on a petition at their stalls—they were there last year. I have seen hundreds of thousands of people across this State come together to campaign against TAFE cuts. We have seen communities join together to sign petitions online—maybe they do not all get out on the street. I note that the member for Northern Tablelands said that people were not scared to join these protests.

My electorate office has received a number of anonymous concerns from people who say they are too scared to speak out publicly because they are worried that they will lose their jobs by talking about the undermining of TAFE by this Government as a result of not advertising courses, not publicising courses and not providing the support needed to encourage and promote our TAFE system. It is clear that TAFE provides an incredible educational opportunity for people. The Greens are strong advocates for public education and the public TAFE system. We know that TAFE has been cut to the bone and it is outrageous that the Government is attacking The Greens and Labor—although, admittedly, Labor in its 16 years in government did not do such a great job of investing in TAFE.

During the time I have been the member for Newtown I have had the opportunity to meet with students at the Design Centre Enmore and I have spoken also to people working at Eora College of Sydney TAFE in Redfern. Many positive stories come out of TAFE. The people who work within the TAFE system and the students are incredible examples of what our public education system can produce. This Government is trying to hide behind the fact that it is cutting TAFE to the bone by blaming the problems in TAFE on the Labor Party and on The Greens. I conclude by mentioning my good friend Willie who works as a bus driver at Eora College. He remembers the day when he first met Adam Goodes. Willie was sweeping the path outside the Eora building when he saw the young Sydney Swans player and a teammate across the road. They walked across and asked what the centre was about and Willie showed them around. They both enrolled at the Eora College. Adam Goodes is a proud graduate of Eora College, as are so many other people. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [11.00 a.m.], by leave: I appreciate the Government giving me an opportunity to make a contribution to this very important debate. A number of people will seek leave to make a contribution because this is an opportunity for us to talk about TAFE and the changes it is going through. I start by calling them "changes", but it will deteriorate from there. I hope that members on the other side will listen to this debate and understand the changes that are happening in TAFE. I will get to those changes shortly. I was inspired by the contribution of the member for Clarence, who spoke about roadworks in his area and how that is filling up seats in TAFE, which is wonderful. The Hunter Expressway recently went through my electorate and for that two- or three-year period our TAFE seats were full as well. The trouble is that the roadworks have moved on and our TAFE is now empty.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: But aren't those people skilled?

Mr CLAYTON BARR: The people who became skilled during the course of those roadworks have had to follow the work, and have moved on to the next project.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: Whereas they would have stayed there and not had a job.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I suggest to the member for Clarence that there is probably a whole bunch

of people who were trained and became skilled in the Cessnock electorate who are now working on the roads in his electorate and helping to train some of the young people who are working on the roads in his area. Additional funding this year inside the TAFE budget comes from student debt. It is not real government money because it is not part of the revenue stream that it has put back into TAFE.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: Do we not subsidise TAFE?

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Clarence. It is an 11 per cent increase, but the money is funded by student debt. The new TAFE project guarantees that young people will start their working life in debt. That is the future we are painting for young people across our State who are working and studying towards a qualification and a degree. They can complete a qualification and a degree, but they will start their working life with debt. When they go to the bank to ask for a loan for a car to get to work they will have to declare all their debts, and the bank will decide whether it will give them a loan to buy a car. Later, when these young people want to buy a house or a property, the bank will want to know about their debts, and that will include their TAFE debt. That money is supporting the increase in the TAFE budget.

Those opposite do not understand that and never want to talk about it, but that is the truth. Does anyone in the Chamber want to guess the size of the debt that is now going into TAFE? It is expected that it could be as high as \$1 billion. Let us assume that is a huge overestimation and let us halve it to \$500 million. That means that \$500 million inside the TAFE budget comes from student debt. That is \$500 million worth of debt that young people across this State will carry when they start their working life. If members opposite want to crow about that, I will leave them to it. I make one other observation, and it is about The Greens. The Greens would like everything across the State to be free, with reckless abandon and no thought for the budget constraints of the State. It is impossible to make it so. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.04 a.m.], by leave: A very important person once said that knowledge is the poor boy's arsenal, meaning that anybody who has the opportunity to educate themselves can lift themselves up out of poverty, improve their status and go on to lead a successful life. I certainly believe in that philosophy. It is worthwhile noting for the record—and it is the reason I sought leave to make a contribution to this debate—that, apart from my university qualifications, I hold no fewer than six TAFE qualifications, including four full apprenticeship qualifications, in welding, boilermaking, panelbeating and spray painting, gained through the appropriate apprenticeship requirements. I also have a Certificate III in Transport and Distribution. A previous speaker in the debate said that a bus driver could gain that qualification; I gained mine during my involvement in the transport industry. I also have a very small qualification as a safety inspector for electrical devices—a qualification necessary once appropriate tagging of electrical appliances was introduced.

My trade qualifications are in addition to my having had the opportunity to complete my master's degree in urban and regional planning. The point I make is that I stand in this House today having embraced every opportunity to educate myself so that I could improve my status for me and my family. The various employment roles that I have undertaken have enabled me to understand the complexities of life. I have been a great beneficiary of the tertiary and further education I have undertaken, whether that was through public processes or through private providers. I take up the final point of the member for Cessnock that The Greens would like everything to be free. There is an old saying that there is no such thing as a free lunch, and we all acknowledge that. There is a significant cost to providing education and it is not unfair that people pay a proportion towards their education because ultimately they will benefit from it. I hasten to add that people should think very carefully about their career choices to ensure that they will be of benefit to them.

I support the role the Government is taking in providing additional TAFE teachers. The Government acknowledges there is a role for private providers to play. As the member for Kiama eloquently put it, Labor in government proposed a 30 per cent provision of the private sector in this educational space when at this point we have approximately 20 per cent of private providers and a very

sound public education system. As a very proud product of tertiary and further educational academic qualifications, I continue and will always continue to support the Government in providing education on behalf of as many people as possible.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) [11.08 a.m.], by leave: As I have pointed out in this place, the electorate of Swansea is most certainly a tradies electorate. Swansea has the third highest proportion of apprentices in New South Wales. More than 25 per cent of people living in the Swansea electorate have trade qualifications. Unfortunately for apprentices living in the Swansea electorate, they are now paying between \$500 and \$1,500 extra on average for their courses as a result of the Government's Smart and Skilled program. Figures released by the department reveal cost increases of between 33 per cent and 70 per cent for trades and apprenticeship courses. Last year a certificate III bricklayer course costs students \$838 a year for three years, but the introduction of Smart and Skilled saw a flat fee of \$3,550 for a second or further qualification. That is after already forking out \$2,960 for their first qualification. On average, apprentices in the Swansea electorate are looking at \$2,000 for a course, up from about \$500 just last year.

I condemn the Government for cutting the metal fabrication, welding, and fitting and machinery courses at Belmont TAFE. The Minister has denied that, and it comes as no surprise. When answering my question as to why the Government saw fit to cut courses so vital to the Swansea electorate, the answer was that metal fabrication, welding, and fitting and machinery courses will be offered to continuing students and in areas of specialised training. Government members talk constantly about requiring the skills we need for the future, so I inform the Government that while Hunter-based manufacturing has faced a significant downturn over the past few years, which has hit our high-skilled metal tradespeople particularly hard, recent news that the iconic Forgacs will sell its shipbuilding and engineering arms to a Western Australian company keen to bid for Australia's new submarine contract appears to be positive news for metalworkers in the Hunter, including those from the Swansea electorate. This potential sale could mean that Forgacs will have sufficient capital to pursue larger manufacturing contracts, which will certainly mean more jobs for local metalworkers.

I ask the Minister whether, in light of this good news for the Hunter, will he commit to reinstating, in full, courses essential to the completion of metal trades at Belmont TAFE or will he simply continue to lock local people out of what are sure to be good, well-paid local jobs? I am genuinely concerned about the future of TAFE in the Swansea electorate. Jobs continue to be slashed from Belmont campus. Courses are down to a bare minimum and just last week we heard the very sad news that the counsellor at Belmont campus had lost his job. No longer will students have access to career advice that is so important to them. Many of the students and teachers at the campus tell me that the Government's decisions have rendered the campus a ghost town. I emphatically call on the Government to reverse its TAFE funding decisions that have had adverse impacts on staff and students, and TAFE budgets. With more than 2,500 jobs cuts since 2011 and 30,000 fewer students enrolled in TAFE courses this year alone, the Government has its work cut out.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [11.12 a.m.], by leave: Kingscliff TAFE continues to grow. Recently the Minister for Skills, John Barilaro, visited Kingscliff TAFE and saw firsthand the multimillion-dollar automotive facility that opened recently. Already enrolment numbers for information technology, nursing and aged-care courses at the TAFE are at record levels. This is a result of the Government employing six additional teachers at Kingscliff TAFE. The member for Northern Tablelands said that eight people turned up to the TAFE in his electorate. When The Greens did their little promo shoot there were only three or four, so it does not cut any mustard. The point is that students are voting with their feet. They are enrolling in courses in record numbers and, in turn, the Government is responding by putting significant resources into TAFE.

It is pertinent to acknowledge the regional director, Elizabeth McGregor, who does a sterling job with her team. She is responsive, informative and innovative; she does such good work, particularly with vocational education and training courses, and TAFE's relationship with local high schools. Those at

Tweed River High School and Banora Point High School spoke highly of Kingscliff TAFE. It is a jewel within the Tweed Heads area. Many years ago I was a TAFE teacher—I taught out of Bankstown TAFE at Revesby Workers Club, so I know the TAFE system. At that time I had the honour of dealing with long-term unemployment, teaching in the bar trade, gaming and hospitality area. I taught at Ryde Catering College and before that I taught at East Sydney in the old prison. The TAFE system is alive and well, and I am sick of both The Greens and Labor trying to denigrate and lower the standard of TAFE. They should hang their heads in shame at what they are trying to do to TAFE teachers and its students. They are always negative.

Do those opposite ever have a positive plan? No, it is always negative. It is the old union rat trap. They have their speeches written for them by the unions and then come into this place to deliver them. They receive donations for their funding and they have unionists on their campaign trail. It is an absolute joke. It is all about the kids. It is about time those on the other side of the Chamber started to think about the kids and their future by creating jobs and being positive. They should not be negative and try to score points for their union masters—we know how that works. It is about reality. I suggest they get out of their offices and into the field, and start talking to the real people so that they can make a positive contribution rather than a negative one.

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) [11.16 a.m.]: I say at the outset that the Teachers Federation is an unaffiliated union and gives no money to the Labor Party. And I wrote my own notes. I was impressed by what Parliamentary Secretary Ray Williams said and I agree with him wholeheartedly: Education is the key to a brighter future for our people. He said he completed four certificates before completing a university degree, which is a great example of what education can do for people if they have a desire to improve themselves. I came from an educational background before I was elected to Parliament. Labor is not trying to talk down TAFE. In essence, we want to promote TAFE and ensure that it is as strong as it can be. This is not an argument about educational opportunities for kids; it is about education for those who need it, and we all agree that education is the crucible upon which we can build a better community; it is critical.

I will talk about my experience with TAFE and my experience as a principal. I saw children who would not otherwise make it to the Higher School Certificate. They did not have to work with relatives who could not provide them with the best opportunities. They made it through TAFE. I think a lot about the partnerships with TAFE that some of our students had while they were at school. They were picking up skills at TAFE and completing their Higher School Certificate at the same time, which gave them many different opportunities. In society square pegs do not fit into round holes; it is not a one-size-fits-all community.

We ran a program through either Chullora or Bankstown TAFE for children who were struggling, for want of a better word, and who wanted to do a pre-apprenticeship course or just needed to learn some different skills. They would attend school three days a week and attend TAFE two days a week. It was an outstanding program that would take on 20 children at a time and skill them up through a pre-apprenticeship course that gave them an opportunity to pursue their future in a successful manner. TAFE was fabulous for catching kids before they fell through the cracks. It also gave opportunities to people who wanted to improve themselves and take on new skills, just as Parliamentary Secretary Ray Williams did, in an affordable manner. The people in the Lakemba electorate whom I serve are not only disadvantaged but also come from diverse backgrounds. We wanted to ensure that we gave opportunities to mothers, in particular, who could be easily marginalised.

At school we ran a program that was delivered by TAFE to provide them with language, computer or other skills, which underpinned their chances of getting out of their homes and interacting with other people. It is stretching the truth to say that the Opposition does not support TAFE. Private and public education providers will always have a place. A private provider may treat education as a business, but it should not be seen through the lens of a business as it has splintered effects. We must invest in people. Since 2012, the number of kids with disabilities who attend TAFE courses has decreased by 11,500, and

3,000 less since 2014. Teaching positions have been reduced by 2,600. We cannot get away from those facts. The Opposition supports TAFE, but we must ensure that it is managed in the right way.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.20 a.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Wyong, Northern Tablelands, Kiama, Balmain, Newtown, Cessnock, Castle Hill, Tweed, Swansea and Lakemba for their contributions to this debate. In particular, I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Lakemba who drew the House back to what TAFE is about. TAFE is not about bricks and mortar or teachers; it is about students, which we seem to have forgotten. All I heard from the shadow Minister for Skills was negativity. He must have something against TAFE, which is probably why he did not study at TAFE.

Both sides of the House recognise the value of TAFE, certainly in regional New South Wales. The contribution this Government has made to TAFE is evidenced in the results that are being achieved at the North Coast Institute of TAFE. When dedicated staff are under a dedicated director, such as Elizabeth McGregor, leading a team that is focused on students will deliver an outcome, which is what has happened at the North Coast Institute of TAFE. North Coast Nationals speak glowingly of our North Coast Institute of TAFE. We talk it up at every opportunity because we have seen the results from that TAFE. I am disappointed that those on the other side of the Chamber talk it down at every opportunity. The member for Wyong never once spoke positively in his seven-minute speech.

I will underscore this Government's record infrastructure program and highlight the importance of the coming months as we head into the 2016 enrolment period for TAFE NSW. Those opposite should be condemned for their scare campaign, which they have waged over the past five years. They have told people it will be bad year to enrol in TAFE while this Government is delivering a \$2 billion investment in TAFE to build the skilled workforce of the future and give students confidence about their future—it is about the students. This includes a \$101 million capital works program to create more modern facilities across New South Wales, and to make TAFE more accessible to more people. When we close down and sell unused infrastructure, that money goes back into delivering more outcomes for more students, certainly in the regions. We want accessibility.

Those opposite should be ashamed of the way they continually talk down our regions and our TAFEs. They fail to acknowledge the incredibly strong economic growth in regional New South Wales, with an additional 61,300 people employed in the past 12 months. I assure members that the North Coast Institute of TAFE is doing everything it can to ensure that those people are skilled for the jobs that are coming their way through the investment that both State and Federal governments have committed to infrastructure projects in our regions. For the Pacific Highway in my electorate \$4.5 billion has been allocated, and by 2016-17 work on the highway will generate 4,000 jobs, more than 50 per cent of which will be local jobs.

For the first time we will have skilled workers who have an opportunity not only to work on the highway in my electorate but also, as the member for Cessnock said, to maybe follow the highway. At least they are not at home watching television and eating Twisties, with no hope and no future. This Government is giving them opportunities through TAFE and by its investment in infrastructure. Take a leaf out of the Prime Minister's book: It is a great time to be alive in this country. It is a wonderful time. The glass is actually half full.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 46

Mr Anderson

Ms Gibbons

Mr Roberts

Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Mr Baird
Mr Barilaro
Ms Berejiklian
Mr Brookes
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Coure
Mr Crouch
Mrs Davies
Mr Elliott
Mr Evans
Mr Gee
Mr George

Ms Goward
Mr Gulaptis
Mr Hazzard
Mr Henskens
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Johnsen
Mr Kean
Dr Lee
Mr Marshall
Mr Notley-Smith
Mr O'Dea
Mr Perrottet
Ms Petinos
Mr Piccoli
Mr Provest

Mr Rowell
Mr Sidoti
Mrs Skinner
Mr Speakman
Mr Stokes
Mr Taylor
Mr Toole
Ms Upton
Mr Ward
Mr Williams
Mrs Williams

Tellers,
Mr Bromhead
Mr Patterson

Noes, 36

Ms Aitchison
Mr Atalla
Mr Barr
Ms Burney
Ms Car
Ms Catley
Mr Chanthivong
Mr Crakanthorp
Mr Dib
Ms Doyle
Ms Finn
Mr Foley
Mr Harris

Ms Harrison
Ms Hay
Ms Haylen
Mr Hoenig
Ms Hornery
Mr Kamper
Ms Leong
Mr Lynch
Dr McDermott
Ms McKay
Mr Mehan
Ms Mihailuk
Mr Minns

Mr Park
Mr Parker
Mr Piper
Mr Robertson
Ms K. Smith
Ms T. F. Smith
Ms Washington
Ms Watson

Tellers,
Mr Lalich
Mr Warren

Pairs

Mr Dominello
Mr Tudehope

Mr Daley
Mr Zangari

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Debate resumed from 12 November 2015.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.36 a.m.], in reply: I will first pick up on some of the comments that the member for Blacktown made in debate on this motion last week. Although offering his bipartisan support, the member for Blacktown also condemned the motion because he believed it was as a self-congratulatory motion that commended the Government for its work. It is true

that the Government is injecting an additional \$60 million into services that it sincerely hopes will improve the status of women who are living in fear of domestic violence in their homes. As I said in my contribution, domestic violence is a scourge that needs to be addressed. We are leading the nation in tackling domestic violence; we will tolerate it no longer.

Last month the Government announced \$60 million in funding to target perpetrators and support women, men and children who have experienced domestic and family violence [DFV]. Additionally, the Government is currently working with the non-government sector to analyse service gaps through the Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint. That work will be completed in 2016. The recent package announcement is in addition to the almost \$150 million over four years that the Government has committed to DFV services in the current budget. Some of the key measures include a critical component whereby holding perpetrators to account will be an effective justice process for dealing with DFV cases in the future. For the first time, domestic violence victims will be able to give their main evidence via a prerecorded video statement for use in criminal proceedings for a domestic violence order. This evidence can be collected when police are called to a domestic violence incident.

Importantly, from the start of the school term next year the mandatory New South Wales years 7 to 10 personal development, health and physical education syllabus will be updated to explicitly include domestic and family violence prevention. Through this update to the syllabus schools can provide a significant platform to help young people to identify, report and protect themselves and others from abuse. Strengthening the years 7 to 10 syllabus to include a specific reference to domestic violence will support exiting opportunities for students to learn about positive relationships and lead safe and healthy lives.

The Government introduced a key feature under the Safer Pathway program known as Safety Action Meetings [SAM]. Following a domestic violence incident a victim who the police assess as being high risk is referred to a SAM for comprehensive wraparound support. I acknowledge the kind words of the member for Ballina—she is certainly not aligned politically with the Government but is from another political party—and her commendation of the Minister for Women in relation to that program. I take this opportunity once again to commend the Government, and in particular the Minister for Women, for working so hard to address this issue.

I have wonderful people working in my own backyard who established the Lisa Harnum Foundation. People will remember that Lisa Harnum was the young lady thrown from the balcony of a building not too far from where we sit today, and the perpetrator, her partner, was jailed for life—as he should have been. There are so many stories of people doing wonderful things in my backyard. Aileen Mountifield is one of them and Robert Critchlow, our local area commander, is another. This Government will continue to address the scourge of domestic violence. Once again, I commend the Government, and particularly the Minister for Women for her proactive approach.

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

Motion agreed to.

FAIRFAX ILLAWARRA AND SOUTH COAST NEWSPAPERS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.41 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Opposes proposed cuts to Fairfax publications in the Illawarra and South Coast.
- (2) Notes that the *Illawarra Mercury*, the *Lake Times*, *South Coast Register*, *Kiama Independent*, the *Shoalhaven and Nowra News*, *Bay Post*, *Moruya Examiner*, *Narooma*

News, Bega District News, Merimbula News, Eden Magnet and Bombala Times are also affected.

- (3) Calls on the Fairfax management to reconsider its proposed restructure and online engagement strategy.

It seems that right across regional New South Wales we are seeing enormous cuts to an important part of community life. For so many regional communities the newspaper is the journal of record of major events. Anyone going to a local library will note that generally the library keeps volumes and files of the local newspaper that records important community events. Of course I acknowledge that Fairfax, like any business, needs to turn a profit. But as I said when I addressed the House on this issue some months ago, Fairfax management has systemically failed to ensure that it kept pace with changing technology such as paywalls on the internet.

Subsequently, I see the loss of many jobs in regional areas like the Illawarra and the South Coast that simply should not have gone. I highlight in particular the significant job losses at the *Illawarra Mercury*. I note that the member for Wollongong and the member for Shellharbour are in the Chamber. They joined me, local councillors, the member for Keira and Federal representatives at a rally in the Wollongong mall. All of us stood up and said that we were concerned that the debate was being dumbed down by the reduction in the number of journalists. Politicians from all sides of the House, regardless of where they come from, will have the odd barney with journalists. There is no doubt that they will sometimes reflect views in certain ways and with which we may not agree. But the great thing about our democracy is that those journalists have the opportunity to challenge, to ask questions and to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of members of Parliament and community leaders are challenged.

For communities in the Illawarra and the South Coast the immediacy of media has certainly changed. We now have online media and there is no doubt that that medium has changed considerably as well. But in my view these cuts undermine any opportunity for the community to receive quality news. I certainly lament the loss of many jobs of Fairfax photographers—many of whom have known only this industry and who have found it difficult to find work elsewhere. In my view, Fairfax media has not really listened to its employees. Many young and promising journalists have not had the opportunity to have their views fairly heard by Fairfax management. The company's proposals were largely implemented, even though it talked about consultation.

I note that the Illawarra is not the only area that is affected. The member for the Northern Tablelands, who is now in the Chamber, has also put on the record a notice of motion concerning Fairfax cuts in his area. It seems it does not stop there. There are also proposed changes to programming at ABC Illawarra in relation to news content, which concerns me greatly. It will mean that our community will not have the access to media that it once did. I also acknowledge the loss of Kerrielyn Clark, who was the editor of the *Kiama Independent* and the *Lake Times*. Kerrielyn was an exceptional journalist. She gave some of her best years to the Kiama and Shellharbour communities and has sadly had her job removed as part of these significant changes across regional New South Wales, with which I am less than satisfied.

I passionately believe in the role of local media and I passionately believe in the job that our journalists do. These continued cross cuts across the media do not make it easier for the public to receive news. I know that the nature of news is changing. But we are seeing around the world media companies keep up by enhancing their online content and engaging further with social media; and these are the sorts of things I would expect any good company to do to respond to the needs of local communities and to respond to the changing needs of the market, and it seems that has not happened.

Many of our local newspapers are more than 100 years old. Their dedicated journalists and staff are their greatest asset. They have invested years of service in sustaining these grand journals of record. Jack Welch once said, and I quote, "Management is all about managing in the short term whilst

developing the plans for the long term." Should the job cuts continue, I am concerned for the future of media, and in particular print media, in the Illawarra region. Management may well be about doing things right but leadership is about doing the right things.

Mr Adam Marshall: Shame on Fairfax.

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection from my friend the member for Northern Tablelands. He says, "Shame on Fairfax." I agree with him on that. Shame on Fairfax for not listening to regional communities. Shame on it for walking away and turning its back on the communities that have been its readership for so many years. So many grand mastheads have been debased by management's actions and lack of foresight. I certainly believe that these changes will not leave regional publications better off; they will leave them far worse off.

Clearly demand for media has not changed but certainly the delivery method has. Even to this day Fairfax websites, after all the debate that happened at the time and is still going on today in this Parliament, do not contain paywalls. Fairfax's competitors have had no trouble establishing similar mechanisms to deliver paid online content and coordinating their online readership to accept an online subscription fee. Why has Fairfax management so obviously and myopically missed this golden opportunity to sustain revenue and jobs? Given this obvious omission from the Fairfax business model, let me be blunt: These job cuts at local Fairfax publications are due to the incompetence of Fairfax management and a lack of leadership to do what all other organisations must do—that is, change with the times. I support our local journalists. I support their work. I support regional publications. But I do not support these attacks on local jobs by Fairfax management.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [11.48 a.m.]: I make a brief contribution to this debate. Just a few years ago we had the same kind of debate about Fairfax and the reduction in employment for journalists in the Illawarra and we took part in a campaign. But unfortunately the number of journalists was still reduced. It is true that, as the member for Kiama has said, the way news is delivered has changed substantially. But there is still the issue of local content. There may be some who would not expect me to stand in this Chamber and defend jobs at the *Illawarra Mercury*. However, I think that if people cannot take the heat they should not be in the kitchen. Journalists have a job to do. It is also important that those journalists have that local input and contact with local identities. They should be the first to receive local news and the first to deliver that news at a local level and from a national and international perspective.

I support the member for Kiama and the member for Northern Tablelands in their condemnation of Fairfax. I am happy to lend my voice to and support the call for Fairfax to reconsider its decision and to retain the employment of those journalists in the Illawarra. I too am concerned about threats to journalism at the Illawarra ABC. I am always concerned about a reduction in regional and local content in the delivery of news. Our local communities need to be kept up to date from a local perspective and those jobs need to be retained. The member for Kiama commented about business requirements and needs but he did not touch on what was and was not going to go to New Zealand. It is unnecessary for me to tell people in this place that my strong preference is for positive discrimination in favour of producing product in Australia, particularly in New South Wales and more particularly in the Illawarra and Wollongong.

Shame on Fairfax! I join the other voices in this Chamber in calling on Fairfax to reconsider its decision immediately and to retain the jobs of those people who not only work locally but also live locally, contribute to the local economy, raise their families locally and use the schools, entertainment facilities, et cetera. I call on Fairfax to support regional and local communities to grow, particularly in the Illawarra where in recent times there has been nothing but reductions in jobs and opportunities. It can be seen from the recent BlueScope example that many people relied on that news to be delivered to them by WIN Television, the *Illawarra Mercury*, the Illawarra ABC and i98FM. As I said, I call on Fairfax to reconsider its decision and to retain those journalists. I support the motion moved by the member for Kiama.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.52 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Wollongong for her comments. I entirely agree with them. I place on record that it was not only the way in which Fairfax management dealt with the number of job cuts but also the sort of behaviour of some of its senior management. For example, when the former editor, Alastair Langford-Wilson, was dismissed he was asked to lunch. When out of the building he was told that he would not be returning. They said to him, "Hand over your swipe card. Your things will be deposited into a box and handed back to you." He had given some of his best years as a journalist to the *Illawarra Mercury* but was dismissed without any warning or any consideration for him, his family or his future. That is appalling behaviour. On a positive note some great quality young journalists have maintained their positions at the *Illawarra Mercury*. I refer specifically to great local journalists like Andrew Pearson, who does a very good job. He is very fair—I would certainly like him to be slightly fairer—and very impartial.

Ms Noreen Hay: I want him to be fairer to me.

Mr GARETH WARD: I note the interjection of the member for Wollongong. I know that Andrew is watching this webcast because he watches both the State and Federal parliaments on screens side by side—I have put that onto the record so I probably will not get any good stories for a while now. I refer also to journalists like Kate McIlwain and Glen Humphries. I also acknowledge the new editor of the *Illawarra Mercury*, Julian O'Brien, who comes to us from Davenport. He has taken over the *Illawarra Mercury* at a very difficult time. He has had to manage the effects of those internal changes on the staff. He has also had to deal with staff morale because any restructure and redundancy process has an inevitable impact on staff and staffing arrangements. I commend him for the work he is doing in rebuilding the *Illawarra Mercury* to ensure that it will provide news for a long time in the future.

These days there is more competition than ever before—members would be aware of the number of online journals that exist—but the quality of the journalism at the *Illawarra Mercury* has not changed. We have great young, vivacious, hardworking, intelligent journalists who are doing their job in holding us all to account. As I said in my introductory remarks, sometimes that might not be helpful to anyone's particular cause but it is their job. The media also has an important role to play. The media does not tell us what to think but it certainly tells us what to think about. The media has an important agenda-setting role. If the media is not adequately resourced it is difficult to set the agenda that is required. For example, I think of the role the *Illawarra Mercury* played in exposing corruption at Wollongong council. In particular, I think of the role of Nicole Hasham, a former journalist of the *Illawarra Mercury* but now a Fairfax journalist elsewhere, who exposed donations from Lend Lease to the Labor Government and Calderwood. That story would not have come to light if it were not for her hard work.

We have seen some great young journalists go on to other things. For example, I think of Mario Christodoulou who has now gone to *Four Corners* and Bevan Shields who now has a much larger role with Fairfax. Those people started their careers at regional papers and have gone on to bigger and better things. I also acknowledge John Hanscombe, who has taken over the role of editor of the *South Coast Register* and *Milton Ulladulla Times*. John is a tremendous journalist. He particularly holds local government to account and has won several awards for his work. John continues to be impartial, hardworking and diligent and applies a healthy degree of scepticism to all politicians. I commend him for continuing his role. I again thank members for their support. I condemn Fairfax and I commend this motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

[*Quorum called for.*]

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Cabramatta called a quorum. He will remain in the Chamber.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: The member who called the quorum has clearly left the Chamber. I ask that the quorum call be suspended.

Mr Nick Lalich: I did not leave the Chamber. I was pacing up and down.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Cabramatta left the Chamber. He will remain in the Chamber.

Mr Bruce Notley-Smith: Point of order: The member for Cabramatta did leave the Chamber.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order!

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

ALBION PARK RAIL BYPASS

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [11.59 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Calls on the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight to outline in the 2015-16 budget a precise timetable for the construction of the Albion Park Rail bypass, including the start and completion date for the project.
- (2) Notes that the Government's commitment is contingent on the sale of the electricity network.
- (3) Calls on the Minister to explain how the project will be funded if the Government cannot achieve the sale of the electricity network.

In a few weeks time the Princes Highway through Albion Park Rail will become a car park as people begin the migration to the South Coast for the festive season. Every day, especially at morning and afternoon peak times, congestion continues to pile up on that section of the Princes Highway. Motorists using that stretch of road continue to feel frustration at the slow-moving traffic. At the March election the Government promised \$551 million to build the Albion Park Rail bypass. However, the Government says that we must wait until 2019 for the project to start. Earlier this month Roads and Maritime Services released the environmental impact statement for the project. It is expected that approval of the environmental impact statement will occur in late 2016.

This road infrastructure project is strongly supported by the community, especially in the southern Illawarra. I expect that any community concerns relating to the bypass will be minimal. The budget papers this year seem to indicate that the project is fully funded. But it is a funding cocktail made complex by the Government denying the Wollongong local government area eligibility for funding under Rebuilding NSW. It has lumped the Wollongong local government area in with metropolitan Sydney and Newcastle. As a result, \$200 million has been allocated to the project from within the existing Roads budget. The remainder, \$350 million, is to be reserved from the proceeds of the sale of the electricity network. By the Government's reckoning, the sale of the electricity network will take place next year. Even the member for Kiama has recognised the potential funding problem, as a comment by him in the *Illawarra Mercury* on 5 June 2015 makes clear. He said:

Obviously we've got to make sure that we get the revenue as expected ...

While the Government seeks to present the Albion Park Rail bypass as a done deal, the facts at this

stage appear to be a little different. The Government still has a number of questions to answer. This motion calls on the Minister responsible for this important road infrastructure project to answer those questions in the context of the 2015-16 budget. If the proceeds of the electricity network sale are not as the Government expects, what is the future of the Albion Park Rail bypass? Will it be started and completed, with the complex funding cocktail reassessed? Will the reserved \$350 million need to be augmented from within the Roads budget?

Will the project be completed in stages, as proposed by the NRMA last year? Or will the bypass proposal be placed on the shelf? These are key questions, and the Government needs to provide a clear roadmap for the future of this project. As the motion indicates, this should be done in the context of next year's budget. This bypass has strong community support. It has, despite attempts by the member for Kiama to mislead the community, bipartisan political support. I have no doubt that when I conclude the member for Kiama will give us a taste of his usual over-rehearsed bathroom mirror rhetoric.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: I resent the suggestion that my contribution will be over-rehearsed.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr Gareth Ward: Attacks on members must be by way of substantive motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I do not regard that as an attack. There is no point of order.

Ms ANNA WATSON: The member for Kiama will allege that the Opposition does not support the bypass, that it voted against the sale of the electricity network and that it did little in 16 years to progress the bypass. His lines are well known and predictable. He may wish to re-litigate the March election campaign, and he is of course free to do so. The motorists who use the Princes Highway through Albion Park Rail every day—who, in a few weeks will be joined by thousands more as they make their way to the South Coast for the holiday season—want to know the plan for the bypass. They want the Government to tell them why, if the funding has been allocated, we need to wait until 2019 to start the project.

They want to know why they have to spend another three years dealing with congestion and wait another three years after that for the bypass to be completed. They want to know how, if the Government does not achieve the expected price for the sale of the electricity network, it will keep its pledge to fund the \$350 million component for the bypass. I hope that the Government will provide answers to those key questions in the contributions that follow. I suspect that, sadly, on this last sitting day of the Legislative Assembly for this year, we will hear only the usual tired, boring, over-rehearsed political rhetoric from Government members.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.05 p.m.]: I acknowledge visitors from the Shellharbour chapter of the University of the Third Age, who are in the public gallery. They have travelled here to spend time with me in the Parliament. It is wonderful to see them. The objective of the University of the Third Age is to get an education. Our visitors will not be getting an education from the member for Shellharbour on the Albion Park Rail bypass. The member has moved a motion on the Albion Park Rail bypass. People like me often sit at home at night and wonder what the Opposition will bring into Parliament, what clever and cunning plan it will come up with. Those opposite have kicked an own goal with this motion.

I note that my friend the member Keira, the shadow Minister, is in the Chamber. When we talk about these projects, people do not care which side of politics we come from. They want to see action and delivery. They do not care whether it comes from Federal, State or local government. They just want to see things done. The member for Shellharbour has used Parliament to score political points. That does not escape the fact that the Labor Party did not promise this project at the last election. I have looked

through the Labor Party policy document for the last election. It contained many pretty pictures and graphs. I am sure that assisted the Labor Party in putting it together.

Mr Ryan Park: You could read it then.

Mr GARETH WARD: The member for Keira interjects.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I draw the attention of the member for Keira to Standing Order 52.

Mr GARETH WARD: Light travels faster than sound. It is in that vein that some people appear bright until you hear them speak. The member for Keira had the opportunity at the last election to say, "We will build the Albion Park Rail bypass." In Labor's 10-year infrastructure plan for all of New South Wales, did it mention the Illawarra once? No—not one project. Labor voted against the very means of funding the Albion Park Rail bypass. It is as though the Labor Party thinks the funds for this project will fall out of the sky. The Government made an honest commitment at the last election that if we lease—not sell, which is what the motion says—49 per cent of the State's poles and wires, we can fund infrastructure. Labor members have the temerity and the audacity to come into this House and say they want to know this or that about the project when they did not even promise it.

The member for Shellharbour talked about congestion. I am sure that Labor members are upset about it too, but when they had the opportunity at the election a few months ago to do something about it they were missing in action. During the election campaign the member Shellharbour said that the bypass had previously been costed at \$600 million and that it had been reduced to \$550 million. First, that is \$550 million more than Labor promised. Secondly, we shortened the route. Only the Labor Party would spend \$50 million more on a project it was not going to build. I could not believe that comment from the member for Shellharbour about a project she did not support. What did the Labor Party support during the election? Labor went to the election with a self-confessed "modest" plan. All the planned infrastructure was in Sydney.

How were those opposite going to pay for it? They were going to pay for it with \$5.1 billion of additional taxes on small business. They were going to impose taxes on Illawarra businesses, cutting jobs. Where was that money going? It was going to Sydney. Labor had an opportunity at the election to support this project and it did not. The first paragraph of the motion calls on the Minister for Roads and Freight to outline in the budget a precise timetable. At the election we said that this project would commence in this term of government, in 2019. We said that because for 16 years in office the Labor Government did no planning work.

Ms Anna Watson: But why isn't it in the budget?

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Shellharbour. The shadow Minister is in the Chamber and there are residents from his electorate in the gallery today. I challenge the member for Keira to stand up in this place and say that the Labor Party, if elected at the next election, will build the Albion Park Rail bypass. Six months ago he had the opportunity to do it and he said nothing—nada, zip, nothing. I worked hard for four years on the planning, on the design, and on getting the environmental planning and assessment statement out, but we heard nothing from those opposite. Now we hear those opposite discussing it and saying they support it. But at the election when they had a chance to commit to it, who made the largest infrastructure promise in the Illawarra? It was this side of politics. Labor talks about owning the Illawarra; it thinks it can just walk in and win seats. But when Labor offers nothing at the election, why would people support it? Paragraph (2) of the motion states:

- (2) Notes that the Government's commitment is contingent on the sale of the electricity network.

It is not a sale, it is a lease—and the member for Shellharbour knows it.

Ms Anna Watson: Ninety-nine years is a sale, Gareth.

Mr GARETH WARD: Labor talks about it being a sale. Labor sold generators and it sold the retailers. Labor did not take that to an election; it just flogged them off when it was in government. I remind those opposite that Paul Keating, Morris Iemma, Michael Costa—so many from Labor—said there was a declining asset on its balance sheet, when union members were getting 26 per cent superannuation contributions and 85 vehicles for every 100 employees. Every person in the gallery is paying \$250 more, on average, because of the union rorts that Labor allowed to be perpetrated on this State when it was in office. The clincher was that the superannuation fund for the trade union movement power workers in New South Wales invested in the privatised electricity markets of Victoria and South Australia. They knew it was a good deal and we knew it was a good deal, and we were honest and told the truth. The trade union movement and members opposite were slammed for their scare campaign. Paragraph (3) of the motion states:

- (3) Calls on the Minister to explain how the project will be funded if the Government cannot achieve the sale of the electricity network.

We absolutely will. We have already outlined—the member for Shellharbour was right about this—that \$200 million will come from the Roads budget and \$350 million will come from the long-term lease of poles and wires. I conclude my contribution with the point I made when I began: People do not care which level of government gets things done. But it is clear in the Illawarra when one drives down the Princes Highway to Gerringong that a \$340 million project has been delivered and that a \$580 million project has been delivered at Berry. The Albion Park Rail bypass, which will commence in this term of government, is being delivered.

People do not care who funds these projects; people are not interested in the politics as long as the projects get done. We have been honest with the community. Now is an opportunity for those opposite to stand in this Chamber and confirm that Labor will deliver the bypass. The 10-year infrastructure plan that Labor took to the last election indicated that it would be happy for a decade to pass with no action in the Illawarra and continued congestion. I am proud to be getting on with projects and getting things done for my community. Those opposite should start telling the truth and start supporting the Albion Park Rail bypass.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [12.12 p.m.]: I also acknowledge the visitors in the gallery, most importantly, my former high school principal at the fantastic Dapto High School, Trevor Dickinson, and his wife. As I have said before, no finer education will anyone get than my two sisters and I received at Dapto High School under the leadership of Mr Dickinson. Had the member for Kiama gone to Dapto High School we would have seen a better performance than the one he just gave. He might not have made our debating team, he certainly would not have made our public speaking team; he might have even been a Labor member had we locked him in at Dapto High School. It was a great school. The students even went on strike at Dapto High School—it was fantastic—and their action was supported by the teachers.

This is an important motion. I acknowledge the advocacy of the member for Shellharbour on this issue for 4½ years. She has worked tirelessly in this place and in the community on behalf of the residents of part of the region she represents to ensure that one of the most unsafe roads in our area is made a lot safer. Labor is very clear about its support for the project. The member for Kiama outlined Labor's infrastructure plan. The port of Port Kembla was leased for 99 years, which means my five-year-old son will be at the ripe old age of 104 when the lease ends. I would say that is pretty well a sell-off. The member for Kiama failed to point out that when the port was leased for \$700-odd million, the Government gave us the grand total of \$100 million. Our friends in the Hunter got 50 per cent when their Port of Newcastle was sold off.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: It goes to Standing Order 76, relevance. The member for Keira is well aware that the motion is about the Albion Park Rail bypass, not the port of Port Kembla—the sale of which Labor supported at the election.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the member for Keira that he has strayed several times from the motion. I draw him back to the leave of the motion.

Mr RYAN PARK: I made that point because the member for Kiama referred specifically to the infrastructure plans that the Labor Party had for the Illawarra. I highlight the fact that we went to the last election with a deal that was the same as the deal for the Hunter—that is, 50 per cent of the proceeds from the Port Kembla lease would be invested in infrastructure in the Illawarra compared with \$100 million, which has not been spent 2½ years—nearly three years—after the funding was announced. Labor and the member for Shellharbour will always support major infrastructure projects such as the Albion Park Rail bypass. We know that too many lives have been lost on that stretch of road and we know that investment is needed there. The NRMA has made it clear and, most importantly, the residents have made it clear that it is necessary. We will support the Albion Park Rail bypass each and every day, and the member for Shellharbour will continue to hold the Government to account—whether it is a Labor or a Liberal government—to ensure that the project is delivered in a timely manner for the benefit of all residents of the great Illawarra.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.16 p.m.]: One thing we learn quickly in politics is that the voting public are not mugs and one cannot for a minute even attempt to treat them as such. A government cannot make commitments to deliver infrastructure when it has no form on the board, and Labor has certainly never had any form on the board. How is that relevant to my electorate? I can give the House a whole list of projects, starting with the Rozelle metro, about which Labor made all sorts of commitments and then treated the voting public with absolute contempt. The member for Kiama stated correctly that prior to the last election there was not a whimper from those opposite about the Albion Park Rail bypass. Now, suddenly, those opposite are in favour of the project: They want it delivered and they want to know how much it will cost and when it will be delivered. But where were they before the election?

Mr Gareth Ward: Nowhere.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: Absolutely nowhere. This motion is an attempt to hijack an issue that has never been on Labor's radar and to get the kudos. It is a good political ploy. For one moment I will pretend I am the member for Shellharbour. What I would do is come into this place, talk about the issue and then be quiet, because I have the member for Kiama next door to my electorate. The member for Kiama will deliver the project for the benefit of his community and the member for Shellharbour will get kudos for supporting him. But the member for Shellharbour is doing the complete opposite. She attempts to be part of the discussion and tries to make the Government explain this, that and the other, when she is not sincere about delivering infrastructure for her community. The public will uncover that in a flash.

From that perspective, Labor has no form on the board. As the member for Kiama rightly said, the public are not interested in who delivers the infrastructure as long as it is credible, the commitments are honest, it is delivered on time, it delivers real benefits and it changes the lives of people in our community. At the end of the day, people know how the projects are done, when they are delivered and they will commend the relevant member. It is disingenuous and quite offensive for the member for Shellharbour to move a motion that has no credibility. The Government is delivering on infrastructure across the State. One need look no further than the city, where 95 infrastructure projects are underway—whether they be walkways, bicycle paths, tunnels, bridges or light rail. The Government is delivering projects at a record pace.

I suggest that on leaving the Parliament people look up and they will see close to 200 cranes in the sky. That is in stark contrast to when the Coalition came to government in 2011. There had been 16

years of promises and neglect; Labor spoke about infrastructure but never delivered. I refer to projects throughout the city such as the Sydney Metro Northwest, which is underway, the Sydney Metro City and Southwest, which is completed, and light rail projects being constructed throughout this great city. It is a great time to be part of Sydney. People in the regions, particularly in Kiama, are seeing record infrastructure projects delivered in their electorates. The member for Kiama is passionate about his community and is delivering infrastructure at a pace never before seen in this State.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [12.21 p.m.]: Today the Labor Party is exposed as a party that has not delivered over 16 years for the Illawarra. The Government is delivering on infrastructure. We are building infrastructure. Anyone who travels throughout Sydney, the Illawarra or my electorate will see the infrastructure being built—be it schools, the M5 widening, the M5 West already delivered—

Mr John Sidoti: Hospitals.

Mr MARK COURE: Hospitals.

Mr Bruce Notley-Smith: St George Hospital.

Mr MARK COURE: St George Hospital. The Government has delivered almost \$400 million in projects or upgrades to Oatley and Narwee stations. We are getting on with the job of building this infrastructure. What we saw from Labor over 16 years was nothing but hot water, steam, mirrors and inaction.

Mr John Sidoti: Warm water.

Mr MARK COURE: Warm water, not hot.

Mr Bruce Notley-Smith: In a hot water bottle.

Mr MARK COURE: In a hot water bottle. We are getting on with the job. In the 2015-16 State budget the Government allocated \$3 million to continue planning for the future Princes Motorway bypass of Albion Park Rail. The New South Wales Government announced a preferred option for the proposed Albion Park Rail bypass in October last year—tick and tick. We heard nothing and had complete inaction from the Labor Party for 16 years. This project involves a 9.8 kilometre extension of the M1 Princes Motorway to provide a bypass of Albion Park Rail between Yallah and Oak Flats.

The proposal aims to improve travel times by bypassing 16 intersections, reducing crash risk, reducing the impact of flooding, improving freight connectivity and catering for future growth. The Government is getting on with the job of building that much-needed infrastructure. Those opposite should just apologise for taking the community for granted. We are getting on with the job of rebuilding this infrastructure. I put on record my thanks to the member for Kiama for his hard work in getting this project partly funded and getting the job done. I also thank the Parliamentary Secretary and the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight.

Ms Anna Watson: Are you up for promotion?

Mr MARK COURE: Yes, I am. I do not want to mislead the House. In March 2015 the New South Wales Government committed \$550 million towards construction of the bypass, with \$350 million of the funding to come from Rebuilding NSW. Construction will start by early 2019. Those opposite failed to make any announcement and failed to deliver on this project—16 years of Labor inaction. We are getting on with the job of rebuilding the State and building infrastructure.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.25 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Kiama, the member for Keira, the member for Drummoyne and the member for Oatley for their contributions to the

debate. It is always entertaining to hear their rehearsed lines, day in and day out, in this place. I acknowledge the visitors in the public gallery and welcome them to the New South Wales Parliament. We see these performances every day. I know it is new for the visitors, but we see it all the time. I simply make the point that we have heard from Government members the usual boring, over-rehearsed rhetoric that we hear time and again—salmon that jumps on the hook. The member for Kiama should be reminded of his own words in this place on 14 May this year. He said:

Democracy may well be a numbers game, but it should not be a case of awarding prizes to those who shout the loudest—nor should people be dissuaded from making their considered points with strength and conviction.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: The member for Shellharbour has been in this House as long as I have and she knows she cannot introduce new material when speaking in reply. She must address the subject that has been debated, which is the Albion Park Rail bypass. She should stop attacking members and start addressing the substantive issue.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I remind the member for Shellharbour that she must reply to debate on the motion.

Ms ANNA WATSON: My motion simply asks the Minister for Roads to outline in next year's budget the precise timetable for the construction of the Albion Park Rail bypass. That is what we want to know: We want a start date and a finish date. People do not want to have to wait until 2019 for a start date—that is too long—and then another three years to build it. This should not be a controversial issue for the Minister and the Government. In conclusion, as this is the last parliamentary sitting day for 2015 I take this opportunity to wish everyone a very happy and safe Christmas. I hope that those travelling on the Albion Park Rail bypass will also have a very safe and happy Christmas. I sincerely wish everybody in the House all the very best for Christmas, and I extend those sentiments to the people in the gallery as well. Thank you for coming today.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

[In Division]

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time.

Ayes, 37

Ms Aitchison
Mr Atalla
Mr Barr
Ms Burney
Ms Car
Ms Catley
Mr Chanthivong
Mr Crakanthorp
Mr Dib
Ms Doyle
Ms Finn
Mr Foley
Mr Harris

Ms Harrison
Ms Hay
Ms Haylen
Mr Hoenig
Ms Hornery
Mr Kamper
Ms Leong
Mr Lynch
Dr McDermott
Ms McKay
Mr Mehan
Ms Mihailuk
Mr Minns

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

Tellers,
Mr Lalich
Mr Warren

Noes, 45

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Mr Anderson | Ms Gibbons | Mr Provest |
| Mr Aplin | Ms Goward | Mr Roberts |
| Mr Ayres | Mr Gulaptis | Mr Rowell |
| Mr Barilaro | Mr Henskens | Mr Sidoti |
| Ms Berejiklian | Ms Hodgkinson | Mrs Skinner |
| Mr Brookes | Mr Humphries | Mr Speakman |
| Mr Conolly | Mr Johnsen | Mr Stokes |
| Mr Constance | Mr Kean | Mr Taylor |
| Mr Coure | Dr Lee | Mr Toole |
| Mr Crouch | Mr Marshall | Ms Upton |
| Mrs Davies | Mr Notley-Smith | Mr Ward |
| Mr Elliott | Mr O'Dea | Mr Williams |
| Mr Fraser | Mr Perrottet | Mrs Williams |
| Mr Gee | Ms Petinos | <i>Tellers,</i> |
| Mr George | Mr Piccoli | Mr Bromhead |
| | | Mr Patterson |

Pair

Mr Daley

Mr Baird

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

VISITORS

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I welcome to the public gallery Mr Arthur King, guest of the member for Prospect and me.

SHANNON ROSEWOOD NEW SOUTH WALES POSITIVE TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [12.36 p.m.]: Mr Temporary-Speaker your skill in the chair is only surpassed by your courtesy to fellow members in the House. I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Shannon Rosewood, a teacher at Armidale New England Girls School, on being recently named New South Wales Positive Teacher of the Year.
- (2) Notes that Shannon was appointed head teacher of St John's Junior School last year and also teaches library and one-on-one special needs lessons.
- (3) Commends Shannon for the excellent programs she has introduced to the school, such as the senior school wellbeing initiative MindMatters, the new playground bike path and chess set for lunchtime entertainment.

The positive schools mental health and wellbeing conference is held in four States across Australia each year. It is open to all Australian primary and secondary schoolteachers, and professionals who work with young people across all the sectors—the public system, the independent school system and the Catholic school system. This year the conference received more than 750 nominations from around Australia for the Teacher of the Year Award, making the selection process very challenging with so many great teachers and great educators deserving of recognition.

The fact that Shannon Rosewood, an exceptional teacher from the electorate of Northern Tablelands, won this award brings great credit not only upon her as an educator, upon her school, St Johns Junior School, which is a junior school of the New England Girls School but also the broader Northern Tablelands region and education more generally in rural and regional New South Wales. In this place we hear many reports of educational standards and outcomes in this State and about the gap that still exists between the results of students in metropolitan schools versus the results through the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] and Higher School Certificate students in rural and regional areas, but it is teachers like Shannon Rosewood that we can look to in the future to bridge that gap.

We must encourage more educators like Shannon Rosewood not only to move to country schools but also to stay in the bush because we need quality educators to assist our students to achieve their potential. As we know, education forms the building blocks of future life. That is particularly true in the primary school setting. As I have said, Shannon Rosewood is the head of St John's Junior School. She completed a master's degree of education in special education at the University of Newcastle and also holds a Bachelor of Education degree from Western Sydney University. Her career in primary education began at Blue Mountains Grammar School. She commenced teaching at Abbotsleigh in 2005, where she held the positions of year 3, 5 and 6 coordinators. Shannon has held the position of head of St John's since her appointment in the middle of last year.

Shannon believes that every child should be challenged and stimulated during their learning journey. She feels it is her role to build strong foundations in literacy and numeracy across the school, ensuring that they are supplemented by engaging programs in all subject areas. She describes herself as a gentle and caring boss and someone who brings a happy and professional attitude to the school community. From chatting recently with some of the staff at St John's I know that her description of herself is shared by her colleagues and those who look to her for professional leadership.

Shannon models effective communication and caring, and her actions have an amazingly uplifting ripple effect. Again, that is reflected in the attitude of her staff. She supported the development of the Junior School Wellbeing Program and not only teaches as part of that program but also is involved in all meetings to explore new ways to develop it further. The wellbeing philosophy is strongly focused on the social and emotional development of each child. Children are actively encouraged to explore their environment and to take calculated risks by building cubbies, using climbing equipment and riding bikes during breaks on the exceptional new school bike path that has been built and borders the old New England Highway.

The activities that Shannon has brought to the school promote the children's level of engagement in physical activities as well as their ability to successfully judge how to take risks to increase enjoyment while maintaining safe practices. They are great lessons to learn in the safety of the schoolyard rather than in later life. Cross-stage participation in sporting, academic and playtime activities promote inclusion and acceptance of individual differences where each child is encouraged to achieve their potential. Children from transition through to year 6 at St John's enjoy the playground that Shannon has built and hopes to build further. They also enjoy the special activities that promote peer interaction. Most importantly, the school supports having fun. As we think back to our primary schooling—

Mr Chris Patterson: A long time ago.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Longer for some than it is for others. We all learn best when we are having a good time. Learning becomes easier, school is more enjoyable and we absorb more knowledge when we are having fun. Shannon has certainly brought that ethos to St John's. In addition to working successfully to bring MindMatters to the school, Shannon has developed many great initiatives of her own. In particular, she has developed a range of initiatives to keep students happy and healthy at recess and lunchtime, which is when incidents can occur.

She designed and organised the creation of the school bike track and bike riding program, installed a child-size chess set in the playground and organised a special code club for students at lunch. Students are encouraged to spend time in the veggie patch during their breaks to help pick and cultivate the plants, and take produce home to mum and dad for tea. Shannon is always there to assist. She approaches everyone with a positive attitude, and makes her staff feel comfortable and happy in the work environment. She is considered by all of her peers as a fabulous role model. I congratulate Shannon on receiving this prestigious award. Given the feedback I have received it is no wonder that Shannon was named this year's New South Wales Positive Teacher of the Year.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [12.43 p.m.]: In the time since my return to Parliament I have learned that the member for Northern Tablelands cares very much about his electorate and brings many local issues to our attention. Today's motion is a fantastic example as he seeks that this Parliament recognise the great work of Shannon Rosewood and congratulate her on receiving the New South Wales Positive Teacher of the Year Award. As the member for Northern Tablelands said, Shannon is the head of St John's Junior School, which is part of the Armidale New England Girls School.

From the member's description of the types of programs that Shannon has introduced at the school I know that she ticks all the boxes for the type of staff I would want at my school. I used to say that the number one thing on which I judged the performance of a teacher was whether I would be happy for my son or daughter to be in their classroom. The description of Shannon by the member for Northern Tablelands indicates to me that she has created an educational environment with which children, parents and staff are happy and where quality learning can take place. Research is increasingly recognising that one of the most important things we can do for children is to acknowledge and facilitate their emotional intelligence. For a long time we have talked about the academic and sporting ability of children at school, but emotional intelligence is probably the most important thing they need.

A key reason for developing emotional intelligence is that children do not learn unless they are happy in their environment. Children who come to school in trepidation or with worries are not tuned in to what happens in their lessons. That is how children slip through the cracks. Children who have other worries in their head will sit in their lessons hearing but not listening, which can be hard for teachers to recognise. As a teacher I could say that I delivered a good lesson that I had planned well. We did all the right activities and met all the competencies, so why did a child not learn? The answer is that the child's mind was somewhere else. The child's attention was not focused in the room like the other children. Creating a positive environment is one of the most important things a school leader and classroom teacher can do.

It is important to make sure that children look forward to coming to school. It sounds as though the provision of facilities such as the bike track, the chess set and the garden at St John's are ensuring that happens. At the last school I worked at I became quite passionate about the garden. It was great to see the children spending lunchtime watering and weeding the garden not because of the activity itself but because it led them to converse with each other. Some children who were previously isolated at school suddenly had very important jobs in the garden that they took very seriously. Those types of initiatives can have a massive influence on a child's success at school. It seems as though Shannon Rosewood has homed in on the importance of such initiatives.

I know the MindMatters program well. It should be encouraged because it is an excellent program. Every time the member for Northern Tablelands visits St John's and sees the environment he

must be impressed not only by what he sees but also by what he feels. When one walks into a positive learning environment one can feel the enthusiasm. One knows that people want to be there. The children will rush at someone to tell him or her about the good things they are doing, and their work is proudly displayed in every corner. The children are happy to show people their books and to talk about their lessons. A good educational leader is someone who creates that type of environment. Good leaders do not necessarily demand that people do X, Y and Z; through their leadership they create an environment of which everybody wants to be a part. I am sure that when the parents visit St John's they feel that they have sent their children to the right place. They are confident that their children will get an excellent education.

Once again I congratulate the member for Northern Tablelands on moving this motion relating to Shannon Rosewood, New South Wales positive teacher of the year. What a great honour to be bestowed upon Shannon. Every teacher across the State would like to think that they would qualify as being a positive teacher. One of the prerequisites for teaching is that one actually likes children. I know that sounds a funny thing to say, but I have met some teachers who do not like kids. We could see it in the way they related to kids and their families. I am sure that St John's Junior School staff love children, love learning and are passionate about new and innovative ways to look after not only sporting prowess and academic prowess but also that third plank that I mentioned earlier—that is, emotional intelligence. The Opposition passionately supports this motion. I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing it to the attention of the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I thank the member for Wyong, a former educator, for his comments.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.50 p.m.]: I am pleased to support this motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands to acknowledge an outstanding individual in his electorate and I pass on the congratulations of this House to Shannon Rosewood. Listening to the report the member for Northern Tablelands brought to this House on Shannon's achievements as a professional educator, and those of her school community, I could not help but convey my personal congratulations and thanks to Shannon Rosewood. She is without doubt a very passionate, dedicated and enthusiastic educator. As the member for Northern Tablelands said, there were more than 750 nominations from across Australia for this award. For her to be selected as the winner from that huge number of nominations is an outstanding achievement and a fantastic honour.

Educators such as Shannon are extremely important. They are an integral component of our community. They hold the future of New South Wales in their hands for six hours a day throughout the school terms. They use their influence, their imagination and their skill to encourage students with a vast range of abilities to reach their innate potential. They are critical to the health and the vibrancy of our State. I am incredibly proud of Shannon and her achievements, and her ability to lead her team in embracing innovative and creative learning opportunities such as a veggie garden and a chess set.

I digress briefly to talk about chess and to acknowledge that my daughter, Laura Davies—hello, Laura Davies—is at Parliament House today working with mummy. Her school provides an opportunity for children in primary school to learn how to play chess. She is engaging in what is a different learning method. She is learning about strategy and planning in a game format. Those skills are a key component to creating an individual who is a strategic planner and who takes risks. Giving children the opportunity to learn chess is one way of encouraging the development of a well-rounded individual through education. We heard about the new playground bike path introduced by Shannon. These various programs and opportunities to learn create a holistic environment for our young people—it is extraordinary.

Shannon should feel immensely proud of not only her commitment to educating herself through ongoing learning through her masters studies at university but also her ability to step up into leadership roles where she is influencing other teachers. She is leading by example, leading enthusiasm and creativity. She is creating a fantastic and rich learning environment. Today I pass on to all the teaching,

administrative and support staff across this great State our thanks for all they do for our children. We appreciate and value them. I also thank the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing this motion to the House. I congratulate Shannon Rosewood on winning this award.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [12.54 p.m.]: I did not intend to speak in this debate. But after listening to the member for Northern Tablelands and my colleague across the Chamber the member for Wyong, who spoke so eloquently, and the member for Mulgoa I have been inspired to speak in this debate. What Shannon has done is truly inspirational and I feel the need to acknowledge her outstanding efforts. She has achieved much and she is an inspiration to many of her colleagues. I hope that debate on this motion enables the Teacher of the Year Award to become more widely known. I hope that Shannon Rosewood can inspire people not just in her electorate but also across New South Wales. As the member for Wyong and the member for Mulgoa said, we have some outstanding teachers in New South Wales. Teachers in my electorate inspire me daily.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Name them!

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I would like to name them all, but with only limited time today I will not. Teaching is a wonderful profession. Teachers do what they do because they want our children to learn—whether they are in primary school or in high school. It is not just a job to our teachers; it is a life. I mention in particular a teacher in my electorate named Karen Sincovac, who is tutoring my kids. She has had a few health issues and has had to step back for the moment from full-time teaching, but I know she will be back better and stronger next year. Teachers are lifelong educators who inspire our children and ensure that they have a great future. I thank them for everything they do. Shannon is clearly an outstanding teacher who deserves this praise. I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for moving this motion. I thank the member for Wyong and the member for Mulgoa for their contributions. All members understand the important role of our teachers and we support them. I wish them all well for the festive season.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [12.58 p.m.], in reply: I sincerely thank the member for Wyong for his remarks in this debate. I know that as a former educator and school principal of considerable standing his remarks were not only heartfelt but also well-informed. He understands only too well the importance of having high-quality teachers in a school. It certainly makes it much easier to manage and lead a school if it has a good group of high-quality teachers who, as the member for Wyong said, not only love kids but also are full of enthusiasm about inspiring the children in their care and creating an environment in which learning can occur easily.

I thank also the member for Mulgoa for her kind remarks about Shannon. I know that Shannon, when she gets a chance to read the *Hansard*, will really appreciate the remarks made by the member for Mulgoa about Shannon's achievements, and the important role that teachers and leaders such as Shannon play in shaping children's development, particularly those of primary school age. As always, the indefatigable member for Camden made a brief but eloquent contribution to the debate on this motion. I thank him as well for acknowledging publicly Shannon's efforts. Shannon is an incredible teacher. She sets the benchmark at St John's Junior School. The teachers under her charge have really lifted their game in response to the new standards that Shannon has set. She has not only set these standards; she enacts them herself as a teacher in the classroom and as an education leader at St John's.

She has brought in the MindMatters program, which I have seen at a number of schools. It is a brilliant program, as the member for Wyong touched on and knows full well. In addition, she has introduced other programs that she had seen at other schools, and the children and the staff are responding to them. As members have commented, in our roles as members of Parliament we visit many schools in our electorates. I have 80 schools in my electorate and I love visiting all of them. But from the moment one walks in a school gate one can tell whether it is a great school. How? Well, to borrow a phrase from *The Castle*, "it's the vibe". One gets the vibe of happiness as soon as one walks into those really good educational schools and Shannon is doing a terrific job in cultivating that vibe.

I congratulate Mr Clive Logan, the principal of the New England Girls School, who came from Sydney to the bush to be a leading educator, on identifying Shannon's skills and employing her to lead St Johns. What a brilliant decision he made. I again congratulate Shannon Rosewood on receiving the Positive Teacher of the Year award. More importantly, I congratulate her on the manner in which she is leading that school and inspiring the teachers around her. She is improving not only the educational opportunities but also the learning outcomes of the students at St Johns. We need more educators like Shannon in our public, independent and Catholic school systems. Indeed, we need to champion great quality teaching in all our school systems. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 10/56

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 11/56

Motion by Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN agreed to:

That in accordance with Standing Order 306 (7) the reports of the Legislation Review Committee, being Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) Nos 1 and 2, be considered together.

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

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [1.05 p.m.]: I thank members for the opportunity to comment on the tenth and eleventh digests of the Fifty-sixth Parliament prepared by the Legislation Review Committee. I comment, first, on the tenth digest. Five bills were introduced last week. Similar to previous weeks they represent significant work completed by the Government over the past year. The committee commented on all five bills in that week's digest and I turn now to discuss the substantive issues raised. First, the committee considered the Data Sharing (Government Sector) Bill 2015. This bill seeks to facilitate the sharing of government sector data between government agencies.

The committee noted that permitting government agencies to share data may lead to personal or sensitive information being inadvertently disclosed contrary to privacy legislation. Any such disclosure would trespass on an individual's right to privacy. However, the committee highlighted the safeguards in place to address any possible disclosure and the bill's objectives, which stress that the protection of privacy is integral to the operation of the Act. The committee also emphasised that the Act will be reviewed in five years, which will provide an opportunity for any concerns with the operation of the Act to be considered.

The committee also considered the Firearms and Weapons Prohibition Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This important bill gives effect to the recommendations of the joint Commonwealth and New South Wales Martin Place siege report. It introduces a number of new offences and penalties for criminal activity involving stolen firearms. The committee raised two issues with the bill. First, the committee discussed the provisions which enable the Commissioner of Police to refer to the spent convictions of applicants for firearm licences and permits. The committee commented that allowing this exception may defeat the purpose of the spent conviction scheme. However, the committee concluded that the provisions will enable the Commissioner of Police to be better informed when determining whether a person is fit and proper to be granted a firearm licence or permit.

The second issue raised was the significant increase in the maximum penalty for the offence of defacing or altering a firearm or firearm part. The bill increases the maximum penalty from five to 14 years. Significant increases in maximum penalties without justification will always be of concern to the committee. However, in this case the committee referred to the aims of the bill, which included ensuring consistency between firearm offences and penalties and to promote public safety. The committee therefore considered the increase was justified.

The committee also commented on provisions in the State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, which amend the Road Transport Act 2013. The bill doubles the maximum penalty for false nominations as to who was in charge of a vehicle when a camera recorded traffic offence or parking offence is committed. Similar to the Firearms and Weapons Bill, the committee noted that it will always be concerned when maximum penalties are significantly increased. However, in this case the committee referred to the second reading speech which noted that the maximum penalty had been doubled in recognition of the seriousness of attempting to avoid liability for such offences. As such, the committee made no further comment.

To conclude, the committee commented on one regulation—namely, the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Release of Stored Photographs) Regulation 2015. This regulation permits Roads and Maritime Services to release photographs taken or provided in relation to licence applications to certain law enforcement agencies. The committee noted the privacy concerns in relation to the release of photographs; however, it considered the public interest in allowing law enforcement agencies to have information that would assist the investigation and prosecution of serious criminal and terrorist activity. I commend the tenth digest to the House.

I will now comment on the eleventh digest. This is the final digest for 2015. Since my commencement as chair in June, the committee has examined 85 bills and over 440 regulations. I take this opportunity to thank the committee members, including Temporary Speaker Evans, for their dedication and contribution to producing the digest each sitting week. I also thank the committee staff. They do a fantastic job. They help the committee to make its deliberations with the best possible advice at hand. The committee examined five bills and commented on three of them. The committee also reported on one regulation, which I will address shortly. The first bill discussed was the Betting Tax Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The committee commented on a retrospective provision in this bill—namely, that the staged reduction of the betting tax rates will operate retrospectively by commencing on 1 July 2015.

The committee will always comment when provisions are drafted to have retrospective effect. However, in this instance the provision did not seek to remove rights or liberties or impose burdens. As such, the committee made no further comment. The second bill the committee considered was the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2015. The committee noted that the bill may contain oppressive official powers by providing that parents found guilty of certain serious offences against their children will automatically have their future children removed at birth. The committee commented that in certain circumstances this may impact not only on the offending parent but also on the child removed from his or her biological parent. However, the committee acknowledged that the bill contains a number of safeguards, including the right to appeal any decision to the Children's Court. As such, the committee made no further comment.

Also examined in this digest was the Conveyancing Amendment (Sunset Clauses) Bill 2015. This bill was introduced on an urgent basis to combat reports of some developers using the sunset clause in off-the-plan contracts to disadvantage purchasers. The bill has retrospective effect from 2 November 2015. The committee noted the retrospective application and concluded that it does not operate to remove rights or liberties or impose burdens. As such, the committee made no further comment. The committee reported on one regulation, namely the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment (National Security Interest Inmates) Regulation 2015.

This regulation allows the Commissioner of Corrective Services to designate an inmate as a national security interest inmate. Inmates given this classification are subject to additional security measures. The committee noted a number of issues with this regulation, including the wide discretion available to the commissioner in classifying an inmate as a national security interest inmate, and certain oppressive official powers in the monitoring of written communications and the restriction of access to official visitors. The committee raised these concerns. However, it noted that in certain circumstances additional security measures are reasonable to protect and manage any risks to national security. The committee made no further comments.

That concludes my remarks on the final digest for 2015. Once again, I thank the committee members for their contribution this year. I thank the staff of the committee for assisting us in our deliberations and for the valued advice that they provide. This could well be our last sitting day for 2015. I take this opportunity to wish all parliamentary staff a wonderful Christmas and a happy, health and safe 2016. I see Hansard is so much in the spirit that there are Christmas lights on the balcony. It is wonderful to see. The spirit of Christmas is alive and well. I commend the digests to the House.

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

Reports noted.

[Temporary Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.11 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The SPEAKER: I extend a very special welcome to Nicolas Crozier, the French Consul-General, to the gallery today. It has been my great honour and pleasure to welcome him to the New South Wales Parliament and to join him for lunch today with the member for Wallsend and the member for Holsworthy. It has been a pleasure to talk to him and to hear about the situation that he is contending with. I have a very special story to tell the Parliament. We did not have a French flag that was big enough to fly above Parliament House. The people who made a flag for us were from the Long Bay Correctional Centre. I ask the Minister for Corrections to convey our gratitude to them for making the flag. The flag was presented to us in Parliament so that we could fly the French flag above Parliament House. We understand that the Consul-General has appointments but we hope that he enjoys question time.

WHITE RIBBON DAY

The SPEAKER: Of course, 25 November is White Ribbon Day and I thank all members for wearing white ribbons. White Ribbon Day, now in its twelfth year, is the world's largest male-led movement empowering men to speak out against domestic and family violence. White Ribbon Day focuses on the positive role men can play to break the cycle of violence in society. White Ribbon Day calls on all communities to stand up, speak out and to act to prevent men's violence against women. I encourage all members to continue to raise awareness about domestic and family violence in their communities and to attend as many events as they can in their electorates next week.

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery Rachel Bailey, Simone Blacker, Kerry Seaton, Kylie Von Drehen, Tegan Gardiner, Jennifer Barrott, Libby Howarth and John Pirie, local area managers from the NSW Police Western Region, guests of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Racing, and member for Dubbo.

ST VINCENT'S HOSPITAL GIVING TREE APPEAL 2015

The SPEAKER: I thank all members who contributed to the St Vincent's Hospital Christmas

Giving Tree. I thank the Deputy Premier, in particular, for a beautiful wombat, which no doubt came from Dubbo zoo. Many members were very generous in bringing gifts today or donating money so that my staff can go and purchase gifts. The gifts are for children not only in New South Wales but all around the State. I would like to acknowledge the particularly generous donation of the member for Wollongong, who came down with her staff and donated seven gifts to put under the tree. They were beautiful gifts and I thank the member for Wollongong very much. Well done to everybody.

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome also Jono Vanderberg, Ainsley Pahljina, Mark Wallis, director of Mosman Bendigo, and Virginia Howard, guests of the Minister for Health and member for North Shore. I welcome as well 45 students and five teachers from North Haven Public School, guests of the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education and member for Port Macquarie, who also joined us this morning, so I thank her. I extend a very warm welcome to representatives from Shellharbour City U3A Club, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast and member for Kiama. I welcome to the gallery as well Alex Costello, President of the University of Wollongong Labor Club.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I advise members that the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Private Members' Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.24 p.m.]

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

Mr LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. Will the Minister reveal to Parliament today whether he will sack elected councils rather than waiting until Parliament has risen for the year in order to avoid scrutiny?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question and for finally showing some interest in local government in New South Wales. We have been on a journey for the past 4½ years getting a lot of research, analysis and evidence on councils across New South Wales that clearly shows change is needed in the local government sector. We have shown that we want to have strong councils and stronger communities. We want councils to have the ability to provide more services and more infrastructure for their communities. Guess what? We have the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] report, which said that \$2 billion could be saved—\$2 billion that could be directed back into communities. The Leader of the Opposition, with his scare campaign and lack of leadership on this issue, spread the rumour that all councils were going to be sacked today.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Guess what? Yesterday was the deadline. I woke up this morning and all councils are still operating normally. We will continue to work with councils and communities across this

State. I know members opposite are embarrassed because in metropolitan Sydney 22 councils put in for a merger preference because they could see there were benefits for their communities. They could see there were savings to be made, which could be passed back to their communities. I know that their members have also signed up for merger preferences. The Labor mayor of Randwick has signed up for a merger preference. The mayor of Botany, opposed to mergers, now sees the benefits for his community. The Labor mayor of Leichhardt, the Labor mayor of Ashfield and the Labor mayor of Marrickville all can see that there are benefits.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Nowhere in the Minister's response so far has he responded to the question asked. The question was: Is he sacking them? Yes or no.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has been absolutely relevant to the question asked. Government members and the member for Port Stephens will come to order.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I point out that the Government has been very clear in that it said by the end of the year it will respond to the IPART report. We have given councils that opportunity and the Government will also respond. Members should listen to this article we have received. The *Sydney Morning Herald* referred to the proposed merger of the Labor council of Canterbury and the Labor council of Bankstown and said:

But the merger vote exposed a split within the Labor Right over territory. NSW boss Jamie Clements supported the push to create a Canterbury-Bankstown super council, telling Fairfax media it was in the party's best interest.

They call the member for Bankstown a powerbroker. The former mayor and Labor Right accused Mr Clements of running behind-the-scenes scare campaigns to stitch up a merger. That side of the Chamber has no direction to make communities stronger across this State. We have a clear pathway to help our communities to become stronger. The choice is very clear.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has finished his answer.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr JAI ROWELL: My question is addressed to my very good friend the Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time. Members who continue to make a noise when I am trying to hear a question will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr JAI ROWELL: My question is addressed to my very good friend, the Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! I wish you had not said that again. Just ask the question.

Mr JAI ROWELL: How has the Baird-Grant Government made New South Wales number one again? How does it compare with the record of those opposite?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of the French Consul-General, who knows our thoughts, best wishes and prayers go with him and to the whole of France as they mourn. It is also fantastic to have the Consul-General present because we can give him a bit of education about what has happened in New South Wales over the past 20 years, particularly the past five years. I thank the member for Wollondilly for his question. He is very loyal to the party and great for conservative

causes. We all remember that night more than 4½ years ago when that great Premier, Barry O'Farrell, came to power and said, "We're going to make New South Wales number one again."

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. Members who do not cease their conversations will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It was not an easy job because we remember what they left behind. We remember the \$5.2 billion deficits they left behind. We remember their Treasurer who did his own forecasts and did not bother talking to Treasury and said whatever he wanted. We remember the \$30 billion infrastructure backlog which they left to us to build.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time. The member for Maroubra will cease interjecting. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Indeed, every economist across the country described New South Wales as the nation's basket case. That is what we inherited from those opposite. The member for Maroubra as finance Minister was responsible for finances. They blew 15 budgets and could not even keep to a budget. How much money did they waste?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time. I call the member for Wollongong to order for the first time. Members will cease interjecting. I call the member for Rockdale to order for the first time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It was \$20 billion because they could not manage their budgets. The good news for the people of New South Wales is that when the new Government came into office things started to change. We knew where we were on jobs growth. What has happened under this Government? New South Wales is number one on jobs growth.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The Government did change, along with the Premier and 10 Ministers all gone from ICAC.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: He has never been good with numbers. He pulled out of a leadership contest when he had the numbers. We were last in economic growth; under this Government we are number one. We were last in business confidence; under this Government we are number one. We are roaring along.

Mr Nick Lalich: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 59. He has answered the same question the same way.

The SPEAKER: Order! Do not address your point of order to the Premier.

Mr Nick Lalich: Standing Order 59—tedious repetition, the same answer to every question.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The great news is that the member for Cabramatta has taken all year to make his first point of order. Well done, mate. That was a great effort. That was a very productive year. In fact, that was the best year for the member for Cabramatta I have ever seen. Well done, mate. The member for Cabramatta is absolutely on fire. He should take next year's point of order now and then he could take the year off. We remember housing supply under those opposite, with 50-year lows but 42-year highs under this Government. Under this Government we are number one with a record amount of housing supply.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In addition, retail trade under the Labor Government was the lowest in the nation.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The triple-A credit rating was under threat under those opposite. We inherited a negative watch and this Government has turned it around. Our Treasurer recently announced the triple-A rating was maintained yet again under this Government.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order and cease shouting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I do not know where to begin about those opposite in relation to transport. We remember the six transport Ministers, nine transport plans and they delivered absolutely nothing. The Sydney Metro Northwest is underway and the Sydney Metro City and Southwest is being delivered—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has been relevant throughout.

Mr Ryan Park: He can outline how we are also number one for prison breaks at the moment.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That was the deputy director of transport for the Sydney metro. He is contributing.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is a similar story on roads. We all remember looking at the M5, the F3 and the M4 but what did they deliver? Absolutely nothing, but under this Government it is being delivered. We are very proud of what this Government has achieved. We said we would make New South Wales number one, and that is exactly what we have delivered. New South Wales is back leading the nation. We are no longer—

Dr Hugh McDermott: Point of order: Standing Order 52. There is far too much noise coming from—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Prospect is the greatest noise maker in the Chamber—the second loudest voice in the Chamber, beaten only by the member for Maitland, and he is worried about noise.

PRISON OVERCROWDING

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Corrections. Given the overcrowding crisis in the State's prisons, will he abandon his plans to sell off Long Bay jail for residential development?

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

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: First, I am delighted to hear that the member for Maroubra is interested in the State's economy and asset recycling. I remember in a previous life he was appointed by a former

Labor leader to advocate the benefits of asset recycling to the business community. The fact that he has made such a turnaround on asset recycling in opposition is gobsmacking. The member is highlighting the fact that our prison system has challenges at the moment. I have said in this Chamber before that we have challenges.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: We have challenges, but I use this opportunity to reassure the House and the community that if the police or the courts deem offenders to be a danger to the people of New South Wales I will find a cell for them. Let there be absolutely no doubt that we will be able to maintain the integrity of our judicial system. I know the member for Maroubra is keen for us to keep Long Bay open because it is easy for him to visit his former parliamentary colleagues. He can easily walk there from his electorate office.

We are not ruling anything in or out. This Government was elected to recycle assets. We have a mandate to recycle assets. Some facilities are more than 100 years old. I am not going to make any plans for the Corrections portfolio in 2015 based on the need of the member for Maroubra to maintain his branch membership. I will do what is in the best interests of the people of New South Wales. Everything is on the table. I have said that from day one. I am hoping that as the local member the member for Maroubra will work with me and not against me.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the New South Wales Government delivering for regional communities and what has been the response?

Mr TROY GRANT: The member for Cootamundra has seen in her electorate as well as in southern New South Wales through the wonderful job she is doing as Parliamentary Secretary exactly what is needed in regional communities and what is being delivered. She is not backward in coming forward to call a spade a spade and to advocate on behalf of those communities to ensure they get what they deserve. That is what this Government has delivered over the past 4½ years. I welcome my guests in the gallery, who represent about 80 per cent of the land mass overseen by local area managers of policing. They are in touch with regional communities and know the difference that our investment in the regions has made in the past 4½ years. They understand that we have put the regions back at the heart of government. We are making decisions in the best interests of those communities and rectifying the 16 years of broken promises by those opposite. Members opposite broke the hearts of regional communities for 16 years. Those days are over.

If people do not believe me they can believe the people of regional New South Wales. It is great to hear the feedback. If members opposite want to ignore regional communities they can go ahead. That is their choice. We will not ignore them. In the member's electorate of Cootamundra we have heard from parents and teachers who are thrilled that their schools are being made safer with flashing lights at crossings. From her electorate we have also heard from Mayor of Temora Mr Rick Firman who said that the State's contribution to his council's medical precinct helped to see a "dream realised". We have also heard from Mr Brian White who is designing new ambulance stations for Coolamon and Harden. He said:

We are excited about the opportunities these new stations will create for both the local community reserves and our paramedics.

It does not matter where in regional New South Wales we have a conversation with the community—the same story is being told. Our investments in health are extraordinary, including at hospitals in Parkes, Forbes, Peak Hill, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Port Macquarie and Tamworth. In addition to that, kids in our regions often need access to specialist care. We have provided \$10 million to Royal Far West for its proposed redevelopment at Manly to provide an important facility for our regional kids. What did that

organisation have to say about our contribution? Royal Far West Chief Executive Officer Lindsay Cane said:

We were so thrilled to have the support of the State and recognition of the important work Royal Far West is doing to help kids in the bush. We believe children are our future and every one of them deserves access to the services and care they need regardless of where they live.

There is no more of the geographical discrimination that was demonstrated by members opposite. Everybody will get a fair go in New South Wales. Last night in this House we passed laws to give the racing industry in this State a fair crack. The racing industry is an important and large economic contributor in regional areas. What did the chief executive officer of Racing NSW have to say? He said:

Great regional championship events like the Wellington Boot, which in 2016 will be better than ever, will be strengthened thanks to the great support of the Deputy Premier in delivering wagering tax parity. He is a great friend of racing in the regions.

Peter V'landys is welcome. Every member of this Government is a great friend of racing in the regions. That is not all. What have we heard from the grateful community in the northern rivers region—a beautiful part of our State? The Knitting Nannas wrote to Thomas George and to me to say thank you for buying back petroleum exploration licence 445. We received "nanna hugs" from them and we send nanna hugs back. The Knitting Nannas are also welcome. We make commitments and we deliver on them. The regional skyline features more cranes than ever seen before as we construct the police station at Parkes, the hospitals to which I referred and ambulance and fire stations. The critical infrastructure that the regions need is taking shape and we are continuing to support the people of the regions.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr TROY GRANT: In Walgett, in the large and important electorate of the member for Barwon, the local police told me they were thrilled with their new state-of-the-art station that meets their needs perfectly. Castlereagh Local Area Commander Jim Stewart said that the indoor dedicated defence training area was perfect for his command, which is faced with unique weather constraints—not to mention the tyranny of distance. In Forbes and Parkes the community is awaiting the opening of the hospital redevelopments that the Minister for Health has delivered. I think they will open on 21 or 22 December. The community cannot wait. Lachlan Health Council Chair Dan Herbert said that these developments would provide a "home away from home" for chronic patients. Aboriginal Health Officer Ellen Doolan said of the Dubbo Base Hospital upgrade:

This is such a significant thing for people in the region, it's about caring.

She is right—that is what it is all about. Dr Dean Fisher said:

We got the best of everything we wanted, the best lights, the best operating tables.

The NSW Farmers Association has told us it is happy with our progress on the 14 first ever memorandums of understanding between the Government and the association to deliver for our primary producers. The communities of regional New South Wales are talking. They are saying thank you.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: I have one message for the wonderful communities of regional New South Wales: We will continue to listen to them and never, ever under this Government will those communities face geographical discrimination.

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

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY MOBILE PHONE JAMMING DEVICES

Mr GUY ZANGARI: My question is directed to the Minister for Corrections. Why has the Minister not yet rolled out mobile phone jamming technology throughout New South Wales prisons to stop inmates treating prisons like wi-fi hotspots?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lakemba will come to order. The member for Fairfield has asked a question and I take it that he wants an answer. He will cease interjecting. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: Opposition members obviously do not listen. I have addressed this matter. We have rolled out jamming devices in Lithgow Correctional Centre. This matter falls within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. We have made another application to have a jamming device placed in another jail. My plan is for that mobile phone jamming device to be placed in Goulburn Correctional Centre. Of course we are rolling out scanners as well and spending record amounts on new technology. For the Opposition to use this last question time of the year to ask about an issue that I addressed in this place and in the public domain more than three months ago is just appalling.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr ANDREW FRASER: My question is addressed to the Treasurer.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Coffs Harbour will be heard in silence.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: How is the Government cleaning up the mess left by Labor and working hard to make the New South Wales economy number one?

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I will hear the point of order from the member for Campbelltown, but I advise him that no individual has been attacked. His point of order may be about that or it may be about something else.

Mr Greg Warren: My point of order goes to Standing Order No. 128. The question contains argument for no real purpose.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I have listened to the questions asked in this Chamber for nearly five years now and that question was nowhere near the kind of argumentative questions that I have heard previously. It does not even come close. For example, I refer to questions asked in the past three weeks in this Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question, and I foreshadow that I have a very important announcement to make in relation to cleaning up Labor's mess.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is important to recap where we are up to. This week the ANZ Stateometer report said that we are topping all other States and are back to being number one again. Labor left us with four deficits. We have now seen four surpluses under this Government. In the year to October 2015, we created more than 137,000 jobs in this State. Unemployment is at 5.5 per cent, the lowest rate of all States. When we came to government 4½ years ago we had been left with an absolute mess. Perhaps one of the darkest chapters in our State's economic history, and a prime example of economic mismanagement, was when those opposite did the gentraders deal.

Labor sold the power retailers and electricity trading rights without a mandate. Did those opposite go to the people of this State? No. And who was the Minister for Finance at the time? It was none other than the member for Maroubra. The Leader of the Opposition wants the member for Maroubra to be the Treasurer one day, but we know that the member has bigger plans than just being the Treasurer of this State. Unfortunately, while the member for Maroubra was the Minister for Finance, Labor's dodgy deals lost the State some \$1.85 billion based on the value of those assets. Given that, just imagine what would happen to New South Wales if those opposite were ever put in charge again.

I am happy to announce to the House today that we have closed the book on Labor's flawed gentraders transactions. We have cleaned up its mess. Labor's dud gentraders deal saw the State selling the energy produced from power stations to the private sector but left the electricity generation assets in government hands. This meant that, without access to the retail businesses that the previous Labor Government sold under its flawed deal, Vales Point was effectively left as a stranded asset on the Government's balance sheet. I am pleased to update the House with the news that the Vales Point coal-fired power station has been sold today. This transaction delivers proceeds to the State of around \$130 million. We have yet again cleaned up Labor's mess. Most significantly, today's transaction ensures that the State is no longer exposed to substantial liabilities and costs because of Labor's mismanagement. It marked one of the darkest periods of economic mismanagement in our State's history, and we have cleaned up Labor's mess.

In addition to that announcement, I am also pleased to say that we have cleaned up another one of Labor's messes—its gentrader transaction that tied New South Wales to the development of a non-commercial coalmine at Cobbora. This was a disaster. It would have saddled taxpayers with a future liability of more than \$1.5 billion in development costs. I am pleased to update the House that this Government will cease the transaction process for the Cobbora coalmine. I am pleased to say that instead this land will be sold for agricultural use. This is a win for the community and a win for New South Wales. We are a Government that always focuses on the positive and on the fact that we have gone from number eight to number one. But at times like this, when we are left cleaning up Labor's mess, it is important to reflect on what might happen if Labor ever formed government.

Today New South Wales is fortunate to have a triple-A credit rating. We have that rating through our hard work and fiscal discipline. But we know that if those opposite ever took over the State then it would find itself below triple-B or having junk bond status. We know that would be the case. We know that when it comes to those opposite their version of economics—or "Foley-nomics—is immensely flawed. Their policy announcement on stamp duty made during the election lasted 24 hours. Does anyone remember that? They rehashed a policy from Michael Egan, a former Treasurer, and then dumped it within 24 hours. We would be reduced to junk bond status because who is Labor going to get to pay for its infrastructure projects? Those opposite do not support asset recycling so they are going to get businesses to pay. They want more taxes and more money from business. Let us not forget their embarrassing record on trying to rewrite history with their jobs figures. They moved a motion in this place trying to fudge the figures.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Those opposite got up in this place—and we should remember this when they say they are new Labor—and tried to rewrite history. When New South Wales was coming last in jobs growth, they try to rewrite history. In Labor's last term in office it was creating about 26 per cent of jobs across the nation. In our term, we are currently trending as creating close to 65 per cent of jobs across the nation. Even though those opposite would reduce New South Wales to junk bond status, there are some shades of light—it is nearly Christmas. I congratulate the member for Rockdale for supporting infrastructure. While the shadow Treasurer does not support infrastructure, the member for Rockdale does and we congratulate him for that. Today's announcement is confirmation—

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Rockdale to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of 10 minutes.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Rockdale left the Chamber at 2.58 p.m.]

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Today's announcements demonstrate not only that this side of the House will continue to clean up Labor's mess but also, most importantly, that we will make sure New South Wales stays number one into the future.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

CONCORD HOSPITAL

Ms JODI McKAY: I direct my question to the Minister for Health. Given that last Thursday the member for Drummoyne said that he is embarrassed by the state of Concord Hospital, why has a possum run rampant through the wards of that hospital?

The SPEAKER: Order! The question was argumentative. Possums are protected. There is nothing wrong with possums.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am sorry but I do not have a briefing note from the possum. However, I will ask the possum why he or she ran through the hospital.

Mr Rob Stokes: It was a sick possum.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: That is right—it was a sick possum. In reality, I understand why the member for Drummoyne said that.

Dr Hugh McDermott: The possum is here.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Merry Christmas. You can give that stuffed possum to the Speaker's giving tree.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Concord Hospital definitely needs upgrading. I am very pleased to remind the House that the Government has committed \$150 million to build a brand-new aged-care rehabilitation facility.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: This facility will focus on holistic care for returned service men and women. Members will recall that Concord Hospital was originally a repatriation hospital. I am very proud of the fact that we have made this announcement and we are going to name one of the wards the "Rusty Priest Ward".

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: I am prepared to table the comments of the member for Drummoyne.

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the member have a point of order?

Ms Jodi McKay: The member for Drummoyne indicated that—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member will resume her seat. The Minister has the call.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I take this opportunity to thank the member for Drummoyne for the wonderful work that he does in representing that hospital. Not only is it a fabulous hospital but also it has wonderful staff, who do amazing work. I also take this opportunity to refer to the report of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare that was released today. It shows that New South Wales is performing better than any other State or Territory in emergency department performance.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129, relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question. The member for Strathfield will resume her seat.

Ms Jodi McKay: Why has a possum been allowed to run rampant at Concord Hospital?

The SPEAKER: Order! Possums do run rampant. If the member for Strathfield comes to the country she will see wombats and kangaroos running riot. The Minister has the call.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I will set the record straight—Hornsby hospital. The member for Strathfield has a short memory. Do I need to remind members about what possums were doing at Hornsby hospital? They were not just running through the hospital; they were urinating.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I know it is difficult for members to stay serious about this matter. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Jodi McKay: My point of order is standing order, 129. I am happy to know whether the possum in Concord Hospital had been urinating.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Strathfield will resume her seat. This is not a debate. Members will come to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The difference between those on the other side of the House and those on this side is that we have totally rebuilt Hornsby hospital and we are now getting on with the job of rebuilding Concord Hospital—maybe the possum went to Concord Hospital because it thought it was a vet hospital. The reality is that we have wonderful staff working in our hospitals but in 2011 when we came to office 50 per cent of our hospitals were more than 50 years old. I am afraid that Concord Hospital, part of which is being redeveloped, was one of those hospitals. I am proud of the people who work there and I know the patients sing the praises of that hospital. The member for Strathfield knows that because she attended the service on 11 November at Concord Hospital, where the staff and the patients were singing its praises.

Ms JODI McKAY: May I ask a supplementary question?

The SPEAKER: Order! I am concerned about the member's request to ask a supplementary question. The member for Maroubra knows that there is an agreement that the Independents ask two questions per week and it will mean that the member for Lake Macquarie will not get to ask a question. I am also concerned about the nature of the supplementary question. Is the question about possums?

Ms JODI McKAY: I promise there is no mention of a possum.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield may proceed.

Ms JODI McKAY: Will the Minister for Health guarantee that patient safety and infection control

were not compromised?

The SPEAKER: Order! The supplementary question is out of order. The member will resume her seat.

Ms Jodi McKay: The Speaker should not be protecting the Minister for Health.

The SPEAKER: Order! I can do what I like. If it had been a serious question I would have allowed it. The member for Lakemba will come to order.

GAS SUPPLIES

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I address my question to the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy. How is the New South Wales Government securing gas supplies for the people of New South Wales, and are there any other Christmas-related matters?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for his question and commend him for his interest in Christmas, as well as our energy security. This Government has a plan to secure the State's energy needs, and we are delivering on that plan. In Action 14 of the NSW Gas Plan we outline the importance of working with other State and Territory governments to explore the possibilities of gas pipelines. This week the Northern Territory Government announced that it had selected Jemena Northern Gas Pipeline to construct and operate the North East Gas Interconnector. This new pipeline will link the Northern Territory to the east coast gas market from Tennant Creek to Mount Isa. This will add to the Territory's vast gas supplies all those available to east coast customers. This is great news for the 1.3 million households, 33,000 businesses and more than 500 industrial users in New South Wales who rely on a secure and affordable gas supply.

Increasing the gas supply puts downward pressure on prices, increases security of supply and boosts competition in the wholesale gas market. Jemena expects construction of the pipeline to be completed in 2018. Over this festive season we all will be relying on gas—whether we are using refrigeration appliances or gas barbecues. This State needs a secure supply of gas. Speaking of the festive season, it would be remiss of the Government not to recognise and acknowledge members opposite. With this Labor Opposition, every sitting day has been like Christmas for the Government. When I looked around yesterday, there were so many frowns on the Opposition side of the House, so many sad individuals. I went up to my office and I said, "Staff, gather around. I am worried. What can be wrong? They are all very unhappy."

The SPEAKER: Order! Members should listen closely. They might get a present.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I said, "Maybe they do not believe in Santa Claus. Maybe they do not believe in Christmas. Maybe they have issues with little baby Jesus. We need to do something about this."

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fairfield will come to order. The Minister has the call.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: One of my staff said, "Minister, presents make people happy." It is time to recognise the good work of members opposite, because it has been a difficult year. I ask for some latitude, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira should stop jingling keys.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I have presents for the good boys and girls opposite. We wondered why the member for Liverpool was so cranky this week. Where is he? Is he here? We thought that, being such a loyal member of Her Majesty's Opposition, perhaps he is cranky because he missed out on

attending the reception with their Royal Highnesses. We have found him a Diamond Jubilee mug and coaster, celebrating the reign of Her Most Gracious Majesty. I ask the member for Canterbury to pass that on to him. It is not only the Australian Labor Party that we must look after; we also must look after The Greens. For the member for Newtown, we have her very own e-tag because we would hate her to miss out on WestConnex.

Ms Jenny Leong: I don't have a car.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The member can fit it to the basket of her bike. The next present is very expensive, but we all chipped in. It is a new phone for the member for Fairfield. It is a new number; the member should not give it out. I have a present for the member for Ballina. It is a beautiful place to have barbecues and we do not want the member to become dehydrated when she is standing around. I have a water bottle for her. It says, "YES 2 GAS" on it. I am sure the member for Ballina will enjoy that.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I thank the Leader of the House for his generosity and pass on a message from Chris Hartcher, who has asked me to deliver these handcuffs to the Minister for Corrections. The former Minister has indicated that he might need them again shortly, so the Minister for Corrections should not dispose of them.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The Minister has the call.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: We will make sure that they are passed on to the member for Baulkham Hills. We all know that the member for Keira loves a serious report. This is not just a gift; it is a challenge for him to get through during the Christmas break. It is the latest 2015 Wiggles *Serious Report*. The member should colour between the lines and bring it back. In fact, it is the deluxe Wiggles *Serious Report*. We have also chipped in for a present for the member for Maitland. It was hard to find. It is a smiley sticker for her car—don't worry; be happy. The member can put it on the back of her car and bring cheer and joy to everyone.

On a serious note, Christmas is all about love, forgiveness and family. It is only right that at this time of year we try to restore peace and happiness to the Illawarra. There is a little gift for the member for Wollongong and the member for Shellharbour. It is about happier times. It is a picture of the two of them and a heart—a little something for their desks. We have also shelled out for a romantic dinner for two at Shellharbour Workers Club. They do not have to sit at the same table or on the same floor. We have organised that. They should bring back that loving feeling in the Illawarra. I wish them good luck with that. In answer to the member's question, gas supplies are secure. Members opposite can collect their gifts afterwards if they so choose. I thank members for their time.

The SPEAKER: Well done!

NEWCASTLE BUSES EMPLOYEES

Mr GREG PIPER: I point out that this is the reason I asked once before whether we could consider moving the Independent's question to an earlier part of question time.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is why we did that earlier in the week.

Mr GREG PIPER: And I missed out on a present. My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. In light of the announcement that Newcastle bus, ferry and light rail services are to be privatised, will the Minister guarantee that existing employees of Newcastle Buses will be provided with the options of both ongoing employment and redundancy?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I am sorry that the member for Lake Macquarie did not get a present. I wish him happy holidays. I would wish members of the Opposition happy holidays—but they have been on holiday all year. This issue could not be a happier one for the Labor Party. It is the Government's intention to ensure that the existing jobs of people who work in transport in Newcastle are carried over to any new integrated operator. In other areas of the State—such as Manly, where there are fast ferries—transport services, patronage and customer satisfaction have increased, which is what this is all about. The Government has made clear that it will get this right. We are sounding out the market and we will make sure that the customer is at the heart of this project. I dare say that from our engagement with the market we will determine new bus routes and services, and will potentially look more closely at ferry routes in the area. Everyone must remember that this has come about because of the advent of light rail, and the tough decision that this Government made to revitalise Newcastle.

Public transport patronage in Newcastle over recent years has been in decline. There has been a 14 per cent decline in the number of patrons using buses. There is an opportunity for the transport workforce in Newcastle to grow. There will be a contract between an integrated world-class operator and the Government in the same way that Hunter Valley Buses or Port Stephens Coaches have a contract with the Government. The Government is taking this matter seriously. We have already talked to the unions and will have an ongoing engagement with the union movement throughout this exercise. It has been a joy to see the Government deliver great transport outcomes across the State in the past 4½ years.

What we are proposing to do in Newcastle is an Australian first. Engaging with the private sector in relation to transport happens elsewhere around the world. I am also grateful for the support the member for Newcastle has given to this exercise by voting in favour of the engagement of the private sector through the council motion. It is interesting and very telling that the shadow Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have absolutely zero to say about it since we made the announcement about a fortnight ago. I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question. We will happily work with him to get the best outcome for the people of Newcastle. We will be able to grow services, grow patronage, increase customer satisfaction and deliver a terrific result.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government delivering for the people of New South Wales and are there any alternative plans?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I warn the member for Rockdale that the next time he is removed from the Chamber it will be for a couple of hours.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question. I think everyone will agree that he is the best Whip this House has ever had, along with the member for Wyong and the member for Wollondilly.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. There are too many audible conversations in the Chamber. The member for Lakemba will cease conversing across the Chamber.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am a big believer in this great State of New South Wales. In the past nearly five years we have gone about the work of looking after the people of New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order or they will be out of the Chamber. Members will receive no warning.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: When we went to the election we put forward a bold plan to finally build the infrastructure that this State had waited for for a generation and we have finally delivered it.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Rockdale to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of one hour. I direct the member for Port Stephens to remove herself from the Chamber for a

period of 30 minutes.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Rockdale and the member for Port Stephens left the Chamber at 3.21 p.m.]

The SPEAKER: Order! Stop the clock. I direct the member for Fairfield to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of 10 minutes.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Fairfield left the Chamber at 3.22 p.m.]

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Bankstown of my previous ruling. I direct the member for Bankstown to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of 10 minutes.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Bankstown left the Chamber at 3.22 p.m.]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will turn around, sit up straight and be a good boy.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: During the election campaign those opposite brought forward some incredible policies. They brought forward an infrastructure plan and people from one end of the State to the other loved it. This is what was said about the infrastructure plan:

To call the Foley policy Swiss cheese was an insult to dairy products.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 128. The comments from the Premier are argumentative. He did not put the Unanderra lifts in and there is no infrastructure program until those Unanderra lifts get in.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They are very embarrassed by their record, and so they should be.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Wollongong to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of 10 minutes.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Wollongong left the Chamber at 3.24 p.m.]

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Another comment was:

Foley looked a lot like old Labor except he's shortcutting that process. He's cancelling projects upfront.

That is what Labor went to the people of New South Wales with.

Dr Hugh McDermott: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 59, tedious repetition.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Prospect to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of 10 minutes.

Dr Hugh McDermott: You are throwing out half the bench.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is right, because they continue to interject.

Dr Hugh McDermott: Madam Speaker, you make Bronwyn Bishop look competent.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Prospect left the Chamber at 3.23 p.m.]

The SPEAKER: Order! He is a very nasty little person. He is even nastier than the member for Maroubra.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Prospect makes no-one look incompetent.

The SPEAKER: Order! He will not have a very good 2016 with me in the chair.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Those opposite came up with a couple of policies over the past year. Remember their policy for Bankstown airport? They wanted to recycle someone's assets; someone else owned it and they thought they would recycle it. They wanted every Cessna pilot in Australia to be able to look at the A380s up close. It was a great policy for Bankstown; they loved it. Those opposite fought hard against the socialist objective. The only problem is that the socialist objective is still there, even though they spent a year trying to get rid of it.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has been entirely relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr Clayton Barr: The question was about what the Government is doing, not about election commitments.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question also asked about any alternative plans.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They also did something that was quite unusual for the Labor Party: It sold out the electricity workers. This is a Government for the workers. We actually look after the workers, but for some reason Labor sold them out.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have noted the member for Camden is on his feet.

Ms Yasmin Catley: My point of order is under Standing Order 52. Because of the noise on the other side of the House I could hardly hear the Premier speaking and I know that you do not like that, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The member's comments are noted and the point of order is upheld, but the noise is coming not only from the Government side of the Chamber; it is also coming from the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Cessnock, probably the member for Kiama, the member for Hornsby and the Minister for Family and Community Services. All members will come to order.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr David Harris: Point of order: The time had expired before the member for Camden got to his feet.

The SPEAKER: Order! You should be observant.

Mr David Harris: I was, I was watching.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am always right. You should have heard me say that I had observed the member for Camden jumping to his feet when there were seven seconds to go.

Mr David Harris: I was keeping a close eye.

The SPEAKER: Order! No you were not. I said I had observed him jump to his feet before the member for Swansea jumped to her feet to take a point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is very clear that we did something that those opposite know nothing about. We went to the last election and we stood up for what we believe in.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We went to everyone in New South Wales and we said that we would fund the infrastructure Labor had spoken about and promised, but never ever delivered. That is what this Government will do. We will stand up for what we believe in and what is right for the people of New South Wales, and we will do that every day.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: For the guidance of the House, is there a standing order against cheesy overacting, because I can feel some coming on.

The SPEAKER: Order! No, there is not but we can certainly invent one. We can invent one for the member for Maroubra.

Mr Michael Daley: Any minute now we will see the big fake smile and the hands waving around. Is that what the Premier is going to do in the last 55 seconds of question time? Government members will stand up and cheer and clap at the overacting, and the Premier will get an Academy Award. Can he sing and dance too?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra does quite well himself. He will resume his seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I have always thought the member for Maroubra was a complete lightweight, but if the truth be known he is a genius, because only he could make Luke Foley look so bad.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has been relevant.

Ms Linda Burney: This is a complete repeat of last year.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Ms Linda Burney: The Premier wants to make sure all the Government members stand up and clap. They can do it now. I will do it for the Premier: Everyone up, come on.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We will always do what is right for the people of New South Wales and we are coming after all those opposite—every single one of them. They think their seats are safe, but they are not.

Question time concluded at 3.29 p.m.

PRINTING OF PAPERS

Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

That the following papers, including the annual report of the Legislative Assembly when presented to the Speaker, be printed:

Report of the Game Council of New South Wales for 2013-2014.

Final Report of the Sydney Catchment Authority for the period 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2014.

New South Wales Disability Inclusion Plan, dated February 2015.

Report of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal entitled "NSW Energy Savings Scheme—Compliance and Operation in 2014, Annual Report to the Minister, Energy Savings Scheme", dated July 2015.

Report of the Independent Transport Safety Regulator entitled "Implementation of the NSW Government's response to the Final Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Waterfall Rail Accident Reporting period: April 2014-March 2015".

Report on State Finances 2013-2014.

Report entitled "OCHRE: Two years on".

Report on the Statutory Review of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002, dated October 2015.

Contract Summary of the Sydney Light Rail Public Private Partnership, dated 25 August 2015.

Report pursuant to section 27ZB of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002 by the NSW Crime Commission for the year ended 30 June 2015.

Report pursuant to section 242A of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 by the NSW Crime Commission for the year ended 30 June 2015.

Report pursuant to section 242A of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 by the NSW Police Force on Covert Search Warrants for the year ended 30 June 2015.

Report of the NSW Ombudsman entitled "Report under Section 242 (3) of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 for the period ending 28 May 2015, Covert Search Warrants", dated August 2015.

Report of the NSW Ombudsman entitled "Report under section 242 (3C) of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002—Criminal Organisations Search Warrants—for the period ending 7 August 2015", dated October 2015.

Report by the Attorney General pursuant to section 45 of the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 for the period ended 30 June 2015.

Report and Determination under section 24O of the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Act 1975 entitled "Public Service Senior Executives Annual Determination", dated 25 June 2015.

Report and Determination under section 24C of the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Act 1975 entitled "Chief and Senior Executive Service Annual Determination", dated 25 June 2015.

Reports and Determination under section 13 of the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Act 1975 entitled "Court and Related Officers Group Annual Determination"; "Public Office Holders Group Annual Determination", dated 25 June 2015.

Report and Determination under section 13 of the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Tribunal Act 1975 entitled "Judges and Magistrates Group Annual Determination", dated 25 June 2015.

Annual Report and Determination on Additional Entitlements for Members of the Parliament of New South Wales, dated 28 August 2015.

Report of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal entitled "Licence compliance under the Water Industry Competition Act 2006 (NSW), Report to the Minister, Water—Compliance Report", dated October 2015.

Report on the Statutory Review of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW).

Child Deaths 2014 Annual Report.

Reports for the year ended 30 June 2014—Education and Care Services Ombudsman, National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioners; WorkCover Independent Review Office; Coal Innovation NSW Fund; and National Environment Protection Council.

Reports for 2014 of—Wine Grapes Marketing Board; Serious Offenders Review Council; and State Parole Authority.

Reports for the year ended 30 June 2015—Professional Standards Council; Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency; Ministry of Health (incorporating the Financial Statements of Public Health Organisations under its control); Combined New South Wales Health Professional Councils; Health Care Complaints Commission; New South Wales Health Foundation; National Health Funding Body; Administrator of the National Health Funding Pool; Multicultural NSW; Australian Technology Park; Central Coast Regional Development Corporation; Hunter Development Corporation; Department of Planning and Environment; UrbanGrowth NSW; UrbanGrowth NSW Development Corporation; Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales; New South Wales Bar Association; NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal; NSW Crown Solicitor's Office; Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; Judicial Commission of New South Wales; New South Wales Law Reform Commission; Legal Aid New South Wales; Legal Profession Admission Board; Office of the Legal Services Commissioner; NSW Trustee and Guardian; Destination NSW; NSW Institute of Sport; Office of Sport; State Sporting Venues Authority; Sydney Olympic Park Authority; Venues NSW; NSW Architects Registration Board; Fair Trading Administration Corporation and the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Authority; Rental Bond Board; Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust; Office of Environment and Heritage; NSW Environment Protection Authority; New South Wales Environmental Trust; Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales; Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust; Lord Howe Island Board; Parramatta Park Trust; Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust; Western Sydney Parklands Trust; Zoological Parks Board of New South Wales (trading as Taronga Conservation Society Australia); Responsible Gambling Fund; Greyhound Racing NSW; Racing NSW; Harness Racing New South Wales; Art Gallery of New South Wales Trust; Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences; Sydney Opera House Trust; Library Council of New South Wales; Australian Museum Trust; Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority; New South Wales Crime Commission; Department of Justice; Ministry for Police and Emergency Services; NSW Police Force; AusGrid; Delta Electricity; Endeavour Energy; Essential Energy; Forestry Corporation of NSW; Hunter Water Corporation; Long Service

Corporation; New South Wales Treasury (Volumes One and Two); New South Wales Treasury Corporation; Port Authority of New South Wales; Restart NSW Fund; SAS Trustee Corporation; Superannuation Administration Corporation (trading as Pillar Administration); Sydney Water Corporation (trading as Sydney Water); TransGrid; Trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund; Water NSW; Snowy Hydro Limited; Office of Local Government; Fire and Rescue NSW; NSW Rural Fire Service; New South Wales State Emergency Service; Department of Premier and Cabinet; Barangaroo Delivery Authority; Natural Resources Commission; Parliamentary Counsel's Office; Infrastructure New South Wales; New South Wales Electoral Commission; Election Funding Authority of New South Wales; Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal; Public Service Commission; State of the New South Wales Public Sector; and Government House Sydney Trust Reserve; Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards New South Wales; Coal Innovation NSW Fund; Cobar Water Board; Dams Safety Committee; Dumaresq-Barwon Border Rivers Commission; New South Wales Food Authority; Local Land Services; Rice Marketing Board; New South Wales Rural Assistance Authority; Wentworth Park Sporting Complex Trust; Veterinary Practitioners Board of New South Wales; NSW Skills Board; TAFE NSW; Family and Community Services (Volumes One to Three); Building Insurers' Guarantee Corporation; Workers' Compensation (Dust Diseases) Board; Office of Finance and Services (including the report of the NSW Procurement Board, Waste Assets Management Corporation, Office of the Valuer-General, Surveyor-General, Registrar-General, and Geographical Names Board of New South Wales); Government Property NSW; Lifetime Care and Support Authority; Motor Accidents Authority of New South Wales; NSW Self Insurance Corporation; Service NSW; State Records Authority of New South Wales; Board of Surveying and Spatial Information; Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority; Teacher Housing Authority; NSW Government Telecommunications (Telco) Authority; WorkCover Authority; Mental Health Commission of New South Wales; Mental Health Review Tribunal; New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry; NSW Climate Change Fund; New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council; and Education and Care Services Ombudsman, National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioners.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Christmas Felicitations

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [3.33 p.m.]:
I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to provide for the consideration of Christmas felicitations during the period set aside in the routine of business for Government business and, after the conclusion of the discussion on the 10,000 signature petition and prior to the taking of community recognition statements.

To clarify to the House, this means there will be no divisions or quorums for the rest of the day.

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

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Tuesday 16 February 2016 at 12 noon.

STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Report

The Speaker tabled the report of the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee entitled "Changes to the Standing and Sessional Orders" Report 2/56, dated November 2015.

Ordered to be printed.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Reference: Inquiry into the Management of NSW Public Housing Maintenance Contracts

Mr Bruce Notley-Smith, as Chair, informed the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Public Accounts Committee had resolved to conduct an inquiry into the management of New South Wales public housing maintenance contracts, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

Report

Mr Greg Aplin, as Chair, tabled the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety entitled "Report on the Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety in NSW", Report 1/56, dated November 2015.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Greg Aplin.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Reference: Inquiry into the procurement of government infrastructure

Mr Alister Henskens, as Chair, informed the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure had resolved to conduct an inquiry into the procurement of government infrastructure, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

PETITIONS

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

Aged Care Facilities

Petition requesting that the Mullumbimby Hospital land be used to develop a range of aged care facilities and housing options through public and community sector partnerships, received from **Ms Tamara Smith**.

The Clerk announced that the following Minister had lodged a response to a petition signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital Parking Facilities—lodged 13 October 2015 (Mrs Shelley Hancock)

Pursuant to resolution Christmas Felicitations proceeded with.

CHRISTMAS FELICITATIONS

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.36 p.m.]: I move:

That the House take note of Christmas felicitations.

This is an opportunity to thank people throughout the Parliament who always do such a fantastic job in keeping this Parliament going. Even though it can be quite robust in the bearpit, every one of us is here to make a difference for our community and this State, and the only way we can do that is with the support of fantastic staff. We must acknowledge that our electorate staff do an incredible job; they are not appreciated enough, in my view. All of us would acknowledge them as true community heroes. They are the eyes and ears of the community, they respond to the community and we are so appreciative of everything they have done.

Believe it or not, I think we should also thank all members of the House overall for their contribution. We should be very proud of where this State is, and regardless of one's political views all of us can take heart that many positive things have happened this year for New South Wales. Importantly, we thank all our parliamentary staff for keeping the House running. I thank the Legislative Assembly attendants and those on the front desk who make it a pleasure to come in here. It would be remiss of me at this time not to acknowledge the selfless work of our security officers. Indeed, one of our former parliamentary security officers was involved in the incident at Parramatta. On a daily basis they protect us and we should acknowledge that they do that without fanfare. We really appreciate what they do, putting their lives on the line on a daily basis for us.

We must thank our cleaners. I particularly thank Angela, who keeps us company at odd hours, early in the morning and sometimes late at night. They go about their work without fuss, looking after Parliament House and keeping it clean. We appreciate the work that they do. I thank the Catering staff and the Library staff. I thank the entire Hansard staff for all they do. I am sorry for the translating they have to do at times, but we try our best. We appreciate the incredibly important work they do. I particularly mention the spectacular work of the building contractors who managed to demolish my desk. There was a lot of history in that desk and they got rid of it. But it was remodelled; they found a way to get all the pieces back together so that I could not tell the difference. I thank them for doing that. I thank the staff at Café Quorum. Mai, who is our caterer, does an incredible job. In many respects I think the Director of Parliamentary Catering, Philip Freeman, should have his own television show. His entertainment talent is seriously underutilised, and I think we should look at that.

It would be remiss of me not to thank you, Madam Speaker, for your incredible work. I know those on the other side of the Chamber also appreciate it. The Leader of the Opposition will absolutely support your stewardship. Yours was an historic appointment but, more importantly, you have done an amazing job as Speaker of this House. It is not something to be taken for granted. We appreciate all you do in looking after not only this Chamber but also the welfare of staff. You go out of your way to listen to the concerns of staff on every occasion and respond. I thank you for that nurturing style, which is very important to staff across the whole Chamber. You do not necessarily display nurturing in here, but the staff appreciate it.

I thank the Deputy Speaker, the Assistant-Speaker and the Temporary Speakers for their work—even Gareth Ward does a good job. I thank the Clerk, Ronda Miller, for her leadership, the deputy and the whole team. Their role is critical to the operation of this House and its significance is often overlooked. I know how significant it is and I thank you for performing it in such a professional manner. I thank the Whips and Deputy Whips without whom we would not survive. Certainly Patto is doing an incredible job for us, as is Mark Coure. I know the Opposition Whips have also done a good job. There have been a few in the Opposition. There is lots of work over there.

It would be remiss of me not to thank the Leader of the House notwithstanding his last answer.

He has taken to this job very professionally and very seriously. I think he has kept the House in good order. This is quite unusual, but lastly I thank the Parliamentary Press Gallery. I was trying to work out what for, but I think I just thank them for undertaking an important role in this House. Certainly every single one of them, just as every single person in this House and Chamber and all the staff, is here to make New South Wales better. Every person can be proud of their contribution this year. Merry Christmas.

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn—Leader of the Opposition) [3.41 p.m.]: I join the Premier in wishing everyone who works in this building the best for the coming festive season. I thank the Clerk for her assistance to me as a new member of the Legislative Assembly and to the large number of new members of Parliament on this side of the House. I particularly thank Les Gönye for the advice he has provided to me personally, and I thank all of the clerks on the team for their good advice to all members. I join the Premier in thanking all of the staff of the Department of Parliamentary Services—the catering staff, cleaners, maintenance staff, library staff and the special constables who keep people safe. I particularly acknowledge Hansard. It has been a tough year for the Hansard team with the loss of Elizabeth Jarka, and they still mourn her loss. I too thank the Parliamentary Press Gallery for their reportage of what we get up to.

I thank all of my parliamentary Labor colleagues. The entry of 18 new members in the Legislative Assembly has strengthened our team and I think all of them who can now say they have served their first year in the Parliament of New South Wales have acquitted themselves very honourably. To my Deputy, Linda Burney, to the Manager of Opposition Business, Michael Daley, to the Opposition Whips: the member for Cabramatta, the member for Wollongong and the member for Campbelltown, I thank them for everything they do. I have found my time in the Legislative Assembly a great change from my period of service in the Legislative Council. I will not repeat what I said last night about the difference between the membership of both Chambers, but I do wish not only Labor members but also the Premier and his team, government members, crossbench members, all staff who assist us in carrying out our duties as representatives of the people, a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) [3.45 p.m.]: As Deputy Premier and very proudly as the Leader of The Nationals in this place I am pleased to extend seasonal felicitations to all on behalf of my Nationals ministerial colleagues and Government members. I extend my gratitude to everyone in the House for their hard work in the past 12 months and recognise their contribution. Being the end of an election year, I thank the New South Wales Nationals who dived headfirst into our elections, and emerged with a clear mandate to put regional New South Wales back at the heart of government. I congratulate them on an outstanding year.

Seven Nationals Ministers stand at the helm of our major portfolios in government, each tasked with delivering a challenging schedule of reform, and I thank them for embracing this. In particular, my Deputy Leader, the Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli who has delivered \$224 million in quality training for teachers and hundreds of millions of dollars in additional funds for our most needy students. The Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business, John Barilaro, has delivered outstanding regional development where it is needed most. The best Minister for Roads in the history of government, Duncan Gay, is delivering the road upgrades regional communities have waited decades for. I am very proud of my new Ministers.

The Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Lands and Water, Niall Blair, has delivered or is progressing all of the 14 commitments made in the memorandum of understanding with NSW Farmers and is continuing work to empower landholders. He is doing a terrific job, as is the first Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education, Leslie Williams. She is bringing to Cabinet a strong and passionate voice in the interests of young people and Indigenous people. The Minister for Local Government, Paul Toole, is making sure our councils are as strong as they can be and is doing a significant volume of work.

This Government has put regional New South Wales back at the heart of government, but that cannot be done if this place is not functioning effectively, so I thank all those who make this place work. We work from end to end geographically, which places an extra onus and demand on regional members of Parliament and Ministers. Without the support of our staff we certainly could not survive, particularly when we are long distances from our families. I thank Premier Mike Baird and our Liberal Coalition partners. They have provided outstanding leadership. I am proud to call the Premier my partner in government but, more importantly, my friend. I thank his team, supported by the Deputy Leader Gladys Berejiklian, who is an outstanding Treasurer, but, more importantly, an outstanding person. I thank her for her work.

To the Leader of the House, Anthony Roberts, Robbo you crack me up every Thursday when we are in this place, there is no doubt about it. I thank you for your quick wit, wise words and organisation that get us through each sitting day. I extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to the Speaker of this great House, Shelley Hancock. She has a very difficult role. I thank Ronda Miller, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and her team for their outstanding and constant support. We could not do the work of this House without her and her team, who do a wonderful job. I thank my guides, the special constables, who need special acknowledgement in such a trying year. They work not only in this precinct but also in Martin Place and put themselves in front of us on every occasion when danger arises, and that deserves special recognition, given the difficult times that our State and communities are experiencing.

I also thank the catering staff who are very important to members of The Nationals, the Library staff who help us with our research, the information and technology personnel and cleaning staff. This building simply could not operate without them. We notice their impact, and appreciate their efforts and contribution. I assure them that it does not go unnoticed by the team of The Nationals. My gratitude goes to the great people from Hansard. The Nationals again extend our sympathies for your loss this year. I do not know how you sit through the hours of debate, the heckling, the complicated legislation and the nonsense from those opposite.

Ms Linda Burney: You almost got there, Troy.

Mr TROY GRANT: I think Hansard is terrific. I was just joking, Linda. On a personal note, I thank my electorate staff at Dubbo. Darren Borger, Aaron McDonnell and Pauline McAllister do a mountain of work in my significant absences from the area. I also thank the departmental liaison officers, the drivers and particularly my staff in the ministerial office under the great leadership of Chief of Staff Alex Bruce. They are the best team in government, in my view. I thank them and all our stakeholders with whom we deal on a day-to-day basis as we do the most important job—representing the people of regional New South Wales. Merry Christmas, everyone.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [3.50 p.m.]: At the close of the first year of the Fifty-sixth Parliament I place on record the deep gratitude that Opposition members and I have for everyone who works in this building. I will not go through the entire list but I will mention some specific people and groups. Of course, that does not mean that we do not appreciate everyone. I thank all the people inside and outside this building who make our work possible and wish them a wonderful holiday season. The role of the parliamentary staff has been particularly important with the influx of new Labor members. I convey to all parliamentary staff our thanks for the support they have provided to those newcomers.

I thank Madam Speaker for the interesting journey and the Deputy-Speaker, Assistant-Speaker and all Temporary-Speakers who take the chair to ensure that the Parliament operates well. I thank the clerks Ronda and Mark and their team for their work and the long hours they put in. I also thank Hansard. I think it must be extremely interesting to watch the goings on in both places. To be able to make some sort of sense out of what can sometimes be very difficult to understand is a great skill indeed. I recognise the attendants for their work behind the scenes. It is most appreciated. Many of us who have run large organisations know how critical it is for all cogs to work together. That does not happen without great leadership.

I recognise Leader of the Opposition Luke Foley and thank him for his incredible leadership, persistence and forbearance when hearing from so many people on so many issues all day long. Opposition members extend their gratitude to the Leader of the Opposition for his steadfast leadership, determination and constant enthusiasm for the work that we do. I recognise the caucus of the Labor team, in particular those who came in at the last election. I thank Luke's team in the leadership office Chloe, Michael Gibb, Michael Samaras, Julian, Jacquie, Lee, Daniel, Michael Buckland, Adam, Pete and Jack, who are ably led by Pat Garcia. To my staff Maria, Rheuben, Di and Fran at the electorate office, the work you do is remarkable. I am greatly indebted to you.

I acknowledge the hard work of our Manager of Opposition Business, who is not terribly well at the moment. I wish him a speedy recovery. He has done a wonderful job. I offer many thanks to Dylan for his efforts and his assistance to caucus members in this House. To the Manager of Government Business I reserve my thanks in light of some of the later nights you have given us, but your good humour is well appreciated. We also appreciate the very decent relationship you have with the Opposition. I thank Colleen, the Whips and the Deputy Whips, who do a wonderful job. I thank Rob Stefanic and wish him well in the future. Our loss is the Federal Parliament's gain. Today's felicitations are not about religious beliefs.

They are about temporarily laying down the sword in this House and recognising, as others have said, that we are all in this place for one reason: to represent the people who elected us and respect the trust they have placed in us. Our political leanings are quite irrelevant when it comes to our duty. Our electors have entrusted us with their aspirations, hopes and dreams. I think each one of us performs that task admirably. I thank our families and friends for their persistence with us and their great trust and love. We use this time of year to take stock of the things that really matter—the things that engage all humanity within the State and country and, at this particular time, across the world. On behalf of the Labor team I hope everyone enjoys the sitting break. We look forward to seeing you and doing it all again next year.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [3.55 p.m.]: Today this session of the Fifty-sixth Parliament draws to a close. I thank the Premier, Deputy Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I also thank the member for Maroubra, my dear friend the member for Baulkham Hills, the member for Lismore, who are here with me, and all members in the Chamber for their assistance, friendship and support throughout the year. I will take this time to thank a number of people who help this House to function as smoothly as possible.

To our wonderful Madam Speaker I pay special tribute. Her continued smooth stewardship of this Parliament is a testament to her supreme character and her integrity. Additionally, I acknowledge and pay tribute to the staff of her office for the thorough assistance they provide to the Speaker in ensuring that this House continues to run like a well-oiled machine. I thank our Clerk, Ronda Miller, for all her hard work in ensuring that the processes of the House are adhered to and the functionality of this place is maintained.

Behind Ronda we have Les Gönye, who has served tirelessly in Parliament for many years, as well as Helen Minnican as Assistant Deputy Clerk, and Catherine Watson. I offer my thanks to the phenomenal table office team, led by Rachel Simpson. Her office is of great assistance in liaising between my office and all the other procedural staff in Parliament. In that team we have Ben Foxe, Jenny Lamont, Sabina Kozłowska, John Hatfield and Anju Sharma. Your assistance in preparing the business programs and papers, facilitating the written questions and answers and accepting petitions is greatly appreciated. Your work does not go unnoticed.

I also thank the Clerk assistants, Manuala Sudic, Rickee Murray and Laura Ismay. I thank the team at procedural research: Jonathan Elliot, Rohan Tyler and Pauline Painter. I thank Cheryl Samuels, our indefatigable Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms. I thank our wonderful Assembly assistants who greet us every morning. Led by Ian Delahunty, they are Danny Heldal, Peter Tuziak, Steve Smith, Chris Herbert, Ian

Thackeray, Chris Papadopolous, April Lowndes and, last but not least, Lynne Vitale. To the Hansard team, led by Scott Fuller, I thank you for the long and often unpredictable hours of your work. This House also dearly remembers Elizabeth Jarka, who sadly passed away earlier this year.

I thank Simon Chalmers for his work as Director of Information Services and Neil Dammerel for running IT. The help of the IT team is always needed, even if it is just telling us to turn something off and back on again. I thank Deborah Bennett, who heads up the library, Rob Neilson and Brett Wright of facilities, and Executive Manager Rob Stefanic and their teams for a fantastic year. I thank the catering staff led by Phil Freeman, particularly Mr Gary Chan from the Parliamentary bar, who is always smiling and ready for a chat. Last year I mentioned the team at the switchboard. This year I again note their huge contribution to the House. I also offer my condolences on the passing of Elayn Gemmell. My thoughts and prayers are with her family. A team that does not get anywhere near enough recognition is the drivers, who are on call at all hours of the day. I thank them for their professionalism and their friendship.

I thank Michael Daley and his younger and—some would say—much more intelligent staffer Dylan Parker for their continuing work. I also recognise the work that the special constables put in each and every day, looking after us in this Parliament and protecting us. I thank my friend, who does a wonderful job looking after my office, Angeliki Stathopolous. She keeps our mess under control, and I thank all the cleaning staff and the people we do not even mention who work every day to keep this place operating. I say a very big thank you to them. I thank the Government Whips, Chris Patterson, Stephen Bromhead and Mark Coure, for making sure the Government pushes through its legislation and for keeping the team together. They are well assisted, as are all the Coalition members in this place, by the Whips staff—Becky Cartwright and Alex Carne.

I wish a very special Christmas to my personal staff: my Chief of Staff, Robert Vellar; Tim Potter, Adrian Pryke, Kate Blunden, Norm Lipson, Nick McDermott, Berge Okosdinossian, Harry Hughes, Callum Fountain, Graeme Gilbert, Gabrielle Hendry; and a special mention to Brandon Jacobs, who is finishing up in my office to move to Canada. I thank my electorate office staff, led now by Zorica Kaye-Smith assisted by Cameron Dunger, Naji Najjar and Andrew Wilson. I thank them for holding the fort at Lane Cove, particularly given all the portfolio positions I now hold.

I pay special tribute to one of my staff members who works tirelessly to ensure the smooth running of my office—that is, Sue Clark. She juggles my day, keeps the office grounded and holds the team responsible for their shenanigans. I thank also my department liaison officers: Anja Staalhammar, Elouise Chandler and Annie Truong. I thank those in the Opposition for keeping Government members on their toes—forcing us to be the best we can be for the people of New South Wales. And finally I thank the people of Lane Cove. I thank everyone in the Chamber today—may God bless you all and may you have a good Christmas. We will see you back here safely next year.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [4.00 p.m.]: I begin by wishing all members of this House, from the Premier to the Minister and all the Opposition members, the very best for Christmas and the New Year. I thank my trusty assistant Dylan Parker. Often when I am busy he is, behind the scenes, the real manager of Opposition business. He is a young superstar who can do anything, and I thank him for his terrific work. I also thank my electorate staff: Karen Brown, who has been a friend to my family since she was in kindergarten and who has served with me for all of the 10 years that I have enjoyed serving as the member for Maroubra. I congratulate her and thank her for her friendship and service. I thank Lisa Williams and Kevin MacDonald.

I thank all my colleagues, and in particular the Labor leadership team—the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Luke Foley, and the Deputy Leader, the Hon. Linda Burney—for the terrific work they have done in moulding a new team after the election. I thank them very much for their friendship and support and congratulate them on their leadership. I thank all my shadow ministerial colleagues and backbenchers. In particular I thank all the new members elected to this place and to the other place after the election earlier this year. They are all superstars. They have performed tremendously well and taken

to the rigors of this place and the demands of being a local member more quickly than one might have expected them to. The new members of our team are of a great calibre and I congratulate them for learning the ropes so quickly. When they really hit their stride, in time, they will be something to behold.

I thank the Opposition Whips. They have been fun to work with and have helped me. I thank the member for Wollongong; the member for Cabramatta, who is with us in the Chamber now, and I thank him for his friendship; and also the member for Campbelltown, a good Rabbitohs supporter. He has helped us out tremendously this year. I thank the Leader of the House, the member for Lane Cove. He has been a friend of mine since we were both elected to our respective councils. Back in 1995 I met him on a very cold night in Wagga. It was a cold and boring night. We have been friends ever since. I thank him and his staffer Adrian Pryke. I thank also the member for Camden and his staff.

The bearpit is a very combative place, but it needs to function and so the respective Whips and managers of business have to have a good and genuine relationship. We are combative when it is required but we have an understanding and we respect each other, and I have enjoyed working with them this year. I thank my wife, Christina, my beautiful angel, and my kids for their support. If you do not have the unqualified support of your family you cannot do this job well. I thank them very much. I thank the Speaker, the Deputy-Speaker, the Assistant-Speaker and all the Temporary-Speakers. I thank the Speaker for not ejecting me as often this year as she has in other years. Whilst, as I say, this is a combative place, behind the scenes we do have a good working relationship on the standing orders and members committees. As members of this place with some experience we do have the best interests of all other members at heart.

I thank the staff of the Parliament, beginning with the Clerks—Ronda Miller, Les Gönye and all the other clerks—for their friendly assistance during the year, as always, and for their expertise. I thank the Hansard staff, the security guards, the special constables and all the staff all the way through to the cleaners. When we come into the office each morning the dishes are washed and everything looks nice and neat. Most of the cleaners are ladies, some are gentlemen. They come in before we do. They are up early to make the place look nice for everyone who comes into this building. They are often forgotten, but we do not forget them today.

Finally I thank the people of Maroubra for re-electing me in March. It has been a tremendous privilege to have served them for 10 years. I single out for special mention the great many members of the French community in the electorate of Maroubra. I think I probably have in my electorate the largest French community in the State. This is due to a great many reasons, one of them being that the Lycee Condorcet, the International French School of Sydney, is at Maroubra. The school attracts many French people to my electorate. I wish them all a Merry Christmas despite the pain that has been visited upon Paris. I thank the people of Maroubra for giving me the tremendous privilege of being their representative in this place.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [4.05 p.m.]: I wish everybody a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. I hope all members and their loved ones have a safe and merry Christmas. I thank the Premier for everything he has achieved this year. New South Wales is in the best position it has been in for a long time. We have in the Premier a true leader, and it is an honour to serve as his Government Whip. I thank our Treasurer. She is a wonderful friend of mine and has been a tremendous support in my time in this House. I thank the Hon. Troy Grant, our Deputy Premier. He is doing a fantastic job. I thank him for all the support he offers me in my role. I thank all my Nationals colleagues. Together we form a strong and effective Coalition Government.

I thank The Nationals Whip, Mr Stephen Bromhead, or "Brommie", for always being collaborative and supportive. I thank Meagan, who worked for Mr Bromhead until recently and who now works for Minister Barilaro, for all her efforts and for working seamlessly with me and my office. I wish Meagan well in her new role. I welcome Annie, who replaced Meagan, and thank her for all her efforts. I thank my Deputy Whip, Mark Coure, for all his efforts. I thank the Acting Opposition Whip and Colleen from his

office. She does an outstanding job. I thank them for their support.

I thank the Speaker for her outstanding work. Her job is not an easy one. I thank the Deputy-Speaker, the Hon. Thomas George, for his tremendous efforts and mentorship. I thank the Assistant-Speaker and all the Temporary-Speakers for their work. I thank the Leader of the House, the Hon. Anthony Roberts, for all his efforts. He is a great mate, and we work very well together. I appreciate all his support. I thank all the Ministers for the incredibly hard work they do for the benefit of the people of New South Wales. They are doing a great job. I thank all my other Liberal and Nationals colleagues for their support, teamwork and friendship. It really is appreciated. I thank members of the Opposition for the mutual respect they have shown.

I thank the Clerks of the Legislative Assembly, Ronda, Les and Helen for all their efforts, and all the other staff. I thank Joe Andrade from the Speaker's office. It goes without saying what a great job he does. This place would not be the same without him. I thank Rebecca Cartwright for the outstanding job she does. She is my right-hand person. I thank her for all her efforts and for making my job so easy. I thank all the ministerial staff for their efforts. I thank Bay Warburton, chief of staff to the Premier, for his efforts, support, friendship and mentorship over the year. I thank Nigel Blunden. He is a great mate and the wolf who stalks the corridors. I thank him for his support and all his efforts.

I thank all the parliamentary liaison officers for their efforts. They are in regular contact with backbench members and with me. We could not function without all their work. I thank Gavin Melvin, Rachael Storey and Zac Bentley the Premier's Parliamentary Liaison Officers; and Julian Whealing, Robert Giltinan, Rachel Hayes, Kim Withers, Berge Okosdinossian, James Bolster, Anna Reid, Tom Green, Jacqueline Hartley, Katrina Carlon, Matt Versi, Nicholas Ruygrok, Clementine Julian, Chris Pettett, Kailee Shaw, Emma Chapman, Michael Shaw, Keiran Byrne, Jacquie Munro, Elle Bailey, Sharna Southwell, Sara Potts and Natalie Heazlewood. They are all outstanding and I thank them for their efforts. I thank Adrian Pryke from the office of the Leader of the House. He does such a great job—mind you he is punching well above his weight—and is making a fantastic effort. Thank you to Caroline Hutcherson from the Premier's office. She has given great support. Indeed, she helps to ensure that this House runs so well.

I thank all the Legislative Assembly Chamber attendants—Ian Delahunty and his team. They do an outstanding job. I thank April, Chris, Danny, Lyn, Chris, Steve and Ian for all their efforts. Their work is much appreciated; they are true professionals. I thank Hansard for their hard work—they have to put up with a lot of drivel in this place at times. Information technology staff members also do a great job. Thank you to parliamentary catering. Phil and his team keep us all going on late nights. They are highly efficient and friendly and nothing is ever too much trouble for them. I thank the security team and special constables for their efforts. They are a great team and very committed.

I see the cleaners and facilities staff first thing in the morning and last thing at night. Thank you for all of your efforts in keeping this Parliament to a standard that we really appreciate. In conclusion, I thank my executive office staff—Debbie Dewbery, who does an outstanding job; Alex Carne, who accompanies me to this Chamber and also does an outstanding job; and Joanne Sendt. Thank you for your support and friendship. Thank you for everything you have done for my office and for me over the year. I hope everyone has a wonderful Christmas and I look forward to seeing you all next year.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.10 p.m.]: As the 2015 parliamentary year draws to a close I would like to reflect on the year that was in this House. Sometimes it is very loud in here and passions run high as people fight for their communities and for what they believe in. Whilst it can get heated, I like to think that when we walk out of the Chamber we are still friends and respect each other. We do not always agree but we all have the best intentions to make this a great State and to serve our communities. I am proud of what we have achieved this year. With that in mind, I take this opportunity to thank my Labor colleagues and those on the other side of the Chamber. As Acting Opposition Whip, I thank the Acting Deputy Whip and member for Campbelltown, Mr Greg Warren, for supporting me in that role. I thank the

Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Luke Foley, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Ms Linda Burney, and the Manager of Opposition Business, Mr Michael Daley. They are all doing a great job for Labor. I also thank Michael Daley's right-hand man, Dylan Parker. He has a hard job and he does it well.

On the other side, I thank the Government Whip, Mr Chris Patterson, and his excellent staff, Rebecca Cartwright and Alexandria Carne. I acknowledge the Leader of the House, the Hon. Anthony Roberts, and his sidekick, Adrian Pryke, for their contribution this year. I also thank the Speaker. It is not easy to keep us in order in this place but she is doing a great job. The member for Holsworthy is also doing a great job as Temporary-Speaker. I express my gratitude to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Ronda Miller, and Catherine Watson. I thank the Chamber attendants. I thank the Hansard staff—as the member for Camden said, sometimes members talk a lot of drivel but it always appears so lucid in *Hansard*. I thank all the staff in the Legislative Assembly and everyone who helps to make Parliament a wonderful place in which to work, including the special constables who help to keep us safe, the cafeteria and restaurant staff who keep us well fed, the library staff, the information and technology staff, the mailroom staff, and the cleaning staff who do such a great job.

I thank the committee secretariats and all those guys who work hard all year with little acknowledgement of the important work they do. Please know that we are all very grateful. And while they do not always get it right, I thank the press gallery for its work over the past 12 months. On a personal note, I thank my wonderful staff, including Colleen in the Whip's office who keeps me in line and makes sure I am at the right place at the right time—without her I would not be able to do my job. I thank the staff in my Cabramatta electorate office—Donson Phetrasy, Anne McNamara, and Anh Dang. I am grateful to my staff for their hard work, support and friendship. I am particularly grateful to them for making me look so good—without them I would struggle. I wish my colleagues on both sides of the House, everyone who works in this Parliament and their families, as well as my constituents in the electorate of Cabramatta, a happy Christmas and a safe and peaceful New Year. May the good Lord smile down upon each one of you.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [4.14 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to wish members on both sides of the House and their families a happy, safe and joyful Christmas. It is a privilege and an honour to work alongside so many dedicated, passionate and motivated people. Despite our political differences and views, we all have the same purpose—that is, to serve our great communities. I thank Madam Speaker, the Deputy-Speaker, Assistant-Speaker and Temporary-Speakers for ensuring that the important work of this House is done. It is not an easy job but their fairness and firmness is greatly appreciated. I thank the Clerk, Ronda Miller, the Deputy Clerk and the team for upholding the standing orders and the traditions of this House. Each and every one deserves a well-earned and restful Christmas break.

My thanks go also to the Government Whip, Chris Patterson, and his staff, Rebecca Cartwright and Alex Carne, for the great job they do and the support they have given me as Deputy Whip. Rebecca and Alex's professionalism is second to none. Chris and I are lucky to work alongside them. I also thank the Opposition Whip and the deputies for their service. I wish them all a merry and safe Christmas. I wish my own staff a very merry Christmas—Flynn McDermott, Violet Becvarovski, Chris Ashton, Diandra Corallo, Tim Millar and Charlotte Regan. I thank the Premier for his leadership, vision and friendship. Over the past 12 months we have seen the best and worst of situations in New South Wales. I am grateful to the Premier for his calm, swift and measured approach to things. I wish the Premier, his family and staff a wonderful and peaceful Christmas. Special mention goes to the chief of staff and his deputy, Bay Warburton and Nigel Blunden. I wish you and your families a very merry Christmas.

I thank the Deputy Premier, Ministers and their staff for their hard work and commitment to ensuring that New South Wales is number one again. The massive amount of infrastructure being built across my electorate and this great State is due to their vision and desire to provide the best possible services to the good people of New South Wales. Special Christmas wishes must go to the Leader of the House and his team for all they have done to assist the Government. My warmest wishes go to the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite, as well as my colleagues on the crossbenches. It is a

wonderful thing to be able to engage in debate with people who are committed to achieving the best for New South Wales. I wish you and your families a wonderful and joyful Christmas.

My sincere thanks go to the Legislative Assembly attendants, the staff at the front desk, the information technology staff and security officers, who are always so accommodating. Parliament functions because these people make so much happen behind the scenes. All members and I are incredibly thankful and grateful for the work that they do. I wish each and every one of them a happy Christmas and a healthy 2016. To the people who prepare the *Hansard* I say, "Thank you and merry Christmas." They are often required to make sense of things that make no sense. They do a wonderful job in reflecting the lively and robust debate that takes place in this House. I thank the catering and cleaning staff who come in early and work late to ensure that we are able to work in a clean and comfortable space as well as provide us with great food and coffee—sometimes a little too much. I wish you and your loved ones a happy Christmas and look forward to seeing you next year.

I express my thanks to the many people who will be working during the Christmas period to ensure our safety and wellbeing; in particular, the NSW Police Force, the NSW Ambulance Service and the doctors and nurse across our great State, including the staff at St George Hospital. It is reassuring to know that these people are at the ready if needs be. I thank them for their work throughout 2015 and wish them well for the year ahead.

My thanks go to the people of Oatley who returned me earlier this year to this great House as their member. I will never take them for granted. Those of us who sit in this House owe much to our families—often they come second to the demands of the job. I wish the husbands, wives, partners, children and families of all members the very best during the festive season and for 2016. We are lucky to have you in our lives and appreciate all that you do.

On a personal note, I acknowledge my wife, Adla, for her ongoing love and support and my son, James, for teaching me that there is so much more to life than just work. They are my greatest motivation and the reason I feel so strongly about making my community better, stronger and safer. I make special mention of my father-in law, Samuel Abraham, who passed away four weeks ago. He was a fun-loving person. He loved sport, politics and listening to Alan Jones in the morning. His passing has left a hole in our families but not in our hearts; he will be missed but never forgotten. Merry Christmas to everyone.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I welcome visitors to the public gallery. I hope you enjoy the Christmas felicitations.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) [4.19 p.m.]: I begin by extending my best wishes for the festive season to Government members, their families and their communities. I wish them all a safe festive season and look forward to their return next year. Despite the theatre of this Chamber, cordial and at times close relationships are common across the dispatch box. That must be hard for outsiders to imagine. Despite the differences in our politics, I wish everyone in this Chamber and in the other place a very merry Christmas.

I acknowledge the contribution of parliamentary staff. Their professionalism and proficiency ensures that the oldest Parliament in the country continues to operate effectively. In particular, I acknowledge the Clerks and staff at the table. The assistance they provide to all members is crucial to this Parliament and allows us to go about our work as effectively as we can. I thank the Hansard staff for their contribution. Hansard is an important official record for the people of New South Wales. All members rely on these staff to faithfully record their contributions. Sometimes we hope they manage to improve the raw material we provide them with. It is a wonderful resource, and I thank them for their work.

I thank the catering staff, who ensure that we are fed and watered throughout the year. Catering staff deal with the lunchtime rush hour and the late-night revelry with equanimity and equilibrium. Sadly, this not always matched by those asking for the service. I mention the facilities staff, who keep this building neat and tidy. The cleaners and maintenance staff often do their work before we arrive in the

morning and after we leave each night. Their work is seamless, but it does not go unnoticed.

We should acknowledge those who will be spending Christmas away from friends and family. I think especially of the service personnel deployed in the Middle East, in Africa and in our region. Our thoughts go out to those for whom Christmas will be a reminder of what they have lost. I think in particular of Curtis Cheng's family, and of those who have lost loved ones in France, Lebanon and Egypt. I think of those in our community who will not be with their loved ones this Christmas. I think of those who lost loved ones in the floods in and around Dungog this year. We should remember that this festive season may not be easy for some. Let us think also of those who serve in the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service, and of our police and health workers. I wish them a safe and, hopefully, uneventful festive season.

I acknowledge the hard work of my colleagues. I thank all members on this side of the House, who work tirelessly in representing their constituents. I thank Leader of the Opposition Luke Foley, the entire shadow Cabinet and Deputy Leader of the Opposition Linda Burney for the support and counsel they have afforded me this year. I acknowledge Opposition Leader of the House Michael Daley. The member for Maroubra works effectively and efficiently in this place, and I thank him for his efforts. I acknowledge the Opposition Whips, Nick Lalich and Noreen Hay, and all those who have contributed to that most important role. I thank the Government Leader of the House, the Premier's office, the member for Camden and Government Whip, as well as all their staff, for their efforts. Despite the occasional hiccup, they have dealt with my office with decency and dignity. That is sincerely appreciated. Thank you.

To the people of Campbelltown: I am delighted and truly honoured to be your representative in this place. My loyalty to you is paramount. You are my priority and will remain so. Nothing will stand in the way of my commitment to you and your interests. I will never yield or waver on that. I thank all Labor staff, particularly the staff in my office. As I am sure Government members can appreciate, we in opposition ask a lot of our staff. They must do so much with very little. I wish all Labor staff a restful and relaxing Christmas break. I thank them for their efforts this year. Madam Temporary Speaker, I wish you and everyone else all the best for the festive season. I thank Madam Speaker and her staff. I thank everyone who has worked as part of a team to contribute to the effectiveness of the Parliament. I look forward to spending some time with my family, but equally I look forward to coming back next year to continue the fight for a better New South Wales.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.24 p.m.]: I wish all who are associated with the Parliament a merry Christmas and a very safe holiday season. I hope all members come back next year safe and well. I thank the Speaker, the Deputy-Speaker, the Assistant-Speaker and the Temporary Speakers for the running of this House. I thank our leaders, Premier Mike Baird and Deputy Premier Troy Grant, for their leadership and their work over the past 12 months. I thank the Government Whips, Chris Patterson and Mark Coure, with whom I work. I thank the Labor Party Whips. At times, I am not sure who they are. I am unsure whether it is Nick or Greg or Noreen, but I thank them for being so easy to work with when we do our head counts.

I thank members of The Nationals, Troy Grant and the team, for their work. I know from working with them that regional New South Wales is at the heart of everything we do. We view all our decisions through the prism of "Is it good for regional New South Wales?" before we decide to go ahead on something. I thank The Nationals Whip staff, Meagan Skinner—who is now working for Minister Barilaro—and Anthea Savage, for their work. I thank the Government Whip's secretary, Rebecca Cartwright. She runs the Government Whip's office. I thank all the parliamentary staff. I will not name them all. I thank Ronda Miller, Hansard, the Clerks and all who work in this place for what they do to make life here that little bit more tolerable.

I thank all the Labor Party members for their civility. It is a bit like playing rugby, where we bash each other on the field, but when the game is over we shake hands, have a drink and forget about it until the next time we are on the rugby field. It is a lot like that in this House. Our philosophies may be different

and we may look at things from a different point of view, but the end game is the same: we all want to make New South Wales the best place to live. I thank Labor members for their contribution. I thank the members of the New South Wales Parliamentary Lions Club. Over the past 12 years we have raised around \$900,000 for various charities. This year we raised about \$130,000 for brain cancer research. I thank all members of Parliament who contributed in many ways, from attending functions to raffling bottles of wine, to help raise money for charity.

I cannot mention Lions Club functions without thanking Philip Freeman from Parliamentary Catering. He and his staff do a fantastic job. Nothing is too hard for them. They bend over backwards to help at the Lions functions. I thank my electorate office for supporting me. I thank Alison, Gary and Stuart for all the work they do. I spend so much time in Sydney or travelling around the electorate that I am not often in the office. They look after the office and my constituents. I thank the people of Myall Lakes for the trust that they have placed in me. It is an honour and a privilege to represent them and to speak in this place on their behalf on so many different matters.

I also pay tribute to the volunteers who work in the electorate of Myall Lakes. For the information of those in the public gallery, Myall Lakes is the number one electorate in all of New South Wales and is internationally renowned as Australia's water playground. That does not just happen; it is because of the fantastic volunteers, whether it is the State Emergency Service, the Rural Fire Service, the Volunteer Rescue Squad or the service clubs such as Rotary, Lions and Quota. They do a fantastic job looking after our communities. I conclude by saying thank you to my family—my wife, Sue, and our seven children. I would mention their names but I have forgotten who they are. Merry Christmas to all of them. I am looking forward to seeing them all at home for Christmas. All the best and Merry Christmas everyone.

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

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

WESTCONNEX

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) [4.30 p.m.]: Congratulations to the concerned residents and families, local community groups, including the WestConnex Action Group, Save Newtown, No WestConnex [NoW] public transport and local businesses, as well as the hundreds of volunteers who spent their time collecting signatures so this debate could occur. A special shout out to all of you who are in the gallery today, but I warn you not to shout back. I stand here leading in this crucial debate on WestConnex because of you—because people like you demanded this debate. You have put the community opposition to WestConnex on the agenda with this petition of more than 10,000 signatures and forced the New South Wales Government—and members are watching on television screens—to hear your concerns.

I make it clear up-front that this petition is calling on the Government to halt the tender and construction processes for WestConnex, including the acquisition of homes and businesses; to hold a full parliamentary inquiry into WestConnex; and to release the full business case. The complete failure of the Government to do anything about addressing those concerns is nothing short of disgraceful. It is clear that the Government has something to hide. Already many residents have had their homes taken from them. Others, including residents and local schools, are being exposed to large amounts of asbestos as a result of the WestConnex M4 widening construction being undertaken by Rizzani De Eccher and Leighton in Granville and Auburn. Many thousands more face the potential of living next to or near congested multi-lane roads, breathing highly toxic fumes and having their neighbourhoods cut in half.

It is astounding that the New South Wales Government continues with WestConnex when the benefits do not add up and when the risks to our communities and to our health are so great. Best-practice planning for healthy, sustainable, liveable cities does not involve putting large amounts of the population into private primary transport options. Let us not forget that those who will supposedly benefit from WestConnex will be slugged exorbitant toll charges. It is a simple fact that building more roads to counter traffic congestion is a fundamentally flawed solution in the twenty-first century. It is completely out of step with all the evidence that it is bad for our natural environment and our climate, as well being completely financially irresponsible. More roads induce more traffic.

WestConnex is simply not a solution to Sydney's current transport problems or its future transport requirements. Why has there been such a lack of transparency? Why have we not seen the finalised business case? Why are billions of dollars worth of contracts being signed prior to planning approvals and completion of all the environmental impact statements? Why has the Government further hidden this project from scrutiny by creating the private Sydney Motorway Corporation? Why has the multinational company AECOM been commissioned to provide environmental impact statements when at the same time it has contracts for the construction of the project?

This will be yet another failed tollway in Australia. Unfortunately, I do not have time now to remind members on the other side of the House of the financial debacles of the Cross City Tunnel and the Lane Cove Tunnel. And what of those who raise concerns and object to this highly flawed project, including the residents of St Peters? They face the arrogance of this Government, particularly the roads Minister who regularly insults community members, residents and representatives who oppose WestConnex. I have a message from the people in the gallery and the 10,000 people who signed this petition: Premier, Ministers, your job is to listen to the people and their legitimate concerns. People are legitimately concerned about this project and that is why they are calling for the release of the public information so that they can know why the Government sees this project as such a benefit.

Let us be clear: It is not only the people who live in the inner city and in the inner west who have signed this petition. People from all over New South Wales have signed the petition. From Banora Point near Tweed to Coonamble in the State's central north and to Gerringong on the South Coast, people have signed on to oppose this road. There are Maria and Beth from Bankstown, Monica from Camden, Ian from Cranebrook, Nathan from Penrith, Colleen and Bob from Seven Hills, Sally from Broke in the Upper Hunter—the list goes on. In Randwick, Coogee, Miranda and Heathcote, people have signed the petition. In Parramatta, Fairfield, Granville and Chipping Norton, people have signed the petition to say stop WestConnex. It is high time to call a halt to this highly flawed project until the full business case is released and a public inquiry is allowed into this polluting tollway.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! I know that visitors in the gallery are happy about those remarks, but I ask them to refrain from applauding.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.35 p.m.]: I hope I do not upset the people in the gallery but I indicate that the Government opposes the petition.

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

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: In the next 10 years an additional one million people will call Sydney home, and that means more people, more businesses and more freight using our transport networks and driving the nation's economy. To meet this challenge, the New South Wales Government is investing more than \$60 billion in infrastructure over the next four years for Tomorrow's Sydney, including major new public transport projects such as the Sydney Metro and the new WestConnex motorway. What this city needs is a government that recognises the need to address issues of population growth and traffic congestion with clear investment in real solutions.

I acknowledge that many people have signed this petition and that some of them are here this evening. I also acknowledge that members in this place also represent the other 4.9 million Sydneysiders who could not be here with us this evening, as well as the 7.6 million residents of New South Wales. It is the responsibility of government to consider the needs of the whole community, not just the vocal few, and this means we must make the hard decisions as well as the easy ones. All we ask is that people have a good look at the projects—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Newtown has had her opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: —that will provide the city's transport solutions, such as WestConnex, and consider them thoughtfully on their merit.

The SPEAKER: Order! Visitors who interject during the discussion will be removed from the public gallery.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I appreciate that there will always be those who would like the world to stand still, but this simply is not a realistic position for any twenty-first century global city. The reality is that Sydney needs new train lines, new light rail services and a new motorway network. Doing nothing is simply not an option. So what is the objective of this petition engineered by The Greens? It calls on the Government to release the business case, yet ignores the fact that the WestConnex Business Case Executive Summary—which explains the fundamentals supporting the Government's decision to go ahead with the WestConnex project—has been publicly available since September 2013.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will not have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion if she continues to interject.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: As has been advised previously—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Summer Hill will not have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion if she continues to interject.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: —the WestConnex business case is being updated in line with the enhanced route. I also confirm once again to the House that the New South Wales Government will release the updated WestConnex business case, including all material that is not commercial in confidence, before the end of 2015. And what will be The Greens' response to that? Will they finally concede that this is a necessary project for the city's future? I, for one, will not be holding my breath for that because The Greens will oppose WestConnex no matter what the business case says. The Greens will oppose WestConnex no matter what any expensive parliamentary inquiry might find. The Greens are not interested in the answers that their own petition demands. It is easy politics: stay popular by opposing everything.

At its heart, this petition is simply a tactic to stall a critical project that this city desperately needs and to prevent the wider community from enjoying the congestion relief that WestConnex will bring. It is clear that The Greens are not interested in even considering the merits of the project. Seeing the business case will not change their view one iota. Holding a parliamentary inquiry will not change their view and members opposite should not wish for something they might get soon. They are opposed to it, full stop.

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

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: The Greens have already closed their minds to any benefits that the people of

Greater Sydney might derive from WestConnex. I know some members agree with that position but a responsible government has to factor in far more than just one side of the argument. We need to balance the needs of the many as well as the needs of the few. Why should good government stand still at the behest of a small group who is going to oppose the project anyway? How is that serving the people? The WestConnex network will transform how Sydneysiders travel, connect and do business. WestConnex will benefit all the people of Sydney and New South Wales, and will work alongside the much-needed public transport infrastructure upgrades that this Government is delivering to keep our city moving as essential elements of Tomorrow's Sydney. Earlier in the year The Greens released their transport plan. We saw no sign of a business case or funding or any vision whatsoever.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Balmain will have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I conclude by reminding The Greens that the Government's spending on public transport far outweighs its spending on roads.

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) [4.40 p.m.]: I am pleased to contribute to this discussion. I thank the member for Newtown for bringing this important petition to the House and I thank the 10,000 people who have signed it. I note the comments of the member for Drummoyne in regard to the business case. I presume that the Government will release the business case as soon as Parliament has risen tonight.

Mr John Sidoti: Good guess.

Ms JODI McKAY: Thank you. I expect that it will be released soon so that once again we have no scrutiny of what is happening with this project. The business case is so important to understanding how this project will be funded. We have a \$15.4 billion project and we have no idea how the Government is going to fund it. We know that tolls are involved. We know that the M4 will be tolled until 2060, so we will have a toll on the M4 for 44 years. We know also that tolls are going to increase greater than the consumer price index, which is an extraordinary move by the Government. We know too that an M4 East toll will also be implemented. Tolls are going to play their part, which means that Western Sydney commuters will be sluggish. I have given notice of a private member's bill that addresses that important issue.

The Sydney Motorway Corporation was formed to take the place of the WestConnex Delivery Authority, which was tasked with delivering the WestConnex project. The new corporation is not subject to freedom of information laws like every other government agency in this State. It is extraordinary that the door is closed to absolutely everyone seeking information about this \$15.4 billion project. People are unable to access information about the largest infrastructure project in this State and no business case has been released. That is a terrible way of delivering a major project in this State.

I touch briefly on the environmental impact statement [EIS], which thankfully was released. There is another deception in the EIS that concerns my community. The tunnel was always going to be under Parramatta Road. The Minister's June media release indicated it would be under Parramatta Road. But when the EIS was released we discovered that the tunnel will be under about 500 homes. That continues the pattern of secrecy, lies and deception and the fact that this project is occurring without any public scrutiny whatsoever. Also, 180-plus properties are to be acquired and many of the issues involved in those acquisitions have not been resolved.

Mr John Sidoti: Headline: Jodi Against WestConnex.

Ms JODI McKAY: I thank the member for Drummoyne. I know that because many of those affected live in my community. We know also that the two tunnels will not be filtered. We know this project is being managed incompetently. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.43 p.m.]: I welcome everyone to the public gallery. The discussion on a petition signed by 10,000 or more persons is an initiative introduced by the Government to give communities the opportunity to raise important matters in this House of democracy. Those in the gallery are here by virtue of that, and we welcome you today. However, the Government will push ahead with the WestConnex project, which is one of the most important road projects ever undertaken in this country. It will provide one continuous motorway loop around the Sydney metropolitan area.

Our plan to reduce traffic gridlock across the Sydney metropolitan area is not just based on a road plan; it is also based on very sound investment in public transport by virtue of the North West Rail Link, which commences in my electorate and will ultimately now travel all the way around to Bankstown—be it via another mode of public transport—in one continuous route. We are addressing the traffic gridlock across this State, and particularly in the Sydney metropolitan area, by investing in both road and rail—heavy and light rail—bus connectivity and particularly in tunnelling. If the member for Strathfield were to doorknock in her area she would find that people are keen to know that travel times between Parramatta and Camperdown will ultimately be reduced by about 20 minutes.

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

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: The member for Newtown should show us the courtesy that we extended to her. Once WestConnex is completed it will reduce about 40 minutes in travelling from Parramatta to the airport.

The SPEAKER: Order! Visitors in the public gallery will remain silent.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Currently, gridlock in this State costs about \$5.5 billion, which is expected to grow to more than \$8 billion by 2020. The increased economic benefit provided directly by WestConnex is somewhere in the vicinity of \$20 billion, which will be clear once the business case is launched and made publicly available. Its cost benefit ratio is incredibly high. While I understand that some must endure the pain associated with a major project—as many people are doing across New South Wales—we make no apologies for investing in infrastructure that the people of New South Wales need. We will continue to do that. We are making record investments, and we have the mandate and the support of the people of New South Wales to continue to do so.

I am glad that people are here today, standing up for their community. I am glad that the member for Newtown has brought this discussion to the House. Ultimately, we will work through the matter together and reach some compromises. However, we will push ahead with the WestConnex project, which will be of vital benefit to the 95,000 people who currently use Parramatta Road and the 94,000 people who currently use the M4. Traffic on Parramatta Road will be reduced by some 45,000 vehicles a day and by 60,000 vehicles on the M4. It is a great project and I am glad to be part of a government that is delivering it for metropolitan Sydney. [*Time expired.*]

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.46 p.m.], by leave: The Greens support all those who have signed this petition and strongly endorse the issues it raises. I have a sense of déjà vu. During my time on Leichhardt Municipal Council, as a councillor and as mayor from 1999 to 2011, we fought against Labor's proposal to extend the M4 East—a proposal that Labor still supports today. Now we stand fighting against the Coalition's WestConnex project. We need a paradigm shift when it comes to transport in this city and this country. Building more capacity simply increases demand. We must invest in world-class public transport, in workable and walkable communities, and in integrated bike paths so that everyone can move cheaply, safely and sustainably. This State is in the middle of that shift at the moment and WestConnex is a throwback to the robbery by infrastructure and finance companies and to a 1950s approach to a modern problem.

Whether it is the WestConnex project or Labor's proposal—which would have seen the M4

extension end somewhere in the central business district—both proposals reflect an outdated, outmoded, unscientific approach to managing transport in the twenty-first century. What should we be doing? We need the continued commitment of every person here; we need to continue sending letters to local papers and lobbying local members. We need rallies and community meetings encouraging people to support us. We must extend that action, as we have been doing, into Western Sydney and demonstrate that the project will fleece the people of Western Sydney, not support them.

We must ensure with a Federal election nigh that the Federal Government, in particular Labor, withdraw its proposal for up to \$2 billion in funding for these projects. Under the former Labor Government \$1.8 billion was committed to these projects. We must make sure that Federal Labor absolutely makes clear it will not give one cent of Federal money to this project, which would significantly undermine the project and lead to an enormous challenge for this Government. In my view the project will be abandoned without the billions of dollars that have been provided by both Coalition and Labor when in government.

Finally, it is important that, despite the secrecy and the lack of documents, we continue to advocate the merits of the case that demonstrate that we need a transport system that does not lock us into a generation of transport-car dependence. We need a transport system that does not destroy our community and take homes from people. We need a transport system that is sustainable, that addresses the climate challenge of the future, and ensures that this State is not locked into old, polluting technology that damages our community.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.49 p.m.], by leave: I recognise the people in the public gallery for their interest in WestConnex, the largest road project in Australia. We live in a wonderful nation that allows all of us to contribute to a sensible debate. I acknowledge all members who have made a contribution to this debate, one of the great things we can do in a democracy. As the member for Parramatta, I welcome the WestConnex project which starts at Parramatta. My council has lobbied me hard for more ramps to WestConnex because it wants WestConnex for a few simple reasons.

The SPEAKER: Order! We will have a respectful debate without interruptions.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I know they are being rude because they do not like to hear the truth. The truth is that the M4 is like a car park every morning when people travel to work. People spend hours and hours sitting in their cars on that motorway going to their jobs in the city or travelling west. That waiting time could be better spent with their families, reading to their children, or on leisure or sport activities. When completed WestConnex will save 40 minutes in travel time between Parramatta and the airport, and eliminate 52 sets of traffic lights. The M4 simply does not work. Those trying to get to the city from Parramatta along the M2, Victoria Road or Parramatta Road at the moment realise it is a failure. Road projects are part of Western Sydney, but not the only part. Of course we need public transport—trains, buses, bike paths and light rail.

Mr Lee Evans: Airports.

Dr GEOFF LEE: And Western Sydney airport. I hate to have to tell the inner-city people that people in Western Sydney actually need cars to get to work and to drop their children at school. Not all of us have a bike path or can catch a train—sometimes we even have to drive to the train station. I am the beneficiary of many of the Government's initiatives to build infrastructure, but we recognise that we need roads for those who need to get from their home or their businesses in Western Sydney into the city to conduct business. I am in favour of WestConnex because it is an equity issue; it is about enabling people in Western Sydney to access jobs and get to their place of work. It is unfair to expect everybody to walk to work: it is simply not possible in Western Sydney. WestConnex will build the missing link of an integrated road system around Sydney and that is why I support it.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) [4.52 p.m.], by leave: I support the petition tabled by the member

for Newtown on behalf of the many people in the public gallery today and across Sydney who are categorically opposed to the Government's WestConnex project. WestConnex rips a hole through beautiful, vibrant communities and neighbourhoods, including in my electorate of Summer Hill. Of those suburbs most affected, Haberfield is of national heritage significance—it is the world's first. Ashfield is one of the oldest and most multicultural suburbs in our city. These are strong and tight-knit communities where neighbours look out for one another and care for one another.

And yet the Baird-Liberal Government is arrogantly pushing ahead with its destructive and polluting toll road without adequately consulting the community and without releasing a business case to justify spending \$15.4 billion of taxpayers' money on this road. This petition acknowledges and community members keep telling me that the conduct of this Liberal Government has been nothing less than shameful. I have spoken with so many Haberfield and Ashfield residents who are simply fighting to get a fair deal for their compulsorily acquired home so that they can buy like for like in the inner west. I have listened to their tales of disappointment and frustration at their meetings with officials from Roads and Maritime Services who allegedly refuse to negotiate in good faith and simply wait for the Valuer-General to make a determination.

The Government appears to be systematically undervaluing properties, leaving home and business owners hundreds of thousands of dollars out of pocket so that it can keep costs low, ignoring the fact that we are in the midst of a property boom, particularly in the inner west. Following the information contained in the M4 East environmental impact statement, residents are worried about a number of things. They are concerned about the impacts on their children's health from placing a polluting exhaust stack less than 500 metres away from primary schools like Haberfield Public School and childcare centres like the Infants Home Ashfield. They are worried about safety risks as thousands of extra cars will be using their local streets as rat runs once the City West Link and Parramatta Road are gridlocked.

Residents are furious at the arrogance that comes from destroying heritage items and by the Government's own admission in the environmental impact statement ripping the Haberfield Heritage Conservation Area in two. They are furious about the prospect of three years of construction, featuring round-the-clock truck movements, road closures, armies of construction workers and noise, pollution and more noise. Far from alleviating residents' concerns, the environmental impact statement only confirmed their worst nightmares. But still this Government refused to extend the consultation period. Only 55 days were allowed to deal with the environmental impact statement. I applaud the many activists and community groups that have taken a stand and continue to fight to save their suburbs and their neighbours. I stand with you and I call on the Government to cease acquisitions immediately, to abandon this misguided project, to put our taxpayer money to best use and to fund a world-class public transport system instead of this dirty, polluting toll road.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [4.55 p.m.]: I seek leave to make a contribution to the discussion.

Leave not granted.

Discussion concluded.

Pursuant to resolution Christmas felicitations proceeded with.

CHRISTMAS FELICITATIONS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.00 p.m.]: I wish everybody in this Chamber a very merry Christmas and a very well earned break because everybody, particularly the new members who have had to come into the bear pit, as we call it, and work extremely hard. They have demonstrated a great deal of passion and commitment to their electorates. As I often say to members who make a lot of noise in the Chamber, especially Opposition members, that is their job. As members of

Parliament we are all in the same boat and doing the same job. We should be very proud to be doing this work. I congratulate all members, in particular, the new members who, as the member for Maroubra remarked earlier, have taken to this job like ducks to water. They have become accustomed to it very quickly. They have debated strongly, passionately and with enormous courage. It is not always easy to face the atmosphere of the bear pit. I congratulate them.

I thank the staff of my office. They have received a great deal of praise today because of their work in liaising with members and organising events in the Speaker's Garden and other functions. In particular I thank Sean O'Connor, Mark Jones, Brigid O'Bryan, Michelle Lane, who also works in my electorate office, and Joe Andrade. All of those people are absolutely necessary to the running of the Speaker's Office. I also thank Luke Sikora, who worked for me for eight years in the Speaker's Office. People love him and miss him. I certainly miss him still. He is doing a fantastic job with John Brodgen. I see him regularly and he is excited by his new challenges.

I thank all electorate staff throughout New South Wales, especially those in remote and regional areas who hold the fort while their members are in this place. They often have to deal with difficult people, difficult situations and complex issues. Electorate staff have to be across a number of issues and I congratulate all of them. Some electorate officers visit Parliament House, but it is difficult for those from regional and remote areas to do so. I thank my electorate office staff Lynne Arnold, Adam Carney, Samantha Luxford and Georgia Copley for the sterling job they do in the electorate of South Coast.

I thank the Speaker's panel, who have all been fantastic this year. It is sometimes difficult to sit in this chair and deal with the interjections and noise. I thank Thomas George for his invaluable assistance as Deputy-Speaker. I also thank Andrew Fraser, Mel Gibbons, Lee Evans, Bruce Notley-Smith, Adam Marshall and Anna Watson, who all take on their roles with great professionalism. I am very proud of all of them. I particularly thank the Deputy-Speaker. If I have to attend a function at short notice he often takes the chair and knows what the job is all about. In fact, he was doing it before I became Speaker. I imagine he knows a lot more than I do.

I thank everybody in the Whip's office, which my office works closely with. I thank Chris Patterson, Mark Coure, Stephen Bromhead and all of the staff of the Whip's office, who I suspect do most of the work. On level 7 the Speaker's office, the Whip's Office and the offices of the leaders have to work closely together to make sure that this place functions properly. On most occasions it functions very well thanks to all of those people. I thank the President's office because we also work closely with the staff of the Legislative Council. I thank President Don Harwin, Brian Lindsay, Stephen Marriott, Joel Schubert and Janet Parnwell. We work together as part of the Parliament Executive group, which meets regularly to discuss issues regarding this place such as the building renovations and other matters. I thank them for their cooperation with my office. The matter of the female bathrooms on level 2 will soon be resolved thanks to the support of male members of this place.

I thank party leaders Mike Baird, Troy Grant and Luke Foley. It is difficult to be a party leader, but they have all done a wonderful job this year. I thank my Clerk, Ronda Miller, and all of the clerks at the table who do their jobs with incredible patience. It is not easy to deal with members who are agitated, upset, concerned or passionate, but the clerks aim to provide sound advice to members who are sometimes in that state of mind. I thank them for that as well as the advice they give to me. I thank Les Gönye and John Hatfield. John Hatfield works very hard in preparing the folders and making sure that everything I have to read out to this House is absolutely precise. John is someone most members probably do not see too often, but he is an absolute master and a very brilliant person. I also thank Helen Minnican, Catherine Watson, Elaine Schofield, Rachel Simpson, Jonathan Elliot, Carly Maxwell, Jason Arditi and Simon Johnston.

I particularly thank all of the Legislative Assembly attendants who welcome members to the Chamber, assist the visitors in the gallery and greet people as they enter Parliament House. They do a fantastic job. They are very quiet in the Chamber, but they offer an enormous level of support to

members. I imagine it is not the best job to sit here and listen to all of us for hours on end. I thank Ian Delahunty, Ian Thackeray, Chris Papadopoulos, Lynne Vitale, Danny Heldal, April Lowndes, Stephen Smith, Peter Tuziak and Chris Herbert for doing a great job this year.

I thank the press gallery for their work this year. I also thank Hansard. Everybody thanks Hansard because they turn what we say into something that sounds quite normal and reasonable when sometimes it did not. It is a difficult job. I acknowledge the tragedy that they have suffered this year and thank them for their hard work. I thank the staff of Catering, Facilities, IT and the cleaners, who do a remarkable job. I ask all new members to speak to the cleaners when they arrive in the morning and thank them for their work. I hope they have been doing that. I also thank our special constables.

To Executive Manager Rob Stefanic, who will leave us in two weeks, thank you for the sterling contribution you have made to this Chamber and this Parliament for the past 4½ years in your current role and your 19 years in Parliament. I thank Catering manager Phil Freeman. As was alluded to earlier, he provides great entertainment value. The other side to him is his rigorous management skills. He has turned the catering budget around and made sure members are looked after and that the menus are suitable. I always hear wonderful comments about catering. If I have left anybody out, I apologise. Thank you to all parliamentary staff and members. It has been a great year. Have a merry Christmas.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [5.05 p.m.]: I join with my colleagues in extending good wishes to all those involved in the running of this House as the first year of the Fifty-sixth Parliament comes to a close. As a longstanding member of this place I understand how important those people are in the everyday running of this place. I agree with Madam Speaker that members should appreciate the work of the cleaners and realise that when they arrive in the morning their office did look like that without some effort. Those people go out of their way to assist us without question or complaint. To those behind-the-scene champions including the cleaners, the catering staff and Phil Freeman, thank you for looking after our every need. I especially thank my cleaner, who received an award recently for 20 years of service to the Parliament and is originally from Peru. We often chat in the mornings.

To the special constables, I say thank you for always maintaining this as a safe place for us to do our best. To the Hansard staff, you play a crucial role in keeping the history of this place. You are here as we arrive and I am sure you often remain here long after we have left. The service you provide is invaluable. I thank you for making us look great in print—particularly with my accent and my language skills. I thank you very much. I sometimes read *Hansard* and think, "Did I really sound like that?"

To the amazing team in the Parliamentary Library, your assistance is vital for members. I appreciate the many things you have done to assist me and my staff, and always so promptly. You assist in making this challenging role a little easier. I also extend my appreciation to the Legislative Assembly attendants and our friendly front desk staff. I give my thanks and best wishes to all members in this House. While we often exchange heated words in this place, we all have a common goal, that is, to be the best representatives we can be for our communities. I wish you all a happy Christmas with your family, friends and loved ones.

To the Leader of the Australian Labor Party [ALP] parliamentary party, Luke Foley, his deputy, Linda Burney, and my Labor Party colleagues including the Manager of Opposition Business, Michael Daley, thank you for your hard work this year. I wish you and your loved ones health and prosperity and a peaceful, holy Christmas this festive season. To New South Wales Labor General Secretary Jamie Clements, Assistant Secretary Kaila Murnain, office holders and staff at head office, I thank you for your assistance and support, particularly during the 2015 election. To the Speaker, Shelley Hancock, thank you for your many kind words and your friendship. I extend my best wishes to you and your family. I thank ALP branch members who wholeheartedly support me and the Labor movement and I also thank constituents in the Wollongong electorate. I am proud to be your voice in the Parliament and I take this opportunity to recommit myself as your strong voice.

I also thank the Wollongong State Electorate Council and Reg Jago for all his tireless efforts in helping me. Thank you also to the staff in the Labor leader's office, on whom we all rely. I thank all electorate office staff, particularly those in rural and regional areas who are our face and our representatives when we are here. I also wish to acknowledge my staff and I extend to them my thanks, best wishes and appreciation. I particularly extend my thanks to Susan Greenhalgh, currently my personal assistant and who is with us today; Kiley Martin, my former staff member of 12 years whose efforts I have very much appreciated and I was sad she decided to move on; Colleen Symington, who has recently joined us and I have come to know and whose support and assistance I very much appreciate; Bruce Clarke, in my electorate office; and Jonathon Liddle.

Finally, I wish to thank my family, as it is our families who bear the burden for those of us who are privileged enough to enter public life. To my husband, Lee, my son Mark, daughter-in-law Suzana and granddaughter Chelsea; my daughter Leah and grandson Cameron; my daughter Alison, son-in-law Darren and grandson Ronan; my son Daniel, daughter-in-law Heather and grandchildren Nora, Seamus and Bridie—you all give me strength when I need to be strong and I thank you for your unconditional love and support. All that is left to say is: Merry Christmas. Have a happy and peaceful holiday period with those who are most important to you. Stay safe and I look forward to returning to this place and giving you all a bit of what-for next year in what will hopefully be an exciting time.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [5.10 p.m.]: It is great to round out the year by thanking those who have helped me during this year. I first acknowledge and thank my electorate staff in the Cronulla electorate office: my dedicated office manager, Michelle Lawson; and my electorate officers Jim Biniaries and Patrick Glynn along with Ruby Ward and Lachlan Fraser. They are a great help to me in serving the people of Cronulla. Whatever other titles I might accumulate in my parliamentary career, first and foremost my job is to represent the people of Cronulla. I thank the people of Cronulla for the great honour of representing them in this Parliament.

In my ministerial office I have had the privilege of working with some amazing and talented people who have calmly put up with my shortcomings. My chief of staff, Bran Black, is calm and collected, a man of great integrity and wisdom. Lance Northey is the doyen of communications staff in Parliament House. My private secretary and office manager, Cecilia Falson, does an incredible job of effectively running my life. I also thank my other ministerial staff: Dominic Kelly, Christian Dunk, Lydia Robertson, Chris Pettett and Michael Cox. My only complaint about them is that they need to get a life and stop working such long hours in my office. I also thank the departmental liaison officers Shilpa Rajkumar, Catherine McManus and Emily Boyle along with those who have served in my ministerial office since 2 April. I apologise if I have forgotten to thank anybody.

It is an enormous honour to serve the people of New South Wales as Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning. Most mornings I have to pinch myself and ask if it is real. I thank the Premier for the opportunity he has given me and the trust he has placed in me to serve the people of New South Wales in this capacity. I thank all my Cabinet colleagues, a wonderful bunch of people to work with in a strong collegiate atmosphere. I thank the often unsung and sometimes maligned workers in the agencies of which I have supervision: the Office of Environment and Heritage, the Environment Protection Authority and the various trusts.

From day one the Chief Executive of the Office of Environment and Heritage, Terry Bailey, and the Chief Executive and Chairman of the Office of the Environment Protection Authority, Barry Buffier, have been a dedicated source of wise advice and hard work. They had to put up with me when I was a new Minister who had a very steep learning curve and they have been a valuable source of assistance, for which I am very grateful. Along with the agency heads I thank all senior agency staff with whom I have worked this year: Michael Wright, Ian Hunter, Paul Elton, Kate Wilson, Steve Garrett, Ian French, Mark Webb, Chris Fechner, Greg Storrier and the chief executives of the trusts Cameron Kerr, Kim Ellis, Mark Goggin and Suellen Fitzgerald. I also thank other staff members of the OEH including Bob Conroy and at

the EPA Steve Beaman, Craig Lamberton, Mark Gifford and Sylvia Bell.

I thank the Opposition and The Greens environment and heritage spokespersons, the Hon. Penny Sharpe and Dr Mehreen Faruqi respectively, for their contributions to the debate this year. We have sometimes disagreed but I have no doubt that the Hon. Penny Sharpe and Dr Mehreen Faruqi have the public interest at heart in serving the people of New South Wales, as we all seek to do. I thank my family, in particular my wife, Caroline, and my children, Kate and Matthew. Families bear the brunt of our careers in politics and I thank them for putting up with late nights and absences. I particularly thank the frontline and other staff of the agencies. New South Wales is fortunate to have about 4,500 hardworking people in the Environment and Heritage portfolio.

For example, there is enormous pride in the corporate reputation of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and in the training of staff, such as those who fight fires. I thank staff for their often unrecognised hard work on behalf of the community. As we take the time to rest and reflect with our family and friends, we should also reflect on the Christmas message itself. It is one of peace, hope and grace, and the love of Jesus who came to Earth not to be served but to serve. To borrow a phrase, let us all pause, reset and recommence this Christmas and as members of Parliament go out of our way to serve the people of New South Wales.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) [5.15 p.m.]: As we come to the end of parliamentary sittings for 2015, my first year in this place, I take this opportunity to thank all of the new members of Parliament on both sides of the Chamber. I think the class of 2015 stands for a spirit of diversity, with members from many different cultures and communities and an increase in the representation of women. I thank those who supported us when we first came to Parliament: the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Ronda Miller; the Serjeant-at-Arms, Les Gönye; the Clerk-Assistant, Helen Minnican; and Catherine Watson. These people were instrumental in preparing us for our roles as parliamentarians. They made us welcome and helped us to get on top of our jobs. I thank the catering staff, those who work in the café and Parliamentary Library staff. I thank Danny and the other attendants in this place as well as staff in cleaning, security, Hansard, Information Technology, the Table office, human resources, members' entitlements, switchboard, special constables and all in parliamentary services. You make us regional members feel at home when we are here.

I thank especially my Labor colleagues. The Hon. Luke Foley has provided fantastic leadership to us as the Opposition. He has also made a special effort to provide mentoring and training opportunities to his new team, which has been fantastic. I thank the Hon. Linda Burney for her compassion, her help, which she has offered to all of us, and her support of all members of the Opposition and of this House. Michael Daley has been fantastic in giving us lots of training and ideas on how to behave in this place. I thank the Opposition Whips—the member for Wollongong, the member for Cabramatta and the member for Campbelltown. I also thank Dylan and Colleen, who do most of the chasing after us whenever we are delayed. I thank the shadow Ministers and other Labor members, who have been very helpful with issues we have had in our electorates. I also thank former members of this place who have come back to help us.

I thank also the women of this Parliament for electing me as their Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians [CWP] representative in May. We have had many successes in this Parliament in terms of improving equity and getting more facilities for women in this place. From the initial meeting of that group to getting highchairs in the cafe and progressing other issues of equity the women have been very supportive. I thank in particular Madam Speaker for her help in this area. I thank also the Hon. Catherine Cusack, member of the Legislative Council, the Minister for Women, and the shadow Minister for women. They have all showed fantastic leadership to women here. Madam Speaker was also kind enough to host a Girls' Night In in her dining room to raise money for breast cancer research. I pay special tribute to Ronda Miller, Rachel Simpson and Laura Ismay for their work providing secretarial support and guidance to me as the chair of the CWP, and our intern student who has been helping us with social media, Mia Dabblestein.

I also thank Sean and Bridget from the Speaker's office. They have been very helpful in progressing women's issues in this place. I thank those on the other side of Parliament. They might be surprised to hear that I do think fondly of them at times and smile. I thank all of them, including Ministers Goward and Hazzard and Deputy Premier Grant. They have met with me individually on occasion to help with particular issues for my constituents. After seeing my performance in this House they were probably a little scared to be in a room alone with me, but all of them have emerged none the worse for it. They have helped to resolve issues on many occasions. I have disagreed with many of their decisions but it has at least been helpful to get the perspective of my community into their deliberations and their decision-making. I also thank their dedicated staff, who assisted us in resolving issues for our constituents—sometimes they were more helpful than their bosses.

I thank my wonderful and hardworking staff: Leeca Higgins, Shauna Stafford, Jordan Fallon and Gena Parker. Leeca was recently recognised in this place for 30 years work as an electorate officer, which is a fantastic achievement. She did not have the best day in the electorate office today—it was a challenging day. For her to work with constituents in our community for 30 years is amazing. I also thank the Hunter Labor members of Parliament. We have worked together this year to progress the views of our communities in a unified way. I thank the country Labor members of Parliament and members of the Legislative Council who also have done so.

I think it is important to recognise that while it can get heated here in the bear pit, when we get to the stage of knowing each other we can work together and get better outcomes. It is a lesson that all communities should learn: that when we come to know people as individuals we can like them despite our differences and disagreements. The world would be a better place if we did that. I thank the community of Maitland for the honour of representing them in this place.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.20 p.m.]: I am very pleased and honoured this evening to be able to provide my maiden Christmas felicitations to this House, and I am pleased to have been given this opportunity to extend my personal appreciation to the many, many people who work with dedication behind the scenes to support the work of members of Parliament and ultimately the exceptional and visionary leadership of the Baird-Grant Government. I begin by placing on the record my deepest and most sincere thanks to the people of Mulgoa for re-electing me as their State representative in this place.

To be a person in our community who has been entrusted with the power and influence to help people who need assistance and advocacy should never be taken for granted. I pledge to continue to serve the community and to continue working to make Mulgoa a truly great place. To be given such a great honour is truly an opportunity and I sincerely thank my wonderful community of Mulgoa for their endorsement of my work as their local member of Parliament and their endorsement of the strong and visionary leadership and plan not only articulated but also now being delivered by Premier Mike Baird.

I thank all my election volunteers and election team for their unwavering support to see the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals returned to govern this great State. To my electorate staff, who have served me loyally this year, I say thank you. They are the ones who daily toil away to help me serve my community and to assist many people in so many ways. I thank Rick, Angela, Jessica, Stacy and Joshua. They all have skills, knowledge and abilities that when added together make a formidable team both in the office and in the community.

I thank all the parliamentary staff—what exceptional and loyal service they all provide. I thank the Legislative Assembly attendants, the front desk staff and the security officers. I thank all the often unseen cleaners who go about their service in the early hours of the morning whilst many of us are still sleeping or going to the gym. I thank them all. I thank Phillip Freeman and all the catering staff, the Café Quorum team and the attendants. They keep us fed and caffeinated, allowing us to function—sometimes till late in the evening. I thank the library staff, human resources, finance, facilities, the education office, the

electorate office staff—especially David Audt, whom I thank for his patience in organising the relocation of the Mulgoa office, which has taken now more than 12 months—the switchboard, IT staff, table office and everyone else. They all do an exceptional job and we are indebted to them each and every day.

I thank Ronda Miller, Clerk of the Parliament, and her team for their guidance on parliamentary protocol and assistance with parliamentary procedure. Their assistance is invaluable. I thank and applaud the Hansard team for weaving their magic over our words. I thank Madam Speaker, who is not in the chair at present. The Speaker has again managed the debates in this place and at times governed an unruly rabble to maintain order. I thank her for her leadership.

I thank the Deputy-Speaker, the Assistant-Speaker and the Temporary Speakers for their service. I thank the Whips and the Deputy Whips from both the Government and the Opposition side. I thank especially Rebecca and Alex in the Whip's office. I take my hats off to them. I would not do their job for anything in the world. I thank the Leader of the House for coordinating the House and for his humour and guidance. Premier Mike Baird is an exceptional and outstanding Premier. He will be forever known as the greatest Premier of this State. I congratulate Deputy Premier Troy Grant on leading a fantastic team of National party members of Parliament.

I thank all the Ministers. They perform an amazing and admirable role in leading and championing their portfolios. I especially highlight the work of the Ministers to whom I am Parliamentary Secretary—Minister John Ajaka in the other place and Minister Brad Hazzard. I thank them for their openness and all their input assisting me as a new Parliamentary Secretary. I thank their excellent, professional and patient staff, especially Kath, Lee, Emma, Emma, Adam and Michael. I thank them for their guidance and friendship. I thank all my Liberal and National party colleagues for their support.

Finally, I thank my family for their support and for enabling me to do my job. I thank my husband, Mark, for being a wonderfully dedicated father to Laura, a loyal husband and friend and the feeder of our two dogs when I am in this place. I thank my darling and beautiful Laura for understanding that when mummy cannot be home with her at times she is helping people in her community. Whenever I am absent she is always in my heart and mind. I thank everyone else, in all our respective electorates, working in any capacity to build strong, safe and loving families, neighbourhoods and communities.

I thank them for their contributions to make New South Wales the greatest State in which to live, work and raise a family. At this time of Christmas let us reflect upon the true meaning of Christmas. Let us remember the Christ in Christmas. For at this time we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the only one in history who split history in two—into BC and AD. Jesus is the reason for the season. His message of absolute love and forgiveness extended to everyone on this planet is the true message of hope, peace and joy that we celebrate at this time. I extend to everyone my best wishes for a safe Christmas, for enjoyable celebrations with family and friends and for a restful, rejuvenating time ready to return in 2016 to continue our work in building New South Wales into the most enviable and desirable place to be.

Ms KATHY SMITH (Gosford) [5.25 p.m.]: I offer Christmas felicitations to everyone in this House. I extend to all of you and your families my sincere best wishes for this holiday season and the new year ahead of us. I entered Parliament for the first time this year and the experience has been all I thought it would be and more. This has been helped by the support and advice I have received from my fellow Opposition members—something for which I will be forever grateful. To you all, both here and in the other place, have the best of holidays with your families and let us all look forward to an exciting and successful 2016. Of course, I must give special thanks to my fellow members of the Central Coast caucus.

We had a great year and 2016 will see us really take off. A well-deserved and big thank you to the Clerk, Ronda, and her terrific staff who have helped me in many and varied ways. Without their help we could have been in a lot more trouble than we are now. I would like to say a big thank you for the upgrade of my "out of the ark" electorate office. It is more appreciated than you would ever know. To the staff in our leader's office, thank you; you all go above and beyond. A special thank you to Colleen in the

Opposition Whip's office, who so helpfully and calmly makes sure we are all where we should be and when we should be. The assistance received from parliamentary support staff has been invaluable. My office would have struggled to get off the ground and function properly without their help. A big thank you to all of you from everyone in my office.

How does the Hansard team do it? Keeping up with what goes on in the Chamber is a task that would daunt many and yet here we have people doing it every day and they are doing a fantastic job. Thank you for your tolerance and a merry Christmas and happy New Year to you all. What can I say about the food in our restaurants and cafes, the catering staff, and everyone's best friend, Phil? Well, the food speaks for itself, the service is exemplary and Phil and his staff are of a calibre more than worthy of a world-class venue. The security service at Parliament House is a quiet service that is always there to ensure our safety: reassuring, discreet, friendly and polite is how I would describe it. Thank you to all the members of this service and I wish them happiness this holiday season.

The research done by library staff is always undertaken in a friendly manner and it is most appreciated that they always keep us up to date with the progress of any request—no hanging around wondering what is happening. This is most appreciated and my thanks and best wishes go to all within the library. I thank the cleaning service staff who make our workplace so pleasant, and the gardeners who created and are maintaining the fabulous outlook from my office. My electorate office staff are the people who have kept the fires burning throughout the year and I take this opportunity to say a formal thank you to them for their support. The work they do to help the constituents who come to my office is phenomenal and I know there are many in the local area that will join me in thanking them and wishing them the best and a deservedly relaxing holiday season.

To the people of the Gosford electorate I say a big thank you. Your trust and faith in me brought me to Parliament and together we have had a successful first year. I came here in the full knowledge that there is much work to be done to gain equity of access to services and amenities for people in my electorate, and for the Central Coast as a whole. This is a fight that I have embraced wholeheartedly and one that I will take into 2016 with strength and determination. I say to my family, who are bearing the burden of my position: we will relax and celebrate in the coming weeks. I wish Madam Speaker, her deputies and assistants and their families an excellent holiday break. Once again, season's greetings to all who are here today, even Government members. Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [5.30 p.m.]: What a year it has been. This year has flown by. I take this opportunity to thank those who have dedicated themselves to improving the lives of others. I thank my office staff in Tamworth: the unflappable Angela Lyle, who runs the office and has done so since my election in 2011. To our queen, Daphne Shorten, Michael Hansen, Gillian Burke and Hannah Bradbery, who recently left us and went on to bigger and better things: thank you for your loyalty, support and dedication. What you achieve in that office when I am not there is quite remarkable. Every time I return to the office it is like a breath of fresh air; it is coordinated and organised. You are a pleasure to work with and I look forward to continuing to work with you in 2016. I thank everyone who has helped me do my job of making the Tamworth electorate a better place in which to live. I sincerely appreciate the assistance and advice of individuals and all those from departments, organisations and businesses across the Tamworth electorate who, like me, want to make Tamworth a better place to live. I thank you for your support and I wish you all well.

Parliament takes a toll on family life. I say to my gorgeous wife, Anna, who is continuing to work full-time and look after the kids while I am representing the Tamworth electorate in Parliament: Thank you so much. What you do with much love astounds me every day. To my children Will, Ella and Sam, to whom I try to speak at least twice a day when I am in Parliament, early in the morning and in the evening, thank you for looking after mum while I am away and we love you very much. I thank Jethro, our four-legged friend and the boundary rider who keeps them safe and keeps a keen eye on anybody wandering around the neighbourhood. I extend my best wishes to all, particularly the community volunteers who astound me with what they do and give back to the community. I wish you all the best for

Christmas.

It is extraordinary what the parliamentary staff do. They have been thanked but I would like to add my best wishes and thanks. I thank Hansard, the clerks—Ronda and her team—and those on the front desk. For any business or organisation the front desk sets the tone and the culture of the organisation within. April and Lyn always offer a warm welcome and they smile so sweetly while asking, "How can we help you?" Thank you for making me feel welcome every time I come to Parliament. To the Legislative Assembly attendants, Ian and Dan who are in the Chamber, and all the boys and ladies, thank you very much for what you do. You make our job so much easier. Thank you to Pete, who conducts the school tours. Every time our schools come to Parliament you make them feel welcome and you accommodate me when I want to say "g'day" to tour participants and interrupt your rigorous and strict schedule.

Our security officers do a fantastic job. I thank the cleaners, Selma, Gary and Lodes. I arrive fairly early and their work is greatly appreciated. I thank the catering staff in Cafe Quorum, Lubo and Mark, who no doubt make the best coffee in Sydney. I take this opportunity to thank the Tamworth community for the privilege of representing them. I will continue to do my best to build a better region and I thank them for their support throughout the year. I wish one and all a happy Christmas and prosperous New Year. For those who are not with loved ones during this period, we are thinking of you and we sincerely hope that 2016 will provide for you all the best you can hope for. Have a great safe and happy Christmas.

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) [5.35 p.m.]: I thank the Speaker and the House for the opportunity to speak at this wonderful time of year. Madam Speaker and I have not always been on the best of terms during this year, my first year in Parliament. On occasions she has disciplined me, sometimes fairly and sometimes, in my opinion, not so fairly. However, I trust that the new year will bring with it a new attitude and kinder, gentler politics to this place. Regardless, I thank Madam Speaker for her service to this House and for her patience. This is a time of year to be thankful for all that we are so fortunate to have. Having left the family business I had been working in and running for more than 30 years, this year has been a year of great change for me.

Therefore, I would particularly like to thank all those who helped me make at times a difficult transition from private practice to public representation. I am thankful to Luke Foley and his dedicated staff, who fight every day to ensure that this Government is held to account and who have supported me and mentored me so ably. Luke came to lead our great party less than 12 months ago and he has proved himself to be an able and responsible Leader of the Opposition. He provides not only fierce opposition to the Government's failings but also reasoned support to the interests of our State. I am thankful to my Labor colleagues who work day in and day out to make this State a better place.

I am particularly thankful to all the wonderful friends, new and old, I have on this side of the Chamber. In particular, the steadfast Opposition Whip, Nick Lalich, and the wonderful Noreen Hay, for keeping me in line, as well as my brilliant Waste Watch committee deputy chair, Christopher Minns. I am thankful also to my friends on the other side of the Chamber. Indeed, on occasion I have been in ferocious disagreement with a number of Ministers and a number of those opposite but, in many instances, they have provided vital assistance on issues affecting my electorate. I am also thankful to the Leader of the House, Anthony Roberts. With his generous gifts and uncanny resemblance to one of my favourite literary characters, I am sure we all appreciate that his heart has grown three sizes this day. Anthony Robert's skin may not be green but, like the Grinch, he has displayed a remarkably giving spirit around Christmas with his question time antics.

I am incredibly thankful to my dedicated staff: Edward McDougall, George Perivolarellis and Christopher Donovan, who have ably assisted me in executing my new duties as a local representative. Without high-quality staff it is difficult to look after your electorate and look good to your constituents—I can assure members that whenever I do look good it is thanks to my staff. I thank also the many dedicated public servants who facilitate the running of this Parliament. I say to those who make the

operations of this massive and historic facility work seamlessly—whether in the Legislative Assembly or the parliamentary bar, the dedicated Hansard staff, those who manage the Chamber so well, and the cleaners who are here long after the rest of us depart—your service is admirable. I thank you all.

I also thank the hundreds of thousands of public servants across this great State who work so diligently to deliver on the legislated promises of this place and who, in many cases, are subject to the whims of this House. I do not think we pause often enough to think of the men and women in our schools, hospitals, police force and across our government departments who work tirelessly to make the will of this place a reality. I am thankful to my wonderful family who have provided so much support to me as I have embarked on this journey to Parliament. I am thankful for my beautiful wife, Magda, who keeps me in order outside this place, and whose love and support keeps me going. I am thankful for my wonderful kids Tina, Eleni, Paul, Nick and Chris, and my amazing sons-in-law, Karl and Bill, and daughter-in-law, Stephanie. I have managed to get almost all of them out of home—now I just need to work on the twins.

Every day I am thankful to my four gorgeous grandsons Dean, Ross, Stevie and Stavros. As anyone who meets with me, visits my office or runs into me in a corridor knows, I am never short of a new video or picture of their mischief. Whilst I apologise to anybody who has grown tired of them, my heart never ceases to jump every time I see those beautiful little lads. It is, of course, our families who bear much of the burden of our duties in this place. It remains central in my mind that I should be seeking to make them proud in my performance here. I am thankful for the support provided to me by the oldest and greatest political institution in Australia: the Australian Labor Party [ALP]. Thank you to the dedicated staff of the NSW Australian Labor Party for all the support and guidance you have given me this past year, and to the oft maligned but indispensable officials who serve our party so well. I am especially thankful to all the inspirational young men and women in the Young Labor movement.

Long after the rest of us within the party have stopped working for the night, it is those within the party's youth wing who keep working to ensure that the machinery runs smoothly, to make sure the calls are made and the bunting is up. There are very few ALP members who could say that they achieved their election without Young Labor, and I can assure you we are forever grateful. Christmas is a special time for me. It reminds me of how much I have to be thankful for and how much I am fortunate to have. It also reminds me of those who are not so fortunate. I believe there is nothing more precious in this life than the bonds of love we have with our families, and I consider myself so incredibly privileged to be able to bring my family together at Christmas time to celebrate the past year.

As members go home this holiday season to spend time with their loved ones, I encourage them all to think of those who are not so fortunate, those who do not have a safe home to go to, those who are alone in this world, and those who do not have the means to celebrate. Finally, thank you once again for giving me the opportunity to speak, and the privilege to serve in this place and to make a difference. Merry Christmas, God bless you all, and have a great holiday.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [5.40 p.m.]: On behalf of The Greens I contribute to this evening's Christmas felicitations. I draw the attention of the House to last year's felicitations because many thought those would be our final speeches. My final words in last year's felicitations were:

In conclusion, I look forward to coming back next year and to continuing my contribution to Parliament. Hopefully, I will be joined in this place by other members of The Greens.

Christmas wishes do come true. I thank my colleagues in the upper House, John, David, Jan, Jeremy and Mehreen and their staff, who have generously given of their time and expertise to me and my colleagues, Jenny Leong, the member for Newtown, and Tamara Smith, the member for Ballina. It is important to get along in a small party. I am delighted that Jenny and Tamara have become genuine friends. We work closely together, we socialise and we get on well. It is a real privilege to work with both of them. I have been really impressed by their tenacity, skills and capacity in this place. Indeed, I look forward to serving the rest of the term with those two fantastic women.

I take this opportunity to thank the staff in my office: Fiona Byrne, Adam Taylor, Louise Stewart and Lesa de Leau. Their commitment, intelligence and compassion are outstanding, especially when dealing with those in our community who are vulnerable, going through stressful times and challenged by the situations in which they find themselves. It is important for me to acknowledge my Greens colleagues because this is an historic moment for our party. In 2011 I was the first member from a non-major party to be elected to this place. I am now joined by another two Greens members who helped to bring me to this place. I thank also all the volunteers, staff and others.

I have recently returned from Burma where I observed the first democratic election there in 25 years. It drove home to me how much we need to thank all the members in this Parliament who work diligently and respectfully to align the power of persuasion in order to effect change. The great democratic process that this Parliament represents is in different stages around the world. We need to remember those who are suffering under dictatorships with a lack of democracy. I extend my best wishes to everyone not only here but also around the world who do not have the benefit of a democratic Parliament in which to express their will.

I thank the Premier, his Ministers and their staff. I thank also members on both sides of this Parliament. I have always been treated with respect and, whilst I have had some disagreements and arguments with members, I believe that we are all working in the best interests of this State. We may have different perspectives but there is a respect for different points of view. I acknowledge also my crossbench colleagues, the member for Sydney and the member for Lake Macquarie. We work very closely together. I respect their counsel, hard work and diligence. So many people come together to make this Parliament a success.

I do not propose to name everyone but each person who works in the public service of this Parliament makes an incredible commitment. I also want to acknowledge, as others have, all those employed by this State who make such a wonderful contribution to New South Wales. I also thank the volunteers who work regularly in my office and who ensure that it is staffed every day: Megan Fletcher, Brendan Manning, Sandra Langtree, Derek Bolton, Lindsay Hardingham, Mark Marusic, Felicity Tilly, Thomas Hikade, Lisa Willett, Martin Brown, Eliza James, Marie-Christine Sancho and Sharon Butt. They have all made a strong commitment to supporting our local community.

I conclude by thanking my family and all who support me in my local area, including The Greens party members and others. I make special mention of Rebecca in the Government Whip's office and the Whip, Chris Patterson. It is a challenge sometimes to be able to participate in a debate. However, both Rebecca and Chris have always treated me and my Greens colleagues with a great deal of respect and have taken the time to hear our points of view. I thank everyone who serves the people of this State and who makes a contribution to it. I look forward to another three years of service in this place, and wish everyone a happy Christmas and all the best for the New Year. I hope that everyone has a safe and happy holiday.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) [5.45 p.m.]: I wish everyone a merry Christmas.

Dr Geoff Lee: Merry Christmas to you, too.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: I thank the member for Parramatta for his warm wishes; I appreciate them. As we all know, it has been a big year, and it is important that we take the time to thank those who have helped us. I will begin as I should by thanking the Speaker, the Hon. Shelley Hancock; the Deputy-Speaker, Thomas George; the Assistant-Speaker, Andrew Fraser; and the Temporary Speakers, with whom I work incredibly closely, Lee Evans, Adam Marshall, Bruce Notley-Smith and Anna Watson. We have a great connection and we help each other by swapping shifts when necessary. We are a good team.

I thank the President, the Hon. Don Harwin, for keeping the Parliament running and for making it as pleasant a place as possible in which to work. I thank the Speaker's staff: Sean O'Connor, Brigid O'Bryan, Mark Jones and Joe Andrade. I also thank Luke Sikora, who was a great help to the Speaker for many years. The Speaker has an amazing team. I thank Ronda Miller, Les Gönye and their team for all they have done to help this place to function. I also thank our attendants: Ian Delahunty, Danny Heldal, April Lowndes, Ian Thackeray, Lynne Vitale, Steven Smith, Chris Papadopoulos and Peter Tuziak. I particularly acknowledge Peter for the way in which he looks after schoolchildren when they visit the Parliament, and Danny for the way in which he ensures that members in the Chair have everything they need, especially water. I do not know how the attendants sit so patiently watching us. I thank the Hansard staff for all they do.

I thank the Whip's office: Chris Patterson, Mark Coure and Stephen Bromhead. I appreciate how they keep the Chamber running and for ensuring that we can contribute to debates. I particularly acknowledge the assistance of Rebecca Cartwright and Alex Carne. They keep the Whip's office working amazingly well and always ensure that we are where we need to be. The Leader of the House, Anthony Roberts, with the assistance of Adrian Pryce, always ensures that the House runs incredibly smoothly. I acknowledge that that would not happen without the assistance of the Manager of Opposition Business. I thank the cleaning staff and the library staff, and I welcome Chris to his new job operating the videorecording system. I thank the catering staff, including Philip Freeman, Lubo, Gary and Mark. We are daily visitors to Cafe Quorum and I thank all the staff for looking after us so well.

I make particular mention of our security staff: Ralph Ewen and the special constables. I have had a lot to do with them recently, and I especially thank them for all that they have done to assist me. I thank Rob Stefanic and Julie Langsworth from the Department of Parliamentary Services for checking to make sure that I was okay. I appreciate that more than they know. I wish Rob Stefanic all the best in his future role with the Federal Parliament. I am the chair of the Committee on Children and Young People and the Joint Committee on the Office of the Valuer General. I thank the committee staff for making sure that I am where I need to be and for the advice and assistance they have provided. I was also a member of the Select Committee on the Regulation of Brothels, and I can assure members that that was an adventure. I found myself in places I never thought I would be. The member for Miranda and I shared some interesting experiences.

Dr Geoff Lee: These are G-rated felicitations.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: Yes, they are. I thank my staff. Jeff Page and the newly arrived Dan Nicholls are working extremely well together. I also thank my additional temporary staff: Faith Perryman, Stevie Lillis, David Gavin, Zareen Nisha and Nicole Lillis. I thank them for being on call and being there whenever we need them. Natalie Peterson and Lauren Benikos are two amazing young ladies who were with me for a long time. Natalie had been with me since day one and Lauren helped out when Natalie was on maternity leave. They are incredibly talented young ladies and I miss them.

I acknowledge the Ministers and their staff. I particularly thank Bay Warburton, Nigel Blunden, Gavin Melvin, Zach Bentley, Sharna Southwell, Lee Dixon, Daniel Hill, Marc Landrigan and Chris Hall for all they do. I make particular mention of the communities of Menai and Holsworthy, the two areas that I have had the pleasure of representing. The area previously covered by the electorate of Menai is now in the wonderful hands of Lee Evans and Eleni Petinos, and I know that they will look after it very well. I thank the community for understanding and accepting the electoral boundary change and for being there to help out. Merry Christmas.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [5.50 p.m.]: As Deputy-Speaker and member for Lismore I pay tribute to a number of people who make this Parliament work. I extend my thanks to Premier Mike Baird, Deputy Premier Troy Grant, their Ministers and their officers for their support throughout the year and for the way in which they cooperate with the Leader of the House to ensure that this Parliament runs smoothly. I thank each and every one of them, because we could not run

this place without their support. I also thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition Whip for working with the Government in the management of this House.

I thank the Speaker, the Hon. Shelley Hancock, for the continuing support and guidance she has provided to me throughout the year. I appreciate that. I thank her team, including Joe and Sean and the other members of her staff. I also thank the Clerks—Ronda, Les and the team. I could spend hours naming them all. However, I want to ensure that they know how much I appreciate their assistance. John was thanked earlier for his support of the Speaker and of me as Deputy-Speaker, and I add my thanks. I pay particular tribute to the Whips, and Stephen Bromhead and his staff—he had Megan, but he now has Annie. He has cooperated extremely well with Chris Patterson and his team, Rebecca and Alex. They have worked well as a team this year to ensure that members carry out their duties and have kept the Parliament running. I also pay tribute to Nick Lulich and his assistant, Colleen. They are the unsung heroes.

Parliament cannot run without the Opposition, and everyone works well to coordinate our business. As a former Whip, I can assure members that the support received from members is always greatly appreciated. Thank you. The Hansard staff have recently experienced another very sad loss. The depth of that loss was evident when we saw them in the press gallery a couple of weeks ago when they paid tribute to Elizabeth. Our thoughts are with them. Hansard has featured prominently in members' contributions to this debate because we greatly appreciate what they do. As one member said, we mumble away and get back an extremely well-written speech. In fact, it could be said that they interpret what we say. I know that it has been a difficult time for them, and our thoughts and love are with them all.

I thank the Parliamentary Library and the team in IT Services. They are always available. The staff stay late every night to support us whenever we need it. They do great work. I also thank the catering staff. They have been thanked by everyone here. When one is away from home for a week, one appreciates being able to duck down to the cafe to get a coffee or a sandwich. I thank them for the services they provide, including the bar and all sections of catering. We sincerely appreciate it.

The cleaners have been mentioned by everyone, but I want to single out Selma. She was presented with a certificate for 20 years of service last week. I waited all morning to be there when it was presented to her. There was a division in the House, and when I went back to the function they had already presented it. Selma does a fantastic job. The work that she has done for 20 years is appreciated, especially up on the twelfth floor. I thank security. In this day and age, sadly, security has been stepped up all around the world and especially here at Parliament House. I thank each and every one of the security staff. They are the first to greet us when we arrive in the morning and the last to see us out at night. They do a wonderful job of protecting us.

I thank Ian, Lynne and the team at the front desk and all the Legislative Assembly attendants who are in the House tonight. When one walks into this Parliament one is always greeted with a welcoming smile. They are always willing to help people. It is tremendous. Visitors appreciate the loving care that they receive when they arrive and are given directions. I thank my team at the Lismore office. I refer to Bronwyn, Natalie and Annie. As everyone knows, I had a tough time getting back into this place. They were there with me all the way.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Four more years.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: That is right. I pay tribute to them, because they copped as much as I did. My family and staff and I had a torrid time over the past three years, with protests and visitors to my office, welcome or otherwise. I publicly acknowledge their efforts and their dedication and loyalty not only to me but to their job. We are only as good as our staff. I place on record my appreciation for the work of the electorate staff. It is greatly appreciated by not only the members but also the public who seek their advice. I could not ask for a better team. I thank all members of Parliament for the courtesy that has been extended to me as Deputy-Speaker. I have received wonderful support. I have been criticised at times,

and I probably deserved it. I take it as constructive criticism and I appreciate it. I thank my wife and family, especially Deborah. I trust that everyone will have a safe, happy and holy Christmas. I wish everyone good health for 2016.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [5.55 p.m.]: I wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a safe break. I thank everyone in this House for their camaraderie. Sometimes this House can become a bit rowdy.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! As it is at the moment. Members will come to order.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Everyone in this place appreciates that when members walk through the doors of this Chamber, regardless of the communities we come from, the people we represent and the partisan flags we operate under, we are all here for the very best of reasons. I extend wishes for a very happy Christmas to all members and their families. I will thank a few people. I thank my colleagues from The Nationals for their camaraderie, support and "guidance" from time to time. In particular, I thank our Whip, the member for Myall Lakes. He is the barbecue king. He cooks the best steaks this side of Texas.

Mr Andrew Gee: The Grill Master.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: He is otherwise known as the Grill Master. Members know that the most important skill that a Nationals Whip can possess is the ability to master the barbecue grill. That is a key measure of a Nationals Whip. The member for Myall Lakes had some big shoes to fill, following the former member for Murray-Darling, John Williams. On the barbecue score he has exceeded anything John Williams could produce. I do not know how he will top that next year.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Hornsby, the member for Parramatta and the member for Bankstown will come to order.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I acknowledge our leader, Deputy Premier Troy Grant, who has done a magnificent job again this year. He led us through the election very successfully. I thank him for his leadership, as well as the guidance he provides to us all. I acknowledge the staff of the Parliamentary Library, particularly Mark Sheehan. I bother him all the time to get clips of various speeches.

Ms Prue Car: There are plenty of them.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Thanks. It has been a pleasure to again be part of the Speaker's panel. I thank Speaker Shelley Hancock, Deputy-Speaker Thomas George and all members of the panel, including you, Madam Temporary Speaker. When one sits in the chair one gains a different impression of this place from when one sits on the benches. I pay tribute to Hansard. As the Deputy Speaker said, it has been a difficult year for Hansard. They have our eternal gratitude for the way they turn our at times incoherent mutterings into something that makes sense. Thank you very much for that. To all the House attendants, who not only fill the water jugs but keep the messages flowing and keep everything running, thank you very much. To Ronda, Les and all the Clerks, thank you for your advice when I am in the chair and your guidance that ensures the good running of this House.

To my electorate staff, Lisa Williams, Kaye McColl, Kirsty White, Lauren Hiscox, thank you very much, team, for your hard work again this year. As I said last year in my felicitation, I am hardly the easiest person to work for. The tolerance and forbearance of my staff is very much appreciated, as is their hard work, beyond the hours that they are employed to work. No member of this place can operate without the support of their family. I thank my partner, Carolyn, for putting up with me for another 12 months. It is a miracle.

Mr Gareth Ward: The next 12 months could be interesting.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Thank you. Hopefully, I will be able to say the same to her again in another 12 months. She is a very busy professional, being the principal of a local high school. We sometimes see each other in the evening but not very much. She is amazing and very tolerant. I thank my electorate for sending me back to this place to represent them. I ruffle a few feathers here in Macquarie Street sometimes. I am very proud to represent my electorate. I will always stand up for my constituents and will never back down. Lastly, I give a big shout out to my local media, particularly Steve Green at the *Inverell Times*, who says I never mention him in Parliament. Steve, there you go, mate. Now give me a good rap in the local paper. Merry Christmas to everyone. Have a cracker. See you back next year.

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

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to resolution community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DENNIS BUXTON

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [6.03 p.m.]: I inform the House that Smiths Lake resident and former NSW Ambulance officer Dennis Buxton was presented with the St John Ambulance 32-year service medal by New South Wales Governor, His Excellency General the Hon. David Hurley, AC, DSC. Dennis has a passion for first aid and helping people in an emergency. He worked as an ambulance driver in Lismore, Sydney and later Taree, where he retired in 1999. Dennis joined St John Ambulance in the training branch in 1976. He has taught first aid to the wider community and to school students in Taree, Forster, Tuncurry and Port Macquarie. In addition, Dennis is a member of his local Rural Fire Service and is on the advisory committee for the community college. He was also previously a member of the Taree volunteer rescue squad.

BREAST CANCER

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) [6.04 p.m.]: Breast cancer is a terrible disease. As a carrier of the BRCA2 gene I know the importance of regular screening to detect this disease which affects one in nine people in our community. Women in my family have been diagnosed with this disease. I pay tribute to Professor Carolyn Mountford, Dr David Clark and Judi Silcock, who are working on an unfunded trial to detect breast cancer in BRCA carriers and high-risk women before tumours develop. I am working to help them raise \$50,000 per year to continue this lifesaving and life-changing work.

Last month Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians hosted a Girls' Night In at which we raised funds for breast cancer in an inspiring display of cross-party support. Maitland Community Unions Alliance will turn Maitland pink next Friday 27 November, in conjunction with businesses, community groups and the National Breast Cancer Foundation. I applaud and pay tribute to these combined efforts to keep the funds coming in as science works towards a cure for this disease.

TRIBUTE TO KAARLE MCCULLOCH

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.05 p.m.]: The Wollondilly electorate has been home to many great and aspiring sportspeople from numerous sports and codes. Today I publicly acknowledge the efforts and successes of Kaarle McCulloch. In 2010 Kaarle received the gold medal for the team sprint and was awarded a silver medal for the 500-metre time trial during the Commonwealth Games held in Delhi. During the Oceania Track Championships held in October, Kaarle was awarded three out of Australia's total of five medals. She received three gold medals for the individual and team sprint as well

as the time trial. Needless to say, this is an amazing outcome for both Kaarle and the Australian cycling team. Kaarle is in a very good position going into the 2016 Olympic Games. She is an inspiration to the community and I wish her every success over the next year.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) [6.06 p.m.]: I draw the attention of this House to the NSW Volunteer of the Year Awards organised by the Centre for Volunteering. I commend all nominees and winners for their commitment and dedication to volunteering, and make special mention of the nominees and winners who live within the electorate of Newtown: Jane Hehir from Ashfield, who volunteers with Newtown Neighbourhood Centre and received the Volunteer of the Year Award; Bridget Rose Kelly from Stanmore, who volunteers at Plumtree Early Childhood Intervention service and received the Student Volunteer of the Year award; the SPARK volunteer team, who received the volunteer team of the year award; Patricia Di Croce from St Peters, who was recognised for her volunteering with the Wilderness Society; and Greg Owen from Newtown, who was recognised for his volunteering with the Taronga Conservation Society Australia. Congratulations to you all.

PREMIER'S SPELLING BEE

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) [6.07 p.m.]: On 11 November 2015, the Premier's Spelling Bee State final was held at the ABC Centre, Sydney. I congratulate Tasha Miranda from Kareela Public School and Andrian Yasintus from Caringbah North Public School on being among the 86 finalists and going word for word to decide the State's top spellers. This is a wonderful achievement for both Tasha and Andrian, who finished ahead of a record 134,000 students from the 939 public schools who competed in this year's spelling bee. Being a State finalist is a great honour and these young spellers have already proven themselves to be the best in our shire. Spelling is a valuable skill that serves us well through life, not just at school. I take this opportunity to commend the schools within the Miranda electorate and the invaluable teachers on their commitment to spelling and literacy skills.

ASIAN WOMEN AT WORK

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [6.08 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to acknowledge Asian Women at Work. I had the pleasure last Saturday of attending their annual general meeting. I take the opportunity also to acknowledge once again the management committee and the staff—in particular, Lina Cabaero, Angela Zhang and Bich Thuy Pham—for their tremendous work in supporting women across our region, with branches at Bankstown, Hurstville, Auburn, Cabramatta and Blacktown. The organisation has worked for many years supporting women, particularly in providing legal advice and advice on industrial relations. In attendance on the day were Senator Jenny McAllister, the Federal member for Fowler, Chris Hayes, and the Hon. Sophie Cotsis. The member for Oatley was also in attendance. It was a wonderful day and I thank the organisation for its hospitality.

ORANGE ELECTORATE OFFICE

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.09 p.m.]: In this Christmas season I pay tribute and offer my sincere thanks to the hardworking team of the Orange electorate office. Kimbaelee Morris is our office manager, who does a wonderful job. She is new to the team and is cool, calm and collected. I thank her very much. Rosie Pritchard handles the media. She is the consummate media professional.

Mr Gareth Ward: She would have to be.

Mr ANDREW GEE: As the member for Kiama points out, she has to be working with the material she has. Bec Mackay left us this year to pursue a career in psychology. Most members would say working in an electorate office is great training for a career in psychology. I thank all our temporary staff

as well: Jude Patton, Anna Durham, Sarah Hayes and, of course, Don Mahoney, international dog judge. Our electorate office undertakes an enormous amount of work, and I am extremely grateful for their professionalism and their wonderful work ethic. It is a difficult and demanding job, but they do it with grace and style. I place on the record how very grateful I am for their efforts this year.

"LEGAL TWEAKS" LAUNCH

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [6.10 p.m.]: I recognise the formal launch of the 2015 edition of a publication entitled "Legal Tweaks". This booklet was launched on 2 November at a function that I attended. Legal Tweaks 2015 was launched by Edward Santow, chief executive officer of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre [PIAC]. The editor of this year's edition was Julian Brezniak, who has done a commendable job. The edition has forewords by the Federal shadow Attorney-General, Mark Dreyfus, QC, and by me. The sponsor of the publication was Maurice Blackburn, a firm of lawyers with an historic and impressive tradition.

The pamphlet is published annually by the NSW Society of Labor Lawyers, who should be congratulated on their efforts. The 40-plus contributors are extraordinarily diverse, from law students to retired judges. Very intentionally, many of the contributors are neither members of the Labor Party nor of the NSW Society of Labor Lawyers. This stems from the aim of the booklet, which is to provide thought and debate. Not everyone will agree with every proposal that is made—that is the point. It is designed to be like that to promote discussion and debate. I acknowledge president Hannah Quadrio; vice-president Darren Jenkins; secretary James Mack; treasurer Lee Corbett; and committee members Kate Harrison, Tom Kelly, Kirk McKenzie, Claire Pullen, Janai Tabernor, Chris Parkin, Lewis Hamilton and Rose Khalilzadeh, all of whom were recently appointed at the annual general meeting.

PREMIER'S SPELLING BEE

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) [6.11 p.m.]: Kurt Strohmayr, a Newbridge Heights Public School student from my electorate, was recently a finalist in the Premier's Spelling Bee. Kurt fought his way through the competition to be included in the final four in the State, but unfortunately the word "spinneret" had him knocked out of the competition—I do not know how to say it, let alone spell it. This is the second year that Kurt has competed in the Premier's Spelling Bee. He was a State finalist in the junior division last year. This year 134,000 students from 945 public schools across the State took part. I am excited that we had a local school student in the top four spellers in the State. I congratulate Kurt on his outstanding effort and on making his school and the local area proud.

NEPEAN FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) [6.12 p.m.]: I congratulate the Nepean Football Association on holding its successful 2015 awards dinner. It was a privilege to be a guest of the association at the dinner and to help present the awards. In particular, I congratulate the Henry Lawson Club, which won the Nepean Football Association Excellence in Club Administration Award. Well done! I also congratulate Keith and Helen Williams from Werrington in my electorate of Londonderry, who were awarded for distinguished service to football for their work with the St Marys Band Club Rangers Football. Thank you to Keith and Helen for their decades and decades of service to the kids of our community.

TRIBUTE TO DON HUXTABLE

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.13 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge a true hero of our community, Don Huxtable, a veteran of World War II who has never stopped giving back to our community. In World War II Don Huxtable served with the 463 Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross medal. During the war Don piloted a Lancaster bomber on 32 missions over Europe. On the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the Second World War the French Republic decided to honour veterans who fought for the liberation of France by awarding

them the rank of Chevalier in the Legion of Honour. The French Legion of Honour is an order of distinction first established by Napoleon Bonaparte in May 1802. It is the highest decoration bestowed in France. The award of such a decoration is decided by the President of the French Republic, subject to very strict examination.

On Thursday 5 November Don Huxtable was awarded the French Legion of Honour medal at the Sydney Adventist Hospital. Unfortunately, he was unable to make it to the official ceremony at the Anzac memorial due to ill health. He was surrounded by two of his daughters, Marilyn and Dianne, and granddaughter Jessica. Don's daughter Dianne seems to have inherited her father's community spirit. She is the much-loved principal of our local Berowra Public School. I have had the pleasure of working with her on numerous occasions. Don is a well-known and loved member of the Hornsby community. He is a life member of the Hornsby RSL and has been an active member for more than 52 years. The club even named its snooker and billiards room after him and dedicated it "The Don Huxtable Room". I am very proud to call Don a friend and to have people like him in our Hornsby community.

SOLDIERS BEACH SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [6.14 p.m.]: I acknowledge and congratulate members of Soldiers Beach Surf Life Saving Club who marked the Anzac Day centenary by participating in a commemorative row through the Dardanelles, around the Gallipoli peninsula, finishing south of Anzac Cove. Fifteen members aged from 18 to mid-sixties nominated to take part in a two-day surfboat race. They were joined by approximately 50 to 60 other teams from throughout Australia, New Zealand and Turkey.

In the two days leading up to Anzac Day 2015 the Soldiers crew participated in a 53-kilometre surfboat race along with boats crewed by other Australian surf lifesavers and our Turkish counterparts. I acknowledge the members of the team: John Edwards, Darcy Waller, Darin Butcher, Shane Walker, Seaton Wilson, Glen Warren, John Tomba, Michael Spring, Matt Rimington, Jason Smith, Michael Raby, Donny Martin, Ashley Falconer, Michael Crowe, Alan Barrie, Brandon Ross, Dylan Barrie and particularly Greg Martin, who passed away before he could go on the trip.

DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET ILLAWARRA OFFICE

KIAMA ELECTORATE OFFICE

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.15 p.m.]: I am constantly reminded of the outstanding work of our State's public service. Since becoming a Parliamentary Secretary I have worked with the Illawarra office of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and I pay particular tribute to Anthony Body, Jonathan Wheaton and Kirstan Fulton, all of whom are outstanding public servants. They can be proud of their service to this State, their hard work and their diligence, and I commend and thank them for their constant support, advice and counsel in my role as Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast.

I also take this opportunity to thank my electorate office staff: Melissa Jobson, Ben Blackburn, Bryan Fishpool and Sam Tedeschi, as well as Paul Ell, who recently left my office to join the team at RMB Lawyers. They all serve my community incredibly well and I am very proud of the hard work they invest to ensure that our community has its voice heard in this place by supporting me in my role. I thank all the State's public servants who work incredibly hard to make this State function well. I am sure members on both sides of the House commend them for their diligence on behalf of the people of New South Wales.

KING PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL AEROBICS

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.16 p.m.]: I congratulate King Park Public School, on recently celebrating 10 years of competing in aerobics. King Park Public School students recently travelled to the Gold Coast to compete at the national level of Schoolaerobics—an international aerobics competition,

which is the largest of its kind, for primary and secondary students. The girls were required to learn set choreography very quickly and then perform before the judges. Although the girls did not gain a place in the primary aerobics section, they all performed at their best and made their friends, family and school extremely proud. I also congratulate Simona Sankovic on winning the title of national champion in the primary audition section.

THE HILLS ELECTORATE SPORTSWOMEN

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) [6.17 p.m.]: I congratulate two women from the local sporting fraternity, particularly athlete Kristy Pond, who has returned from the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association [CPISRA] World Games in the United Kingdom with a dazzling array of swimming medals, including gold in the 50 metres freestyle and the 100 metres freestyle, and silver in the 200 metres freestyle. Kristy, astonishingly, broke the world record in the 100 metres freestyle, which had stood for eight years. Kristy has also represented Australia in track and field, competing in the 2012 London Paralympics in 100 metres and 200 metres wheelchair track events. I know that community support from The Hills has been much appreciated by this amazing athlete, who has become an ambassador for not only The Hills but also New South Wales and the Commonwealth.

I also inform the House of the recent achievement of Ms Melissa Ellis, who has been named New South Wales Manager of the Year by Golf Management Australia. She has been general manager at the Castle Hill Country Club for more than two years and is notable for having been the first female manager in its 65-year history. Golf Management Australia congratulated her on her efforts in increasing the club's membership as well as undertaking a refurbishment program. Ms Ellis, characteristically collegial, noted that she had "staff whose enthusiasm matches my own in making Castle Hill Country Club the very best it can be and always striving for continual improvement." The club is a fixture of The Hills community. We are lucky that Ms Ellis adorns it too.

RANDWICK BOTANY LITTLE ATHLETICS

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.18 p.m.]: I was honoured recently to attend the launch of the forty-eighth season of the Randwick Botany Little Athletics and to present a number of our wonderful young local athletes with awards for their outstanding achievements in athletics. As patron of the Randwick Botany Little Athletics, I acknowledge the committee members, who work tirelessly to ensure that this club is number one in the State. In particular, I single out the work of Tony Vecellio, OAM, and his wife, Judy, who for decades have given their time passionately to serve the community and who, in a very real sense, are the beating hearts of the club. I also recognise the three new club captains: Ally Grujoski, Zaidan Minslow and Riley Bregonis, who I have no doubt will do Randwick Botany Little Athletics proud. As I looked out at the sea of more than 600 little athletes and their proud families, I noticed that every child had a smile on his or her face and every parent wore their pride on their sleeve. This is truly a community and family oriented organisation that we can be proud of.

HOUSE WITH NO STEPS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.19 p.m.]: As I speak this evening, the Hon. John Ajaka, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Multiculturalism is hosting the awards ceremony for the NSW Disability Industry Innovation Awards. I am delighted that one of the finalists in the 2015 Disability Industry Innovation Awards is House With No Steps, located in Belrose in my electorate of Davidson. House With No Steps established a peer mentor program that employs people with a disability, such as Leigh Creighton and James McCoy, who are supported by House With No Steps.

The program promotes human rights and improves awareness of the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS], both inside and outside the organisation. It also gives advice on House With

No Steps policies and procedures, while facilitating self-advocacy groups and helping their peers to prepare for the NDIS. I congratulate all the people involved on this wonderful initiative at House With No Steps, including Andrew Richardson, Lyn Ainsworth and Rachel Spencer, and I wish it continued success for the future.

THE ENTRANCE SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) [6.20 p.m.]: On behalf of the community of The Entrance I record my deep appreciation for the work being done by The Entrance Surf Life Saving Club—one of the oldest clubs on the Central Coast, established in 1922—and its president, Glenn Clarke. Under Glenn's leadership, the club has worked hard to rebuild its membership. It does a great job of making safe not only The Entrance beach but also the channel entrance to Tuggerah Lake, where last summer it helped rescue 92 people in one day. Glenn's service was recognised this year when he was awarded Volunteer of the Year by Central Coast Surf Life Saving. Glenn and his wife, Louise, also a club volunteer, represented the Central Coast at a Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving event held this week and I welcomed the opportunity to thank them then, as I do again today.

WORLD RECORD HOLDER ANTHONY KELLY

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [6.21 p.m.]: I congratulate Armidale's Anthony Kelly, on currently holding more than 30 Guinness world records and who added another world record to his amazing poolroom last week when he appeared on Channel 9's *Today Show* to set the Guinness world record for the fastest tennis ball ever caught. His goal was to catch a tennis ball speeding towards him from a six-metre distance at 120 kilometres an hour. Typical of "kung-Fu" Kelly, he smashed the record and he caught the ball at 192.8 kilometres an hour—an outstanding achievement from a champion of the Armidale community. Congratulations Anthony Kelly. He is popular in Armidale, in New South Wales and all around the world—particularly in China, where they love him. Well done on another world record to add to the cabinet. Good on you mate.

ST RAYMOND'S MARONITE PARISH

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) [6.22 p.m.]: On Sunday 15 November, I was honoured to join the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Granville at the official opening and blessing of St Raymond's Maronite Parish Home at Auburn. The event also marked the beginning of celebrations for St Raymond's Feast Week—a very important week for the parish. The blessing was made by His Excellency Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay and Mass was celebrated by him and other clergy. The blessing and celebration on Sunday came immediately after the terrible bombings in Beirut and the horror of Paris. It was a great comfort to me, and the hundreds of parishioners and supporters of the church to be amongst a community that was united in its prayers for peace for all people. I congratulate the parish of St Raymond's on the opening of the parish home. I wish the parish all the very best for the future and offer its parishioners my best wishes for a joyous and wonderful Christmas.

TRIBUTE TO LUCY HOBGOOD-BROWN

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [6.23 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House that Wingham resident Lucy Hobgood-Brown has been named one of Rotary International's Global Women of Action and was recently presented with her award at the United Nations in New York. Lucy is a community development specialist and educator, with more than 30 years experience living and working in nine countries. She is the co-founder of HandUp Congo, a not-for-profit organisation that strategically links existing and potential collaborators with grassroots community initiatives in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where she was raised. My wife, Sue, a registered nurse, accompanied Lucy to the Congo last year to assist in the mission. Lucy helped raise funds to support public health infrastructure during the Ebola outbreak in the Congo in 2014. Lucy has also assisted in projects for both the Rotary Club of Taree and the Rotary Club of Wingham, and was a member of the committee that organised Africa Comes to

the Manning Valley.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL YEAR 12 GRADUATION

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.24 p.m.]: Recently I attended the Southern Highlands Christian School's graduation of year 12 students, and what a fine dedication it was to such a fine group. I acknowledge the board chair, Carol Unwin; the great principal, Andrew Middleton; the head of high school, Peter Lee; the chaplain, Jade Barr; the teacher of year two, 2005, Megan Moore; the head of English, Deborah Brake; school captains Jake Pearse and Emma Bollom; and school vice captains Granton Lee and Anna Otieno. I met the class of 2015—a fantastic group of kids: Michael Alekna, Daniel Anderson, Emma Bollom, Cody Boyd, Natalie Budiarto, Matt Bunter, Tiffany Chesterfield, Eliza Chiaverini, Rayne Crawford, Ryan Cuerden, William Dabin, Matilda East, Lachlan Feary, Nicole Hay, Granton Lee, Elijah Mauger, Elizabeth Neilsen, Lucy Noble, Anna Otieno, Jake Pearse, Liam Ryde, Karina Vaughan, Hayden Veivers, Georgia Walters, Imogen Wilhelmi, Elliott Wilson and Samuel Wilson.

GYMNASTICS AUSTRALIA JUNIOR INTERNATIONAL AGE GROUP ATHLETE OF THE YEAR ELIZABETH KIDANE

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [6.25 p.m.]: My electorate of Cabramatta is proud to be nurturing a future star gymnast. Elizabeth Kidane, who is just 12 years old, was this year named Gymnastics Australia Junior International Age Group Athlete of the Year. It has been a big year for Elizabeth: She placed second at the NSW State Championships, third in the Aerobics International Age Group 1, and second with her teammate in the AeroSkools division at the Australian Championships. She also qualified for the Suzuki World Championships in Japan and the Australasian National Aerobics Championships in San Diego, California, this year. Her coach, Patsy Tatian, said she is a very hard worker who is always supporting her other teammates. On behalf of my community, I want to let her know that we are all cheering for her and we are already proud of everything she has achieved.

TAREN POINT BOWLING CLUB

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) [6.26 p.m.]: I congratulate Taren Point Bowling Club on winning the 2015 Drakes Pride NSW Champions League final on 15 November 2015. The gripping final against Warilla was deadlocked and was decided in a tie break, which Taren Point won 2-1. The annual event is an elite lawn bowls competition comprising 10 clubs and is open to men and women players. The exceptional skill of the teams at Taren Point is evidenced in their record of success. The club has won the men's number one pennant three years in a row for 2013, 2014 and 2015. It has also won the NSW Champions League title twice in the past three years. I acknowledge the talented members of team one: Steve Garry, Mike Nagy, Cy Threlfall and David Axon; team two: Reg McCulla, Jacob Bobeldyk, Chris Green and John Green; and team three: Jake Chapman, Peter Armstrong, Craig Donaldson and Wayne Turley. In particular, I pay tribute to Craig Donaldson who was named player of the final. Congratulations once again to all involved.

TRIBUTE TO NICHOLAS KARAM

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.27 p.m.]: I acknowledge the fantastic work of a member of my staff, Nicholas Karam, who leaves me today. Nick has worked tirelessly in my office since leaving high school and has been a wonderful scholar at the University of Sydney. He has almost completed his law degree with a distinction average. Nick is a great political thinker and has developed into a great adviser. I wish him all the best for his internship at the law firm to which he is going. I acknowledge his wonderful contribution, his selflessness and his advice.

FAIRFIELD CHRISTMAS TROLLEY DRIVE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.28 p.m.]: I acknowledge the efforts of the Fairfield Chamber of

Commerce as well as Mr Tom Murphy and Raj Bhandari for organising this year's Fairfield Christmas Trolley Drive, which is an annual event that covers all of Ware Street in the central business district of Fairfield. The Christmas Trolley Drive is in aid of the Uniting Church Diner, which feeds thousands of underprivileged people in the Fairfield local government area. I pay tribute to the wonderful volunteers of Fairfield Uniting Church for their care and dedication to those who are on the outer margins of the community. Local schools contribute to the Christmas Trolley Drive each year. It is a festive occasion, but the drive reminds us that during this time of celebration it is also a time of sorrow for people in our communities who are less fortunate.

ORANGE AND ORANGE CANOBOLAS LIONS CLUBS

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.29 p.m.]: Last weekend the Orange Lions Club in partnership with the Orange Canobolas Lions Club hosted the fifty-fifth convention of District 201N4. The convention was a wonderful success, with more than 160 members attending. I pay tribute to the convention committee: chair Mick Medcalf, president of the Orange Lions club, and his wife, Julie; secretary Peter Fuge, who was ably supported by his wife; and treasurer Past District Governor Les Brown.

The committee members included: District Governor Tony Smith; Ron Winterton; Norm Bembrick from Orange Canobolas Lions Club; my old friend Allan Goodacre, who did a great job; Barbara Andrews; Neil "Boots" Barlow; Rodger Thomas; and Anne Jones from Wellington. The Orange Lions Club board comprises: Mick Medcalf, a Lion with a great heart who personifies the spirit of Lions; secretary Neil Barlow; treasurer Kevin Hope; first VP Kevin Faye; directors Barb Perry and Ron Perry; second year directors Les Brown and Andrew Wood, who is my neighbour and great friend. I also pay tribute to the president of Orange Canobolas Lions Club board, Shirley Ellis, who gave us wonderful support over the weekend.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BERYL JEAN SCHAEFER, OAM

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) [6.31 p.m.]: I pay tribute to Beryl Jean Schaefer, OAM, who passed away in late August 2015. Beryl was a champion in the Cobargo community. She served 16 years on Bega Valley Shire Council and 10 years as president of the Cobargo Show Society and dedicated many more years to supporting local causes. She grew up on the family farm in Yowrie before moving to Cobargo. She worked at the local hotel as a housekeeper and met Lance Schaefer, whom she later married. Throughout her life Beryl was a fierce defender for those who lived on the land. She cared deeply about people living in small towns and villages, and this inspired her to be elected to council in 1995.

Beryl loved a challenge. She had no hesitation in taking on government and bureaucracy. In her view, her greatest achievement was harassing the then Minister for Roads until funding was supplied for the tar sealing of the Cobargo Bermagui Road. Beryl also chaired the Narira Retirement Village Trust for 25 years. The trust was set up by locals to provide housing for retirees in the town. During her chairmanship, two new units were constructed, two blocks of land were purchased for future enlargement of the village, and the first sewerage system was installed in Cobargo.

From the age of eight Beryl was an exhibitor at the Cobargo show. She grew champion dahlias, leaving the competition in her dust. The show ball was always a huge success under Beryl's tutelage. She

would roam the streets, pinning people down to book a table. Beryl held life memberships with the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW [RAS], showing excellence in agriculture, and with the Cobargo Show Society. She gave her time to the Red Cross, the Country Women's Association and the Narira Retirement Trust. For 28 years she was a member of the Cobargo Showground Trust and she spent 16 years as a councillor. Beryl also performed great deeds for farmers in the fight to preserve their water rights and fought against weeds invading the shire. Former Cobargo Show Society president Kevin Allen described Beryl best as "a true champion—a Phar Lap and Bradman".

I will always remember I had been a local member for only two weeks when Beryl rang me about an incident that had occurred. Beryl spent a lot of time coordinating the Southern Districts exhibit at the Royal Easter Show. When she rang me she was furious because the incident involved produce that was to be used in the Southern Districts exhibit. A police helicopter from Sydney was doing drug surveillance in the area when the officers saw an unusual looking plant in the middle of the corn crop in Bega. They flew the chopper lower to get a closer look. The plant turned out to be the sorghum crop that was to be used for the Southern Districts exhibit that year, but unfortunately the low-flying helicopter flattened and destroyed it. Beryl took great delight in following up the issue with the local member. If my memory serves me well, did an interview on a Sydney radio station to highlight what had occurred. It was a funny but serious moment, but it is one of my fond memories of Beryl.

Beryl always supported me and gave me advice about the way things should be for the community of Cobargo and the far South Coast. She was a dedicated person to her community and to her family. Without doubt, Beryl will be sorely missed by the community. She always made an enormous contribution. I enjoyed seeing Beryl at the Cobargo show every year and when I attended the Australia Day celebrations at the Cobargo Hall. Beryl is survived by her children Wayne and Gail, their partners Helen and Murray, and granddaughters Hanna and Leah. On behalf of members in this place, it is fitting that we pay tribute to someone who has made an enormous contribution not only to the show circuit on the far South Coast but also to the Royal Easter Show. May she rest in peace.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [6.36 p.m.]: A couple of weeks ago I had the pleasure of congratulating Bankstown City Council after the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal handed down its final recommendation on Fit for the Future, which stated that Bankstown City Council was one of the seven councils located in metropolitan Sydney that was deemed to be fit for the future. Today I stand in this place for a very different reason. Part of that relates to concerns about some of the machinations that have taken place in the past few weeks in my community and as a result of an extraordinary council meeting that took place on Tuesday in which a resolution was subsequently passed, moved by a number of the Liberal councillors, to resolve that a list of preferences be given to accommodate the Minister's direction by 18 November that councillors place their preferences on which councils they want to merge with.

An article has appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that effectively divulges some of the reasons why a number of councillors may have voted for that resolution. I do not believe any of those interests lay in furthering the interest of Bankstown City Council or the community. It appears there was at least one meeting, an unusual meeting, where a number of people came together in a manner that requires further investigation by the Minister and the Premier as they take the next few weeks to make decisions on which councils should amalgamate and which should stand alone. It is of concern when a group of people come together, including a developer consultant, and sit in a room with Labor and Liberal councillors in someone's house to decide the future of two councils. I cannot be silent on that issue. I know the member for Canterbury, Ms Linda Burney, is concerned about what transpired and whether that meeting and others have engineered the final response we saw in the past two days from Bankstown City Council.

I hope that the Government in its considerations in the coming weeks is mindful of the type of

backroom deals that take place and certainly have taken place, I believe, between these two councils. I have a copy of some of the articles that Kate McClymont wrote earlier in the year about Canterbury City Council. I will not go through the details, but anyone reading them can see that there are clearly issues of impropriety at that council. I do not know whether the department investigated the matter, but on the face of those articles there are some concerns. What concerns me is the influence of some of these councillors, or potentially people associated with that council, on Bankstown City Council. I am concerned that this process in some way has encouraged these untoward types of gatherings, which are not open and transparent.

I have the firm view, shared by the member for Canterbury, that these meetings should take place in an open and transparent way involving the community. They should be minuted correctly and should provide an opportunity for everybody to have their views heard on how councils determine their potential merging options and whether they merge. I note, though, that Bankstown City Council was clearly of the view that it did want to stand alone. I acknowledge the four councillors—Councillor Ian Stromborg, Councillor Linda Downey, Councillor Alex Kuskoff and Councillor Jenny Gollidge—for remaining firm and strong in the interests of the ratepayers of Bankstown and in the interests of transparency. They backed the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal report, which deemed that Bankstown should remain a stand-alone council. I urge the Premier and the Minister in their considerations in the coming weeks to have a closer look at some of the unsavoury backroom deals that have taken place.

TAREE AIRPORT

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [6.41 p.m.]: I advise the House of a matter of great concern to the electorate of Myall Lakes. Myall Lakes has one airport, Taree Airport, which urgently needs funds to assist with its upgrade. Taree Airport is the gateway to Myall Lakes and to the Manning, and it plays a significant role in the electorate. It is the first port of call for so many people coming into the electorate and therefore people should be proud of it. When a businessman gets off the aeroplane at Taree he should think, "This is a good place to do business." When tourists alight from the aeroplane they should think, "This is a great place to stay". For that reason Taree Airport needs upgrading.

The Greater Taree City Council and the community have applied for funding, and I urge the Minister to seriously consider the application because the airport needs the upgrade. Indeed, I call on the Government to put funding towards this upgrade. A significant number of people do business in Taree and the Manning Valley on a daily basis, including specialist doctors who practise on certain days each month, either in Taree or out at Forster, or businessmen doing business in the commercial sector. Judges and barristers go to Taree to preside over and attend court sittings to deal with criminal and civil cases. Many businesspeople use the airport on a daily basis, as well as a significant number of tourists.

All members know that the Myall Lakes electorate is internationally renowned as Australia's water playground. We have Bombora Waters, Myall Lakes, Smiths Lake and Wallis Lake with its myriad islands—it is absolutely beautiful. We also have the mighty Manning River, with 156 kilometres of navigable waterways, the only delta formation in the Southern Hemisphere. The area has almost 200 kilometres of pristine beaches and the mighty Ellenborough Falls, the longest single drop waterfall in the Southern Hemisphere. The Manning Valley produces one-third of the fresh milk market for New South Wales while Wallis Lake produces one-third of Australia's Sydney rock oysters. They are the best in Australia. All of this is fantastic, but we must have the airport to go with it.

Recently the runway was upgraded and works on Taree's Aviation Business Park have just been completed, although a number of safety measures are still required to do with lighting and such. It is extremely important for my area and regional New South Wales that regional airports be upgraded. Councils and communities cannot do it on their own. We are not asking for a handout; we are asking for a hand up. We need assistance to get this vital development underway for the community. Once again I call on the Government to consider the matter and provide this desperately needed funding. The community would be eternally grateful if that were to happen.

CENTRAL COAST MEN OF FOOTBALL

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [6.46 p.m.]: Tonight is the annual general meeting of the Central Coast chapter of Men of Football. The 2015 year has been another strong one for the Central Coast chapter of Men of Football. The hardworking committee has been doing fantastic work this year, including two very successful fundraisers in the seven-a-side tournament and the golf day. It held its first formal dinner, and whilst the numbers were not what the committee hoped for for a variety of reasons—mainly grand finals—the attendance of former Socceroo Paul Wade as guest was a real bonus. I acknowledge the hard work of the committee that represents the organisation on the Central Coast.

I acknowledge our patron, Lawrie McKinna; vice president Mick Morley; secretary Mark Raftery; treasurer Graeme Dyce; welfare officer Chris Rubie; and committee members Keith Ollier, Phil McNab, Tommy McFarlane, Keith Whelan and Michael Newton. I can safely say that our chapter is innovative, proactive and most of all committed to helping the football family. Achievements include a new website, a new Facebook presence and an incredible video, which has played in local media at Central Coast Stadium and during a number of radio interviews, telling the community about our good story.

Mick Morley has been a great vice president, stepping up and delivering great outcomes. I particularly mention his liaising with the Mariners, media and sponsors, especially for the mega successful golf day. Our whole committee has worked really hard. I acknowledge that and thank them individually for their efforts. I thank our membership—particularly the over-35s and over-45s who are still hanging in and playing—for their support of a great cause. Without their participation in our events we could not function. I give a special mention to Ray Sandell, who continues to lend his invaluable support behind the scenes. Ray is a legend and he continues to step up—particularly with the successful Damien Brown Medal, providing outstanding work for this organisation. We were able to welcome former Central Coast Mariner and assistant coach John Hutchinson recently as an ambassador, which was fantastic. We thank him and the Central Coast Mariners for their ongoing support. We are building an excellent relationship with the club, which gives us some great advantages.

To Lawrie McKinna, Damien Brown, Dale Eggleton, I say: Thank you for your continued support of the organisation. I acknowledge the Newcastle boys and the national body for supporting us through the previous 12 months. I thank all of our sponsors. We cannot operate without the money we raise through their generous support. Either at our events or through in-kind support, our sponsors enable us to spread our good message. Finally, we only exist to support those facing tough times—those who are a part of our wonderful football family. I know our Treasurer will tell you how much we raised and how much we donated, so I will not spoil his good news.

However, it has been a tough time for some families over the past 12 months. We lost one of our own from the 45Bs family, in Mickey Dean. We all love to play, but a tragedy such as this shows us that we are all human and it demonstrates why the Men of Football organisation should exist. On Saturday 1 August this year, 47-year-old Michael (Mickey) Dean was playing an over 45Bs game when he suffered a heart attack and died. I thank our welfare officer, Chris Rubie, who visits and comforts the families we support. It is not just about money; it is about caring and supporting them through difficult times. I thank the organisation for allowing me the privilege of being president of such a good organisation. I look forward to the activities of the year ahead and know that each year the organisation grows strong, raises more money and supports more people in difficult times. I wish everyone involved in Men of Football a safe and happy festive season and we look forward to working with you again in 2016.

CHRISTMAS FELICITATIONS

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) [6.51 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity on the last sitting day of the year to deliver a Christmas message for the first time as the member for Ku-ring-gai. To say that the year has flown would be an understatement. I was pre-selected as the Liberal Party candidate for

the electorate of Ku-ring-gai in mid-February—St Valentine's Day, in fact—and campaigned until the 28 March election, at which time I was honoured to be chosen to represent the good people of Ku-ring-gai. I thank the pre-selectors, especially our local Liberal Party members, for putting their faith in selecting me to represent the Liberal Party, and for supporting me so strongly since my election. In particular, I thank the conference executive, the current conference president James Winter, vice-presidents Jim Thompson and John McColl, secretary Barbara Ward and treasurer Ron Lucock. I also like thank all of the branch executives and their members, and also Caroline Cameron and Mary O'Dea, for their support and service to the conference.

Our Federal member, Paul Fletcher, who was a university friend many years ago, has given me great support since I entered Parliament, and was of considerable assistance during my election campaign. We have worked together for many years in the Liberal Party since his campaign and election to the Federal Parliament in December 2009. I also thank the member for Hornsby and the member for Davidson. Our local constituents are well served by their Federal and State members working cooperatively. Since the election I have literally met scores of community groups and hundreds of constituents, and it would be fair to say that I have introduced myself to thousands of Ku-ring-gai's school students. The issues that they have discussed with me have been many and varied, from NorthConnex to the 10/50 code, and from Fit for the Future plans to lifts at train stations.

I have also been privileged to serve on numerous parliamentary standing and select committees, including the companion animal breeding—or puppy farming—inquiry and the brothels regulation inquiry, which I was honoured to chair. I thank members for their collegiality on the committees I have worked on. Ku-ring-gai is an electorate with a rich and important history in State politics, having been the electorate of two past Premiers, the Hon. Nick Greiner and my immediate predecessor, the Hon. Barry O'Farrell. My staff and I are working hard to meet the high expectations of the electorate. I thank the many members in this place who were so welcoming on my arrival as a new member, and who have worked with me so closely, passing on their wisdom and experience. I also thank the parliamentary staff who make this place operate so effectively.

A special thankyou should go to the Whip, the member for Camden, who assisted the new members to transition into Parliament, and Rebecca and Alex. It is no small thing to pack up a very busy legal career of almost 30 years to embark on the great unknown that is politics. I could not have made this transition as smoothly as I have without my wife and two children. I thank them for their support; I love them very much. I also thank my electorate staff. There is a great deal of shared wisdom in my office. Roger White—or Dodge, as he is widely known—is a seasoned campaigner of many years in the media and politics. I thank him for his guidance, help and support. I hope that an Illawarra boy and a Newcastle boy working together will be a potent combination.

I thank also Deanna Turner, who has a great deal of the sort of corporate knowledge and experience that is invaluable in any work place. I am so glad that she chose to stay on with me after working for eight years with Barry O'Farrell. Diane Woods is one of the treasures of the Liberal Party, and I am so happy to have her in my office. I have been very blessed to have three volunteers this year—two very talented law students in Thomas Gardner and Lachlan Shaw, and a very experienced volunteer in Ben. I thank all my staff and volunteers for their hard work and wish them and their families a very happy Christmas.

One of the truly satisfying aspects of being a local member of Parliament is visiting our many schools. Ku-ring-gai is blessed with great schools—both public and private—and I know that students, teachers, carers and parents alike, are rightly proud of them. This year I continued the tradition begun by Barry O'Farrell, and hosted a dinner in Parliament House for the leaders of Ku-ring-gai's high schools. This month I began a new event, which was to host a morning tea for the leaders of Ku-ring-gai's primary schools, along with parents, guardians and teachers who wished to come along. This year I also continued the tradition begun by Barry O'Farrell and hosted a public speaking competition for the local public primary schools. I thank those who were so magnificent in participating and also Margaret Wick

and Aileen Wolf for organising the event. I also thank barrister Alex Leopold, SC, and radio newsreader Natalie Peters for judging the competition with Mrs Wick.

Throughout 2015 I have enjoyed the privilege of presenting awards and certificates to many of the talented and selfless people living in the Ku-ring-gai electorate—from sports stars such as Abbotsleigh's track stars Annabel McDermott and Mia Hemsworth, up and coming baseball James Percival and badminton player Ricky Tang, through to amazing carers such as Sara Spurr and Lynne Brakel. I thank those in the electorate who have so warmly welcomed me as their new local member, and wish all of Ku-ring-gai and those in this place and their staff a very merry Christmas and happy holidays.

CANCER COUNCIL DANCING WITH THE STARS

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [6.56 p.m.]: Last Saturday night my wife, Kerry, and I had the pleasure of attending the second event this year of Dancing with the Stars, organised by the Cancer Council in Coffs Harbour. The organisation decided to change the date. February was probably not the right time to hold the event so, very bravely, it held it for a second time this year. The organisation decided to run it twice in one year. It was one of the most hilarious and most enjoyable nights that we have had in a very long time.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Did you dance?

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I knew that I would be asked to dance. No, I did not put my constituents through that torturous experience. My mother and father used to teach dancing to all the debutants in New South Wales, but when my mother tried to teach me she told me that I was the only person she knew who had three left feet. I do not visit the dancefloor on a regular basis. Brendan Smith, a local reporter with NBN, was there. He is quite a character. We saw another side of Brendan that night, which I am sure we will not forget for a long while. Dr Kristen Pigram, Sarah Ramsay, Peter Hodges, Jacqui Barnett, Sam Ledger, Paul-Thomas Clarke, Gary Amiguet, Sarah Pryor, Lee Millard-Newton and Alice Williams all had professional dance partners from the many dance schools in the Coffs Harbour electorate.

That night we saw everything from ballroom dancing and samba through to belly dancing. We saw it all. I can say with sincerity that every act was professional. The partners and their teachers must have put in an incredible amount of work over the past few months. The emcees David Lahogan and Vicky Hunter made light of the whole night. Not one couple on the floor escaped a comment from them. Three judges gave professional and amusing advice, and made the night a very pleasurable one. I thought we would have been home early; that it would be an early night. I will not announce the winners of various categories such as the people's choice—

Dr Geoff Lee: You don't remember.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I do remember, but I do not believe anyone lost on that evening. If I were a judge all of them would have scored 11 out of 10 for bravery for getting onto the floor in the first place. They were all winners on the floor, but, in my opinion, the real winner was the Cancer Council. More than \$100,000 was raised by the dancers, and from raffles and entries on the night. It was about \$50 or \$70 a head to attend; money well spent. I could not have seen such good entertainment anywhere else. Kirsten Houston was the chair of the organising committee. My wife, Kerry, who is a cancer survivor, played a big role in setting up the Cancer Council in Coffs Harbour 25 years ago and she is a patron of the North Coast Cancer Council.

Cancer is an insidious disease, and the research the Cancer Council does to stop it is second to none. I mention the Cancer Care Unit in Coffs Harbour and Professor Tom Shakespeare. This calendar year alone the Coffs Harbour community has raised more than \$200,000 for the Cancer Council to do its research work. Philipa and the girls on the team at the Cancer Council do a fantastic job. I cannot name

all the people who sponsored and supported the night because there are too many. They gave of their time, money and services. It was a fantastic evening. There were no winners on the night except the Coffs Harbour community, the Cancer Council and those fantastic people who gave us one of the best night's entertainment we could have. I commend them for the great work and for the great night.

DIWALI HINDU FESTIVAL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [7.01 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the Diwali celebrations recently within the electorate that I represent. Diwali, sometimes referred to as Deepawali, is a significant Hindu festival celebrated throughout the world. It is most frequently translated as the Festival of Lights. There are significant Hindu communities in south-west Sydney and especially Liverpool, hailing from India and from Fiji. Indians went to Fiji as indentured labourers, better described as slaves, to make super profits for sugar producers, including at one time an Australian company, CSR.

On 30 October I attended a Diwali Mela organised by Shree Sanatan Dharm Sabha of New South Wales at the Ram Krishna Temple at Austral. I recognise President Anil Singh, Secretary Parjeet Singh and Treasurer Hari Krishna. The event also celebrated the full completion of the temple. The chief guest was the Hon. Professor Biman Chand Prasad, leader of Fijian National Federation Party and current shadow Minister for Finance. Also present was Councillor Anne Stanley from Liverpool Council. The chief guest, Biman Prasad, and member of the Fijian Parliament said this in his written message:

It is extremely pleasing to see that Hindu members of our Fijian community, who have made Australia their home, and indeed other nationals, have maintained and continued their cultural and religious activities in a vibrant manner through Ramayan Mandalis and construction of temples.

This is most admirable as you are bequeathing a strong foundation of self-dignity and the virtues of respect and tolerance of future generations.

Deepavali or Diwali is the festival of lights. It is a time of rejoicing with family and friends, it is also a time for prayer and reflection about those less fortunate.

A constituent of mine, Rajen Harakh, said this about Deepavali:

Deepavali is a festival promoting harmony and goodwill and promotes harmonious relationship among communities of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

Diwali gives us the opportunity to pray for health, knowledge and peace of one and all. The lighting of lamps symbolises the philosophy of advancement from darkness to light.

Deepavali is celebrated in the month Kartick, the precise calculation of which is based on the moon. It is a festival that extends for several days. The Ram Krishna Temple, , located at Fifteenth Avenue, Austral, is quite a significant building both in terms of physical size and also its cultural importance. It is also an impressive community facility with a range of activities surrounding it. For example, it provides Hindi classes, musical classes and Ramayan classes. A magazine is also produced by Shree Sanatan Dharm Sabha [SSDS] of New South Wales for each festival. The significant number of supporters and sponsors of the event is shown in that publication and is an eloquent display of community support. On 8 November I attended the annual two-day Deepawali Mela celebration in Northumberland Street, Liverpool, organised by Shree Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi Sabha of Australia. I recognise national president Jagdish Sharma and national secretary Yogesh Chandra.

This was the ninth annual consecutive festival by this organisation at this venue. I am happy to say I have attended all nine events. This festival also included the Sanatan Rattan presentation acknowledging members who have made significant contributions to the community, including Harish

Sharma previous leader of the National Federation Party and leader of the Fijian Opposition and Deputy prime Minister in the Bavadra Government in Fiji. Harish is also a member of the SSDS management committee. Shree Sanatan Dharma Pratinidhi also produces an annual magazine, which also demonstrates widespread community support. Having attended their festival for nine years I am acutely aware of the large number attracted to the festival, 30,000 last year, and the community support that the event enjoys. The organisations national president Jagdish Sharma said:

Deepawali [commonly known as Diwali] is a festival of brightness and happiness; and signifies the triumph of good over evil.

Diwali is celebrated with great enthusiasm all over the world; where people from every age group participate with great joy and splendour. We give expression to our happiness by lighting earth lamps ("diyas"), decorating the houses, praying to the almighty and inviting our dear ones to our households to join in the celebrations.

He also said:

Darkness represents ignorance and light is a symbol of wisdom, during Diwali we light Diyas to symbolise the obliteration of all negative forces and the enlightenment of knowledge.

The organisations general secretary Yogesh Chandra said:

Depawali brings joy of light, depicts harmonious relationship amongst other and enhances strong ties amongst communities. Ouadeepawali Mela procures togetherness, happiness, social interaction and cultural awareness in our multicultural community.

I should acknowledge the members of the Deepawali Melaorganising Committee: Shal Singh, Rajesh Lal, Marcus Pran, Praneesh Gounder, Bob Satendra, Jai Madhaval, Avinesh Ram, Nitesh Sharma, Shashi Lal as well as Jagdish Sharma and Yogesh Chandra. Shree Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha, of course, organises other events and performs other functions during the year including a Holi Mela celebration in February. It is a pleasure to attend these events and to be involved with these communities. I look forward to continuing involvement with them over many years. They are a good example of the vibrant multicultural community that exists at Liverpool.

PARIS TERRORIST ATTACKS

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.06 p.m.]: Since my election to this place four years ago I have reserved my private member's statements to speak exclusively on matters that impact on my electorate, whether they be good or bad. I have broken that trend today because I was profoundly moved by the senseless and callous attacks on the innocent people of Paris last week. I was overcome with sadness—sadness for the victims, sadness for the city of Paris, in fact, sadness for humanity. I have this overwhelming sense that "there but for the Grace of God go I", or my family or my friends. I know my constituents are just as moved as I am, and that their thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families.

I have been trying to reconcile what has been gained by the brutal murder of young people at a rock concert or by the slaughter of families who are simply enjoying a meal together. There is no glory in this. This will not go down in the history books as a great campaign. This will not be recorded in history as a revolution by a suppressed people. This is not warfare or fighting an oppressive dictatorship. This is simply murder. There is no God or religion that sanctifies the senseless and brutal murder of innocent people. The people who have perpetrated these acts are not revolutionaries; they are not religious in any way; they are simply murderers and psychopaths.

They do not do this in the name of religion, they do this to justify their own existence. They are the

lowlifes of our society, the drug dealers, the thieves and rapists, the failures. They are desperately trying to find some relevance and meaning to their life and they are simply using religion to cloak their evil way of life. The actions of these murderers is akin to the same behaviour of marauding bands from the Dark Ages that would go on a rampage and slaughter innocent men, women and children in neighbouring villages. By raping women and beheading men and boys, their actions are the same as the murderers of today. There was no justification for this throughout history and there certainly is no justification for it today. It is just blood lust.

These people should not be linked with Islam or any religion. They are not religious people. They are just murderers in the same vein as the infamous David Berkowitz, who is better known as the Son of Sam, Martin Bryant or even Ivan Milat, who were and are simply evil and disturbed people with no sense of humanity. So are the murderers in Paris and prior to that the murderers in Lebanon as well as many other cities across the world as depicted in our media. They should not be glorified as being Islamists or as people who are fighting a holy war. The media should stop referring to them as belonging to any religious group, extreme or otherwise. No religious person would claim the terrorists as their own. Call them what they are—murderers, cowards, low-lifes—but do not credit them with belonging to any religious cause. Those people have no place in our community. They have no conscience. They have no moral fibre. They have no humanity. I say to the people of Paris: I share your heartache and I stand resolutely with you, as do the people in my electorate of Clarence. We share your sorrow and we grieve for humanity.

WORLD PANCREATIC CANCER DAY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [7.11 p.m.]: Last Friday, officers, sporting teams, school students, celebrities and families across the globe gathered to Turn It Purple and raise awareness of pancreatic cancer. World Pancreatic Cancer Day provides an opportunity for people from all backgrounds to come together and to send a powerful message to the broader public, the medical community, and governments that more needs to be done. By engaging in this global conversation, we can better understand how to advance research, how to provide support to patients, and how to improve survival rates.

Pancreatic cancer has the lowest survival rate of all major cancers, with just 2 to 10 per cent of those diagnosed living longer than five years past onset. It is also the seventh-most-common cause of cancer-related death in men and women across the world. But despite those statistics, it is alarming to consider that, according to a worldwide survey, more than 60 per cent of the population cannot name a single symptom of pancreatic cancer. This lack of awareness, coupled with the fact that symptoms rarely present in the disease's early stages, accounts in a very significant way for low survival rates. We know that in the United States of America and Europe, death rates for pancreatic cancer are increasing while death rates for most other cancers decline. That is why public health campaigns like this one are so important to paving the way for better treatment outcomes for those diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Last Friday, medical professionals, survivors, and families who lost a loved one took to social media to show off their purple gear and to share their stories about the impacts of pancreatic cancer. It would be hard, though, to find a tougher, more hardworking advocate than Megan Barnes, who, I am proud to say, is a constituent of my Cronulla electorate. Megan is the 2015 Cronulla Woman of the Year in recognition of her unwavering dedication to fight for better treatment and support services for those diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Sadly, Megan lost her father to pancreatic cancer in 2012. She knows all too well what that journey means for sufferers and their families. She subsequently petitioned the Federal Government to have the pancreatic cancer drug abraxane listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. In Megan's own words:

This was an incredible achievement and there are many families that will be able to spend one more Christmas, one more family gathering, one more family holiday together because they will

have better access to this therapy.

Megan is also an ambassador for the world's first Pancreatic Cancer Nurse Network, which has been developed by Bedside to Bench. The network enables patients to have access to nurses who specialise in pancreatic cancer care and to obtain additional support through a dedicated helpline, which is staffed by registered nurses. The inability to connect with a medical professional with specialised knowledge of pancreatic cancer became an ongoing frustration for Megan as she witnessed her father's ordeal. It is pleasing that those types of patient-driven initiatives now are providing a benefit to so many people.

Training is provided to nurses to build skills and capacity in pancreatic cancer care. It operates as a sort of peer support group through which nurses are able to learn from each other and support each other in their roles through education. The network also is closely affiliated with clinical trial groups, which means that patients can be provided with opportunities to participate. The strength of purpose that Megan has shown during her own personal loss is a sign of remarkable character. Her advocacy is helping to ensure that every pancreatic cancer patient in Australia will receive the care and support they need.

LONDONDERRY ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) [7.16 p.m.]: I take the time today to talk about one of my very favourite topics—schools in my electorate. The first school to which I will refer is the Bennett Road Public School in Colyton. I have often spoken about this school in this place—in fact, in my inaugural speech—particularly in regard to the desperate need for the school to be air-conditioned, but this evening I draw to the attention of the House the fantastic work the school is doing, particularly as a result of Gonski funding. Recently I toured the school with its fantastic and hardworking principal, Matthew Plummer, and the incredibly hardworking as well as in-touch parents and citizens association, who do a fantastic job of advocating for the school and the kids and their parents.

I was fortunate to be shown around the school during National Gonski Week and to see firsthand what that funding is doing to totally transform the educational experience of hundreds of students at the school. Gonski funding has meant so many things for the Bennett Road Public School, but amazingly the funding has meant that Bennett Road is able to home in and focus on early intervention and improving literacy for their students. The school is part of the Early Action for Success education initiative, which appoints an instructional leader—a fantastic woman—to work with teachers for better literacy for kindergarten, year 1 and year 2 students. The school has been able to build on the success that started with Gonski funding in 2014.

Gonski funding enabled teachers to obtain the resources they need. They bought \$80,000 worth of books, which means that each classroom has its own library. I saw that when I sat down with students while they read with their teachers the specialist books that have been obtained through Gonski funding. The teachers have been able to supplement their Reading Recovery allocation by using Gonski funding to allow an increased number of students to have access to a Reading Recovery teacher and to employ a speech therapist, who sees between 20 and 25 students a week to also break down literacy barriers. Because I saw what is happening on the ground at Bennett Road it has galvanised my belief that Gonski's needs-based funding generally is absolutely critical for schools in New South Wales, and I am sure members of this House agree. No-one can see what is being rolled out through Gonski in schools across New South Wales and say that educational outcomes are not being improved.

I take this opportunity to again congratulate the principal, Matthew Plummer, the parents and citizens association and the whole Bennett Road Public School community for everything they do to advocate for their school. I really look forward to continuing to work with them and to seeing the transformative impact that Gonski funding will continue to have on the school when, hopefully, the Federal Government commits to funding years five and six of Gonski reforms. Another school I congratulate this evening is the Madang Avenue Public School in another suburb of my electorate, Whalan. Recently the Madang Avenue Public School was highlighted in the New South Wales

Department of Education and Communities' Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation [CESE] report as one of the most overachieving schools in New South Wales. Members can imagine how proud I am, as the school's local member of Parliament, of that achievement. The staff and students of the Madang Avenue Public School should be extremely proud of that result.

I take this opportunity to congratulate them wholeheartedly in this Parliament this evening. I cannot overstate how important schools like Madang Avenue are to communities at large. The school is the centre of the community and deserves recognition for the work the staff, students and school community do. I am personally thankful for that recognition being given to the Madang Avenue Public School. I thank the school's principal, Ms Meredith Myers, and her staff for what they have accomplished. Congratulations Madang Ave Public School! The people of Londonderry are so proud of your achievements and your dedication to your students and community. Congratulations also to the staff, students and school community of the Bennett Road Public School for the work that is being done to transform the lives of the school's students and their educational opportunities.

JILL'S CUISINE TRADITIONAL TOMATO RELISH

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [7.21 p.m.]: We hear a lot from people complaining about how difficult the major supermarket chains can make it for farmers and suppliers thanks to their significant market dominance and price cutting. Shopping for food is big business and can be tough on all in the supply chain. What we do not hear much about, however, are stories from the positive side of the ledger. Jill's Cuisine, which is celebrating 20 years as a supplier to Coles and 750 of its stores, must be at the top of the list of those reporting good outcomes for small suppliers. This is a story that deserves to be told about how a kitchen table business broke into the biggest supermarkets.

When Coles took on Jill's Cuisine and its Traditional Tomato Relish it was a small business indeed. But hard work, a bit of luck and a great recipe combined to help Jill open the doors one after another. Jill's Cuisine Traditional Tomato Relish is manufactured in my electorate of Albury at premises along Table Top Road at Jindera and now finds itself on kitchen tabletops across Australia. The tale begins with rice farming. Jill Davis is a farmer's wife. With her husband, Robin, they grew rice for 16 years in the Southern Riverina. Jill saw the amounts of other local crops that after harvest were going to waste—specifically, tomatoes and onions.

Jill joined other farming families in the making of relishes and other products using the leftover tomatoes and onions. Jill says it was a desire to prevent waste that provided the initial inspiration for what was to become her successful business. She started making tomato relish using her own recipe. Then she made more and more. She began to sell her relish locally and a couple of small supermarkets took it on. The product sold well. "I started to think this might be a business," said Jill, who next approached delis, corner stores and cafes.

She heard about a travelling craft exhibition that visited Albury once a year. She found out they were looking for something foodie—as she puts it—to go on display. Jill jumped at the opportunity, going to many shows across regional Victoria where, importantly, she talked to lots of people and discovered leads to retailers. "I found the exhibitions very time consuming but helpful," said Jill. Typically she would sell out of her popular tomato relish. Soon she was supplying nearly 40 regional outlets, all off her own bat.

It was while promoting her product at a deli outside Coles in Albury that a man came to her little tasting table, sampled the relish and told her she should be supplying Coles like he did with his own product. Soon she found the courage to telephone Coles, where she got onto a buyer who listened with interest and invited her to come and see him. The buyer liked what he tasted and asked how many Coles supermarkets she wanted to supply. Jill replied, "Albury." The delighted buyer gave her nine stores. She made a point of running table tastings at these stores, going out of her way to meet the staff and managers. After six months things were going well, so Jill decided to write a letter to the general manager of Coles. "Supermarkets get so many people moaning at them," she said, "and I wanted to thank them. It's amazing how a little positivity helps." And help it did. Her letter, in modern terms, went viral and was

passed along from one person to another.

It appears the respect is very much mutual. Jill says that Coles never tried to heavy her into lower prices or to do what she did not want to do. A highlight of their relationship came last September when her business was nominated as a finalist in the Coles awards within the "best in-store execution" category. She says they have always paid her, which stands in contrast with her problem in the early years when she would make deliveries to small supermarkets late at night and her precious invoice would slip into the storeman's shirt pocket and then into the washing machine where it was lost.

Now she has moved on from mixing ingredients on the kitchen table, cooking on her home stove and having to shift her little business out of the way each night just to eat dinner at the table. These days her relish heads out from Jindera by the pallet load. Nevertheless, Jill and Robin are still making the relish themselves, albeit with the assistance in the business of a few staff members. And it is a great tomato relish. Not only was it borne out of the environmentally conscious desire to save waste; the relish is made from locally grown produce and is free of any artificial preservatives, colours and flavours. Of course, it is very tasty too. Twenty-two years after she began—the last 20 with Coles on board—Jill is still making her Traditional Tomato Relish herself and still doing business with her loyal customers, retailers large and small. "I took the opportunities as they arose," Jill told me. "You would never think that people could be so interested. It was just a bit of fun, and it grew!" I congratulate Jill Davis.

BLACKTOWN CITY COUNCIL

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) [7.26 p.m.]: I acknowledge the important achievements by Blacktown City Council under the current Labor administration and Mayor Stephen Bali over the past year. Blacktown City Council is the largest local government in the State. Council has delivered its largest budget ever of more than \$500 million and, notably in this current climate, has managed to remain debt free. In this budget council acknowledged the fact that life is already tough for pensioners and showed its support by increasing the voluntary pensioner rebate from \$105 in 2014 to \$200 in 2015, thereby reversing the cuts that were made by the previous Liberal administration. Council has also granted pensioners free entry to the local pools, also reversing the cuts made by the previous administration.

The greatest achievement by Mayor Bali's Labor administration was the reopening of the Mount Druitt swimming pool, which had been closed for two seasons under the previous administration. During the past 12 months council has also been able to lower its infrastructure backlog from \$80 million to less than \$60 million and has plans in place to further reduce that figure by the end of this financial year. Council has a strong stance against violence towards women. Councillors participated in White Ribbon Day events to raise money for this worthy cause. Their involvement, which included abseiling the council building, highlighted the scourge of violence towards women in our society. In the past 12 months Blacktown City Council has held its first Workers Memorial Day as part of the International Day of Mourning that commemorates those who have died at work and, importantly, puts the spotlight on the issue to help prevent any further workplace fatalities.

Through consultation with the community council has been able to restore important festivals to the events calendar. It has given people confidence and a way to build self-esteem by contributing to their community. In a landmark moment for the community of Blacktown, council announced that the Western Sydney Wanderers will make Blacktown the permanent home of its training and administration headquarters. This club is going from strength to strength with around 15,000 members and its presence will add significantly to the sporting life and general public profile of Western Sydney. This council has a vision for the future of the Blacktown Local Government Area. Council is working hard to encourage the Department of Education to relocate its headquarters to Blacktown, bringing with it a significant workforce. Council has reached out and had positive discussions with universities about the future possibility of having a tertiary campus located in Blacktown.

Under the current Labor administration council has gone from strength to strength—restoring

services to the community, providing new services, infrastructure and sporting facilities while remaining debt free. Despite all of those achievements and council's strong fiscal position the Government has labelled Blacktown council as "unfit" for the future. To put such a label on one of the strongest and largest councils in the State makes a mockery of the entire Fit for the Future review. The community of the Blacktown Local Government Area can be proud of their council and can be assured of council's continued success under Mayor Bali and a Labor administration. I congratulate council and Mayor Stephen Bali on their continued support of the community.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.31 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Mount Druitt and share his support for the Western Sydney Wanderers. The member is obviously proud that the team will move its base to Blacktown. The people of Parramatta greatly support the Western Sydney Wanderers, as do many Government and Opposition members. It is a truly great team for the whole Western Sydney, not any particular electorate. We are proud that Venues NSW is involved in the plan to increase the seating capacity of the Pirtek Stadium in Parramatta to 32,000 so more fans can attend games. We welcome members from both sides of the Chamber when they come to Parramatta to watch the Western Sydney Wanderers team play major home games at this stadium with Blacktown remaining the team's training facility and home base.

WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [7.32 p.m.]: I inform the House about an issue that is now causing concern in my electorate. In Wilton a housing estate known as Bingara Gorge was rezoned in 2005 by Wollondilly Shire Council. Ten years on Bingara Gorge is an Urban Development Institute of Australia [UDIA] award winning master planned community on approximately 450 hectares of land. Bingara Gorge is subject to State and local voluntary planning agreements—legal agreements that specify infrastructure contributions, land dedications and various works in kind. The project includes over 110 hectares of environmental protection and recreation lands; an 18-hole golf course and associated country club; a public primary school, which I had the great honour of opening in 2011; and a village retail centre.

The project has approval for 1,165 residential lots. To date, approximately 900 residential lots have been approved by council and nearly 350 homes completed on site. The resulting average lot size is around 900 square metres. The golf course has recently been completed at a cost of over \$24 million. I was fortunate enough to open it with the course designer, golf legend Graham Marsh. This estate has been a huge boost to the Wollondilly community by ensuring new infrastructure is being provided for and, of course, many new jobs have resulted. This all sounds great and it is great for the people already living there. However, a problem that has occurred is an interpretation by council that is now preventing new residents from building their dream home. The issue involves council's refusal to release a three-lot subdivision certificate for homes that form part of the already approved 1,165 quota. There is currently a condition of consent at Bingara Gorge that states:

Prior to the release of the subdivision certificate for more than 585 residential lots all 18 holes of the golf course shall be completed and suitable for use by the public including the provision of car parking, clubhouse and amenities for staff and visitors.

It is believed that this condition has been satisfied as all 18 holes have now been completed and are suitable for use by the public, with parking and required amenities at the country club, which also includes a gymnasium, swimming pool, community meeting space and cafe. The point of difference is that council does not believe the condition has been satisfied and is linking the issue of suitability to the completion of a proposed golf buggy and pedestrian bridge. However, this was a separate development application, lodged some seven years after the condition to which I have referred was imposed. The golf bridge is not required to make the 18 holes suitable for use as the first nine holes have been played on by residents this year and the other nine holes—I am advised—now have arrangements in place making them available. The proponents are happy and willing to build the bridge, but as it crosses the gorge the Federal environmental laws come into effect. I am advised that even though it will be approved the

process can take up to 18 months.

Despite various meetings and solutions being proposed, including a suggested \$2.7 million bond for the bridge, council is currently refusing to move and the issue remains unresolved. I do not stand in the Chamber today in defence of the proponents or someone who owns property in the area but on behalf of the people caught in the middle of this dispute—that is, the home buyers who simply want to build their new dream home. These home buyers are getting increasingly anxious—to the point of tears—about a bureaucratic interpretation. I have had mums and dads contact me stressed that they purchased their land in February this year and who have been told that the matter will be resolved at the earliest in December 2016. Apart from the economic loss to the area, it is unfair to those families who want to get on with life and raise their families. As we all know, holding costs are expensive for families and building costs will go through the roof over an almost two-year period.

Surely council can immediately release the three-lot subdivision certificate that has been sitting with it for over six months. In addition, a 24-lot subdivision certificate was lodged with council last week and will not be released by council until the current impasse is resolved. A further 300 lots sold to date will require certification over the coming months. In the meantime, the affected home buyers can do nothing other than wait. The consequence of continued delays will be fundamental in project revenue and cash flow that goes towards building of additional infrastructure for Wollondilly. Without settlements there can be no house building, with flow-on effects to the construction industry, jobs and the local economy. In simple terms, the project is being strangled and it is impacting on people's lives.

Recently, after working with council very closely over many years, we successfully secured a new housing estate that will see the fifth largest town in New South Wales being built in Wollondilly—namely, Wilton Junction with approximately 16,000 homes. I have concerns about the delivery of the current project of 1,165 homes, let alone one that involves 16,000 homes. I have a good working relationship with the council, but in relation to this matter I must stand up for the mums and dads who are doing it tough this Christmas because instead of moving into their homes they do not even know when they can start to build. To rub more salt into the wounds, these three families are watching 18 other homes being built in their street, as they were part of the 18 planned homes that made up the numbers to get to the halfway point. I call on the council to review its decision and ask that the councillors also look into this matter and see what common-sense measures can be put in place to resolve this devastating issue.

AGED CARE SERVICES

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [7.37 p.m.]: Our older Australians living in residential aged-care facilities are among the most vulnerable people in the community. We all agree they need and deserve the best quality of care. Older people have spent their lives raising children, working to pay taxes, looking after grandkids and passing on their knowledge and skills while volunteering with charities. The least that society can do is to ensure that towards the end of their life they are given the best quality of care and are cared for with dignity and respect. Towards the end of their life many senior citizens are cared for in aged-care facilities. And one day all of us in this room may need to live in an aged-care facility. Would we not want to feel secure in the knowledge that if or when that time comes we will be well cared for?

That is why I support the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association on the issue of the legal requirement to have a registered nurse on duty 24/7 at all aged-care facilities. I welcome the release of the recent upper House committee inquiry into this matter. The committee found that shifts led by a registered nurse often reduced unnecessary hospitalisations and increased the quality of clinical care at residential aged-care facilities. This ultimately reduced the already overwhelming pressure being placed on our hospitals. The committee received 163 submissions—with 80 per cent of them calling for this requirement to remain. The submissions came from nurses, doctors, other healthcare workers, palliative care specialists, community organisations and members of the public. In addition, more than 24,000 people have signed a petition to keep the requirement for a registered nurse to be available around the clock at all nursing homes.

I am deeply concerned at the very idea of an untrained and unqualified person handing out medications to older people. Some of these medications are very strong and if a patient is given the wrong dosage it could have lethal consequences. We know that older people do not always suffer from just one medical condition; they could suffer several complicated conditions that require a medley of medications. It would take a specially trained and qualified registered nurse to know when to deliver medications, and in what order, with food or without food and so on. It would also take a registered nurse to see the subtle signs of when someone is sick. Many of the residents in nursing homes have dementia and are unable to communicate how they are feeling. A registered nurse would be well trained to look for the signs. Can members imagine how many lives are saved this way? I can tell members that there is a lot of concern in the community about the Government's review into this requirement.

I have read some submissions that just break my heart—for example, the story of Des and his late wife, Irene, from Bonnyrigg Heights in my electorate of Cabramatta. Des and Irene were married for 55 years and raised two children. For five years Des watched his wife slip away as dementia grabbed hold of her. He cared for her around the clock, until he just could not cope anymore. This just broke his heart. Irene had to move into a not-for-profit nursing home. Des said that on two occasions Irene would have died if not for the registered nurse on duty. Once she had a bladder infection that was not picked up by any other staff. Then on another occasion she had a fall that resulted in trauma to her head.

Des said that on that occasion, ambulance paramedics were too busy to attend to Irene's bleeding head and the registered nurse was told to manage the problem—and she did. Paramedics arrived three hours later to transport her to hospital where Irene received seven stitches. Irene lived happily in the nursing for nearly two years. Sadly, she passed away earlier this year. Des strongly believes that registered nurses are vital to the care provided to older people living in nursing homes. He has collected more than 1,600 signatures for the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association petition to oppose any changes to the requirement for registered nurses. This man in his older years is now working hard to ensure this requirement remains. The Government needs to listen to Des, the nurses, the health workers and older people living in nursing homes. They all believe the Government should not remove the legal requirement to have a registered nurse on duty 24/7 at all nursing homes. If this Government decides to remove this requirement, it will risk having blood on its hands.

WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [7.42 p.m.]: This evening I will speak briefly about a topic which I know many members have also spoken about today and over the course of the year—the importance of local schools. In Wollondilly we have a huge array of primary schools that do a fantastic job. I often have the pleasure of attending these schools, whether it be to attend school fetes, school presentations or awards presentations. I often go along to these schools and answer questions from the students. Some of the schools in the Wollondilly shire are: Bargo Public School, Tahmoor Public School, Buxton Public School, Thirlmere Public School, Oakdale Public School, The Oaks Public School, Picton Public School, St Anthony's, Yanderra Public School, Appin Public School and Warragamba Public School. I had the absolute honour and privilege of opening our latest and greatest primary school, Wilton Public School, back in 2011 when I was newly elected.

Tonight I am speaking only about schools in the Wollondilly shire local government area. Of course we have many great primary schools in the Wingecarribee local government area which is also in my electorate. I have mentioned these schools specifically because of an issue that is becoming a problem for us in the Wollondilly shire end of my electorate—that is, Wollondilly shire has only one public high school: Picton High School, which is at capacity. This school, which does an amazing job has a fantastic principal and teachers. But with 12 primary schools feeding into that one high school and with the growth that is coming—earlier today I spoke about a new development site at Wilton Junction for 16,000 new homes, which will be the fifth-largest regional city to be developed in New South Wales, right in the heart of Wollondilly—very shortly we will tip over the edge to the point where we desperately need

a second high school.

I have raised this matter directly with the Minister for Education, the Hon Adrian Piccoli. I know that he understands this issue and I take this opportunity tonight to thank him for listening to my concerns and the concerns of my constituents. Local mums and dads are starting to feel concerned about where they are going to send their kids over the next three, four or five years, particularly as Picton High School is basically at capacity now. Earlier this year we had the great announcement that Picton High School was to be upgraded with at least \$5 million allocated for those upgrades. Obviously that does not include the additional money for Gonski, which members have spoken about today.

The Picton High School site can only cater for so many more students. In the very near future we will need a second high school. I highlight this issue this evening for the benefit of all members. This is extremely important for my community. I look forward to working next year with the Minister for Education, the Department of Education, and all the public school principals in my electorate—whom I meet with on a regular basis—to see what we can do to fast-track a second high school for Wollondilly shire. Of course we have a private high school in the Wollondilly shire—the Wollondilly Anglican College which is also growing at a rate of knots. It does a fantastic job. A great highlight for me is its annual musical, and meeting some of its students when they visit the Parliament with Dr Stuart Quarmby.

Now is the time that we need to start planning for a second public high school. The site at Wilton Junction that I mentioned has allocated one public high school and one private school. I am asking for that to be fast-tracked so that we can bring it online sooner rather than later. We need to cater for the current and future demands of my area—not just Wilton Junction but all those other developments in the pipeline. Obviously those 12 primary schools do a fantastic job and will continue to do so with the additional students going into them next year. I thank the Minister.

TRIBUTE TO PHIL SALTER

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.47 p.m.]: Phil Salter was a great man. This man of character loved deeply and was loved in return. His story is proof that the Australian dream is alive and well—the idea that anyone, regardless of their circumstance, can get ahead as long as they are willing to dream big and work hard. He was born in September 1951, the second of Tom and Mary Salter's six children. He was not born into wealth or privilege but, rather, into a household where love was abundant and family was everything—that is the Salter way. It is no secret that his love and admiration for his dad, Tom, contributed to making him the man that he was. Phil was a self-taught man like his dad. He had his enterprising spirit. His dad taught him not only how to get back up when he got knocked down but also the importance of building and maintaining relationships—a skill in which he excelled and one that would ensure his success later in life.

Phil grew up in Sydney's inner west. In 1957 he started primary school at Domremy College and in 1960 he moved to St Patricks College, Strathfield. It was at St Patricks College that Phil met Pete Mattick. This was the start of a friendship that would transform both their lives and later became one of Australia's most successful business partnerships. Throughout high school Phil developed a passion for the game of rugby. He always played in the top teams and made the St Patrick's first 15 in his Higher School Certificate year. That passion never left him; he continued playing well into his thirties. On leaving school Phil won a teaching scholarship at Macquarie University. Before long he worked out that his passion for people and his ability to sell things was where his future lay. In 1972 he entered the real estate industry. He successfully sold real estate until 1976 when he and Pete formally began their first business venture—the opening of a menswear store called Uncle Sam's.

It was during this period that Phil's most important partnership was formed with a beautiful girl from Pymble, Christine Westhoff. It is fair to say that in a life of good fortune, she was his most precious gift. Chrissy was his rock and inspiration. She gave him strength, purpose, joy and friendship. She always stood by him, especially in those last and hardest days. They started a life together in a small home in

Eastwood where they had the first of their children, Daniel, and then Andy and Anna. In 1982 they moved to The Hills district where they welcomed Dom, Richard and Juliet into the world. Family meant everything to Phil; it was always his number one priority. In 1979, whilst still working in menswear, Phil and Pete decided to try a new business idea. They looked into the sampling and small distribution work that Phil's dad, Tom, was doing for Colgate. The opportunity appealed to Phil and Pete as there was no stock, good margins and a good customer base with potential.

They decided to expand their operations by going door to door to seek customers. Unsurprisingly, with Phil's natural ability to deal with people and with his flair for sales, the company took off. It started out as a small family business and became one of the most successful marketing and communications companies in this country. After growing Salmat for two decades, Phil and Pete publicly listed the company on the Australian Stock Exchange in 2002. That business now employs more than 4,000 people and has operations in Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines—none of which would have been possible without him.

Phil was easily one of the most generous people one would ever find. He always made time for a kind word or friendly piece of advice. He rarely turned away a good cause, and used his wealth to support innumerable good works. He funded the St Patrick's Old Boys Rugby Club, supported many Indigenous sporting teams and charities, including Save the Children Australia and the Starlight Foundation. But his favourite charity was the Royal Flying Doctor Service, which provided him with an annual excuse to join his best mates and sons on the outback trek—a tradition that his sons intend to continue.

Phil Salter was taken from us far too early, but what he did in 64 years most of us could never do in 164 years. He left nothing in the tank. He was a man who will be remembered publicly for his extraordinary professional achievements and missed privately for his enormous heart and generous and fun-loving spirit. He was a great son, brother, husband, father, grandfather and friend. The example he set makes one want to be a better person. To the Salter family, this sprawling and intimate clan, I know that Phil's passing has left an enormous hole in their hearts. To his mother, Mary, and siblings, Mike, Jane, Kathy-Anne and Carl, my sincerest condolences for your loss. Phil adored each of you and your families, and I know it was returned many times over. To Daniel, Andy, Anna, Dom, Ritchie and Juliet, who I am lucky to call friends, there are not words big enough to describe how much your dad loved you and how proud he was of the men and women you have become.

To Chrissy, I can only imagine the burdens you have been carrying these past few years. Thank you for the loyalty and love you gave this man on a wonderful journey. We are all grieving with you and here for you at this time. As hard as it is right now, through all the pain and tears it is our obligation to Phil to think not about what might have been but what is because of him. The energies he released, the standards he set, the goals he inspired and the love he gave is not gone. It will live on in the hearts of every one of us who have been lucky enough to know him. May God bless Phil Salter and may he rest in eternal peace.

CHRISTMAS FELICITATIONS

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [7.52 p.m.]: It is a great honour to speak this evening and wish everyone in this Chamber a very merry Christmas. I am looking forward to taking some time off with family and friends and returning rejuvenated to the bear pit in 2016. This place does not operate by politicians alone and I will take this opportunity to acknowledge a number of people. I apologise if I forget anybody or any one group. As a whole there are so many people who make this place work; they are important cogs in a wheel. I thank the Whips for ensuring the House runs smoothly. I particularly thank my good friend and parliamentary colleague the member for Camden, Chris Patterson, the Deputy Whip, Mark Coure, and their staff, Bec and Alex, who do a fantastic job.

I thank The Nationals Whip, Steven Bromhead, who is always first in line in the Chamber for community recognition statements—he keeps this place going. I thank my very good friend the Premier of

New South Wales, Mike Baird, for his guidance and his leadership. I have appreciated a number of conversations we have had over the course of the year on a range of matters and his guidance has been invaluable. The Deputy Premier, Troy Grant, is doing a fantastic job, particularly for my rural electorate of Wollondilly. I appreciate the guidance over the last couple of years, and during my transition to the ministry, of the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, Gladys Berejiklian. I thank the Cabinet and Parliamentary Secretaries. I include the new Parliamentary Secretary, Matt Kean, who is present in the Chamber this evening, and thank him for his hard work this year. It is great working alongside him not just at the start of the year but during the last couple of weeks.

Mr Matt Kean: We have had some special projects.

Mr JAI ROWELL: Yes, special projects that advance the cause of conservatism across the State. I thank the Hansard staff for making all of my speeches sound a lot better than the initial delivery in this place. I thank the Clerk, Ronda, and her team, Helen, Les, Catherine, Rachel, Elaine, Jonathan, Simon, Jason and Rohan. Thank you for your guidance over the last five years. All the attendants do a fantastic job. I thank the catering staff for feeding and watering us. I thank the cleaners, who are always here before we arrive to ensure our offices are spic and span and the place looks wonderful. The Speaker, Shelley Hancock, the Deputy-Speaker, Mr Thomas George, and the Assistant-Speaker, Mr Andrew Fraser, are always there to help the members. I thank the President, Don Harwin, and the staff. The special constables, information technology staff and committee staff all do a wonderful job. As chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters I have been very thankful for the committee staff. I thank the parliamentary liaison officers, chiefs of staffs, the Ministers, security, the maintenance staff and my electorate staff.

I have been fortunate to have a number of electorate staff and volunteers with a wealth of knowledge and dedication to our community. I thank Tracey, Pat Gibbs, Pat Young, David Gavin, Liam Garman and Brooke Hilton, who left to work in the family business earlier this year. I thank my former ministerial staff for the 12 months leading up to the election: Michael Shaw, Kat Steinweiss, Scott Percival, my chief of staff Kathryn Rankin, Kristina Cimino, Aiden Cromarty, Rona and Tegan Le Lay and the great Alan Johnston. They have been invaluable to the transformation of mental health space. I thank all my parliamentary colleagues, particularly on our side of the House, but also on the other side of the House. I note the member for Cabramatta is in the Chamber. I wish him and his family a merry Christmas. I also have to thank those that I spent time with before coming to this place, including my good friend, the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox.

I would like to mention two new recruits to this Parliament. The first is Eleni Petinos, the member for Miranda. It is great to see women representatives in this place and I am proud to work alongside her. I know she is destined for bigger and greater thing. I have known her since she was 17 years of age. It was wonderful to see her give her maiden speech in this place. The second is the Hon. Lou Amato, who is a mate from Wollondilly. He is doing a great job representing south-west Sydney in the other place. I thank the branch members across the Liberal Party who keep me in a job and fight the cause. The people of Wollondilly, the voters and the constituents who make their issues known on a daily basis are the reason I am here. I thank them for their kind words, support and for the issues that they raise.

Finally, I thank my family. I thank my rock, my wife, Belinda. She is fantastic. I have spoken about her over the last couple of days. I have two wonderful sons. Will started high school this year—I am so proud of you. My younger son, Menzies, started primary school this year and this week he lost his first tooth. I know the tooth fairy gave him \$1.50, but my older son told him that is not enough. We will get a PlayStation or something for him later on. I am so proud of my two sons. I wish everybody in this place a merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year.

Private members' statements concluded.

The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.57 p.m. until

Tuesday 16 February 2016 at 12 noon.
