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## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Thursday 18 February 2016

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

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

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Notices of Motions**

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

#### **NOTICES OF MOTIONS**

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have previously asked members to try to limit the length of their motions so that all members have the opportunity to give notice of their motions. Members on both sides of the Chamber have read out lengthy motions in the past. It is disappointing when some members do not have the opportunity to give notice of their motions each morning. I will consider limiting the length of motions if members continue this practice.

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

#### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 12 November 2015.**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [10.13 a.m.]: Having worked through the specific operative provisions of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2015, I now turn to the legislative safeguards contained within the proposed legislation. Labor is very conscious that reforms to child protection must be undertaken very carefully, with great sensitivity and with appropriate safeguards in place. This bill has a number of very important safeguards: Schedule 1 [4] allows the Children's Court to revoke an instrument of guardianship or restraining notice where:

- (a) a successful application has been made for revocation by a parent of the child or young person or,
- (b) an application for a care order contemplated by the proposed new provisions has been made by the Secretary.

New section 38K (2) ensures that the secretary is not required to issue an instrument of guardianship if the secretary is of the opinion that the relevant disqualifying offence:

- (a) occurred where there were significant mitigating circumstances, or
- (b) arose as a result of any illness or condition from which the offender no longer suffers or from any circumstances that no longer exist.

While the bill does not define what these mitigating circumstances might be, this provision should be read

narrowly and is only intended to allow for extraordinary circumstances where it would be manifestly unjust to issue an instrument of guardianship against the offender. There is a similar provision under new section 38Q (2) in relation to the issue of restraining notices. A significant safeguard in the bill is to allow a parent guilty of the disqualifying offence whose child has been removed to apply for a revocation of an instrument of guardianship. This is to ensure that if parents can demonstrate to the Children's Court's satisfaction that they are no longer unfit to care for their child those parents may be authorised to do so. This provision aligns closely with the South Australian Coroner's recommendation 22.2 where he stated:

The power vested in the court to vary or revoke the Minister's custody might be exercised in the convicted parent's favour in the event that they could establish to the court's satisfaction that they had changed their behaviours and attitudes so that the court could be satisfied that they would not subject the child to abuse or neglect.

New section 38O allows that a parent may apply for revocation of an instrument of guardianship. This new section provides:

The Children's Court may, on application by a parent of the child concerned, revoke an instrument of guardianship if satisfied that it is appropriate to do so.

New section 38U sets out the matters to which the Children's Court is to have regard in determining the application as follows:

- (2) Without limiting the matters to which the Children's Court may have regard in determining an application, the Court is to have regard to the following:
  - (a) the age of the victim of the relevant disqualifying offence when it was committed,
  - (b) the seriousness of the relevant disqualifying offence and of the penalty imposed,
  - (c) whether or not the disqualifying offence involved any aggravating factors,
  - (d) whether or not the disqualifying offence occurred where there were significant mitigating circumstances,
  - (e) whether or not the disqualifying offence arose as a result of any illness or condition from which the offender no longer suffers or from any circumstances that no longer exist,
  - (f) whether or not the offender has a record of previous findings of guilt (particularly if the offender has been found guilty of several disqualifying offences or has a record of previous findings of guilt for serious personal violence offences that are not disqualifying offence).

The Children's Court may also have regard to the same matters when determining an application under new section 38T, which provides that an offender can apply for the revocation of a restraining order. The Children's Court may also have regard to the same matters when determining an application under new section 38P, which provides that a woman who has been found guilty of a disqualifying offence and who is expecting a child may, during the term of her pregnancy, apply for an order of the Children's Court to prevent the issuing of an instrument of guardianship in relation to the child. This provision ensures that a pregnant mother guilty of a disqualifying offence has the opportunity to be declared a fit mother by the court prior to her child being removed from her care. This provision acknowledges the significant development and bond that occurs between a mother and child, and that significant stage of development should not be denied to a mother who a court finds is fit to care for her child. Finally, new section 38K (b) ensures in relation to the issue of an instrument of guardianship:

If the child subject to the instrument of guardianship also resides with a parent who has not been found guilty of a disqualifying offence, the Secretary is not to issue an instrument of guardianship, but must instead issue a restraining order under proposed section 38Q against the parent found guilty of the disqualifying offence.

This provision is to ensure that no child is removed from a parent innocent of the disqualifying offence. This provision also aligns directly with the South Australian Coroner's recommendation 22.2 in which he stated:

Furthermore, the Minister would have the same powers in relation to the child as any other child under the Minister's care and protection: for example, the Minister might ... permit the child to remain in the care of some other member of the child's family. This might, for example, include the other parent of the child, who may have no previous conviction in relation to children, and may be a suitable person to care for the child. In such a case the Minister should be empowered to impose conditions on the convicted parent's dealings with the child, if the parents are still in a relationship. That would alleviate the risk that the proposal might work an injustice upon a person with no relevant conviction who happens to have a child with a person to whom the section applies. The Minister would be able to place the child with that parent, if satisfied that he or she was committed to ensuring that the child would be protected from neglect or abuse at the hands of the convicted parent.

This bill emphasises that the rights of the child must remain paramount over the rights of any criminal parents. We must recognise that children, particularly very young children, are the most vulnerable and voiceless in our society. We must do everything in our power not only to protect the children currently at risk of harm but also to prevent future children yet to be born from the evils of those that are simply unfit to care for them. In closing I draw on a passage quoted by the South Australian Coroner in his report of the inquest into the death of Chloe Valentine. The passage comes from Jeremy Sammut's report "Do Not Damage and Disturb: On Child Protection Failures and the Pressure on Out of Home Care in Australia" (2011) and is as follows:

An enlightened truth, and the bedrock of sound child protection, is that childhood is fleeting. This time of life must be optimised for children's sake, and for society's good, because bad early experiences have deleterious, life-long consequences. Because today's child is tomorrow's citizen ...

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Mark Coure and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

## **WYONG SPECIAL AREA (PROTECTION) BILL 2015**

### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 19 November 2015.**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS** (Wyang) [10.21 a.m.]: Professor Pells said in an email to Alan Hayes:

There is a list of 245 houses, numbered 1 to 245 but without location defined, and there are plans showing each house, but without being numbered. So one cannot relate the list and the damage details in that list, to the houses on the maps.

I thought I could work out the numbering system by carefully studying the subsidence prediction contours in relation to the house positions. My conclusion from this is that the numbering of the houses has been made "chaotic" so that it is impossible to know in what damage category a

particular house will fall.

In a further email to Alan Hayes, Professor Pells said:

I have been following up over the weekend the issue of not knowing what the houses are for which damage assessments are given in the EIS. In the process I communicated with one of the people responsible with the subsidence assessments in the EIS. The following is a cut-and-paste from what they wrote to me today:

There was a recognition that mine plans can change over time and these predictions are based on one mine layout only. As you can appreciate, if the longwalls were to be shifted or reoriented within the extent of the Extraction Area, the individual houses would be predicted to experience greater or lesser movements, depending on their locations relative to the longwalls.

So the focus of the report at this stage of the approval process was to provide an indication of overall spread of subsidence predictions and potential impacts for houses rather than predictions and assessments at an individual level.

If landowners independently looked up our report to find what the predictions are based on the mine plan right now, they would be forgiven for thinking that these were the numbers that will apply to their house if the mine was approved.

They may not realise that mine plans can change in the future. This might create extra angst in the future if the predictions from the final layout were higher than those shown at the moment because the longwalls have shifted or changed orientation or something.

What I find extraordinary is that this means the EIS is not an EIS. It is supposed to be a statement of the environmental impacts—full stop. Human beings and their houses are part of that environment and what this is saying to me is that once the mine is approved they can change anything, so nothing in the present EIS has any substance. Not the water impacts, the noise, the dust or anything else. They may change longwall face widths and hence the magnitude and pattern of subsidence and impacts on groundwater, they may change the method of coal handling and hence dust, traffic and noise, etc etc.

In stage one of the proposed mine, 150 brick homes in the modern rural Hue Hue subdivision sit directly above the Awaba Tuff material, which is described as unstable and unpredictable, casting doubt on the validity of the miner's subsidence figures. Awaba Tuff is described in all mining manuals as being particularly difficult material to stabilise. This puts the Wallarah 2 proposal into the realms of a dangerous experiment risking the fabric of many family homes. From 2002 until 2012 the Mine Subsidence Board has only accepted 45 per cent of subsidence claims. Many of those remain unpaid as people are strung out in the Mining Warden's Court.

In 2014 the Planning Assessment Commission accepted that the economic analysis in the environmental impact statement was grossly flawed and that there will be little economic value flowing to the Government and the Central Coast region. It was further found that the royalties and other miscellaneous income streams back to the Government from the mine would be far less than the subsidised benefits the miners would receive from the Government, leaving New South Wales receiving less than it was paying—and that has become even worse with the current coal prices. The damage to public infrastructure, in particular the 39 high-voltage electricity transmission towers and rail upgrades, has never been fully addressed to determine who will cover the cost. This would run into multimillions of dollars.

Approval of the Wallarah 2 coal project was also dependent upon consent from the Darkinjung

Local Aboriginal Land Council to allow the mining company to build a rail spur through its land. This consent was refused and the matter was taken to the Land and Environment Court, which ruled that the mining company's development application was defective and could not be approved without the land council's consent. The Government has accepted the court's decision. Forced mediation between the land council and the miners has also failed, with access consent still being withheld. Operation Spicer, which saw the demise of a number of Liberal parliamentary members, revealed secret meetings between the miners and senior Ministers of the O'Farrell Government, including a trip to South Korea to the miner's head office and dinner parties with senior Ministers and executives of the mining company at the home of one of the executives.

The community and local government have soundly rejected this project since its inception because the risks are so great to the water supply of the Central Coast region and because of the dangerous health outcomes to residents. The Dooralong and Yarramalong water catchment is the major water resource for more than 350,000 people and the growing housing development in the northern area of Wyong shire which sits beside the proposed coalmine loading and transport facility. It should be noted that in September 1950, New South Wales *Government Gazette* 153 proclaimed the Wyong Water Supply Catchment District to be preserved in connection with the Wyong water supply under the control of the Wyong Shire Council. I am proud to be presenting this legislation to the Parliament on behalf of the Wyong and Central Coast communities. It demonstrates that at least some politicians deliver on their election promises. I pay tribute to Labor leader Luke Foley for his support in meeting this election promise.

Since 2006 I have fought to have this project stopped. I publicly congratulated former Premier Barry O'Farrell at a rally held at Mardi for his ironclad commitment of "No ifs, no buts. We will move special legislation if necessary" to the people of the Wyong valleys. I acknowledge Greg Piper, the member for Lake Macquarie, and former Wyong mayor Councillor Bob Graham, a former Liberal member of this place, for their ongoing opposition to this mining project, which threatens our local area. Finally, I acknowledge and thank Alan Hayes, OAM, Mike Campbell and Warren Simmons, together with all the supporters and members of the Australian Coal Alliance who formed the "Water Not Coal" campaign, who have stridently opposed Wallarah 2 since its inception. This Government, under Premier Baird and planning Minister Stokes, has the opportunity to right the wrongs of former Premier Barry O'Farrell and former Minister Chris Hartcher and keep the solemn promise made to the electorate, and across the State, and support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Stephen Bromhead and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

**Pursuant to sessional order General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) proceeded with.**

## **RURAL ROAD AND BRIDGE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [10.31 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Government has invested a record \$19.5 billion into road and bridge infrastructure in rural and regional New South Wales.
- (2) Acknowledges the huge positive impact this investment is already having on communities across country New South Wales.
- (3) Commends the Government for successfully rectifying the former Government's underspending on road and bridge infrastructure in rural and regional New South Wales

during its 16 years in office.

As I briefly touched on yesterday in this place, since 2011 this Government has invested an historic \$19.5 billion into road and bridge infrastructure in country New South Wales. The results of that investment are already becoming evident. For a country member of Parliament there are few sweeter smells than the smell of the coming of beautiful rain, freshly cut lucerne waiting to be raked and baled, and fresh bitumen. On a recent visit to my electorate, Minister Ajaka was concerned about the number of roadworks because it impeded our swift travel from Moree to Armidale. I wound down the car windows and said, "Minister, breathe it in. That is the smell of progress. We love the smell of roadworks in the bush." I can assure the Minister that on his next visit he will be travelling on beautiful new roads and our trip will be quicker.

It is not only the smell of investment we love but also the sight of pylons rising up from the ground for our new bridges. Ribbons are being cut and we are hearing the applause of grateful communities across New South Wales, who are now seeing a massive injection of capital for projects that were long neglected by Labor governments. The projects are now being completed, thanks to this Government's record investment. As the Deputy Premier and proud member for Dubbo said yesterday, it is a bonanza for the bush. When one looks around the length and breadth of the bush in country New South Wales one sees new roads, the widening and extension of roads and brand new bridges.

In coastal areas there is the \$8 billion Pacific Highway upgrade, one of the biggest projects in the Southern Hemisphere. Currently more than 3,500 people are working on that project, and next year that number will grow with 12,000 indirect and direct jobs being created. The Pacific Highway will become a much safer and quicker transport route. To the south, thus far about \$1 billion has been spent on the Princes Highway. This project has been long planned and talked about by past governments; it is now being done. I know it is happening because the member for Kiama constantly reminds me and other members in this place about that work. It was long campaigned for and is now being delivered, and this road will no longer be the deathtrap it once was.

The major reason for the Government undertaking these upgrades in country New South Wales is productivity. Massive upgrades are being made to our key freight transport routes. The Government wants to make it cheaper, easier and quicker to get produce from the farm gate to the plate. The Government wants a better price at the farm gate. Now, farmers will spend less money transporting their produce because they will be able to use ordinary roads. They will no longer have to go the long way round because of pinch points or bridges that do not meet the current standards or roads that are simply not up to scratch. The Government is investing billions of dollars in upgrading roads so that road trains and B-triples can freight the produce as quickly as possible.

For 30 years the communities in the Orange electorate campaigned for the \$56 million Goanna Hill upgrade. It is now underway. The \$26 million replacement Stingray Creek Bridge in the electorate of the member for Port Macquarie is more than halfway through its construction phase. Since 2011 the Government has spent more than \$268 million in repairs on the Newell Highway—the spine that runs through the greatest part of this State, connecting the north with the south. It is a very important freight route. In my electorate the \$30 million Moree bypass has now been completed. More bypasses will be constructed along the Newell Highway at Coonabarabran, Parkes and Boggabilla and there will be major pavement upgrades. The Government is ensuring that heavy vehicle freight travelling through these areas can bypass towns and get from A to B as quickly as possible. This also keeps heavy trucks out of the central business districts of our beautiful country communities, making it safer for pedestrians and a better environment for the local townspeople.

It is all about unlocking our potential in the bush and allowing freight to pass through more easily and safely. As a country member of Parliament I could not be more proud. Members might have thought that I was joking when I said I love the smell of fresh bitumen, but I seriously do love it and I will never tire of it. More is coming for New South Wales, such as the Emu Crossing Bridge and the new \$200 million Grafton Bridge, which was promised by Bob Carr and is now being delivered by this Government. As I



said yesterday, it is a veritable feast of road and bridge projects in the bush. It is magnificent and the dividends will continue as the Government makes freight more efficient and builds more bridges and roads in the bush.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS** (Wyang) [10.38 a.m.]: Members on this side of the House are getting used to the self-congratulatory motions of those opposite. The Government continues to sing its own praises from the top of every hill and road whilst our communities are seeing the real impact of this Government's policy.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George)**: Order! Members will come to order.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS**: This Government has sold everything that was not nailed down—and quite a few things that were nailed down. It has sold our electricity network, TAFE colleges, ports, Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] offices—

**Mr Jihad Dib**: Our farm school, Hurlstone.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS**: That is right, Hurlstone agricultural college. Money should be spent in regional areas. Government members should not be crowing about it, given the Government has sold State assets and taken them away from community ownership. They should not be congratulating themselves on that. They should be explaining to the people of New South Wales how services will be delivered in New South Wales in years to come. The member for Shellharbour is in the Chamber. In 2011, 500 students were attending her local TAFE college. The college has been deliberately run down through this Government's policies and will no longer be used as a TAFE college. Shellharbour is an area that has high youth unemployment and youth in that area need to develop their skills.

The member for Swansea is also present in the Chamber. Her Roads and Maritime Services office has been shut down, as have many around the State. She will be moving a motion on this issue. People now go to a Service NSW office where customers are greeted at the door by a concierge who takes them to a booth to use a phone to talk to somebody who usually knows nothing about what is going on. There are problems with the Government's policies and we will see the impacts of its policies down the track. Government members should enjoy their glowing messages of praise now because I can guarantee that in three years the messages will not be so glowing.

It is wrong to say that in its 16 years in government Labor spent nothing in the regions. The truth is that over 10 years in government an average of \$2.42 billion was spent on roads and bridges in rural and regional areas. Any government would like to increase that amount but Labor decided it was more important to keep services in public hands. We did not sell our community assets; so there is a trade-off. The Nationals have sold out. They have rolled over, with their legs and arms in the air, and have allowed community assets to be put into private hands. They did a deal with Essential Energy and the Government decided to hang on to it because it operates in country areas. But yesterday we found out that 800 jobs will be cut from the electricity sector.

**Mr Adam Marshall**: Point of order: With all deference to the member for Wyong, for whom I have great regard, I ask under Standing Order 76 that he be brought back to the leave of the motion. The motion is specifically about road and bridge infrastructure in country New South Wales; it is not about electricity or motor registries.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George)**: Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Wyong will return to the leave of the motion, which refers specifically to "rural road and bridge infrastructure investment".

**Mr DAVID HARRIS**: I was explaining how the infrastructure is being paid for. An essential part of building roads and bridges is making choices about how to pay for them. I was expressing the view that

Labor did spend money on roads and bridges in rural and regional areas but it decided not to sell every public asset to do more. At the last election Labor made a whole range of commitments to regional and rural areas. We committed to a \$23 million rescue package for Upper Hunter roads, which would affect council areas in Singleton, Gloucester, Dungog, Muswellbrook and Liverpool Plains. The project would include sealing the gravel section of Scone Road and upgrading Merriwa Road, Glenbrook Road and Brookers Bridge. We committed \$247 million to the northern rivers councils for road upgrades, including \$177 million for the new Grafton Bridge; \$60 million for the Kings Highway; a \$250,000 matching grant to replace the Minneys Creek Bridge near Tabulam; and a \$9 million investment in rail trails. I note that rail trail representatives are here today.

Labor made commitments at the last election that we would implement without the need to sell our assets. People had a clear choice and some country seats had massive swings toward us. A lot of country people wanted to hang on to their assets. They knew that not as much money would be allocated but they would not lose important assets. They knew they would not lose jobs, such as the 800 Essential Energy jobs that will be cut in country areas. Labor made those commitments without the need for privatisation.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** Point of order: The member for Wyong is misleading the House. The Australian Energy Regulator has set the budget—

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** He is misleading the House. The Australian Energy Regulator has set the benchmark for electricity in this State.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** In the first four years of this Government we saw a \$6.5 billion underspend of its budget. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [10.45 a.m.]: As a representative of an area witnessing a transformation in its roads, I am delighted to support this motion on road and bridge infrastructure investment in rural and regional areas of New South Wales. We all know that country roads are costly to build and maintain when looked at purely in respect of the population that they service. I am pleased that this Government is being totally supportive of our needs. I refer to the Riverina Highway east of Albury. In the early 1990s work was undertaken to transform that section of road from Albury to Lake Hume, but it was not completed. The last 2.5 kilometres of winding road was unmade. Instead, the then Government, after it came to office in 1995, reduced the speed limit as a measure of safety.

Over the years that I have been a representative of the area I have endeavoured to have that work improved to match the other section of road that leads out from Albury. The best the Labor Government could achieve was tallying road counts to tell us that the volumes did not merit the cost. However, with the growth of population, tourism, the popularity of cycling in that region, and the number of heavy vehicles using the road to access the farming areas of Victoria, a major hazard has developed. I am pleased that this Government has responded and work is well under way on an \$11 million fix—which the Labor Government had backed away from. This work is nearing completion and should be completed by April this year.

The Riverina Highway east of Albury was a difficult planning job. I commend Roads and Maritime Services, its planners, engineers and the people conducting the works for a magnificent job that does not fail to impress anyone who drives out to Lake Hume. Importantly, they did their research and realised that the works would be an inconvenience during the Christmas holiday period when Lake Hume becomes a mecca for tourists and residents of the Albury area. The work was shut down between 18 December and 4 January so that local traffic would not be impeded by heavy transport and earthworks. That was a

safety measure that was well appreciated and will be considered for the Easter break, depending on the progress of the work at that point.

Stage one, from Sandy Creek to Hume Weir Village, started in October. It involves widening the road, installing the guard rail, providing new and improved signage, improving drainage, and rebuilding the road surface. It is a magnificent project and one that we will be delighted to see completed. And that is not all; the good news continues. The second round of the Fixing Country Roads program is open and more work is being made available to councils to help repair their roads and bridges. This funding is part of a \$500 million commitment from Rebuilding NSW to fix council-owned infrastructure that creates bottlenecks and hinders efficient freight transport. It is designed to better connect local roads to State highways and key freight hubs, such as silos, saleyards, railheads, supermarket distribution centres, operating industrial parks and depots, to make it easier to move regional freight from paddock to port.

I am pleased to say that in round one our area was successful in obtaining funding for Corowa Shire Council for the much-needed upgrade of Hopefield Bridge, for Urana Shire Council for the Boree Creek freight link and for Greater Hume Shire Council for Jingellic Road at Yarara Gap. Last week I was at Yarara Gap. The work there on one of the most dangerous sections of road in my electorate is progressing at such a pace that it will now be one of the safest gaps to climb in the area. I commend Roads and Maritime Services and this Government for the work being undertaken.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [10.49 a.m.]: As a member of The Nationals I am proud to support the motion of the member for Northern Tablelands, a fantastic local member and champion for his area. It was interesting to listen to the contribution of the member for Wyong. A number of things he said were simply untrue. His remarks were straight out of the Labor Party handbook: "Say anything, say whatever needs to be said, and tell lies to get your point across." The member for Wyong said that everything is being sold. That is just not true. He obviously does not know the commercial difference between a lease and a sale. The assets have been leased.

The member for Wyong also spoke about the electricity network. The Government leased the metropolitan assets and saved the assets in regional New South Wales. The Australian Energy Regulator said that there must be efficiencies, which resulted in a restructure of Essential Energy. It was not the New South Wales Government or The Nationals who said that; it was the Australian Energy Regulator—the same organisation Labor went to in 2009 with a proposal to gold plate the poles and wires across New South Wales at a cost of \$19.4 billion. This Government stopped that—for example, the TransGrid Stroud to Taree line, the Lismore to Bonshaw line and the line at Armidale—to help drive down electricity costs.

The next lie by the member for Wyong was that this Government had the money for projects because it had sold the poles and wires. Wrong, wrong, wrong. The \$19.5 billion investment, which is the subject of this motion, was committed by the Government in its previous four-year term, before the lease of the poles and wires. That \$19.5 billion is from the New South Wales budget, which shows what an efficient and effective government we have been over the past 4½ years. The member for Wyong spoke of Labor spending \$2.4 billion. I am a lawyer, not an accountant, but \$19.5 billion over four years is close to spending \$5 billion a year—double what Labor was spending on regional New South Wales. This Government knows that regional New South Wales plays a major role in this State becoming number one again.

Labor members are so city-centric they do not understand the importance of regional New South Wales. The member for Northern Tablelands said that this investment is not only important for road safety but also important for freight and commerce—getting the produce from the farms, which help create the wealth of this State, to the ports for export. I am sure that no Labor member has had the experience of attending a fatal accident on the Pacific Highway. My area alone was averaging almost 28 fatalities a year, and for every fatal accident there were at least six major accidents involving injury. That has stopped because of the duplication of the Pacific Highway, and that work is still going ahead. The

duplication was started by The Nationals under John Howard when the Pacific Highway was declared a national road, thereby attracting Federal funding.

In my area, Bulahdelah—one of the biggest blackspots in all of Australia—has a bypass and the Pacific Highway duplication on the North Coast is going ahead and should be delivered by 2020. There are 3,500 people working on the highway and contributing to the local economy, which is a fantastic result for New South Wales. Funding has been provided for the new Marlee and Duffs bridges, \$6 million for the upgrade of Martin Bridge and funding for the Bulahdelah bypass. The Greater Taree City Council has had a 261 per cent increase in funding for its roads. Roads and bridges are being built everywhere. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [10.53 a.m.]: It would be remiss of me if I did not speak in support of the motion moved by my colleague the member for Northern Tablelands. The Central Coast is a classic example of how the Labor Party failed to deliver road infrastructure over 16 long years. The greatest joke on the Central Coast was the West Gosford intersection. Under Labor it became the Bermuda Triangle of roads; it was ignored over the 16 years of the Labor Government. After the first four years of the Liberal Government, the West Gosford intersection, a \$170 million development, was delivered seven months ahead of schedule and, even better, on budget.

There was also the debacle of the Central Coast Highway. Under Labor that project was going to be delivered by 2030, and Labor was proud to say that. I am pleased to say that under this Government over the past four years that project has been completed and on budget. It is staggering that the member for Wyong complains about the Government's spending on roads, given that the members representing The Entrance, Wyong and Gosford electorates in this year's budget are receiving nearly \$100 million in funding for roads compared to Terrigal's \$9 million. But am I not complaining. This Government determines the projects that are needed and delivers them.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Members will direct their remarks through the Chair. I am concerned that some members seem to be calling in to the tuckshop before they come to the House and are consuming handfuls of food in the Chamber.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** The Government is also delivering the Charles Kay intersection ahead of schedule and on budget. The Government committed to building this key road project. Every road project the Government has committed to is being delivered, and that includes the duplication of the Pacific Highway as mentioned by the member for Northern Tablelands. That road project has already started. The member for Wyong should think carefully before he criticises road delivery by this Government. We have taken the lead on road projects and we are delivering.

When I doorknocked during the election campaign the single biggest issue in the community was the lack of road infrastructure on the Central Coast. The Government has taken that on board and we are fighting to deliver the best roads possible to the people of the Central Coast. The Government sees spending on regional roads as a necessity. I identified an intersection in Kincumber as a key road project and over the next three years the Government will deliver a brand new intersection for the long-suffering people of the Central Coast. This Government will deliver the roads that people need. It is all about the mums and dads—

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Terrigal has the call.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** I thank my colleagues for their enthusiasm. It is all about making it easier for the mums and dads to get their kids to school and for people to do business on the Central Coast. Over the next 3½ years the Government will continue to deliver the essential road projects that are needed to continue to grow this State.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [10.57 a.m.]: I remind those opposite that this Government

has invested a record \$19.5 billion in road and bridge infrastructure in rural and regional New South Wales.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** Zero for Swansea.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** Swansea needs a better member.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Tamworth will direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** I note the interjection of the member for Swansea, who said there is zero for Swansea. The people of Swansea need a better member; they need someone who is going to fight for them. There is a message there for the member. She has answered her own question. Let me educate the member for Swansea and those opposite about what an effective member can do in relation to upgrades to roads and bridges and so on. In the Tamworth electorate the Oxley Highway between Tamworth and Gunnedah had been neglected for so long before 2011. Upgrades were promised but never delivered. We recently opened the \$8 million Tangaratta Creek Bridge—a magnificent piece of infrastructure. A significant number of local contractors were employed on that project. That speaks volumes about what this Government is doing with respect to creating local jobs.

Local businesses as well as the Tamworth Regional Council provided the road base, the crushed rock, the steel and the cement. That is an example of the ways in which we are trying to invest in regional and rural New South Wales. We have done more than provide the \$8 million upgrade to Tangaratta Creek Bridge. There was a significant blackspot at the intersection of Meadows Lane and the New England Highway. I pay tribute to the regional director of Roads and Maritimes Services, John Alexander, who consistently comes to our region and asks us how he can help us to get the funding required to upgrade.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** John the builder.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** Yes, he is John the builder; I note the interjection from the member for Northern Tablelands. John Alexander does an outstanding job. Meadows Lane really constituted an accident waiting to happen. Trucks and vehicles heading south on the New England Highway about eight kilometres south of Tamworth were turning right onto Meadows Lane from the middle of a highway. So at night motorists heading south on the single-lane highway who wished to turn right would have trucks banking up behind them. We fought hard and, now, through the great work of Roads and Maritime Services, a slip lane has been put in place so that vehicles can safely turn right into Meadows Lane off the New England Highway. That is just another fine example of the effort being put into road and bridge infrastructure.

Manilla Road, Tamworth, is another example. Mr Deputy-Speaker, you have been in this House a long time and would have heard this issue brought up time and again by members. Promises were made but never delivered. The Labor Government rolled out roads Minister after roads Minister, who stood on Manilla Road and, hand on heart, said, "We will fix this." That continued until the Hon. Duncan Gay, the present Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, released the funds. Now Manilla Road is safe. It is wider, flatter and smoother. Now that road infrastructure is helping that region to grow, although there is more work to be done there. I commend the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing this motion forward. I commend the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay in the other place, and his excellent staff, who continue to work to make our electorates a better place in which to live—ultimately, building a better region.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.01 a.m.], by leave: I thank members for granting me leave.

**Ms Yasmin Catley:** We cannot wait.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** I can understand that the Opposition cannot wait, because I always like to contribute to worthwhile debates. There is no more worthwhile debate than this one. It is a great pleasure to join my Nationals colleagues, particularly the member for Northern Tablelands, in expounding on this issue, on behalf of the constituents of my former electorate, Hawkesbury, which I represented for two terms, who were the beneficiaries of millions and millions of dollars of roads funding, thanks to this Government under the guidance of our very capable Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. I served very proudly as the Hon. Duncan Gay's parliamentary secretary for a large number of years.

When we were in opposition, towards the latter part of the sad 16 years of horror under the Labor Government, I do not know how many times I stood up to talk about the fatalities that occurred on the Bells Line of Road. For years and years that road was overrepresented in regard to fatal and tragic accidents. Those accidents wrought havoc on many families who travelled up and down that road. The cost in human lives lost was incalculable but there was also a cost to government budgets. I am very proud to say that tens of millions of dollars have been injected into half a dozen passing lanes on that road. It has been my great pleasure to go to that area with the Hon. Duncan Gay on several occasions and highlight the fact that these overtaking lanes are providing a much safer road.

Other work has been done, including safety improvements and straightening out some corners along that road. So the journey for the many people who travel in that area of the Blue Mountains has improved. I also acknowledge the fact that The Nationals were strong advocates of the upgrade of the Bells Line of Road because many of our colleagues—people who represent country areas—drive down that road on a daily or weekly basis to get to Parliament in order to carry out their duties, whether they be ministerial duties or other duties in this Chamber. They recognised how necessary that road is. This underlines the need to have representatives at a grass-roots level who recognise the problems across this State.

Nobody has better represented the needs of regional Australia than our colleagues, The Nationals. That is why we have benefited from so many millions of dollars being put into the Bells Line of Road. Through the advocacy of rural representatives—including The Nationals members—we have seen a significant amount of funding put into rural bridges. I do not think there are any wooden bridges in my electorate of Castle Hill, but in the Hawkesbury—the electorate I represented previously—about eight bridges, including at Little Wheeny Creek and on the Colo River, have been replaced by this Government. That provides safer access for members of those communities and for people who travel on the bus networks that transport children to and from schools on a daily basis. We tend to forget, sometimes, that buses of seven or eight tonnes apply a great deal of strain to older timber bridges. Gradually, bit by bit, those bridges are being replaced. That is occurring thanks to this Government and to the Hon. Duncan Gay, Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. A record \$5.5 billion is being invested each year by this Government in roads across New South Wales. It is a great outcome for the New South Wales constituency.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [11.05 a.m.], in reply: I note the interjection of the member for Lake Macquarie. Yes, this debate is coming to a close. Like me, he loves to extol the virtues of investing in road and bridge infrastructure outside our major metropolitan areas. As has been said previously in this debate, this infrastructure is being built not just to make our travel routes safer but, in country areas, to increase freight productivity and to unlock the vast potential of the productive areas of country New South Wales.

I thank the members who have participated in this debate, representing the electorates of Wyong, Albury, Myall Lakes, Terrigal, Tamworth and Castle Hill. In supporting the motion those members relayed to the House important projects in their electorates that have been completed or are well underway. In the course of this debate some numbers were thrown around. To sum up this debate I thought I would inject a few figures of my own. Since this Government took office in 2011, \$19.5 billion has been spent on roads

and bridge infrastructure in country New South Wales. The average annual spend under this Government has been almost \$5 billion a year, which is a 67 per cent increase in average annual funding for country New South Wales compared to the Labor Government. I say that not to score a political point but to point out the facts. One can argue about why that is, but it is a fact. I congratulate the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, on his great work. He is the best roads Minister this State has seen in a very long time.

**Mr Chris Patterson:** Ever.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** "Ever," says the member for Camden. I have not been in the Parliament as long as the member for Camden, so I cannot say, but the Hon. Duncan Gay is certainly a brilliant roads Minister. Every community in country New South Wales has benefited from his stewardship of that portfolio. There are roads going in everywhere and bridges going up. We have heard about some of those projects from members in this debate today. It is important that we continue this investment, and we will. That can happen only if a government has a strong balance sheet from which to generate the funds to provide investment to country areas. I am proud to be part of the Liberal-Nationals Government that is doing just that and will continue to do just that.

I acknowledge the wonderful people of the community of Bundarra, who recently celebrated the opening of the new Emu Crossing Bridge after 70 years of waiting. The \$4.2 million bridge was opened by the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. It is a 150-metre long, 20-metre high dual lane concrete structure. It replaces the former low-level crossing, which was first used 96 years ago. It shows that communities that are persistent eventually achieve the investment they seek. They certainly do from this Government. I thank members for taking part in this debate. I congratulate the Government and roads Minister Duncan Gay on the wonderful investment that is transforming country communities and our freight productivity in this State. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 49**

|                |                 |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Mr Anderson    | Mr Greenwich    | Mr Provest      |
| Mr Aplin       | Mr Gulaptis     | Mr Roberts      |
| Mr Barilaro    | Mr Henskens     | Mr Rowell       |
| Ms Berejiklian | Ms Hodgkinson   | Mr Sidoti       |
| 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 Maguire      | Mr Tudehope     |
| Mrs Davies     | Mr Marshall     | Ms Upton        |
| Mr Dominello   | Mr Notley-Smith | Mr Ward         |
| Mr Elliott     | Mr O'Dea        | Mr Williams     |
| Mr Evans       | Mrs Pavey       | Mrs Williams    |
| Mr Fraser      | Mr Perrottet    |                 |
| Mr Gee         | Ms Petinos      | <i>Tellers,</i> |
| Ms Gibbons     | Mr Piccoli      | Mr Bromhead     |
| Ms Goward      | Mr Piper        | Mr Patterson    |

**Noes, 33**

Ms Aitchison  
Mr Atalla  
Ms Car  
Ms Catley  
Mr Chanthivong  
Mr Crakanthorp  
Mr Daley  
Mr Dib  
Ms Doyle  
Ms Finn  
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 Robertson  
Ms K. Smith  
Ms T. F. Smith  
Ms Washington  
Ms Watson  
Mr Zangari

*Tellers,*  
Mr Lalich  
Mr Warren

### **Pairs**

Mr Ayres  
Mr Baird  
Mrs Skinner

Mr Barr  
Ms Burney  
Mr Foley

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

### **TORONTO MOTOR REGISTRY**

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [11.18 a.m.]: I seek leave to amend Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 324 by deleting paragraphs (3) and (4) and inserting instead:

(3) Calls on the Government to provide a Service NSW office in Toronto.

**Leave granted.**

Accordingly, I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the high level of community concern about the recently announced closure of the Toronto Motor Registry and the relocation of its services to the Warners Bay Service NSW centre.
- (2) Notes the inconvenience and disadvantage the closure of the Toronto registry will cause for the people of western and southern Lake Macquarie.
- (3) Calls on the Government to provide a Service NSW office in Toronto.

My notice of motion was submitted last August when, after a year or more of speculation and uncertainty, our community was told that it was to lose its well-used and highly regarded motor registry. Since that time things have moved quickly, with its years of service to the community coming to an end at the close of business on 23 October last year. The site itself was put to auction and sold in January, therefore



necessitating my amendment to the original motion, though it is an amendment which still fits with the feelings of my local community.

The Toronto Motor Registry had served the area well for many years, with residents from Wyee, Morisset and Cooranbong in the south through to Speers Point, Teralba and Booragul to the north as well as all those areas in between, and then some, having made good use of its services. The motor registry was well situated and very accessible for the kinds of services that were provided by the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] and Roads and Maritime Services during those years. This explains why many people chose to do their business in Toronto even if for some it was a little further away.

Do not get me wrong, I am not opposed to the Government making changes that deliver better service and that respond to contemporary times; I do not hear anyone arguing against the concept of Service NSW, whether they be from the western side of Lake Macquarie or from the east, where the member for Swansea has been raising similar issues for her constituents. I first spoke about the then pending closure of the Toronto Motor Registry on 8 September last year. Then on 22 October, the day before the closure, we had a debate in this Chamber following a petition of nearly 11,000 signatures being raised in just over two weeks. This was a fantastic example of the Lake Macquarie community saying "No" to this proposal, and their opinion has not changed as far as I hear. As I have said though, they are not against the concept of Service NSW; indeed, like me, they support it. But they want Service NSW strategically placed—not to minimise the number of offices but to provide for convenient and expected ease of access. The move to Warners Bay fails on that measure for the vast majority of people from the area.

I have previously raised the issue of the poor location of the Warners Bay Service NSW office. Indeed its location is, glaringly, the main problem. Apart from the locality being a considerable extra distance for thousands of customers and being one of the worst areas for residents of my electorate to access by public transport, it is also a congested site internal to the bulky goods retail precinct. Once again, this is a problem shared by residents of the Swansea electorate. No doubt when the commercial centre was developed it was not envisaged that there would be the kind of turnover there is now and the traffic conflicts from having one outlet that are apparent now.

I receive regular feedback from customers saying that their trip to Warners Bay was, if not a nightmare, much more difficult than they would want or expect. The concierge welcome and the staff are not the problem; indeed I hear good things about them and that part of the experience. What remains a problem is the inconvenience of the location, the distance to travel to get there and the difficulty in parking. I have had feedback that business owners are quite unhappy about the loss of parking. However there may be some that appreciate the additional passing traffic; after all, there is apparently plenty of it—as a matter of fact there is probably too much.

The Toronto Motor Registry was not only an important facility but also one of the few government services in the area. We do not have a local TAFE, and I note that the member for Swansea has concerns in that regard too. We do not have a hospital. We do not have much visible government presence in our area at all, and to take away the RTA in a town and commercial centre accessed by residents for so many goods and services just does not make sense. For our area it was a kick in the guts.

The Minister for Finance, Services and Property did join in the debate held in October. While I appreciated his willingness to do that, the information that both he and his Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Hornsby, provided was little more than what we had already heard about the intentions of the philosophy and policies behind Service NSW—something I support in principle but not in its application in this instance. I acknowledge that the Government, through Service NSW, has provided a component of a solution, at least for the short term, for the people of western Lake Macquarie—that is, the weekly Service NSW mobile offices that have been operating at Morisset and Toronto Multipurpose Centres since the closure of the Toronto Motor Registry. They have been extended recently but will soon finish up unless

further extended, and I certainly hope that the Minister considers doing that before addressing this for the long term.

As I say, that is not a long-term solution. I call on the Government and the Minister to reconsider the way in which Service NSW was rolled out in our area; to take into account the difficult logistics of our region with population dispersed over an extensive area, long distances to travel, poor public transport access to the Warners Bay site and parking often stretched to or beyond what is reasonable; and, in reconsidering, to provide a Service NSW presence permanently in Toronto. This is a very real issue and I appreciate that the member for Swansea is here to support this motion today. She has very similar issues in her electorate.

I respectfully suggest that, for the nooks and crannies around the western side of Lake Macquarie, having no contiguous public transport through that corridor makes things a bit worse. On the other hand, for people from the Swansea electorate the distances involved are quite significant. The difficulty in getting to Warners Bay around the lake, through Belmont and Croudace Bay, is something that people just do not enjoy experiencing. They had a very well situated service for many years and they do not understand why this change has occurred, because it just does not make sense, given the philosophy of Service NSW. However I am looking forward to hearing some answers from the Parliamentary Secretary and the Government.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [11.25 a.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Government on this motion. From the outset I say that the Government opposes this motion. However, that said, the Government and the Minister do have the utmost respect for the member for Lake Macquarie, and this is not just lip service. We have worked with the member for Lake Macquarie and will continue to work with him and the members from surrounding electorates to get good outcomes. I will go through the reasons why we are opposing this motion; however we are extremely supportive of the Lake Macquarie region and want to work with the member for Lake Macquarie to achieve outcomes. I just want to put that on the record, and the Minister has asked me to reiterate those comments.

Service NSW offers a one-stop service where people can access more than 800 transactions from agencies across government, which will save them time. Instead of having to go to multiple sites, people will be able to complete transactions at one location. Our one-stop shops offer transactions from over 18 government agencies compared to the single agency transactions undertaken at a motor registry. Other transactions include Seniors Card applications, Housing NSW payments, Fair Trading licences, birth certificate applications and many more.

Locations are chosen as part of a network which benefits the whole community and allows access to a wider range of transaction services than those offered at existing motor registries. Today customers at Toronto and Belmont already travel to Newcastle for services not provided by their respective motor registries. We appreciate that this is a change for residents, and the member for Lake Macquarie said that some residents of the Hunter are not happy with this change. But the whole idea behind the one-stop shop is that people need only go to one place—a much more refined place offering a much greater service, and a quicker service with better opening hours. They will have a better experience there. Unfortunately, we cannot have one of these centres in every location—it just would not work. Service NSW has already merged the Carrington Motor Registry, the Fair Trading counter at Newcastle and soon the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages at Newcastle. Why are Belmont and Toronto being relocated? Belmont and Toronto motor registries are small sites unable to accommodate Service NSW requirements and driver testing to meet current and future needs of the region.

A temporary mobile service has been deployed in the Toronto and Belmont area to cater for modified or restricted licence holders and to help them through this change. Approximately 200 people in Toronto have self-selected to drive less than 20 kilometres, with another 145 in Belmont. I will now give some key facts about customer numbers and staffing. The Warners Bay Service Centre currently serves around 370 customers a day, and that number is due to grow to about 700 customers a day. Last week

alone the Warners Bay Service Centre served more than 4,000 customers. It has the capacity to meet the customer numbers from Belmont and Toronto, with its extended trading hours, more staff and the facility to make appointments. By comparison, the Belmont Motor Registry served around 260 customers a day and Toronto around 240 a day. Warners Bay Service Centre has 27 staff. In comparison, the former Belmont Motor Registry had six staff members and the former Toronto Motor Registry had eight.

In Gregory Hills in my electorate there has been a tremendous response to the service centre due to its extended opening hours. Warners Bay Service Centre is open longer than motor registries. It is open from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. on weekdays—so pre-work and post-work—and from 8.30 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. on Saturdays. This compares to 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on weekdays at Belmont Motor Registry, and 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on weekdays and 8.30 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays at Toronto. Customers will find that these longer opening hours on weekdays and at weekends suit them. Also, Warners Bay Service Centre is located in the Warners Bay shopping precinct and is easily accessible by private vehicles and buses.

In my local area the Narellan Motor Registry and the Ingleburn Motor Registry have been closed. Residents expressed the same concerns as have been raised by the member for Lake Macquarie. However, from day one customers found they had a much nicer experience at the new service centre, which is a much more vibrant facility. We have received only positive feedback regarding the 300 per cent or 400 per cent increase in customer transactions. There has also been a large increase in multiple customer transactions, as people kill two or three birds with one stone when they are at the service centre.

We will listen to the concerns raised by the member for Lake Macquarie and work with him to make the transition as seamless as possible. I am not trying to tell the member for Lake Macquarie how to suck eggs but I am relating the experiences of my constituents who thought the sky was going to fall in when they heard that their local motor registries were to close. The sky has not fallen in and customers have instead experienced a bright, sunny day. People appreciate the Service NSW experience. We have also set up pop-up stores, with one in Macarthur Square, close to the now-closed Ingleburn registry. That has been a tremendous success. Some days more than 200 people seek services at that pop-up store. A lot of thought goes into picking locations to do the best we can for the community by ensuring that no matter what service is offered it meets people's needs.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [11.32 a.m.]: I thank the member for Camden for relaying the experience in his electorate, but the reality is that the Warners Bay Service Centre has been open for months and the experience there is in stark contrast to that relayed by the member for Camden. I speak in full support of the fine motion moved by the member for Lake Macquarie about the closure of the Toronto Motor Registry and his call for the Government to establish a Service NSW Centre in his electorate. The Government is closing motor registries across New South Wales. It has closed them in Maroubra, Campbelltown, Toronto and, of course, Belmont, in the Swansea electorate. The closure of the registry in The Entrance is imminent, and I note that the member for The Entrance is in the Chamber today. I support the member's opposition to that closure.

The Government says that it is closing those registries in the name of efficiency, productivity and quality service delivery. But upon the closure of these local motor registries we find that replacement services are few and far between, and often in inaccessible and inconvenient locations. The residents of Lake Macquarie—almost 200,000 people—are being told that they will now need to get themselves to the Warners Bay Service Centre if they want to transact business face to face. That means a lot of people are being funnelled into one facility that has been characterised as inaccessible and ill-equipped to handle the business that closing two well-patronised motor registries has generated.

I agree with the second part of the member's motion, which notes the inconvenience and disadvantage that the closure of the Toronto Motor Registry will cause for the people of western and southern Lake Macquarie. The closure of the Belmont Motor Registry, which is in the Swansea electorate,

will also inconvenience and disadvantage eastern Lake Macquarie residents. During discussion of the 10,000 signatures petition presented by the member for Lake Macquarie, Minister Perrottet said:

The people of New South Wales rightly expect to access New South Wales Government services quickly, conveniently and simply. They expect services to be delivered in ways and at times that suit their busy lives. The New South Wales Government has a strong commitment to putting the citizen at the heart of customer service delivery.

I certainly agree that the people of New South Wales expect access to quick, convenient and simple services. But this expectation is far from a reality for the people who visit the Warners Bay Service Centre. Accessibility issues, parking problems, a lack of facilities and amenities, and blowouts in waiting times are common issues that people have raised with me since the closure of the Belmont Motor Registry—people like Yvonne from Belmont. Yvonne wrote to me about her difficult experience at Warners Bay. She began her email:

At 9:30 I began my search for a disability park at Warners Bay (there are only two) while in a bumper to bumper vehicle line stretching back to the entrance of the industrial area where the service centre is located.

Oh my god Yasmin—

she wrote, recounting what happened when she finally got to the door—

people were lined up out the door, and we were advised that there was a wait of at least 30 minutes.

I have a medical condition, and was advised that there was no way to speed up or allow for anyone with health issues to receive priority service.

I left disgusted and feeling targeted by a so called "best for the community dream" that has become a nightmare for a large majority especially those with any health condition.

I have heard hundreds of stories like Yvonne's since the Government closed the Belmont Motor Registry. Last year, when discussing the 10,000 signatures petition presented by the member for Lake Macquarie, I spoke about the reasons that closing motor registries is bad for a regional electorate such as Swansea. We are nothing like Sydney metropolitan electorates, and I do not think the Minister gets that. We do not have an integrated transport network or a dense population and front-line services are few and far between, with successive State and Federal Liberal governments hell-bent on getting rid of our government offices. From Medicare and Centrelink to the motor registry, those governments have shown that they do not care about regional New South Wales. I join the member for Lake Macquarie in calling on the Government to provide a Service NSW centre in Toronto.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.36 a.m.]: I am glad to make a contribution to debate on this important issue. The member for Lake Macquarie is a good member who often brings commonsense motions about matters of general concern. With Service NSW the Government has demonstrated the many advantages of bringing under one roof more than 800 transactions from agencies across government. But that is not the issue, as the member for Lake Macquarie has acknowledged. Surveys show that there is widespread community stakeholder support and strong customer satisfaction—which is around 98 per cent—for this change. In saying that, often the 2 per cent who express dissatisfaction are very loud and vocal, and sometimes surveys can be misleading.

In Five Dock, in my electorate, I received many complaints when a service that residents had used for many years was closed and relocated. The member for Swansea spoke eloquently about the

Government's closure of Roads and Maritime Services offices across the State but she failed to mention that new service centres have opened. She must be careful not to be too negative. It is important to inform local residents about this process—such education is important in relation to all legislation introduced in this place. A government can have the best policies in the world but if it cannot sell them it is doomed. In Five Dock I received a lot of complaints and criticism when that office closed. Locals said the office was convenient, being located right on their doorstep. But residents at the other end of my electorate—on the Rhodes-Concord side, where there is massive growth—did not complain because the office was relocated to Burwood, which is closer for them. Facilities will always be more convenient for some people.

It is important to mention that service centres have not just been plonked down willy-nilly. Service NSW evaluates service centre locations against strict criteria, including population catchment, estimated population growth, geographical spread, availability of suitable sites and maximising the overall access for communities. I understand this task is more difficult in rural and regional areas of New South Wales as the population is not concentrated in a single area. But consumers save time if they are able to complete several transactions at one location. The member for Camden noted the benefits of the service centre being open from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. on weekdays and from 8.30 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. on Saturdays, as well as the fact that appointments can be made. That is important to people with busy lifestyles. While I sympathise with the argument put forward by the member for Lake Macquarie, I think the benefits of service centres outweigh any negatives.

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [11.40 a.m.]: In August last year a headline in the *Newcastle Herald* declared:

Service New South Wales flags 'One stop shop' for Wallsend as RTAs close at Toronto, Belmont

The same piece trumpeted the advantages of Service NSW centres: They have extended trading hours and provide access to more than 800 government transactions. Throughout the process of shutting the motor registry at Toronto the Baird Government's catchcry has been "efficiency". But tell me: How is it efficient for residents of Toronto and Belmont and the surrounding areas to have to travel to Wallsend in order to access State government services? It takes a minimum of 20 minutes to drive from the old Toronto registry site to the Service NSW centre at Wallsend. I grew up in west Wallsend and my mother drove me to the centre to get my licence, so I know it is not an insignificant journey. It takes a minimum of 40 minutes via public transport.

The trip to Warners Bay is almost as arduous: 16 minutes by car and twice that time on public transport. That does not take into account the further difficulties faced by people of limited means or with limited mobility. What is efficient about that? Does the Baird Government expect every person in the area to fight their way to Wallsend or to Warners Bay? In the same *Newcastle Herald* article the member for Swansea pointed out that her entire electorate would be without access to State government services. The member for Lake Macquarie said:

The Warners Bay centre is not easily accessed by public transport and is already struggling to meet demand, with customers reporting long waiting times and difficulty parking.

Meanwhile, the Wallsend Service Centre faces its own difficulties. It shares a carpark with a very busy shopping centre, a commercial hub in the western suburbs of Newcastle. As more people are forced by the closures to travel to Wallsend and demand increases, parking pressures will increase also. That is happening already. Public transport in the western suburbs, which is already in dire need of a comprehensive review and overhaul, will be stretched to the limit.

These closures are another example of a Sydney-centric government ignoring the realities of life in the Hunter region. Our public transport networks are neither as extensive nor as efficient as those in Sydney. Our communities are less centralised and rely on local services and local service delivery. Local

residents want the Baird Government to understand their needs. Toronto needs a Service NSW centre; the surrounding communities need a Service NSW centre at Toronto. I join the member for Lake Macquarie and member for Swansea in calling for the reversal of this decision and the construction of a Service NSW centre at Toronto. More broadly, I call on the Government to heed the wishes of regional centres and regional residents.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.44 a.m.]: I do not think I am the only person in this Chamber who has had a bad experience at a Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] office. I think everyone's first experience with an RTA office would have been when they went to get a licence. I did that on my seventeenth birthday and there was no problem. However, a year later, like every young boy from the bush I applied to get a heavy vehicle driver licence. My boss was very supportive and booked me in at Blacktown RTA at 2.30 p.m. We fought our way through traffic to the office and found a spot to park the truck. I then queued with about 15 people only to be informed when I reached the front counter that we were in the wrong queue and I should have seen the bloke at the other counter. But by then I was three minutes late for my test so I had to make another appointment for another day. Needless to say, my boss was quite shocked—not because I had to return to take my test at a later time but probably by the expletives that I let fly, which would have made a blacksmith blush. As we left the room my boss said "I'm buggered if I know how we're ever going to get your driver's licence." I said, "Mate, we won't be doing it here; we'll go to another RTA, at Richmond." That is what we did and I got my heavy vehicle driver licence.

The arrogance and intimidation displayed by some RTA officers in the past was beyond the pale; it was completely and utterly unacceptable. Different officers gave different advice. It was not necessary. For that reason I was proud to join former Premier Barry O'Farrell and the member for Lismore in opening the first Service NSW centre, in Sydney. It was also my great pleasure to open other centres prior to the last State election in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads. I opened the centre at Prospect and joined the Minister for Finance and Services at the opening of the centre in my electorate of Castle Hill which, like the service centre at Warners Bay, is located in a bulky goods area.

I note the advocacy of the member for Lake Macquarie on behalf of his community and acknowledge that it is 10 kilometres from Toronto to Warners Bay, which is not an insignificant distance to travel to access a high-quality service. I note also that in this day and age a high percentage of people conduct their business online—although I acknowledge some seniors in our community do not use the internet. For example, people can get their green slip online, which has negated the need for many to visit the new service centres. It is interesting that the member for Swansea argued in support of the Toronto service centre, which is 23 kilometres from Swansea—or a little less if the member swims across the lake. It is 13 kilometres from Swansea to the Warners Bay Service Centre. I acknowledge the member's advocacy on behalf of her community. I have had first-hand experience of the Liverpool Service Centre and I know that the community appreciates the well-resourced, high-quality service provided by all service centres.

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [11.48 a.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Camden, Swansea, Drummoyne, Wallsend and Castle Hill for participating in the debate. I will deal with the last speaker first as his contribution is no doubt resonating in members' minds. The good member for Castle Hill has previously aired his emotional issues in this Chamber, and the anecdote about his bad experience in a motor registry goes some way towards explaining them. I offer him the opportunity to speak with me about the emotional damage he appears to have suffered as I may be able to help him. I thank the member for Swansea and the member for Wallsend for eloquently supporting my motion and for advocating on behalf of their constituents.

Previously the region was served by the Toronto and Belmont motor registries. We have heard that the public is not opposed to Service NSW centres, but that is not what this debate is about. Many Service NSW employees worked previously for the Roads and Traffic Authority and for Roads and Maritime Services; they are experienced employees. Some of them might have lined up to harass the

member for Castle Hill when he was attempting to gain his heavy vehicle licence but most of them are good public servants. It is not about that. The aim to provide better, more efficient service is appreciated and endorsed by members and the public. Unfortunately, in this particular circumstance it has not worked. I appreciated hearing the experiences of the member for Camden and the member for Drummoyne, but they are different from the experiences of my constituents.

The accessibility of the site is a vital issue. I do not dismiss the point made by the member for Drummoyne, who said that Service NSW does not plonk centres randomly around the State. I know that; I have spoken to Service NSW. But this is a very difficult site to access. The member for Camden said it was located within the Warners Bay shopping centre, but that is not correct. If it was located within the shopping centre my argument would be less forceful as accessibility to public transport would be improved. The present site has atrocious public transport availability and customers must compete for parking spaces. I appreciate the support of the member for Swansea and the member for Wallsend, who understand the area well. I sympathise with the member for Swansea. She understands the tyranny of distance and the lack of contiguous public transport that affects her electorate. For example, it can take up to six hours for someone in Wangi Wangi or on the Morisset peninsula to travel 10 kilometres. This decision is wrong and must be addressed.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 37**

|                |              |                 |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Ms Aitchison   | Ms Harrison  | Mr Park         |
| Mr Atalla      | Ms Hay       | Mr Parker       |
| Ms Burney      | Ms Haylen    | Mr Piper        |
| Ms Car         | Mr Hoenig    | Mr Robertson    |
| Ms Catley      | Ms Hornery   | Ms K. Smith     |
| Mr Chanthivong | Mr Kamper    | Ms T. F. Smith  |
| Mr Crakanthorp | Ms Leong     | Ms Washington   |
| Mr Daley       | Mr Lynch     | Ms Watson       |
| Mr Dib         | Dr McDermott | Mr Zangari      |
| Ms Doyle       | Ms McKay     |                 |
| Ms Finn        | Mr Mehan     | <i>Tellers,</i> |
| Mr Greenwich   | Ms Mihailuk  | Mr Lulich       |
| Mr Harris      | Mr Minns     | Mr Warren       |

**Noes, 46**

|                |               |             |
|----------------|---------------|-------------|
| Mr Anderson    | Ms Goward     | Mr Piccoli  |
| Mr Aplin       | Mr Gulaptis   | Mr Provest  |
| Mr Barilaro    | Mr Hazzard    | Mr Roberts  |
| Ms Berejiklian | Mr Henskens   | Mr Sidoti   |
| Mr Brookes     | Ms Hodgkinson | Mr Speakman |
| Mr Conolly     | Mr Humphries  | Mr Stokes   |
| Mr Constance   | Mr Johnsen    | Mr Taylor   |
| Mr Coure       | Mr Kean       | Mr Toole    |
| Mr Crouch      | Dr Lee        | Ms Upton    |
| Mrs Davies     | Mr Maguire    | Mr Ward     |
| Mr Dominello   | Mr Marshall   | Mr Williams |

Mr Elliott  
Mr Evans  
Mr Gee  
Mr George  
Ms Gibbons

Mr Notley-Smith  
Mr O'Dea  
Mrs Pavey  
Mr Perrottet  
Ms Petinos

Mrs Williams  
  
*Tellers,*  
Mr Bromhead  
Mr Patterson

### **Pairs**

Mr Barr  
Mr Foley

Mr Ayres  
Mr Baird

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

### **NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [12.01 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the New England Conservatorium of Music on winning the prestigious Art Music Award for Excellence in a Regional Area, awarded at the annual Arts Music Awards gala, for its 2014 choral showcase New England Sings.
- (2) Notes New England Sings incorporated performers from the Armidale Youth and Symphony orchestras, Armidale City Band, the Armidale Pipe Band, and more than 800 school students and 40 teachers from 23 schools in Armidale, Bellingen, Gunnedah, Inverell, Tamworth and Walcha.
- (3) Acknowledges the Arts Music Awards as Australia's most prestigious national music event presented by the Australasian Performing Rights Association and the Australian Music Centre.

Today I share with members the amazing contribution that the New England Conservatorium of Music, or NECOM, as it is better known, makes to the Northern Tablelands and wider region through the delivery of outstanding musical programs. Of special note is the work it does with younger people, from babes in arms to young people approaching the end of their school days. Since 2003 NECOM has supported and nurtured students ranging from aspiring musicians with music flowing through their veins to students bundled off by doting parents to struggle with clefs, codas and concertos. In fact, in 2003 the conservatorium opened for business with a total of two viola students. NECOM has amazed all in the community by developing leading programs that now deliver an estimated 21,000 hours of music services annually to more than 5,500 students across our region. NECOM is now one of five tier 1 regional conservatoriums in New South Wales and has expanded to nearby Inverell to deliver programs in the north-west of the electorate.

It is appropriate at this juncture to acknowledge and congratulate NECOM Director Susanne James and the management team and teaching staff on their amazing contribution to the establishment and ongoing growth of NECOM. Board members Francesca Andreoni, Cathy Archer, Lorraine Coffey, Brett Constable, Caroline Downer, David Gee, Rosemary Leitch, AM, Greg Moin, Bruce Myers and outgoing board members Chairman Dr Arthur Rickards, OAM, John Brady and Liz Egan bring incredible



dedication and passion to their roles as educators. Their energy and enthusiasm is boundless and it is a pleasure to publicly acknowledge them.

It was the work done in the schools across the region that singled out NECOM for praise on the national stage when the 2015 Australasian Performing Rights Association [APRA] and the Australian Music Centre's Art Music Award for Excellence in a Regional Area was presented to NECOM. The award recognised the outstanding achievement of the 2014 New England Sings choral showcase. New England Sings is an event that defies logistical sense. It is a wonderful example of the tenacity and dedication of the teachers, volunteers and supporters of NECOM that a concept such as New England Sings can even work—let alone work to a level that Australia's most prestigious national music event, the Art Music Awards, singles it out for special recognition.

New England Sings is one of the largest choral events in Australia. It involves 800-plus school students and more than 40 teachers from 23 schools in Armidale, Bellingen, Gunnedah, Inverell, Tamworth and Walcha, plus 80 musicians from the Armidale youth and symphony orchestras, Armidale City Band and the Armidale Pipe Band. Incredibly, NECOM has joined again with the Armidale Music Teachers Association and regional schools in planning for an even bigger New England Sings to be staged in October this year. No doubt I will also bring news of that successful event to the House. NECOM has commissioned Australian composers Luke Byrne and Paul Jarman to write choral works for the choirs of more than 800 schoolchildren to premiere at the event.

That is not the only program currently in the works at NECOM. Nineteen of NECOM's choral singers took part in the Gondwana Choirs National Choral School in Sydney last month. Gondwana Choirs is Australia's most prestigious choral organisation and is internationally acclaimed for its innovative and outstanding quality of training. Its National Choral School is an annual event for Australia's most talented young singers, composers and conductors. Auditions are rigorous and very competitive. More than 500 children from across Australia and New Zealand auditioned for more than 280 places in the National Choral School. It is a record for so many choristers from one regional centre to be selected to represent Armidale and the New England region.

NECOM continues to achieve accolades for its innovative programs for children and adults with disabilities. NECOM established the Side by Side Choir in 2013 and it is the only one of its kind in New South Wales. This socially inclusive choir brings together teenagers from the Special Education Unit at Armidale High School to sing alongside their Armidale High School peers who are mainstream music students or choristers from the school choir. The students from the Special Education Unit also attend songwriting workshops run by NECOM and perform their songs in public concerts throughout Armidale. The Side by Side Choir starred as a solo choir at the 2014 New England Sings and is continuing to gain recognition for its heartwarming performances throughout Armidale.

It would be remiss of me not to detail the decade of outstanding leadership of NECOM by Arthur Rickards, who retired as chairman in December last year. He successfully negotiated with the Department of Education to approve the establishment of NECOM in 2004 and since then has overseen its development and meteoric rise to join the other tier 1 regional conservatoriums of New South Wales at Bathurst, the Central Coast, the Riverina and Wollongong. With the smallest regional population of any tier 1 conservatorium, the achievements of the New England conservatorium are exemplary. The long list of achievements and the growth of the conservatorium once again highlight the importance of State Government funding to support NECOM into the future. I acknowledge the many young people who have passed through the NECOM halls and the work of Susanne James and her staff. It is a pleasure to extol the virtues of NECOM in this place. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [12.08 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by my colleague from the Northern Tablelands and commend him for his continued support of all facets of life within his electorate. As well as doing an enormous amount of work in a variety of areas he is also a firm believer in the promotion of the arts and the involvement of youth within them. I am led to believe that he is

something of a closet baritone. Maybe we will hear more of that one day—perhaps at this year's Christmas party.

I congratulate the New England Conservatorium of Music on winning the prestigious Art Music Award for Excellence in a Regional Area. Regional areas have to deal with the tyranny of distance. Also the availability of teachers and opportunities is quite different to that of metropolitan areas. I congratulate all those involved including the teachers, the students who performed and, most importantly, the parents who obviously sacrificed time and resources in allowing their children to take part. I also congratulate the Armidale Youth Orchestra, the Armidale Symphony Orchestra and the Armidale City Band. This is one that is very close to your Scottish heritage, Mr Assistant Speaker: Armidale Pipe Band. I know you are a very big fan and your brother is a very talented bagpiper. I have been told that very shortly you will be donning the kilt for more Scottish festivities—let us hope that it fits.

Some 800 students and 40 teachers from 23 schools in Armidale, Bellingen, Gunnedah, Inverell, Tamworth and Walcha—that includes some big and some small cities—were involved. It is great to see opportunities being given to our students in regional areas to compete on a State level and also on a national level. Perhaps one day the member for Northern Tablelands will see them on *The Voice* or *Australia's Got Talent*. Often students from regional areas go on to greater and better things. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge a couple of young people in my electorate who have achieved some significant advancement in the world of music and entertainment. A former Tweed River High School student, Zane Kingi, who performs under the name of Zane Francis, was the 2015 triple J Unearthed winner. I have had the pleasure of hearing Zane perform at a number of school events and I can confidently say Australia will be hearing a lot more from Zane in the very near future.

A young lass, Ayesha Gough, is an incredibly gifted pianist from Tweed Heads. She is 21 years old and studying advanced performance at the Queensland Conservatorium. In 2015 she won the prestigious Lev Vlassenko Piano Competition, a very highly sought after award. She was a feature artist at last year's classical musical festival at Tyalgum in the electorate of Lismore. The festival is held each year and attracts many thousands of people. At the other end of the spectrum—and I like to be fair with this—aspiring young rock musicians in the Tweed are gearing up for another big Tweed Battle of the Bands competition, which will take place in April in the brand-new automotive garage section at the TAFE college. It is very popular. If their Facebook page is any indication, last year's winners HighTide are making the most of their success. I encourage all youth within the Tweed to become actively involved in the arts and music, and to follow their chosen careers. It is like chasing a dream.

Yesterday in this place the member for Orange gave us an impression of Elvis and previously members have sung in this Chamber—possibly a first, although there could be some improvement. Through his motion the member for Northern Tablelands has recognised something quite significant. It is important to bring students together and to provide them with experienced teachers, because they not only need the talent; they need the assistance of really good, skilled teachers to unwrap their artistic ability so that it can evolve. The member for Northern Tablelands clearly has a very active interest in the arts and an ongoing desire to promote his local area. All members in this place have a duty to promote the talent in their areas and to promote their youth. Members from both sides of the House have said that the youth are our future. We should do all we can to give them the opportunities and support they need to live successful lives and contribute not only to their local community but also to the great State of New South Wales and, ultimately, to Australia.

**Mr LEE EVANS** (Heathcote) [12.15 p.m.]: I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing this very important motion to the House today. I concur with his exuberance about the New England Conservatorium of Music [NECOM], which is a fantastic organisation. I understand that Side by Side Choir began as a solo choir. In 2014 the New England Singers continued to gain recognition with heart-warming performances throughout Armidale. Other NECOM programs include the Mini Minstrels Program in preschools and early childhood education; and instrumental, choral and ensemble programs for kindergarten to year 12, supporting the New South Wales music curriculum. It sounds fantastic.

Obviously the people of New England, with the member for Northern Tablelands—

**Mr Adam Marshall:** Can you sing?

**Mr LEE EVANS:** I can sing. I was in the choir as a kid and I have a fantastic voice, if I do say so myself. But I will not demonstrate that today. I remember the recorder choir very well from recent days prior to Christmas. I am sure many members have sat through fantastic renditions from recorder groups at school presentations. It is fantastic to see kids enjoying music. NECOM also delivers an Aboriginal education program, including early childhood classes in primary schools and a mentoring program in secondary schools. NECOM also delivers music therapy programs for children and adults with disabilities, which I will dwell on for a second or two.

Currently I am doing some work with a professor with music therapy for kids with disabilities. Apparently it is a very good thing, particularly for autistic kids. It is something that is being investigated as part of the curriculum for kids with disabilities—to put music within their environment so that they stay calm. My son works in the disabilities area. They play a lot of classical music to keep the kids calm and then when they want them to wake up after their afternoon naps they play something a little more upbeat and their mood changes with the music. I think it is something that in years to come will become standard across New South Wales and Australia.

NECOM also provides community and school enrichment programs and events, scholarships and bursaries, masterclasses and workshops, instrument hire, and regional conservatorium initiatives with the Sydney Opera House: Opera Australia Orchestra Project 2012, Orchestra Workshop with Concertgebouw 2013 and Orchestra Workshop with London Symphony 2014. Again I congratulate the member for Northern Tablelands on bringing this to our attention. My life has been enriched by learning about what happens in New England. I am very proud of him as a colleague and as a member of Parliament. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon) [12.19 p.m.]: I commend the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing the motion regarding regional music to the attention of the Chamber.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** Clever.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** I am glad that my play on words was noted by my musically attuned friend sitting behind me. It is my belief that the member for Northern Tablelands is an accomplished musician—I am not sure what he plays, as opposed to playing up at times. The New England Conservatorium of Music [NECOM] was recently awarded a very prestigious award. The Barwon electorate does not have a conservatorium of music. We rely on the goodwill of the New England Conservatorium of Music at Armidale and the Tamworth Regional Conservatorium of Music, and from my home community of Moree to south Narrabri students have access to support and training from both of those conservatoriums, and at times they have provided outreach to some of the more remote areas. But culturally we live on and we also rely on some of the larger centres.

The Armidale conservatorium has branded the area as what I would describe as a diversity of the arts and cultural appreciation, which can sometimes be forgotten in country areas. NECOM has made an outstanding effort in providing tuition, fundamental training and services to 5,500 students across the Northern Tablelands and broader area. NECOM is now a tier 1 regional conservatorium in New South Wales. This is testament to the commitment that Liberal-Nationals Coalition governments have made to rural areas not only in music but also the arts. The New England north-west, which includes part of my electorate, now has a strong arts presence and a strong arts program, and it continues to grow. It is no accident that The Nationals have held the Arts portfolio for some time and that the recognition the regions deserve has been captured. This is being well demonstrated not only at the Armidale conservatorium but also across the broader area.

I take this opportunity to commend the work of some of the arts councils, in particular Orana Arts in my area and Outback Arts, which stretches to the Far West. As I said, we do not have a conservatorium as such, but through the Arts and Cultural Development Program we are able to access some of the resources and expertise that places like NECOM can provide. It is part of the music network, which is great for the creative arts and visual arts generally for regional New South Wales. I commend the member for Northern Tablelands for his motion and congratulate NECOM on its prestigious award.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES** (Mulgoa—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.23 p.m.]: I am extremely pleased and delighted to contribute to this valuable and important motion on the New England Conservatorium of Music and the outstanding result that this group of fabulously talented and dedicated people have delivered to the New England area. I join my colleagues in congratulating the member for Northern Tablelands on his passion and connection to his community. He has identified this fantastic result and brought that reality from his rural electorate to this place so that we all can appreciate the outstanding work that is being done in rural and regional New South Wales.

I thank the staff and board members of the New England Conservatorium of Music, many of whom give up many hours of their time as volunteers, for providing these students with a cultural and rich experience that they may otherwise miss out on. I also thank the families and carers of these young students. If it were not for the carers, relatives, big brothers or big sisters who take these children to their lessons and to venues so they can perform in front of an audience, they would not have this experience. If it were not for all of them, these children would never enjoy the cultural experience that many of us in the big cities sometimes take for granted.

Prior to coming into this place I worked at the University of Western Sydney, now known as Western Sydney University, for a period of time. Around 2000 or 2001 the university was approached by Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Australia to establish a centre on the Kingswood campus. Indeed, I worked very closely with the financial controller of the university at the time to push through what we felt at times were small barriers. Finally the university agreed and the centre was established on the Kingswood campus. Over the years I have visited the centre and watched music therapists work with children with disabilities—some with very severe disabilities.

I have seen young, inward people, completely disconnected from their surroundings, connect with the rhythm of music. Music is powerful. It can sometimes shock us, cause us to laugh or cause us to cry. The New England Conservatorium of Music is a great resource. It has been wonderful to hear of the fantastic result of those dedicated teachers and tutors. I congratulate everyone involved on this outstanding result. Indeed, I look forward to hearing more in the years ahead. I again congratulate the member for Northern Tablelands on his motion.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [12.27 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Tweed, Heathcote, Barwon and Mulgoa for their contributions to this debate. It has provided them with an opportunity, dare I say, to blow their own trumpet or perhaps add a new string to their bow. They too have congratulated the work of the New England Conservatorium of Music [NECOM], and I thank them for doing so. As I said in my earlier remarks, the work that NECOM does is extraordinary not only with New England Sings, the largest choral event in Australia for which it won this prestigious award, but also with students and adults in our community with disabilities by giving them access to music.

As the member for Mulgoa said, music has a powerful impact on people. Students are being given access to high-class tuition and those at the elite level are being given a pathway to professional and international performance. With expectations that all conservatoriums must grow and increase their engagement with schools across country New South Wales, it is vital that the Government continues to support them, recognise the achievements they make and match that with the appropriate level of funding. As a local member of Parliament I have had the pleasure of going in to bat for the New England Conservatorium of Music a number of times to source funding for programs that were in dire need of

support. I have remained committed to supporting NECOM. Indeed, I count myself fortunate as a country member of Parliament to have an amazing organisation such as NECOM in our region. I will continue to support its programs and the wonderful work it does for young people and adults with disabilities in our communities. I acknowledge all the young people who have passed through NECOM's halls over the years who have gone on to pursue a musical career.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! If the member for Tweed wishes to have a private conversation he will do so outside the Chamber.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** I thought the member for Tweed would be interested in this point.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** He is more interested in forced amalgamations in Walcha. Why do you not support the community?

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** I do not know what that interjection was about, but this motion is about supporting the community. This motion is about the New England Conservatorium of Music, the work it is doing and the wonderful achievements of young people in that organisation. They have an opportunity to pursue a love of music or to develop their love of music and culture through conservatoriums. They learn persistence and discipline, which are qualities that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives, regardless of whether they pursue music as a career. NECOM and other regional conservatoriums have an important role in our communities. I am delighted and proud as the member for Northern Tablelands to extoll the virtues of NECOM. I wish Susan James and her team the best for the future and I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## **SOUTH COAST INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [12.31 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Government voted against placing a precise timetable on the construction of the Albion Park Rail bypass and the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital.
- (2) Calls on the Government to start construction on the Albion Park Rail bypass in the 2017-18 budget year.
- (3) Calls on the Government to start construction of the upgrade of the Shellharbour Hospital in the 2016-17 budget year.

The two infrastructure projects mentioned in this motion were announced by the Liberals in March last year. Combined, they represent an \$800 million investment in a major road and an upgrade to health services in the southern Illawarra. Both projects have bipartisan political support in this place. In moving this notice of motion in the House today, I do not seek to score cheap political points; I expect Government speakers to do that. My intention is to make it clear to the House that the Liberals promised these two projects during the last election and they now have an obligation to deliver them. When I first listed this motion on the *Notice Paper* last August, the Illawarra was staring down a bleak tunnel. BlueScope Steel was reviewing its operations and the threat of closure was real. Thousands of jobs were to disappear and the regional economy would have been decimated. We risked becoming the Detroit of Australia. Thankfully, that scenario did not unfold. Still, 500 direct steel jobs have been slashed and almost on a daily basis we continue to see reports of businesses foreclosing in the Illawarra.

When the private sector withdraws from the economy, it is the responsibility of the government of the day to do all that is possible to fill the vacuum. That is exactly what the Federal and State Labor governments did when we faced the global financial crisis in 2009-10. The construction of the Albion Park Rail bypass and the upgrade of the Shellharbour Hospital represent two key infrastructure projects with a combined economic stimulus of \$800 million. The Government tells us that the two projects are fully funded. Last year's budget papers apparently indicate that this is the case. The Albion Park Rail bypass is subject to a complicated funding cocktail which is, in part, reliant on the sale of the electricity network. However, the upgrade of the Shellharbour Hospital is not; its \$250 million allocation comes from the existing Health portfolio.

I am told by the Minister for Health that the business case for the Shellharbour Hospital upgrade is complete. I wrote to her earlier this month and requested that in this year's budget she fight for the allocated funding to start the upgrade. So far, the Government has indicated that it has no set construction timetable for delivering on its election pledge. Last September my Illawarra parliamentary colleagues and I set out a clear 10-point plan to support Illawarra jobs, with key dates to start these projects. We called for the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital to commence on 1 July 2016 and for the construction of the Albion Park Rail bypass to commence on 1 July 2017. Once all the planning work has been done and the approvals have been given, there is no reason for any delay in the delivery of these two projects by the Government.

Should the Government reject this motion, as I expect it will, its Illawarra members must justify why long-suffering motorists using the Princes Highway have to endure traffic congestion for yet another year. They must justify why patients will be denied improved health services at Shellharbour Hospital for yet another year. The Government's vague description is that these two projects will be delivered at some stage. Labor's timetable sees these projects being brought forward so as to provide the Illawarra regional economy with a much-needed stimulus over the next two budgets. Earlier this week the member for Kiama claimed in the *Illawarra Mercury*:

What I actually look forward to the most is working with all parties at the table... to ensure that we have a brighter future for the Illawarra and we build it together.

Building a future for the region isn't going to happen by simply one group of people saying they've got all the answers; no-one does.

Today's debate will shine a light on whether this is yet another example of the member for Kiama saying one thing in the Illawarra and another in this place. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.36 p.m.]: I lead for the Government in response to the motion moved by the member for Shellharbour and indicate at the outset that the Government will oppose the motion. The reason is that talk is cheap. Actions speak louder than words. Two of the largest investments in the Illawarra were made by members on this side of politics in the run-up to the last election, and I fought hard to achieve both investments. During the 16 years in which Labor was in office it ignored motorists on the Princes Highway at Albion Park Rail. There was no action, no delivery and no attempt to progress that project. The last time there was progress was during the term of the Fahey Government, which looked at the alignment for that highway, and that has been reflected in local planning documents.

When I became the member for Kiama I took up the need for the Albion Park Rail bypass and fought for funding to start that project. At the last election we announced that if we were successful—subject to the lease of poles and wires, and money from the roads budget—we would

progress that project. We took that promise to the election and I would have thought that the Labor Party might have matched that proposal. The election came and went and there was no commitment from any Illawarra Labor Party member to fund that project. Indeed, in stark contrast, the Labor Party released its State infrastructure plan for the next 10 years. I ask members opposite: Was there any mention of the Illawarra in that 10-year State infrastructure plan? The answer is: There was not. I notice that my friend the member for Keira is jiggling in his seat. He knows that that 10-year infrastructure plan did not mention the Illawarra once.

Labor would have much more credibility in this debate if it had committed to this in the election and if it had put forward an alternative plan. Worse than that, its members voted against the lease of poles and wires that would fund the Albion Park Rail bypass. They cannot say they support the project because when they had the opportunity to do so, they voted against the means to fund it. They did not commit to it at the last election. Labor promised to build infrastructure in Sydney—by raising taxes on small business in the Illawarra to pay for Sydney's infrastructure. I cannot support the motion of the member for Shellharbour because she is arguing for a project that she could not get her shadow Cabinet colleagues to commit to at the last election. The same could be said for the Shellharbour Hospital project. I acknowledge the Opposition's election commitment of \$30 million for that hospital, but that is only 12 per cent of the \$251 million commitment that was made by this Government to assist the hardworking doctors, nurses and staff at Shellharbour Hospital.

I am committed to seeing both these projects delivered, which we said would commence in this term of government. I note the comments made by the member for Shellharbour. I agree with her on one thing: everyone in the Illawarra worked in a bipartisan way during the BlueScope crisis. I was delighted with the Government's payroll tax deferral which, together with local employees, achieved a great victory for the community so that BlueScope could continue steel manufacturing at Port Kembla. I thank all those concerned on that achievement. But in relation to this motion there is a degree of hypocrisy on the part of the member for Shellharbour.

If Labor members had committed to this project and they had suggested a means of funding it, they may well have had much more credibility in arguing for the Albion Park Rail bypass. But when Labor did not mention the Illawarra in its 10-year infrastructure plan it meant that people in the region would have had traffic gridlock for the next decade and no action on roads in the region. Labor voted in this place against the long-term lease of Port Kembla and then during its campaign before the last election it said that it would spend the proceeds. Once again members of the Opposition are trying to take credit for projects that they were not prepared to fund.

The Opposition should answer some questions. Why did it not commit to the full upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital at the last election? Why did it not commit to the full upgrade of the Albion Park Rail bypass at the last election? Why did the Opposition offer only 12 per cent of the total amount of funds needed for Shellharbour Hospital? If anyone wants an example of what this Government is doing in the future, they should look at what it has been able to achieve in the past. I remember travelling to Wollongong Hospital during my mum's first round of cancer treatment and seeing the lack of car parking at that hospital. I was proud to secure funds to double the number of car parking spaces. I was also pleased to open, with the Minister for Health, new facilities at the hospital due to the Government's commitment of \$106 million.

I am also looking forward to starting a project at Bulli Hospital, for which I know the member for Keira has advocated. Unfortunately, he was not able to secure a commitment from his side of politics to do that, but because this Government is a good government that understands the needs of the region, it will get on and do what Labor failed to do in that region. We are committed to the healthcare interests of the Illawarra. We have upgraded Wollongong Hospital, which Labor did not do in its 16 years in office. The Labor Government promised to upgrade the Gerringong section of the Princes Highway in 2007 but it failed to do that. The Labor Government promised that upgrade if it was re-elected in 2011, but it failed again. This Government has delivered the upgrade.

The Opposition voted against a means of funding the Albion Park Rail bypass and a means of funding the Berry bypass—the long-term lease of Port Kembla. People who read this contribution in *Hansard* or who are listening to this debate may think it is fine to question the time lines. As I have said, we have outlined and are committed to those time lines and they relate to this term of office. People should look at what we have delivered in the past: hospital and road upgrades that will make a real difference in people's lives. I am pleased and proud to be a member of a Government which has delivered the infrastructure investments for which we asked when we were in opposition but which were denied by the Labor Government, which at the time was happy to invest in Sydney. I again point out that Labor's planning documents at the time of the election indicated that it was prepared to invest only in Sydney. This Government is prepared to come up with solutions to the problems that our regions face. Until those opposite join us in matching those solutions they have no credibility in this debate.

**Mr RYAN PARK** (Keira) [12.43 p.m.]: It always gives me great pleasure to follow the member for Kiama in debate. I will give the House a bit of a history lesson on infrastructure in the Illawarra, just as the member for Kiama did earlier, but I have a slightly different version. I will outline a couple of small projects that Labor funded, the first of which the member for Kiama knows—the Kiama bypass—which is a road close to where he lives and on which I am sure he drives every now and then. The Kiama bypass was funded by Labor. Another project is a small road in his electorate and in the electorate of the hardworking member for Shellharbour on which I am sure the member for Kiama travels every now and then—the Oak Flats to Dunmore stretch of road which was delivered by the Labor Government. These are only small projects. I note that the member for Heathcote is in the Chamber. His electorate received only an iconic \$50 million Sea Cliff Bridge. These are small issues.

Earlier discussion about Wollongong Hospital was interesting. When our good friends in the conservative Government were in office in 1995 Wollongong Hospital was just a big hole in the ground. It must be terrible news for those opposite and it must be awful when reality hits, but all that was there was a hole in the ground. The Labor Government redeveloped Wollongong Hospital, but that was fairly minor infrastructure. I did not listen to everything that my good friend the member for Kiama had to say but I recall him mentioning the sell-off of Port Kembla.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** The lease.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** That worked well for people in the Illawarra. That \$100 million was announced about 3½ years ago but that money has still not been spent. At the time Minister Ajaka said, "I am going to get this out. I am going to crack the whip." I hope that John Ajaka never has to drive in a racing car in that region as he would have to travel at a very slow pace. The Illawarra did poorly compared to other regions. Labor made a commitment to use 50 per cent of the proceeds of the sell-off of Port Kembla but, tragically, that was not a deal on which those opposite delivered. I state clearly that no-one in this House fights harder for the Albion Park Rail bypass and the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital than the member for Shellharbour. She has pursued those projects and advocated for them since she was elected. She is working as hard as she can on behalf of the community to ensure that these issues are prioritised. I say to the member for Kiama who is attempting to interject that when he travels through Kiama and Dunmore tonight it will be on roads that were funded by his predecessor, Labor member Matt Brown—road infrastructure that Labor will continue to fund and support.

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [12.47 p.m.]: Today we exposed the Labor Party's vision. Over the past five years this Government has delivered a proud plan for the Illawarra thanks to the Speaker and member for South Coast, and the member for Kiama and Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra.

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

**Mr MARK COURE:** We promised \$251 million to upgrade Shellharbour Hospital. Labor members had 16 years in which to upgrade Shellharbour Hospital but they did not, which shows that they are no



friend of the Illawarra. At the last election Labor promised only \$30 million, or a pathetic 12 per cent of this Government's commitment of \$251 million. What services at Shellharbour Hospital will a Labor government cut because \$30 million will not rebuild that hospital? We want to know—we want to hear loudly and clearly—what services will be cut at Shellharbour Hospital under a potential Labor government. We know that \$30 million will not fund a brand new hospital at Shellharbour.

Thanks to the member for Kiama and the member for South Coast, this Government is providing \$251 million for the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital. Where is the member for Wollongong? She is not supporting the motion moved by the member for Shellharbour because she knows that Government members have a plan to rebuild the hospital. She knows that we have \$251 million to rebuild the hospital but all the Opposition can come up with is \$30 million. The member for Shellharbour could not even convince her shadow Cabinet. Where was the member for Keira?

**Mr John Sidoti:** He was asleep.

**Mr MARK COURE:** He was asleep in the shadow Cabinet. He should have been saying, "No, these guys have delivered \$251 million." I ask the member for Keira: Where is the rest of the money? He could not even convince his shadow Cabinet. It just shows that when it comes to the Illawarra Labor is no friend of Shellharbour. Opposition members have failed again. They could not even fund the hospital upgrade, which is why we are opposing this motion.

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [12.51 p.m.], in reply: I thank all those speakers who contributed to debate on this motion. I say to the member for Keira: Well done. I thank the member for Kiama for his contribution, and the contributions of the member for Oatley are always interesting. Predictably, Government speakers, in their contributions, were interested only in getting out well-rehearsed bathroom mirror lines. The Government offered only a vague timetable for the commencement of these two major infrastructure projects. The Government offered nothing by way of construction timetables to get these projects underway. As I indicated in my earlier contribution to this debate, people in the Illawarra need this investment and they need it now.

When all is said and done there is bipartisan political support for the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital and the Albion Park Rail bypass. While the Government continues to delay the commencement of each project, Opposition members have put up clear and precise timetables. The upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital will commence on 1 July 2016 and the construction of the Albion Park Rail bypass will commence on 1 July 2017. I refer to the old saying, "Expect nothing and you will never be disappointed", which applies to the contribution today of the member for Kiama. He talks to the media about working together but he plays cheap politics in this place. He should be supporting this motion. It is obvious that there are two blowholes in Kiama. One is by the sea and the other is on Terralong Street.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: Despite geography, the metaphor more correctly applies to other people.

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

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 31**

Ms Aitchison  
Mr Atalla  
Ms Burney

Mr Harris  
Ms Harrison  
Ms Hay

Mr Park  
Mr Robertson  
Ms K. Smith

Ms Car  
Ms Catley  
Mr Chanthivong  
Mr Crakanthorp  
Mr Daley  
Mr Dib  
Ms Doyle  
Ms Finn

Ms Haylen  
Ms Hornery  
Mr Lynch  
Dr McDermott  
Ms McKay  
Mr Mehan  
Ms Mihailuk  
Mr Minns

Ms T. F. Smith  
Ms Washington  
Ms Watson  
Mr Zangari  
  
*Tellers,*  
Mr Lulich  
Mr Warren

#### **Noes, 50**

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

Ms Goward  
Mr Grant  
Mr Gulaptis  
Mr Hazzard  
Mr Henskens  
Ms Hodgkinson  
Mr Humphries  
Mr Johnsen  
Mr Kean  
Dr Lee  
Mr Maguire  
Mr Marshall  
Mr Notley-Smith  
Mr O'Dea  
Mrs Pavey  
Mr Perrottet  
Ms Petinos

Mr Piccoli  
Mr Piper  
Mr Provest  
Mr Roberts  
Mr Sidoti  
Mr Speakman  
Mr Stokes  
Mr Taylor  
Mr Toole  
Mr Tudehope  
Ms Upton  
Mr Ward  
Mr Williams  
Mrs Williams  
*Tellers,*  
Mr Bromhead  
Mr Patterson

#### **Pairs**

Mr Barr  
Mr Foley  
Mr Hoenig

Mr Ayres  
Mr Rowell  
Mrs Skinner

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

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

#### **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY**

##### **Report: Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety in New South Wales**

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

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [1.01 p.m.]: I thank the House for the opportunity to speak on the report of the inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, or Staysafe, into motorcycle safety in

New South Wales, which was tabled in the House on 19 November 2015. The inquiry into motorcycle safety was referred to the committee by the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, the Hon. Duncan Gay, MLC, in light of the obstinate over-representation of motorcyclists in New South Wales road trauma statistics. Fifty-nine riders died in 2014 and the number of fatalities rose to 65 last year, despite the efforts of the relevant road authorities and a targeted motorcycle safety strategy, which was launched in 2012.

The committee found that this situation requires a refined, multifaceted and holistic policy approach, not only to further improve the overall safety of motorcycling in New South Wales but also to reduce the number of rider fatalities. The policy would have to focus on a mix of measures, including inventive policy solutions, improved partnerships and a greater use of technology. One possible solution identified by the committee is the greater use of technology in the reporting of road hazards. The committee considers it important for the various agencies to use an integrated system to respond to traffic hazards. A user-friendly system, such as a mobile phone app, would allow road users to report incidents quickly. While this would be a great tool for all road users, it would be particularly useful for motorcyclists, given that they are more vulnerable to environmental and road surface risks.

The committee stressed that not just a closer cooperation but a true partnership between the State road authorities and local councils is crucial to the implementation of such policy solutions and to deliver safe motorcycling and safe road systems for all road users in the twenty-first century. The committee noted the requirement to ensure reliable standards for safety gear, helmets and vehicle design, given the exposure of riders on the road without the protection which cars offer to drivers. Staysafe therefore sees the importance of establishing a star rating system for protective clothing for motorcyclists. The committee would like this system introduced quickly. It also recommended that the State Insurance Regulatory Authority work with the insurance industry to examine incentives such as rebates on insurance to increase and reward riders for using protective clothing.

The committee noted that it is encouraging that high-risk rider behaviour seems to be decreasing. The combination of enforcement, education and consultation appears to have played a vital role in this context. In particular, I acknowledge the work of Transport for NSW in establishing relationships with the motorcycling community, which has made a positive difference to rider safety. Nevertheless, the committee found that speed and alcohol consumption continue to be key contributing factors to motorcycle fatalities and that there is no room for complacency. It recognised that the role of drugs in motorcycle crashes is an area that needs further research and recommended that Transport for NSW commission research into that, as well as looking at strategies to deter risk-taking behaviour.

Staysafe acknowledged that motorcycle riders share the road with others. The committee looked at ways to address the interaction between the different road users, not just riders. To that end, Staysafe has made a number of recommendations to enhance driver skills, behaviour and awareness of riders on the road. This includes the introduction of an element of qualified training as part of the initial licensing and training of drivers. The committee made a number of recommendations relating to the New South Wales Graduated Licensing Scheme to reflect best practice and recent developments in other Australian jurisdictions. A possible amnesty is listed as an option to address the issue of unlicensed riding in order to bring unlicensed riders into the licensing system.

The committee highlighted the importance of having adequate support for and ongoing professional training of riding instructors to enhance the safety of motorcycling in New South Wales. Finally, the committee stressed that the shortage of rider training courses in rural and regional areas should be addressed. I thank the members of the Staysafe committee for their contribution to this inquiry: my deputy chair, Scot MacDonald; Adam Crouch, the member for Terrigal; Nick Lalich, the member for Cabramatta; Adam Marshall, the member for Northern Tablelands; Eleni Petinos, the member for Miranda; and members from the other place Dr Mehreen Faruqi and the Hon. Daniel Mookhey. I also thank the stakeholders who made submissions and the witnesses who appeared before the committee.

I acknowledge the committee staff, Vedrana Trisic, Jason Arditi, Jacqueline Isles and Jennifer

Gallagher, for their hard work, support and assistance during this inquiry. I look forward to the Government's response to the committee's report and to the departments and the community coming together to reduce the number of crashes and fatalities of motorcyclists and all road users. We all look forward to seeing improvements to motorcycle safety in New South Wales. I know the Government is committed to making roads safe for all road users. I commend the report to the House.

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [1.07 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the report of the inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety into motorcycle safety in New South Wales. This lengthy report looks at how we can protect those who use motorcycles as a method of transport. The report discusses the trends of motorcycle usage, injury and fatality in New South Wales; crash and injury risk factors, including rider and driver behaviour, conspicuousness and vehicle instability; the effectiveness of the current action plan to enhance motorcycle safety; strategies used in other jurisdictions to improve motorcycle safety; licensing and rider training; and related matters.

The first part of the report focuses on the trend of motorcycle usage. The inquiry found there was a rise as motorcycle registration and motorcycle licences increased in New South Wales. The number of motorcycle licences issued increased by 17 per cent between 2006 and 2010, while motorcycle registration increased by 41 per cent in the same period. Increased motorcycle usage would suggest the likelihood of more fatalities on the road, but the report found that overall motorcycle fatalities in New South Wales have been decreasing, in line with fatalities involving other motor vehicles. The inquiry found a decline in high-risk behaviour, due to penalties, better education and strategies in place to deter riders from such activities. The report also looked into crash and injury risk factors, such as speeding, alcohol and drug use, fatigue, visibility and the experience of the rider.

I will briefly touch on visibility as a factor in motorcycle incidents. Poor visibility is one of the main causes of accidents. This is due to riders not wearing sufficient high-visibility gear, being unable to see over obstructions, or speeding, as riders admitted to exceeding the speed limit at times when there is good visibility. In 2013 a Centre for Road Safety NSW prevalence study found that 93 per cent of riders believed accidents were caused by drivers not seeing motorcyclists. I know personally of a case back in about 1961. My cousin was riding in Liverpool and went through a T-intersection. Although he had right of way, a car collided with him. He broke his thigh in three places and was in traction for six months. After that he always had a bit of a hop when he walked, and now that he is older he will probably require a knee replacement. His injury has caused him all sorts of trouble, all due to the fact that he rode a motorbike.

My personal view—I do not say this is the opinion of the committee—is that motorcycles should only be used for recreational purposes and should not be allowed on the road. Motorcycles can be bumped by vehicles and with only a slight touch a rider can be thrown off a bike and injured. I believe that anyone who rides a motorcycle has a death wish. Car drivers just cannot see them. The report found that speeding continues to be the leading factor in motorcycle casualties in New South Wales. Educational campaigns and training programs must be ongoing to ensure the safety of riders. Campaigns such as the Ride to Live campaign and Motorcycle Awareness Week are in place to ensure riders wear proper safety gear and abide by the road rules.

I thank the chair of the committee, the member for Albury, Mr Greg Aplin, and the deputy chair, Mr Scot MacDonald, member of the Legislative Council. I thank my other parliamentary colleagues on the committee: Ms Eleni Petinos, the member for Miranda; Mr Adam Marshall, the member for Northern Tablelands; Mr Adam Crouch, the member for Terrigal; the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, member of the Legislative Council; and Dr Mehreen Faruqi, member of the Legislative Council. I also thank the committee secretariat, the Clerks and Hansard. Without them, we would not have been able to publish this report.

**Ms ELENI PETINOS** (Miranda) [1.11 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the take-note debate on the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, more commonly known as Staysafe, entitled

"Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety in New South Wales". I grew up in Bundeena, a beautiful suburb within the Royal National Park. To get home each day I would drive approximately 20 minutes through the national park's spectacularly picturesque bushland along the tumultuous winding roads. Whilst it was my daily route home, for so many others it is used as a popular route for a weekend drive or car and motorcycle enthusiast club trips. I am regrettably all too familiar with the winding road being closed due to another accident, often involving a displaced motorcyclist and sometimes a fatality.

I understand that motorcyclists continue to be over-represented in New South Wales road trauma, and I echo the chair's sentiments that the persistently high number of rider fatalities is of particular concern. I take this opportunity to thank Minister Gay for referring this desperately needed inquiry to the Staysafe committee. I acknowledge the hard work of the committee members and I particularly thank the chair, the member for Albury, for his hard work and dedication to this particularly important issue. The report contains several worthwhile recommendations. I will refer to recommendations around crash and injury risk factors. So much of the evidence presented to the committee was around speeding, road standards, alcohol and other drug factors. In particular, the committee heard a large amount of evidence about the fact that although motorcyclists were very careful in their use of the road, road-use factors did not always provide a safe environment for motorcyclists.

The committee heard evidence about the types of barriers that would be more suitable for motorcyclists, whether it is a T-bar or a wire barrier. We looked at different factors that would encourage motorcyclists to go about their daily business and enjoy the roads in a safe manner. That included consideration of whether motorcyclists as well as motor vehicle drivers should be educated on motorcycle safety, because more often than not motorcycle accidents involve cars. Recommendation 9 of the report states that authorities should consider the importance of educating all road users, not just motorcyclists, to ensure that the common occurrence of fatalities and injuries to motorcyclists in this State does not continue into the future. With that in mind, I commend the report to the House. I thank all of the committee members for their hard work: the chair, the member for Albury, the member for Terrigal, the member for Cabramatta, the member for Northern Tablelands and the upper House members, Mr Scot MacDonald, Dr Mehreen Faruqi and the Hon. Daniel Mookhey. I thank all those involved and commend the report to the House.

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

**Report noted.**

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

**Report: Changes to the Standing and Sessional Orders**

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

**Pursuant to standing order debate postponed and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

#### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 12/56**

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

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [1.16 p.m.]: I thank the House for the opportunity to comment on the Legislation Review Committee's digest No. 12 for this Parliament. The committee commented on the only bill introduced into Parliament in the last sitting week of 2015: the Wyong Special Area (Protection) Bill 2015. The committee also reported on one regulation: the Rail Safety (Adoption of

## National Law) Amendment (Drug Testing of Oral Fluid Samples) Regulation 2015.

The object of the Wyong Special Area (Protection) Bill 2015 is to protect land in Wyong from mining and mining-related activities. The bill prohibits the granting, renewal or modification of licences, leases, claims and authorities that allow persons to prospect for and mine minerals and petroleum on the Wallarah 2 coalmine site. It also prohibits the granting of planning approvals relating to the same site. The committee observed that clause 6 of the bill cancels any approval for prospecting and mining in the Wyong special area granted before the Act commences. It is unclear from the bill whether compensation will be provided for any such cancellation.

The committee highlighted that cancelling planning approvals granted prior to the commencement of the Act may run counter to the rule of law. The committee stated that, in some cases, this may unduly trespass on personal rights and liberties. However, in this instance, the committee noted that individuals were unlikely to be affected by this bill. The committee also acknowledged the objectives of the bill, which are to protect the water supply for residents in the Wyong area. The committee made no further comments.

The Rail Safety (Adoption of National Law) Amendment (Drug Testing of Oral Fluid Samples) Regulation 2015 makes changes to the scheme for requiring oral fluid analysis of rail safety workers under the Rail Safety National Law. Clause 13 of the Rail Safety (Adoption of National Law) Regulation 2012 deals with situations where blood or urine samples are taken from a rail safety worker who is in hospital as a result of an accident. Clause 13 (6) of that regulation prevented evidence being given about the presence of a drug, or a particular concentration of a drug, in the blood or urine of a person charged with an offence under section 128 of the Rail Safety National Law. These offences involve individuals who have prescribed concentrations of alcohol and/or drugs in their system while carrying out rail safety work. The maximum penalty is \$10,000.

The amending regulation changed clause 13 (6) so that evidence of this kind can be given, but only if the court is satisfied that the blood or urine analysis was not arranged in contravention of the regulation. While the updated provision will apply to evidence given after the amending regulation commenced, the relevant blood or urine analysis can be from before the amending regulation commenced. The committee highlighted that these amendments will have some retrospective effect. However, the committee acknowledged the public safety aspect of the offences in question. The committee also noted that evidence of this kind can only be given if the court is satisfied that the analysis was not arranged in contravention of the regulation. The committee therefore made no further comments. That concludes my remarks on the first legislation review digest for 2016. I thank the committee staff for their hard work and committee members for their contributions. I trust the digest is a useful resource for all members and staff. I commend Legislation Review Digest No. 12/56 to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN** (The Entrance) [1.20 p.m.]: I support the comments made by the committee chair, the member for Upper Hunter, in relation to the work of the Legislation Review Committee. I wish to comment briefly on one of the bills reviewed by the committee, the Wyong Special Area (Protection) Bill 2015. I am pleased that this bill made it through the committee's assessment and met the criteria. The bill represents a promise made by Labor at the 2015 election to protect the Wyong water catchment area, which is the water catchment for the whole of the Central Coast. It also represents a promise made by the O'Farrell Liberal Opposition and later Government at the 2011 election—an ironclad promise which the Government never kept. I look forward to this bill coming again before the House and passing through this House and the upper House to become an Act. I thank the committee staff for their support. I commend Legislation Review Digest No. 12/56 to the House.

*[Temporary Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.21 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

## VISITORS

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome into the public gallery the Mayor of Imar, Mr Ghassan Mouawad, the Mayor of Burwood Council, Mr John Faker, and Makta Joseph Bou Melhem and delegation, guests of the member for Drummoyne. I welcome 40 students and teacher from Meiji Gakuin University, Japan. I also welcome Mr Jeremy Travers, who turns 25 tomorrow. Happy birthday, Jeremy.

## **REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I inform the House that today the Minister for Finance, Services and Property will answer questions in the absence of the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport. The Attorney General will answer questions today in the absence of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing.

## **MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **Ministerial Statement**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [2.18 p.m.]: I wish to make a ministerial statement. In light of the line of questioning that has been pursued by some members of the Opposition in question time the past two days, I take this opportunity, as Leader of the House, to remind everyone of the responsibilities members have to protect confidential information in undertaking their duties as parliamentarians. All members of this House have agreed to follow a code of conduct. The code includes express provisions governing the use of confidential information. The line of questioning that has been pursued against the Premier and the Minister for Family and Community Services suggests that it may be reliant on material that has been provided in connection with a current inquiry being conducted by the joint Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** The committee has not published the material provided to it. Indeed, it has even announced that it will be seeking legal advice as to how the material can be treated by the committee. Members who ask questions in this House should consider very carefully their ethical and legal obligations to protect confidential information.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will cease interjecting. The member for Keira will cease shouting.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** Members must, at all times, abide by the law, and not infringe upon the privileges of Parliament or its proper functioning. I remind members of this House of section 70 (4) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, which provides:

Where evidence is taken by the Joint Committee in private otherwise than at the request of a witness, a person (including a member of the Committee) shall not, without the authority of the Committee under subsection (5), disclose or publish the whole or a part of that evidence.

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** Whilst section 122 of the Act provides for freedom of speech for members of Parliament whilst in this place, this privilege is not afforded outside this House.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will cease interjecting. He will resume his seat.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** Indeed the Act places such importance on protecting information of this nature that unauthorised disclosure under section 70 (4) carries a penalty of up to three months

imprisonment.

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** The reason for this sanction is the adverse impact that such disclosures can have on the operation of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** It is critical to point out to members in this place that they have a duty not to infringe upon the privileges of other members or the proper functioning of this Parliament. This can include impeding the exercise of the functions and duties of Parliament's committees. Given the importance of the inquiry currently being conducted by the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption, I strongly urge all members of this House to exercise caution before considering action that could be seen as undermining the committee's work.

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** I am aware that the chair of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption has emailed members of that committee expressing his concern about the unauthorised disclosure of confidential material presented to it by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The chair has convened a meeting of the committee for Tuesday 23 February to discuss this matter further.

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** It is the prerogative of members of this place to decide upon the questions they ask of this Government. However, I ask them to consider carefully the information I have just provided to this House in doing so. They might thank me for it.

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

**Mr LUKE FOLEY** (Auburn—Leader of the Opposition) [2.23 p.m.]: I note the ministerial statement from the Leader of the House. I also note the absence of the time-honoured courtesy of the Government to inform the Opposition prior to the making of a ministerial statement. If the Leader of the House wants to make an allegation, he should have the guts to make it clearly.

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

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** Let me be clear: I have received no information from any member of the parliamentary committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind members that shouting and interjecting is disorderly at all times. I call the member for Kiama to order for the second time.

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** Game, set and match. What the Minister has been peddling to the gallery all week is not true. Let the Minister for Family and Community Services make the same unequivocal denial that he did not attempt to pervert the course of justice during an Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry: he cannot and he will not.



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

## **QUESTION TIME**

*[Question time commenced at 2.25 p.m.]*

### **MINISTER FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**The SPEAKER:** I call the Leader of the Opposition. He will ask his question.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** Name your source.

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** The same source who tipped me off on his Muslim flyers.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will ask his question.

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** I direct my question to the Minister for Family and Community Services. Given that the Minister has had 24 hours to reflect, will he now assure members that at no time did he say to counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption, "Do you know what you are doing?"

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Coffs Harbour will be heard in silence. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber without warning.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** I refer to Standing Order 279 and to Standing Order 91. The ministerial statement delivered by the Leader of the House referred to the confidentiality of committees. I suggest that the information asserted by the Leader of the Opposition in his question is contrary to committee confidentiality.

**Mr Michael Daley:** To the point of order: Standing Order 279 states:

The date and time of the first meeting shall be set by the mover if a member of the committee, otherwise the Clerk shall call the meeting.

Opposition, two; Government, nil.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Further to the point of order: Sorry Madam Speaker, I meant Standing Order 297.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the House alluded in his ministerial statement to the fact that members are entitled to ask whatever questions they wish during question time; that is still their right. There is no point of order. The Minister for Family and Community Services has the call.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I know it is the courteous thing to do, so I will thank the temporary Leader of the Opposition for his question. Earlier in the week I referred to the Leader of the Opposition as "mature"—I am not sure whether I referred to him as temporary—but after watching the activities of this week I am quite sure that his colleagues to his right will be glad to see him move on.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I say to members opposite that their leader is certainly displaying superficial, trivial, immature and shallow political judgement. There is a place over the road that used to

be called the Red Rose Cafe. I had a wonderful melt over there at lunch today. As I was eating the melt something suddenly came back to me.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I remembered a meeting I had with the Leader of the Opposition when he was the brand-new shadow Minister for Planning. There was quite a good shadow Minister before, that was Linda Burney.

**Mr Luke Foley:** Tell us how your planning Act went, Brad.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I am about to. I remember there was a lot of consultation with the Labor Party. Then along came the current shallow temporary leader, who had then been shadow planning Minister for three or four weeks. When I asked him what he wanted to discuss about planning—

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129.

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

**Mr Ryan Park:** I have not explained it yet.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will resume his seat. I remind the member for Keira that he is on three calls to order. The member for Keira will remove himself from the Chamber for a period of two hours.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Keira left the Chamber at 2.30 p.m.]*

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** When I tried to have a sensible discussion with the then shadow planning Minister his response was—I remember it very clearly, and it really rings true this week—"I know nothing about planning. I intend to make a purely political decision."

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** That is what he has been doing all week. He is continuing with the same political attitude and no substance. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that his time is measured.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** His time is numbered.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** His colleagues will wake up to the fact that he does not have a hope.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Prospect will come to order. This is his final warning.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** Having said that, numerous members—I indicated yesterday that I could name them but I am going to respect their privacy—have often referred to the fact that they were pleased when I was Attorney General because everything was done on a non-partisan, non-political basis.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** The contest is back on. Daley's on the run. Go for it, Michael.

**Mr Michael Daley:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Has the Minister completed his answer?

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** No.

**Mr Michael Daley:** The Minister has all of a sudden got a good memory but he cannot remember calling this witness five times 14 months ago.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** The member for Maroubra has gotten very excited over the years but he is still waiting to be on the leadership. I can say without any question, as I said yesterday, that I do not recollect the context of whatever words he said yesterday. I think I made that very clear. However, I had a look at the words after question time and I can say this without a shadow of a doubt: There is no way that I would have used those words to anybody, let alone a senior counsel at the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

What I do know is that when I rang him I was doing what the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act requires, which is to convey to him the fact that as the person who had been just appointed—he was in his chambers, as I recollect, at the time. He said he had not been able to get across the detail yet because he had only just been appointed, but I recollect that I gave him the witness's name and details as is required under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act and entirely in conformity with the administration of justice requirements. As was the expectation through my period as Attorney General, I will continue to do those things appropriately for as long as I am in this place. The Leader of the Opposition is shallow and temporary.

## **SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**Mr MARK COURE:** My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government developing new and innovative ways to help those in the community who need it most?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I thank the member for Oatley for his question. He is undoubtedly the most outstanding member for Oatley this State has ever seen. He is doing an incredible job down there. They all thought he was not going to win, but look at him—there he is in all his majesty. Members on this side of the House are continuing to focus on the issues that matter to the people of New South Wales and on delivering. The Opposition might have forgotten about the issues that matter to people. They have come back this week and not asked one question on policy. Have they asked anything about health, education, roads or transport? Absolutely not. They have not asked anything about social and affordable housing either. The great news is that we are focusing on delivering.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We have said that as we continue in government we want to focus on three pillars; we want to improve services for the people of this State, we want to build infrastructure and we want to look after those who are most vulnerable. A big part of that is ensuring that we deliver on social and affordable housing. It has been a long time coming but the Minister that members opposite have been attacking this week is delivering something that will make a real difference to those who need it most. We are proud of that.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Prospect will remove himself from the Chamber for a period of one hour.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Prospect left the Chamber at 2.35 p.m.]*

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** For a considerable period we have looked at and argued for new approaches to providing long-term social and economic benefits. Importantly, we recognise that the State Government cannot do this alone. We have to look for opportunities to partner with the community sector. We are doing that for a range of measures. We certainly think that what we have come up with can deliver better outcomes for the community. Last month I was proud to see the Minister launch the Social and Affordable Housing Fund, which will allow us to unlock new homes. Indeed, the Government will provide \$1.1 billion in seed capital which will give certainty to the sector and allow it to invest and deliver more housing. All those years ago under the now Opposition social housing went down, down, down. We are finally turning that around by investing in and developing new stock. It is long overdue. On preliminary estimates the fund is expected to deliver about 3,000 additional social and affordable houses across the State. I hear the Opposition complaining about it. Why on earth would they complain about this? Additional housing means waiting lists will come down, which is a great thing, and people will get into a home, which is also a great thing for those who need support.

This type of collaboration with private and non-government organisations goes along with our work on social benefit bonds. The Treasurer and many Ministers have been involved in that. The social benefit bonds initiative was based on questions such as how do we ensure that we provide support to families when children are about to be removed, and how do we get them back together with the appropriate support around them? We know about the long-term impact of children being taken away. The social costs to individuals and across the community are very significant. If we can bring families back together it is a great thing. It has attracted additional capital and the initial results are quite incredible. It is a good example of when collaboration works to deliver great outcomes across the community and provide benefits to those who need them most.

The proposals we are putting forward are about looking for significant social outcomes. It is not just about housing; it is also about improving the social outcomes that go with it. We are looking at improving employment and education prospects, providing stability and support to women and children who have experienced domestic violence, providing stability and ongoing support for people with mental health issues, improving connectivity with family, kinship and community, and achieving economic independence for tenants.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Members opposite will look for anything to criticise but I would have thought this was a very positive thing. I know in the electorates represented by members on this side of the House and across this State everyone is saying that this is a great thing that is delivering wonderful things for their community. I congratulate the NSW Council of Social Service on its work in this space. It has done an incredible amount of work and is determined to make a difference in social housing. In addition, Infrastructure Partnerships Australia has done strong work on the matter, as has the Minister and his team and the many agencies across government. This is a great thing for the people of New South Wales. We are very proud to be delivering it. Making a real and substantial difference in social and affordable housing is long overdue. This Government is doing exactly that.

#### **MINISTER FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Premier. How can it be acceptable for a Minister in his Government to have multiple conversations with an eyewitness, counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the commissioner and Ms Cunneen's work colleague during an Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition that the question is verging on being argumentative and as such could be ruled out of order. The Premier may choose to answer if he wishes

to do so.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** If anyone was in doubt about the judgement of the Leader of the Opposition, we are getting a full show today. We absolutely can see. Members on this side of the House are seeing what those on the other side of the House know, and that is that his judgement is absolutely in question—there is no doubt about it. We hear the claims he is putting—we have not heard a specific claim yet. Let me read to the Leader of the Opposition the words that come from the witness that he is talking about. This is what she said:

Mr Hazzard was simply trying to give me the details of all the relevant parties involved in a fair and just way.

That is what the witness said.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Leader of the Opposition continues along this line but he has not put a specific allegation. I have to say this may be question time but there are many more questions for the Leader of the Opposition.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** For a start, where did you get the information? Where did you get it? Will you confirm that no member of the Labor Party and no member of the Opposition has obtained this information from where they should not have?

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. If the Premier thinks that the former Attorney General has acted entirely appropriately, he should just say so.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order on the matter of relevance.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I love the member for Maroubra pretending he is protecting the Leader of the Opposition. He is just pretending. There he is in a fury and he came up, "Blah, blah, blah, blah." Do it with meaning, son. If you want to back him, back him, for goodness sake. Do not try to go through that. I learnt nothing from the member for Kogarah either, I might say, by the way. Why on earth will the Leader of the Opposition not hold a media conference? Why would you not go out there, hold a media conference, get the whole gallery there and answer some of those questions? He will not—he will sneak around and go into a little back corner and try to get a camera here and a camera there. Look, you can go under the tree of truth. Go down there to the tree of truth—it is waiting for you. They want to hear the truth. Or go downstairs to level 6. Look, I will lend you my—

**Mr Luke Foley:** Point of order: I will do you a deal. I will hold a press conference at 4 o'clock if Brad Hazzard holds one too.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. There is no point of order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time. I direct the Clerk to stop the clock. Members will not take points of order in order to interject or to argue with a Minister. Members who do so will be removed from the Chamber. The Clerk will restart the clock.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** In many respects I feel sorry for the Leader of the Opposition. He knows he is in a lot of trouble. He is trying to pretend he is not but he knows he is in a lot of trouble. So I am very pleased that he is actually going to go and hold a media conference and answer these sorts of questions. I am happy to lend you the room up on level 8 if you want to have it there. You can have it wherever you

want.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** There is a serious question of judgement around the Leader of the Opposition, because he is happy to come into this Parliament and he has not yet confirmed where he got that information from. He has not said where he got that information. He is happy to come into this Chamber despite all the types of penalties that could apply in terms of where that information may well have come from and he is happy to attack a Minister—

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. The question was—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier's answer is completely relevant to the question. There is no point of order. I have warned members about taking spurious points of order. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** And the member for Canterbury is so excited by your leadership she is going to Federal Parliament: "I've had enough, don't want this, can't believe it—out I go." So we are not listening to the member for Canterbury. We certainly call on the Leader of the Opposition to answer those questions because a very serious issue has been raised and he is attacking a Minister who is doing a first-class job in Family and Community Services, making a real difference to the families that need our support. That is what we will continue to do.

### **ICE ADDICTION TREATMENT SERVICES**

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** My question is addressed to the Assistant Minister for Health. What action is the Government taking to tackle the scourge of ice across New South Wales?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** The member for Wagga Wagga is an outstanding member who, like all of us on this side of the House, is very concerned about the impact of drugs on his community. This morning the Deputy Premier, Troy Grant, and I held a drug round table with Government and non-government agencies. It included experts from police, justice, health and drug treatment services. This was my second round table with experts to discuss the efforts needed to tackle drugs in our communities. We discussed the importance of early intervention, early treatment and supporting families. We also agreed on the need for better coordination between Government and non-government services and ensuring we maintain a clear focus on achieving outcomes that improve lives.

Illicit drugs do not discriminate. They can affect people of all walks of life in all communities. All members in this Chamber have met and interacted with families who have been traumatised by the devastating impacts of drug use. That is why this Government is determined to tackle the drug scourge across New South Wales. The New South Wales Government invests \$185 million a year in drug and alcohol services to support people in this State.

As part of our \$11 million election commitment, we are investing \$2 million in treatment services in Wollongong and Shoalhaven focusing on young people aged 16 to 25; \$1.6 million for Western Sydney treatment services based in Mt Druitt, with a focus on delivering for culturally and linguistically diverse communities; \$1.2 million for the mid North Coast for outreach services into Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Kempsey, with a focus on providing services for Aboriginal people; similarly, \$1.2 million for communities in northern New South Wales including Lismore, Casino, Tweed and Grafton; additional funding in Newcastle to provide outreach to Tamworth and Taree; and also \$1.2 million to expand services at St Vincent's Hospital, where this wonderful stimulant treatment model began.

Earlier this month I was in Dubbo with the outstanding local member, the Deputy Premier, where we announced \$1.4 million to deliver non-government organisation [NGO] led ice treatment services in

western New South Wales. I have also announced \$1.4 million for NGO treatment services in southern New South Wales. I look forward to announcing the successful NGO tenderer for the Murrumbidgee district shortly, for Wagga Wagga and Murray. This is a new and innovative approach. By partnering NGOs with local health services we can deliver treatment services that are nimble and tailored to the needs of individual communities, and deliver flexible treatment models that ensure outreach to surrounding communities in our very diffuse State.

Yesterday I announced that the Australian Drug Foundation will be supporting our community drug action teams across New South Wales to educate the community on the dangers of ice, because we know that strong, supported communities are our best defence against drugs. The first two forums will commence in Tweed Heads and Wollongong next month. Without doubt, this Government says what it will do and does what it says. It certainly believes in supporting people into treatment earlier. We believe in supporting families affected by drug use. This stands in stark contrast to the future of the Labor Party and to the Labor member for Summer Hill, who wants to decriminalise illicit drugs—drugs that destroy communities, destroy families and destroy lives. It is such a shocking over-simplification of a very complex health problem. As the Deputy Premier has said:

This Government will not run a quality assurance regime using taxpayers' dollars to prop up drug dealers' businesses.

These are poisons. He went on to say:

We will not support illegal drugs and an industry that destroys families and young lives.

We will not send any other message to our communities. This is a complex health and social issue; we need to intervene early. We need new models of care and we need to support families. We absolutely need to back our front-line workers, including our wonderful police and their sniffer dogs. This Government will not be distracted from good policy by cheap political stunts from those opposite.

#### **MINISTER FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** I direct my question to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing. What directions did the Minister give to the Director of Public Prosecutions concerning Margaret Cunneen and a potential witness in Operation Hale?

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I have to say that if you expect as Attorney General—if you ever get that job, and I do not think you ever will—that it is appropriate for you to give directions to the independent Director of Public Prosecutions, then, sir, you also should never be a leader in this place.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** Could I answer also that if this is the leadership team—that is you and the honourable Leader of the Opposition—you do not have much of a team. I think I have been here now for almost 25 years.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I have been a lawyer for almost 40 years. Do you know what? I have seen a lot of Opposition leaders come and go—

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order—

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** —and I am absolutely certain that I will see you go sooner rather than later.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will resume his seat. The member for Campbelltown rises on a point of order.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will resume his seat.

**Mr Greg Warren:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. Personal reflections are not required. The former Attorney General should be aware that if he simply answers the questions perhaps he will stop getting them. It is very simple.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on both sides of the House have made personal reflections this afternoon.

**Mr Greg Warren:** They should be addressed. But in this particular case the Minister is making personal reflections.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That is often the nature of question time, but I take the member's point.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** Anybody who has been here as long as I have well knows that the member for Liverpool is known as a mean and nasty little human being. He can be okay when he is outside the Chamber, in here he is mean and nasty but at least he has a brain. I am afraid the Leader of the Opposition does not have a brain because if he did he would know that what he has done in this attack this week shows that he does not.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. I suggest that the Minister is flouting Madam Speaker's ruling.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I did not make a ruling; I noted the point that the member for Campbelltown made. I warn the Minister not to make unseemly comments about the member for Liverpool. The member for Liverpool did not, however, take offence.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** For the sake of the new Labor members, when your side asks a question you do not normally interrupt; you just let it happen. Can I just say that clearly I address my comments to the Leader of the Opposition. You, sir, have shown that you will never be Premier because, unfortunately, you do not show any understanding of justice or the rule of law. The allegations that you have continually made—

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

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will resume his seat. The member for Charlestown rises on a point of order.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will resume his seat.

**Ms Jodie Harrison:** My point of order is that members are required to address their comments through the Chair.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I uphold the point of order.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** Madam Speaker, I am happy to direct my comments through you because



I know you understand the rule of law and the administration of justice, which clearly the Leader of the Opposition does not. I also note that if the Leader of the Opposition wants to repeat any of the allegations that he has made I would be delighted if he would step outside.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** Just step outside cowards castle because I would love to see you there.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will direct his comments through the Chair. Has the Minister completed his answer?

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** No.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. Opposition members ask questions yet they do not want to listen to the answers.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** Having someone turn this Parliament into a cowards castle—knowing the background and the shallowness, and knowing that the person has gone out and repeated not just one criminal offence of drink-drive but two, shows just how bad he is. For him to come in here and attack me is ludicrous. That is fact. I say finally that what I did as Attorney General was entirely proper. I made sure that the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the other person was apprised of the fact that there was a witness. It was the right thing to do. It was actually in the interests of the administration of justice and it was something that clearly no-one opposite understands.

**The SPEAKER:** Good afternoon, member for Sydney. Welcome.

### **PUBLIC SCHOOL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSON:** I address my question to the Minister for Education. What is the New South Wales Government doing to boost language programs in public schools and are there any alternative policies?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I thank the member for his question.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I thank the member for Sydney for turning up in time for this question. Parliament House is located in his electorate. I come from Griffith and I manage to get here on time.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That comment was uncalled for.

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** Point of order: As members may or may not be aware, today was the memorial service for Deputy Lord Mayor Robyn Kemmis. I attended that service, along with the member for Balmain and the member for Newtown. That is why I was absent.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! We apologise for making light of your late arrival.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I do apologise; I was just having a bit of fun. We all saw the Labor Party's conference last Sunday. All the Labor luminaries turned up. It was fantastic. They had the background shots.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The Town Hall was filled with all these people. It looked like somebody had whacked a piñata and all these union thugs and Labor spivs had fallen out onto the ground. I do not think there was a single person not on the payroll of either the Labor Party, the New South Wales Government, the Federal Government or, indeed, a union. Every single person there was on the payroll. There was a speech given—

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** You do not hear it too often but there were even a couple of things that they called policies. Shock, horror! A couple of them were about education. One of them was about languages—every primary student will learn a language in New South Wales. It reminded me of what former Prime Minister Bob Hawke said: "By 1990 no child shall live in poverty." That went really well—in fact, it went about as well as this will go. Typically, there was no detail, no costings—but do not worry, we have done the costings subsequently for the Opposition. We will do the work that they refuse to do.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** For the 26,000 primary classes across New South Wales in the government and non-government sectors—

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** —two hours per day will cost \$125 million a year.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** No costings and no ideas. Again, that lofty but, unfortunately, empty rhetoric about a Labor promise.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Remember the other one? We will build a light rail all the way to Rozelle. We will build a railway line to the north-west of Sydney.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** None of those things were ever delivered. There was also an announcement about early childhood: "Labor commits to affordable and accessible preschool for four year olds." I can tell members about the work that I did as Minister and that the member for Port Macquarie, who is the new Minister for Early Childhood Education, is doing a fantastic job in making preschools more affordable.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Again, from Labor there was no detail and no costings. They have no idea.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I place the member for Maitland on three calls to order. Members who are on calls to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** More importantly, no three-year-olds. Remember the questions Labor

asked us about the preschool funding model? There was a big fuss about no funding for three-year-olds. They have committed funding for four-year-olds, but not three-year-olds.

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

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Port Stephens left the Chamber at 2.59 p.m.]*

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Do not take my word for it. A comment on Facebook states:

I am an ALP supporter but the second language policy is a rehashed failed policy of the 1980s and 1990s. It is not feasible and this policy is doomed.

That is coming from one of their supporters. Another one states:

I never make comments on political statements. However, hearing Luke Foley state that by primary school, children will be bilingual falls way short of what I consider to be important markers during a child's first year of school.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** That is what we are hearing from Labor supporters.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** They are worthwhile objectives, but it is empty rhetoric. They have no idea and no costings. It is great to see Labor interested in education. Was there a commitment to Aboriginal education? No. Was there low socioeconomic status funding? How are they going to fund Gonski? Labor opposed everything, but it did commit to working—

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. I would not be talking about Aboriginal education if I were you.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. There is no point of order.

**Ms Linda Burney:** This is just pathetic. I would be very careful.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. There is no point of order. I remind the member for Canterbury that she is on three calls to order.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Ask me a question about Connected Communities. I am more than happy to answer a question on that, especially from the member for Canterbury.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury will remove herself from the Chamber for a period of two hours.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 3.01 p.m.]*

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** There was a commitment to hard work. The new Labor members should remember to remove whatever they are copying from the photocopier when they are finished.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** It is an old mistake.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I was using the photocopier when I found a Labor memo. Here it is, straight from Luke Foley's speech last Sunday, "The hard work starts tomorrow." It is a memo to all Labor members and staffers. "The hard work starts tomorrow." What is really unfortunate is that this is the first and only memo from Luke Foley that they have listened to. They have not done the work today; they did not do it yesterday; they did not do it last week or last year. We are still waiting for tomorrow to come for the Labor Party.

#### **MINISTER FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. Given the Premier's earlier answer, and challenge, is the Minister prepared to hold an all-in press conference this afternoon, because I am?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The question contains argument. The Minister is not required to answer it.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I do not mind. I do not expect a high-quality question from the Leader of the Opposition. First, I acknowledge the comments by the member for Sydney about himself and the other Independent members. I worked with Deputy Lord Mayor Robyn Kemmis and she was an outstanding advocate on behalf of the community. She always spoke out strongly, whether it was for the down and out or on women's issues. She had integrity and passion. I am sorry I was not able to attend her memorial service today. I had intended to but, unfortunately, I was attending another function. It is incumbent upon this Parliament to reflect that there are people who contribute to this community in an incredible way. She was certainly a stand-out. She was born in Grafton, Queensland, as I recollect. She died unexpectedly when she was only 72. She had so much more to contribute. Thank you, Robyn, for your incredible contribution to the City of Sydney and the broader community. As to the Leader of the Opposition's—I am not sure what to call it—

**The SPEAKER:** A challenge.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I would call it a juvenile antic, an immature juvenile antic, and what I say to him is: Put up or shut up.

#### **OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Early Childhood Education. How is the Government helping families across the State to access before and after school services?

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** I thank the member for Holsworthy for her excellent question. I know she is committed to supporting families in her local community. One of the first schools to open the out-of-school-hours [OOSH] care service is in her electorate. It opened as a result of our \$20 million Before and After School Care Fund. Last Wednesday the Premier joined me on a visit to Sutherland Shire Christian School. We saw firsthand the difference that this new service is making to the local community. Students from kindergarten to year 6 will now be able to take advantage of the 90 new places on offer for before and after school care. It opened only last week, but I inform the House it is already a popular service.

The school has used the grant for storage area fit-outs and maintenance of their kitchen area to ensure that the standards for OOSH are met. I understand that the school will also use the funds to purchase new play equipment. As we promised, the Before and After School Care Fund aims to deliver

up to 45,000 additional OOSH places over the next three years in government schools and less resourced non-government schools. Currently in New South Wales more than 1,200 OOSH services exist—most of which are based in schools—with more than 81,000 places on offer. I visited a number of OOSH services across the State and I understand the important role they play in our local communities. I know also that OOSH can provide a wonderful addition to our school communities and we know that children have a great time at these services.

However, I know more places are needed across this State. We are working to meet this demand with the OOSH grant program. As a result of our grant program, thousands of working families have benefited with more out-of-school-hours care places, helping families to juggle work and family commitments. Across the State, schools have used the grant to pay for improvements to facilities to enable the outside school hours care service to operate, such as lighting, ventilation and the purchase of equipment for security and storage or play. I am pleased we are already seeing this fund benefit families not only in the city but also in regional communities across the State. Schools in Penrith, Bankstown, East Hills, Balmain and Summer Hill electorates are some of the areas that now have more OOSH places as a result of this fund. Regional families across the State are benefitting from the fund, with new OOSH services opening in Bathurst, Orange, Ballina and Cootamundra, to name a few. This Government knows that there are areas of high demand for outside school hours care services across New South Wales.

We know some schools that currently have an OOSH service would like to expand their existing provision to meet community demand, which is why we are broadening the eligibility criteria for the grants. During the visit to the Sutherland Shire Christian School, I announced that applications for one-off grants of up to \$30,000 will now be available to schools establishing new services, but, importantly, for schools wanting to expand their existing OOSH services. We will continue to support schools to prepare their grant applications. Importantly, arrangements between providers of out-of-school-hours care and schools are initiated and negotiated at the local level, with school principals working with childcare providers, the department's Facilities and Infrastructure and the early childhood education and care regulator. New public schools are being built to accommodate OOSH services. Once the schools are completed and operational, school communities decide whether an OOSH service is appropriate. If that decision is made, a tender process is started for a provider to run the service.

Working parents need flexibility, and that is why the grant program has been expanded and opened up to address parents' needs in local communities. Local councils also have a valuable role to play in providing out-of-school-hours care, which is why these grants are now also available to local councils that may wish to establish before and after school hours care services at their own sites or work in partnership with schools to meet unmet demand. The Department of Education will continue to work with children's services in local councils to determine how the Before and After School Care Fund can continue to be utilised to support local communities in creating more out-of-school-hours care places.

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

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** Applications that have already been submitted will continue to be assessed, and with grants currently open I encourage schools to look at submitting an application if they have an unmet need in their community. In the meantime, OOSH services will continue to open across the State in the coming months to meet local community demands. If members see a need in their local community for more before and after school hours care places or if they know of an existing service that has the capacity to expand, I encourage them to work with the principals, the parents and citizens association, and local councils.

**BALLINA KOALA COLONY**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH:** My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister recommend to his Federal counterpart that a robust, long-term monitoring strategy be put in place to evaluate the impact of the section 10 Pacific Highway road upgrade before it is too late for the

Ballina 200 koala colony?

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** I thank the member for Ballina for her question. What a contrast between the member for Ballina, who asks a sensible question, and Opposition members, who have not asked a single policy question all week. The Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway upgrade—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Ballina will come to order. I am sure that she would like to hear the answer to her question.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** —is a \$4.36 billion joint project of the New South Wales and Federal governments. A significant koala population is present in the West Wardell, Bagotville, Meerschaum and Blackwall Range areas in the Ballina shire. In 1992 the koala was listed as vulnerable under New South Wales legislation and in 2012 the Federal Government listed the koala as vulnerable in New South Wales. In the Ballina area the road upgrade route aims to minimise impacts to koala habitat and listed endangered ecological communities by traversing mostly cleared lands adjacent to the Blackwall Range area.

The upgrade was approved by the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment and the Federal Minister for the Environment in 2014, with strict environmental conditions. State Government approval required the preparation of a koala management plan for key areas along the approved route. One Federal condition required Roads and Maritime Services to demonstrate that the impact on the Ballina koala population would be acceptable before building could start in the area known as section 10, between Broadwater and Coolgardie.

Both the koala management plan and the population viability analysis [PVA], which modelled the koala population in the area for the next 50 years, have now been completed and provided to the Federal Minister. The process was overseen by the Koala Expert Advisory Committee, chaired by the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer, Professor Mary O'Kane. She led a panel of experts who reviewed all ecological information on the Ballina koala population and made recommendations on the suitability of mitigation measures to protect the koala. The Environment Protection Authority [EPA] provided input to this process. The State approval conditions and the recommendations of the koala management plan include ongoing monitoring of koalas in the areas of concern along the upgrade route.

The koala management plan builds on other mitigation measures that the EPA has negotiated with Roads and Maritime Services. These measures include connectivity structures to enable koalas to move under the new highway, fauna exclusion fencing along both sides of 16 kilometres of highway and planting 130 hectares of koala habitat in a known koala corridor. The EPA will work closely with Roads and Maritime Services to develop a responsive monitoring program for the koala populations along the Pacific Highway. That program must focus on, first, assessing the effectiveness of the mitigation measures; secondly, being scientifically robust and defensible; thirdly, recommending additional measures if the existing mitigation measures are not delivering the predicted outcomes; and, fourthly, running for long enough to ensure that the koala populations are not declining.

I mentioned a population viability analysis with a 50-year time frame. The PVA indicated, first, that the Ballina koala population will decline over time with or without the road upgrade, in particular because of koala deaths on roads in the neighbouring vicinity, disease and predators; secondly, that the upgrade could potentially have a small adverse impact on the population, which could be offset by additional mitigation measures to address koala deaths on existing neighbouring roads; and, thirdly, that these and other mitigation measures, such as predator control, could improve the situation for koalas above the current projections without the upgrade.

The question from the member for Ballina has picked up the language of Associate Professor Jonathon Rhodes of the University of Queensland who conducted a peer review last month. That peer review notes some qualifications, but it concludes, first, that the koala PVA is scientifically sound; and,

secondly, that Dr Rhodes is happy to endorse the contents of that report. Dr Rhodes says:

... the road upgrade is estimated to have a plausible range between having no effect to having a small effect equal to around a 10% decline in population size relative to the no road case ...

Dr Rhodes says that mitigation activities could compensate for the impact of the road upgrade. He goes on to say:

Nonetheless, considerable uncertainties inevitably still exist and I recommend that a robust long-term monitoring strategy be put in place to evaluate the actual impact of the road upgrade ...

He refers to "long-term monitoring strategy" and "actual impact", not "projected impact". Dr Rhodes is not saying stop the upgrade until more studies are done. He is saying that when the upgrade is done the effects in the long term should keep being monitored and the mitigation strategy should be adapted if necessary. To answer the question of the member for Ballina: the Government is more than happy to commit to that recommendation, in order to protect our iconic koalas.

### **UNPAID FINES AND TAXES**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance, Services and Property. How is the New South Wales Government making it easier to pay fines and drive down debt?

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** When we came to government, service delivery in this State was stuck in the Dark Ages. There was no innovation, no forward thinking and just like Labor's convention at the weekend absolutely nothing happening—except for its favourite policy, which is its drug policy. What a great idea from the member for Summer Hill: use taxpayer funds for a new service to check the safety of illegal drugs. She should have left those crazy ideas back in the United States of America.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Michael Daley:** The Minister has been in this place long enough to have familiarised himself with Standing Order 73.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I am making an important point about service delivery. Job service delivery is something that this Government—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will return to the substance of the question.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Madam Speaker, your ruling was loud and clear. Because the Minister wants a laugh does not mean he can continue to flout Standing Order 73.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. I will hear further from the Minister.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** This is the Parliament of New South Wales; it is the real thing now, Jo.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will return to the leave of the question.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Thankfully, the Baird-Grant Government is focusing on law-abiding

citizens. We have turned around the fortunes of this State. We realise that these days members of the millennial generation of New South Wales want fast, convenient, friendly government services at their fingertips. They want services as and when they need them, directly from their smart phones. That is exactly what this Government is providing: a revolutionary service delivery model.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Service NSW provides around-the-clock services and the ability to pay fines. You now get notification when a fine is due. You get a photograph of the offence, and the ability to request a review.

**Mr John Robertson:** No, you do not; only if you ask for one.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The member of Blacktown should be one of the 21,000 people who, in the past couple of weeks, have downloaded that app.

**Mr John Robertson:** I do not intend to incur fines.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** A few other members of the Opposition might incur fines. There is another aspect to this initiative that is foreign to those opposite: good financial management. Good financial management has taken New South Wales from last to first. Interestingly, the Opposition, although it is now out of government, recently expressed some interest in the current state—

**Mr Michael Daley:** That is what oppositions do.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The member for Maroubra did not do it in government, though, when he was the finance Minister. The Opposition recently expressed some interest in the state of unpaid taxes and fines in New South Wales. The member for Maroubra, my good friend, has returned from his break. He is looking fit for the challenge. I hope it is all natural and that he is not getting any help from the member for Summer Hill. The sidekick of the member for Maroubra, the member for Cessnock, is not in the Chamber today. He recently expressed interest in the current state of unpaid fines and taxes. The member for Cessnock suggested, very helpfully, that the Government might want to consider chasing down unpaid taxes and fines.

I thank the member for Cessnock, in his absence, for such great advice and assistance. But if he had done his homework he would know that when Labor was last in government unpaid fines and taxes totalled \$2.2 billion, double the amount that is outstanding today. In five years we have introduced a raft of measures and reduced the debt left to us by Labor to the tune of \$1 billion. Labor's unrecovered \$2.2 billion in 2011 is the equivalent of 13 per cent of the total tax and fine revenue for that year. Within five years this Government has reduced that amount to 5 per cent. This Government has fixed up Labor's mess and has continued to invest in better, more efficient, more convenient services for the people of New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Lakemba will come to order. This is his final warning.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We understand that our job is to work every day for the people of New South Wales, and we are going to do that for many years to come.

**Question time concluded at 3.22 p.m.**

#### **STANDING ORDER 27**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [3.22 p.m.]: I wish to address an issue with respect to Standing Order 27, which states that every member is bound to



attend the service of the House and any committee to which they have been appointed. I note that the Leader of the Opposition, for the third time this week, has left the Chamber well before the end of question time. Madam Speaker, I draw your attention to Standing Order 27.

## **PETITIONS**

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

### **Powerhouse Museum Ultimo**

Petition requesting the retention of the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo and the expansion of museum services to other parts of New South Wales, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

### **Edgecliff Railway Station and Interchange**

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

### **Surry Hills Light Rail Station**

Petition calling on the Government to build a second light rail station in Surry Hills at the Wimbo Park-Olivia Gardens site, using appropriate landscaping to minimise visual and noise impacts and provide a quality park for the local community, received from **Ms Jenny Leong**.

### **Social Housing Conservation Areas**

Petition calling for community consultation on the sale of social housing properties listed as conservation areas under the Heritage Act 1977 and supporting tabled petitions relating to Millers Point and other conservation areas, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

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

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

### **Pet Shops**

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

### **Slaughterhouse Monitoring**

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

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

### **School Student Transport Scheme**

Petition requesting the Government to expand the School Student Transport Scheme to include light rail where it is the most direct travel option to and from school, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

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

## CENTENARY OF ANZAC

**Debate resumed from 17 February 2016.**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON** (Maitland) [3.24 p.m.]: The Centenary of Anzac has been profound and moving for our nation as a whole and for the many rural, regional and metropolitan communities that have commemorated this event in so many different ways. In schools, RSLs and churches, private moments of reflection have been taken by millions of individual Australians to mark the sacrifice made by men and women who answered the call, not just in 1915 but in theatres of war and peacekeeping in the century since. In the past 12 months I have attended, with my community, a number of memorial services in Maitland—I also attended the service in Sydney on Remembrance Day—to honour and commemorate the sacrifices made by Australian men and women who, in many cases, paid with their lives. As I stood shoulder to shoulder with members of my community to pay our respects, I was reminded of how the acts of courage and sacrifice have remained so poignant throughout the decades. The many services I attended last year showed the importance of reflecting on the contribution made by our service men and women, and how their actions have enriched our way of life.

The services reflected the diverse ways in which our community recognises those actions and that gift of sacrifice. One service I attended marked the sixty-fifth anniversary of the armistice that ended the Korean War. The Consul General for South Korea, Huijin Lee, presented Ambassador of Peace medals to four Maitland veterans of that war: David Cunningham, Ray Jones, Basil Stemp and Brian Moore. The Consul General spoke of the help that his nation had received during and since the war, and how that had helped the nation become an important trading partner. He said that trade, not just with our country but also with the rest of the world, was important for Korea, which was now in a position to help others. It is easy to forget that in all aspects of life it is often those to whom we give a hand, those whom we empower, who later pay it forward by extending a hand to others. A musical performance and the serving of some traditional sweet dumplings was a very positive way to commemorate the service of our Korean veterans and enhance the multicultural understanding and relationship between our communities.

In August last year I attended a ceremony to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Lone Pine at Gallipoli. This ceremony was organised by the members of the Rotary Club of East Maitland to place a memorial plaque next to a lone pine at Cooks Square Park. The pine had been grown from the seeds of the original Gallipoli lone pine. The memorial service was held during the same period as the Battle of Lone Pine, 100 years before, and featured 25 names of those from our area who fought in that battle, including the 18 men who died there. Some of these services have taken on a unique Maitland flavour, including the one held by the Friends of the Maitland Regional Museum, which showcased an excellent local display from the Australian War Memorial. Dr Janece MacDonald, the local advocate for a Maitland regional museum—which we hope will be built soon—was the local curator of the exhibition. It was presented beautifully, and was combined with an embroidery exhibition of poppies that local women had created to commemorate the veterans of the Great War.

Held at historic Brough House, the Federal member for Hunter Joel Fitzgibbon delivered a moving speech about his recollections of the women of Horseshoe Bend. I thank him for enriching our local knowledge of these women in our community. Amongst these women there were many widows who never knew the love of a man because their fiances had died on the battlefields after their promises had been made. Many lost their husbands to the terrors of war. The sadness of those women's stories is in the sacrifice told only by their single status as they aged. The stories of those women were not documented in any way, and are only evident today through the name of the man they lost, carved deep into the stone of a cenotaph—a very familiar sight in towns across the country. When I see one of them I am always reminded of the poem *Smalltown Memorials*, by Australian poet Geoff Page. I will share some of that poem with the House now:

No matter how small

Every town has one;  
Maybe just the obelisk,  
A few names inlaid;  
More often full-scale granite,  
Marble digger (arms reversed),  
Long descending lists of dead:  
Sometimes not even a town,  
A thickening of houses  
Or a few unlikely trees  
Glimpsed on a back road will have one.

The poem continues:

Unveiled;  
Then seen each day—  
Noticed once a year;  
And then not always,  
Everywhere.

The next bequeathed us  
Parks and pools

But something in that first  
Demanded stone.

Humans have always been driven to record their history, whether in ancient lines in Celtic stones, paintings on cave walls, carvings in stone temples, the stained glass of Gothic churches, intricate illuminated works such as those found in the *Book of Kells*, and the amazing artworks in our own Australian art galleries and the Australian War Memorial. In the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries people moved towards telling their stories mainly in words. Later, stories were told through photographs and videos, still in their infancy, black and white, with blurred resolution and jerky motion. Photos, artwork and video are all used in propaganda and are very powerful. Wartime photos are an amazing resource for students and historians today.

In my electorate, Yvonne Fletcher and John Gillam have been researching and recording the war efforts in the Hunter. I was impressed last week when I participated in the launch of their latest book, *Men in Sheep's Clothing: The History of the Sheepskin Diggers Vest*, to learn that that story started with one of those very blurry old wartime photos. The book explores a remarkable story of Australian innovation, self-sacrifice, determination and love. During the winters of the Great War soldiers were dying of pneumonia and freezing to death in the muddy trenches. The people of Australia responded with a practical solution: the design and manufacture of a life-saving sheepskin vest that was given to every digger. So innovative, so Australian was this vest, but it was not documented as part of the official Army uniform. The record of it was almost lost but for its being observed in the photograph that inspired the book.

To commemorate the Centenary of Anzac historians Yvonne and John wrote a story about the vest, exploring its history and its impact on Australians. The commemoration coalesces with the Centenary of the Red Cross and the book recognises the contribution of the ladies who made the vests. Last week at the launch it was very interesting to hear how the Red Cross was set up over a weekend and how it was able in such a short time to deliver vests to the men at the front. Not only have John and Yvonne researched the history of the vest but also, with the help of Stephanie and Tony Mortel, who are local sheepskin manufacturers in my electorate, they have been able to reproduce a version of it. They are making it here in Australia. That is another example of the innovative ways in which we can remember the sacrifice of those who fought for this nation.

The way we record and commemorate our experiences has changed so much. No longer do we record our thoughts and feelings in stone. We live in an information age. Our desire to record our personal moments online is pressing. No longer do we whisper our sadness, our grief to the village, we shout it to the world. There was a time when the written word was much more considered than it is today. Carefully chosen words that expressed a point of view or an emotion or described someone were once valued far more than they are today. Now we need to be able to express our opinions and thoughts in 160 characters or in seven-second video "vines".

It was therefore pleasing to me to see that in 2015 two women in my electorate, Robyn Wickham and Anne Campbell, published a beautiful book called *Maitland's Gallipoli Campaign*. It explores the stories of people from all over our region who served at Gallipoli. The book is a valuable resource for local teachers, who make these stories come alive for children through the magic that is education. I hope this book will help them to impart to our young people relatable stories of this century-old battle. That the human costs of war are great and that we need to try harder for peace is the lesson. It was our boys who went away to fight and our girls who nursed them at home and abroad and who kissed their cheeks and sent them on their way and never saw them again. They, like the teenagers of today, had warm, beating hearts full of dreams and aspirations. They are the stories that Robyn and Anne have told in their book.

As dawn broke at Gallipoli Cove on Anzac Day in 2015, 20 students and four chaperones from the Hunter region gathered for the commemoration. They had each researched the story of a soldier to tell to the gathering. Like Anne and Robyn, the authors of *Maitland's Gallipoli Campaign*, those students have come to know those soldiers as men—as brothers, fathers, husbands, sons and lovers—through whatever records have survived. The students went far beyond words carved on a cenotaph. I am always humbled by the opportunity to represent our community at memorial services and ceremonies, to pay respect to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf. Last April, due to flooding in Maitland Park, the Anzac Day ceremony was moved to Maitland Town Hall at the last minute. In a similar vein, the community of Gillieston Heights put together their own Anzac commemoration when they were stranded in their community for more than a week. These are the ceremonies that speak to me. In the face of challenges it was a case of "soldier on", in tribute to the traditional Anzac spirit.

During the April 2015 storms and the recent January storms in the Hunter I witnessed the enduring spirit of the Anzacs in my community on so many occasions. I make particular mention of the 2,000 State Emergency Service volunteers from around Australia who came to help us. The region received assistance from the police, firefighters, both retained staff and volunteers, paramedics, Ausgrid staff, council workers, Family and Community Services staff, and staff from Commonwealth agencies and community service agencies. These modern displays of resilience, persistence, courage and sacrifice embody the Anzac spirit that has remained in our soldiers, our Armed Forces and, indeed, our culture since 1915.

In the Centenary of Anzac debate I have heard some of my colleagues reading letters from soldiers to their families describing conditions at the front, but one soldier's letter that I read when I was in El Alamein, at a desert war memorial on the seventieth anniversary of that battle, had particular resonance for me. I have visited the sites of many wars around the world where Australians have served. I have paid my respects at war memorials in Europe, Borneo, South Africa, Egypt and North Africa, Vietnam, Cambodia, Rabaul in Papua New Guinea and many other sites. Last year my son, my husband and my father-in-law walked the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea, where two of my son's great-grandfathers fought during World War II. In two months' time I hope to go to Turkey to commemorate Anzac Day at Gallipoli, the site of that most hallowed ground, the Anzac memorial.

My maternal grandfather fought at El Alamein during World War II. El Alamein was known as "the gentleman's battle". No civilians were involved in the fighting. It is important to note that some 40,000 men died—Germans, Italians and Allies. There is no gentle death in war. The Commonwealth war graves at El Alamein are very ordered: stark headstones in geometric patterns with vivid pink bougainvillea standing

out from the sandy desert. There is a word or two about each soldier on his headstone, underneath his name, with his date of birth and his date of death. Being in the exact same place as one of those young soldiers as I read the letter he wrote to his sister, in a clear, beautiful hand, was a uniquely moving experience.

I could almost hear his young voice speaking positively about the conditions, allaying his sister's concerns as she prepared for the birth of her first child alone, without her husband, who was also at war. To feel his wish to help her share the miracle of birth, family and joy while he experienced the horrors of war was almost surreal. To see him reach for some normality amidst the chaos, to offer hope in the horror and despair of war, was and is, to me, an embodiment of the Anzac spirit. Reading that soldier's letter on a sunny day, 70 years later—and it was a beautiful sunny day—at an isolated war memorial, in quiet and peace and order, with only 10 or so people around me, made it all seem so much more jarring. I will share with members something that I wrote at the time to convey the emotions I felt:

Hard up against the wire of the fence, weapons faced against the soldiers,  
They lie down the slope a way, with silent sentries to mark their places on the battlefield,  
Messages of love and loss from families frozen in grief, in time,  
The only hint left of the warm young bodies that once lay above the ground.  
The blue turquoise of the water beckons me,  
Sparkling on the horizon, the sky meets the sea in a mist that defies the eye to say  
Where it begins and where it ends,  
It is so far away.  
And in that distance, the blue turquoise is a talisman, an impossible oasis,  
Where they forgot for a moment, the dry brittle heat of this desert,  
This battle for a land so barren where they fight without the distraction of civilians.  
They write their letters home, they keep their chins up,  
Offering reassuring, wise words to family, in perfect blue penmanship which belies the chaos  
around them.  
Human comfort for a thirsty soul.  
Eyes look up for a moment, to follow that other thin line of blue,  
That beguiling horizon which blends into the cyan sky in the distance,  
Imagining that they can follow that line with their eyes  
Home,  
To their families, friends and loved ones.  
They never went back.  
Instead, here they lie,  
Soldiers under the battlefield  
In strict formation,  
Row by row,  
Horizontal sentries.  
Seventy years on,  
And still the water dances beyond their reach.

The stories of those who served Australia in all wars are, and will be, forever etched in our hearts and they propel us every day to be better, fairer, stronger and kinder and in so doing to truly honour the Anzac spirit. It is amazing to think that 100 hundred years after a single battle on a small beach in a far-off land our national heartbeat still resonates when the bugle calls and we see those lists of names on cenotaphs around Australia. Lest we forget.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [3.41 p.m.]: I make a contribution to this debate to commemorate the service of the Anzacs. We are now 101 years on from the events of Gallipoli. It is a chapter of Australian history that is so massive and so all-encompassing that every town, village and suburb in the nation was affected in a way that has not been matched by any event since. And yet it was all so far away—so distant and so remote from the people at the time. In the early part of last century, the

electorate of Riverstone comprised the township of Riverstone. It was quite a small town. It was also quite some distance from Sydney and quite a distinct locality. The rural districts around it looked to Riverstone as their centre—places like Schofields, Rouse Hill and Kellyville were just localities; they had no townships as such. Riverstone was the local town that served that district. The only other towns of any consequence in the region were Windsor and Richmond to the north in the Hawkesbury.

When war broke out in 1914 it was three weeks before it was reported in the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*. The story about war breaking out appeared on 28 August. Yet despite that remoteness and that different era we are talking about, when communications were so poor and so slow, the first Riverstone recruit signed up on 11 August. So word of mouth must have been working, and the telegraph presumably was working. Boer War veteran Mr Fred Clark enlisted on 11 August 1914 and embarked with the force to serve in the German Pacific colonies only one week later. He was actually on board the ship heading towards New Guinea before the local paper had even reported the outbreak of war. Such was the patriotic fervour of people at the time that when word did spread that the empire was at war and that the King needed their service, Fred Clark and others signed up promptly and without hesitation. A few days after Fred Clark enlisted, Alfred Brookes, Herbert Davis and Edgar Harvey were recruited. They found their niche in which to serve King, country and empire.

I acknowledge that I am relying very heavily on the book *Riverstone and the First World War* produced by the Riverstone and District Historical Society for the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of these events, which we have been noting over the past few years. The authors of that book, the people who in particular contributed the most, were Ron Mason, Shirley Seale and Rosemary Philis. They were assisted by other members of the historical society. It is a wonderful tribute to their work. They have made a great contribution to recording the history of their town at this significant juncture. Fred Clark and Alf Brookes ended up on the expeditionary journey to the German colonies of the Pacific—New Guinea and Rabaul to claim those and prevent them from being used as staging posts or intelligence posts for German forces or bases from which German raiders could refuel and harass Allied shipping. Before Christmas 1914 that task had been achieved by people like Fred Clark and Alf Brookes—those German colonies had fallen under the control of the Australian forces and were no longer available to serve the German cause.

The book records that Brian Mason, a long-term Riverstone resident, had a potent memory of the day the World War 1 army recruiting officers arrived in Riverstone. As a local school boy of nine or 10 years of age, it made a lasting impression on him. He recalls how the army recruiters arrived on horseback from Windsor. They were beating a drum and leading a riderless horse. They then addressed the townspeople from the verandah of the Royal Hotel, issuing a challenge to the young men to take up the reins of the riderless horse and join the war effort. Many did just that. The authors note that even though Australia had a population of just under five million—not much more than the current population of Sydney—416,809 men enlisted. Nearly 40 per cent of those recruits came from New South Wales, which was a significantly higher proportion than the proportion of New South Welshmen that made up the population of the country at the time.

Between 127 and 178 of those volunteers came from the Riverstone region. The discrepancy in numbers comes from the different ways of recording people's place of origin, and probably from the fact that all of the towns and localities were keen to claim each of the boys as their own. If a person was born in one place and lived in another or worked in another then he could be claimed by more than one locality as a recruit from that region. The official memorial in Riverstone records 127 men, but the one at the school records 178, and there are accounts that fall in between those two numbers.

The latter two of those earlier recruits, Herb Davis and Edgar Harvey, enlisted in what was the new Australian Imperial Force, which was created specifically for the purpose of sending men to Europe to serve in the conflict there. They sailed from Sydney on 18 October 1914 to Albany in Western Australia, and then via Colombo, Aden and Suez, arriving in Alexandria, Egypt, in December 1914, where they trained. Given that most of the men who were recruited had no previous military experience, they

needed significant training before they were put into combat. It was decided by the Australian Imperial Force and the British War office that that would be done in Egypt. The men from Riverstone who arrived in Egypt, trained there and went on to serve in Gallipoli included Fred Clark, Edgar Harvey, Alf Brookes, Herb Davis, Ernest Griffin, William Davies, Arthur Brennan, Austin Smith, Robert Hayward, Herbert Rimmington, Jack Kenny, Joseph East, Herbert Kenny, William White, Henry Johnson, Archibald Showers and Norbert Rosa.

Perhaps it is not remarkable that a number of those names are still reflected in the Riverstone population today, as many of those families are still Riverstone residents. These 17 volunteers served in Gallipoli and it is worth noting that all Australia's forces at the time comprised volunteers. That made Australia's contribution to the Great War distinctive, which was not the case for all nations. Obviously, at times this was a divisive issue in Australia, but it is to our credit that so many recruits left from Australia and all were volunteers. Fortunately for the people of Riverstone there was only one death amongst the 17 volunteers from the region, and that was Archibald Showers.

Tragically, Archibald Showers was reported missing on the day that he arrived at Gallipoli. His body was never recovered, but it is believed that he is one of those buried at Lone Pine. The book records that all he left behind was a hairbrush, a testament, a hymnbook and a matchbox. The book describes this as "a sad manifest and cold comfort for his loved ones". It is sad that so little was left behind by a man who bravely volunteered to serve his country and tragically did no more than arrive at the place of conflict. Many soldiers wrote letters to their loved ones. These letters provide valuable insight into the conditions for those serving. One account was written by Jack Kenny, and included the landing. He wrote:

Landing the troops took time, and it was after daylight when my turn came to get into one of the small boats which ran us into shore. We were noticed by the Turks, with the result that one of their batteries, of which the well-known gun "Beachy Bill" was a member, sent a few shrapnel shells over, but, except to add to our nervousness, which we already felt, and wounding a few men, they did practically no damage. It did not take us long to scramble ashore, and once our feet were on firm ground we felt more confident.

Few of us will ever forget how weird everything seemed as we neared Anzac. The great flashes of the fleet guns and the terrible explosion on the side of Achi Baba and Gaba Tepe as we passed, and the tremendous amount of rifle fire and the popping of grenades sounded very weird and horrible.

Later Jack Kenny talks about the charges that we know so much about as they were dramatically recreated in the film *Gallipoli*:

While in Gallipoli I saw several charges, though I took part in none. I was much surprised at the work of the fleet. The accurate marksmanship of the gunners is wonderful, almost unnatural. On several occasions there were bombardments of the Turkish positions in front of us, and during these bouts the noise is tremendous. The vibrations of the earth greatly resembled a violent earth tremor. Throughout the latter part of September the fleet and shore batteries kept up an incessant bombardment of Achi Baba. To us, as spectators, it seemed marvellous that the very hill itself did not crumble away—yet the Turkish guns replied as gaily as ever. At night the whole of the slopes of this hill were lit up with bursting shells, which were of different calibre, up to the 15 inch shell.

Aeroplanes were largely used on both sides. On one occasion a Taube dropped a bomb rather close to us, but it burst without doing any damage or injuring anyone. Some of the aeroplanes are fitted with machine guns. It sounds peculiar to hear these rattling among the clouds. In modern warfare danger not only lies on all sides, but above and below. In many places the trenches were being undermined the whole time, and one never knows at what moment the whole trench formation, with men and everything else, will go upwards in pieces.

The calmness and matter-of-fact nature of these words is surprising knowing what we now know about the experiences of soldiers during World War I. These words speak volumes of the courage, practicality and down-to-earth nature of men as they took these experiences in their stride. Kenny goes on to describe his reaction to the evacuation at the end of the Gallipoli campaign:

Though the evacuation came as a surprise to all, we were more or less pleased that Gallipoli was a thing of the past. We could have crossed the Peninsula, no doubt, but it would not have been worth the sacrifice of lives that such an operation would have entailed. But there is one thing certain—the Turks could not have driven us into the sea by force, as they often boasted that they would do. The whole campaign in Gallipoli seems to have been a case of the irresistible having met the immovable. It was no use sitting behind a brick wall and barking at the enemy.

These words strike me as remarkable 100 years after they were written. It is remarkable that a person who had experienced such horror would write so plainly and simply about that experience. It is a sobering thought that so many men did not get the opportunity to return to their loved ones and their lives in Australia, but they faced with courage and a simple approach the dangers of that place. They believed that it was their duty on behalf of their country and they went willingly to war.

I have spoken of the Riverstone of 1914-15 and it is worth noting that the Riverstone of 2016 is a remarkably different place although many people of that era are still represented in the community. One of the particular differences is the presence of populations from other parts of the world, particularly India. In my electorate there is a Sikh Gurudwara based at Glenwood, a temple of the Sikh religion. The Sikhs are largely from the Punjab region of India and there are many Punjabis in the Riverstone electorate as well as people from other parts of India. That is worthy of note because they too were represented at Gallipoli. People from many parts of the British Empire, as it was then, served together on the battlefields.

At the time there were Punjabi Sikhs who were residents of Australia and I believe seven of them signed up to join the Australian Imperial Force. One of those men died overseas and the others returned to their homes. The volunteer who lost his life on behalf of his adopted nation of Australia was Sarn Singh. It is worth recording in this place his name as a Punjabi Sikh from Australia who volunteered to serve the British Empire and gave his life along with so many other volunteers in that campaign. Much is written on the contribution of these Sikhs and those of the broader Indian community, members of the British Indian Army, and their participation in Gallipoli in particular and in World War I more generally. While Australians remember such places as Lone Pine, the Nek and Anzac Cove, for Sikhs the most poignant and painful memory of the Gallipoli campaign is the Battle of Krithia. Sir Reginald Savory, a British officer posted with the British Indian Army to lead a Sikh contingent, gives an account of the Battle of Krithia:

On 3rd June we received orders for general assault all along the line next day. The orders were short and clear. At 11 am on 4th June all the guns were to bombard the enemy's front line trenches for twenty minutes. Then for ten minutes they were to stop while the infantry were to cheer and wave their bayonets.

The object of this was to persuade the enemy to man their parapets. Then the bombardment was to come down again. At noon we were to advance. It all sounded simple enough. The 14th Sikhs were to attack astride the Gully Ravine. The 4th of June was a beautiful summer day. Our guns started registering at 8 am and even before the bombardment began it must have been clear to the enemy that something was about to happen.

It was now 11.30 am and time for the cheering to start; but the noise was so great that we could hardly hear it even in our own trench. And then—twelve noon—blew the whistle—and we were away. From that moment I lost all control of the fighting. The roar of musketry drowned every other sound, except that of the guns. To try to give an order was useless. The nearest man was



only a yard or two away but I couldn't see him. Soon I found myself running on alone, except for my little bugler, a young, handsome boy, just out of his teens, who came paddling along behind me to act as a runner and carry messages. Port little chap.

During the first few minutes, I was knocked out, lying on the parapet with two Turks using my body as a rest over which to shoot at our second line coming forward. When I fully recovered consciousness, the Turks had gone. I looked around and saw my little bugler lying dead, brutally mutilated.

I could see no one else, stumbled back as best I could, my head was bleeding and I was dazed and then, Udai Singh, a great burly Sikh with a fair beard who was one of our battalion wrestlers, came out of the reserve trenches, picked me up, slung me over his shoulder, and brought me to safety; and all the time we were being shot at.

That is just one of many stories of heroism and duty displayed by the British Indian Army Forces, including the Sikhs who served alongside our diggers in Gallipoli and elsewhere in World War I. It is worth nothing that 1,380,000 troops were recruited from India to be sent overseas to the conflict on behalf of the British Empire, and of those 74,000 paid the ultimate sacrifice and 67,000 were wounded. The contribution made by the British Indian Army was just as significant and massive as the contribution made by Australians who volunteered and answered that call to mount the riderless horse that came to Riverstone in late 1914. There are no good stories to tell about war: it is a horrible business. We recognise the valour, courage and sense of duty shown by all who were involved. It is appropriate that we commemorate them 100 years on.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN** (The Entrance) [4.01 p.m.]: I speak on the Centenary of Anzac. Last year the people of The Entrance electorate embraced the opportunity to remember the events of 1915 and turned out in large numbers for the traditional Dawn Service held at The Entrance Memorial Park, the Central Coast's largest Anzac event, organised by The Entrance Long Jetty RSL Sub Branch and the street march organised later that day organised by the Ourimbah-Lisarow RSL Sub Branch. I had the privilege of attending both events. I commend Mr Allan Fletcher, OAM, JP, President of The Entrance Long Jetty RSL Sub Branch, his executive and the organising team for the quality of the Dawn Service and the day's events in that part of our electorate.

I also commend the march and service held at Ourimbah Public School, organised by Mr Dave Pankhurst, President of Ourimbah-Lisarow RSL Sub Branch, his executive and the organising committee. The Ourimbah march is a community event and the one day of the year when the typically very busy Pacific Highway is closed to allow the march to proceed. Ourimbah is one of the oldest suburbs of what is today called the Central Coast region and it is the oldest suburb of The Entrance electorate. I will focus my comments on the suburb of Ourimbah today. The township, originally called Blue Gum Flat, was established in the 1840s. It was built on the timber industry and the demands of the New South Wales railways for that material.

The main northern railway line runs through the township, and the timber railway station, opened in 1887, is one of the oldest in the State. Ourimbah is still a small township today. The 2011 census reported a population of 4,162. Some idea of the size of the population in 1915 can be gauged by the electoral boundaries that prevailed at the time. In 1915 Ourimbah was one small village in a large coastal electorate called Kahibah, named after one of its northern suburbs, which was also a miner's settlement located closer to the outer suburbs of Newcastle. The Kahibah electorate stretched from the Hawkesbury River north to the outer suburbs of Newcastle. Today the same area is home to six State electorates. In 1915, the member for Kahibah was Alfred Edden, a founding member of the Australian Labor Party. I will return to him later.

In 1915 the population of Ourimbah was much smaller and the departure of local men to enlist for overseas service must have had a big impact on the community. We know this because the community

recorded the names of every man, all 74 of them, on a cenotaph and memorial located next to Ourimbah railway station, which was started in 1921 and completed in 1938. The memorial consists of a large beam resting on two columns in the form of an arch. The years 1914 and 1918 appear on the arch while the columns, each with the Australian Imperial Forces emblem located at the top, lists the names of those from the area who served in World War I. The Australian War Memorial records that:

Australia's involvement in the First World War began when Britain and Germany went to war on 4 August 1914, and both Prime Minister Joseph Cook and then Opposition Labor Leader Andrew Fisher, who were in the midst of an election campaign, pledged full support for Britain. The outbreak of war was greeted in Australia, as in many other places, with great enthusiasm.

I should add that during that election Fisher campaigned on Labor's record of support for an independent Australian defence force, and pledged that Australia would, "stand beside the mother country to help and defend her to the last man and the last shilling". Labor won the election with absolute majority in both Houses and Fisher formed his third ministry. The enthusiasm for war in its early years was felt just as keenly in the Ourimbah village, and Ourimbah men were some of the earliest to join up. In 1915 a group of them enlisted at Liverpool to be sent as reinforcements to units involved in the Gallipoli campaign. Three of them were William Crane, David Tynan and Cecil Wamsley. These men were distributed amongst the battalions that would take part in some of the first fighting to be seen by Australian troops in France on the Western Front.

Private William J. Crane was a sleeper cutter. He was issued army number 1681 and posted to 17th Battalion. After further training in Egypt, the 17th Battalion proceeded to France. Landing there on 22 March 1916, it took part in its first major battle at Pozières between 25 July and 5 August. Private Leslie David Tynan, also a sleeper cutter, joined the 4th Battalion and was issued army number 2872. After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, the 4th Battalion returned to Egypt where it was joined by Private Tynan. In March 1916, it sailed for France and the Western Front. From then until 1918 the battalion took part in operations against the German Army, principally in the Somme Valley in France and around Ypres in Belgium. The battalion's first major action in France was at Pozières in the Somme valley in July 1916.

Private Cecil "Curly" Carrington Wamsley, who listed his occupation as bushman on his enlistment paperwork, was issued army number 1017 and was posted to the 20th Battalion, 5th Brigade. After further training in Egypt, the 20th Battalion proceeded to France. It entered the trenches of the Western Front for the first time in April 1916 and in the following month had the dubious honour of being the first Australian battalion to be raided by the Germans. The 20th took part in its first major offensive around Pozieres between late July and the end of August 1916.

Despite being posted to different units, all three remained in contact and all three were involved in the Pozières engagement. The Battle of Pozières was a two-week struggle for the French village of Pozières and the ridge on which it stands during the middle stages of the 1916 Battle of the Somme. Though British divisions were involved in most phases of the fighting, Pozières is primarily remembered as an Australian battle. The fighting ended with the Allied Forces in possession of the plateau north and east of the village in a position to menace the German bastion of Thiepval from the rear. The cost had been very large for both sides and in the words of Australian official historian Charles Bean, the Pozières ridge, "is more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth."

On 10 August 1916, Private Crane wrote home and his letter was published in a local newspaper, the *Gosford Times*, in October that year. I should note before I read from that letter that copies of the *Gosford Times* were sent to troops in France and the proprietor, Robert James Baker, reprinted a large number of letters from troops. These letters have recently been collected to form a digital book by Dr Richard G. Van Wirdum, which is available on the Gosford RSL Sub Branch website. For those Central Coast people interested in researching the war period, newspapers are an interesting source of information. I note the newspaper does have a conservative tone, which was reflected in the reporting of the conscription plebiscite. I will speak more of that later. Let us return to Private Crane. He stated in a

letter:

We have had some hot stuff during the past five weeks and this is how our lads came out of it: killed, Les Tynan and Curly Wamsley, also another chap from up the creek. Tom is wounded and also Bill Young. Poor old Les was killed by concussion of a shell; he was not hit at all. Curly was killed the next night in the first charge that his battalion was engaged in. Tom was wounded about five days later and at time of writing I do not know if it is serious. The death of Les will be a sad blow to Mr and Mrs Tynan. But, there is one thing—he went under doing his bit and doing it like a man.

The Germans are using all sorts of things against us here and as a result of the fearful concussions many of our lads are suffering from shell shock, which is worse than being wounded. A man suffering from shell shock fights day and night and very often has to be strapped down. John is taking his brother's death like a true born soldier. When the Australians were first sent into the firing line they were ordered to take a village and they got it the first try. The Tommies were trying to capture it for months and it cost them about 40,000 men for nothing. So, you will see what we are up against.

When we went in we had a ridge to take. We got it the first night, but had to fall back part of the way. It was in this charge that poor Curly Wamsley went under. We took the ridge five days later and captured a good many prisoners; most of them could speak good English. There is a lot of dissatisfaction among the Australian troops over clothing. When we came out of the trenches most of us were in rags, so they gave us a new rig-out, but a lot of it belonged to the Tommies and most of the boys would rather keep their rags than change them for English clothing. A bit of Australian clothing turned up today, so we might get our own yet.

Though he was wounded a number of times, Private Crane would go on to survive the war. Military records show that he had lost his service record and asked for a further copy to be sent to Wauchope. Presumably he worked in his trade in the timber industry. He later returned to the Central Coast and retired to Woy Woy. Again he lost his military papers and asked for another copy.

Leslie Tynan was 22 years of age when he was killed. His name is recorded at position number 42 on the Australian War Memorial roll of honour in Canberra. It was not until 1925 that his parent's received notice of his grave site. Cecil Wamsley's name is recorded at position number 92 on the Australian War Memorial roll of honour. He was 24 years of age when he was killed. As best I can determine, the home of his family in Ourimbah, Ivy Cottage, is located next to what is today Wamsley Road. His body was never recovered and he has no grave. Cecil and Leslie were just two of the 16 men from Ourimbah who were killed and never repatriated. The loss of that number of young men would be keenly felt in the Ourimbah community today but in 1916 it must have been shocking. Another name on the Ourimbah memorial is Private Sohier, who is recorded as killed in action. His large family still resides in the area and Riley Sohier and his son Brandon are both members of the Ourimbah Narara Valley Branch of the Australian Labor Party.

Alfred Edden was the local Labor State member in 1916. With mounting casualties during 1916, Prime Minister Billy Hughes conducted a national plebiscite to gauge support for conscription. He did so against Labor policy and the party split as a result. In 1916 Edden was expelled from the Labor Party. In 1917 he went on to join the Nationalists and to win the seat of Kahibah. The events of the war had repercussions throughout the community. It is appropriate to use this time to remember the loss suffered by the community and the changes brought to Australia and the world by mass industrial war. There is a wealth of material to draw on for those interested to learn about the war period. As our attention is drawn to disputes elsewhere in the world it is essential to remember the consequences of war and the loss felt by communities. These disputes threaten to draw in our troops. We must remember what occurred to Australian troops in the past and reflect soberly before we make a decision one way or the other to commit our soldiers to any conflict.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [4.14 p.m.]: I am honoured to commemorate the Centenary of Anzac. As a returned Australian Air Force serviceman, with six years of service, I know only too well the sacrifice that men and women make and will continue to make in defence of our great country. There are many moving publications about the Great War and one of them originates in my electorate of Tamworth and the town of Gunnedah. I will read an extract from the book by Ron McLean entitled *In the Line of Fire*. It concerns the Gunnedah and district role in the Great War. This extract was published in the Gunnedah local newspaper, the *Namoi Valley Independent*, and relates to the Wallaby March. The march gathered steam as it worked its way towards the coast through Gunnedah. The extract reads:

Gunnedah residents turned out in force in December 1915 to give a rousing welcome to the Wallabies, a band of young men marching from the north-west to Newcastle to enlist for service in World War I.

To the beat of a kettle drum and the cheers of the crowds lining the streets in towns and villages, the Wallabies put their patriotism to the test and their lives on the line by signing up for the far-off battlefields.

The Wallaby March from Narrabri to Newcastle in December 1915 was an exciting event and became one of the most successful recruitment efforts of World War I, eventually providing around 800 troops for Australia's war effort in Belgium and France and in Egypt and Palestine.

In Narrabri, Gunnedah, Quirindi, down through coalfield towns in the Hunter Valley and villages in between, the steadily growing numbers of marchers were met by cheering crowds, brass bands and large numbers of excited youngsters.

The Wallaby March came a few months after the highly successful Cooee March from Gilgandra in the central west to Sydney.

Volunteers from Wee Waa, Walgett, Collarenebri, Moree and Inverell districts began arriving by train and went into the Narrabri military camp on the racecourse near the railway station in early December 1915.

The men marched out behind a motor transport flying the Union Jack and the Australian flag, to the cheers of the crowd and the beat of a kettle drum, which had been presented to the group by citizens of the town. Among the ranks of the marchers were shearers, opal miners, blacksmiths, clerks, stock and station agents, farmers, station hands, labourers, a grocer, schoolteachers, bank tellers and a clergyman, the Reverend John Wilkinson, Methodist church minister at Narrabri, who became the Wallabies' first casualty in early February 1916—he was killed by a bolt of lightning while the Wallabies were in camp at West Maitland.

After leaving Narrabri, the marchers camped out the first night in a deluge of rain. By morning their blankets were like sponges. Discarding their clothes, they marched on in their swimming costumes. By the time they arrived at Baan Baa, however, they were "like nigger boys", according to one newspaper report, as the road was a quagmire.

As they entered each village, the men took up the chant, "What do we want?" Reply (a roar), "More men". Each man was a recruiting agent. They sought out and buttonholed the young men, tried their hats on them and did their best to persuade them to join the march.

Each night, the Wallabies bunked down in village halls and public buildings or, if they were out in the bush, they slept under the stars, using their army issue coats rolled up into a swag as their pillow. As the march continued, publicity grew apace.

At Boggabri, the Wallabies were presented with two tambourines and at a public meeting that night the "star turn", who was a permanently incapacitated local soldier, who described the landing at Gallipoli eight months earlier—how many brave Australian soldiers died as they hit the beach and in charging up the precipitous terrain against withering Turkish gunfire.

One recruit was signed up at Dubbledah and two at Emerald Hill before the Wallabies set out for Gunnedah the next day. After a few hours on the road, a parade near the freezing works pumphouse and a swim in the river, the recruits formed ranks for their triumphal march into Gunnedah.

The best description of the march comes from the notes of Gunnedah historian Russell McDonagh, published years later in the *Namoi Independent* newspaper.

It read, in part: "Long before the appointed time of arrival, throngs of people were assembling on the Boggabri Road. People in vehicles of all descriptions, men and women on horseback, pedestrians of all ages, and schoolchildren, all went out to give the Wallabies a tumultuous welcome. It was estimated that there were nearly 2000 people congregated there.

"Led by Captain Cameron, the Wallabies were lustily singing patriotic songs to the accompaniment of the bagpipes and the rat-a-tat-tat of the kettle drum. A large banner was carried, which was most striking and fitting—it bore in large letters The North West Route March and underneath The Wallabies. In an oval painting in the centre of the banner was a wallaby in its natural state.

"Twenty-two lads who had earlier been recruited at Gunnedah went out to join the Wallabies on the edge of town.

"On reaching the town boundary in the vicinity of the saleyards, a halt was called for the imposing procession through Conadilly Street, which was marshalled by Sergeant Reid of Gunnedah Police and headed by Constables Blackman and Prangley on police horses. Then followed the town band, the senior cadets under Sergeant Summers Reid, volunteer reserves, the militia led by Sergeant Cohen, the Rifle Club and the members of the Friendly Societies.

"On reaching the centre of the town, large streamers of bunting were suspended across the street and Allied flags were hung from the shops, hotels and public buildings ..."

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, which had sent a reporter to cover the march, described the town's welcome as "lavish". One of the spectators lining the route, a young man, called out: "Your feet will be sore before you get there, mate" to which one of the marchers replied: "It's better to have sore feet than cold feet," as much as saying that the caller should show some courage and throw in his lot with the Wallabies.

The procession down Conadilly Street was described by the *Tamworth Daily Observer* as the largest gathering in the town's history, quoting Captain Cameron as saying that "the Governor-General could not have received a better reception".

Following a night of heavy rain, the Wallabies set out for Curlewis. There the Wallabies again received royal treatment. More than 20 lads gave their names and a similar number promised to join up at a later date.

On Saturday, January 8, the Wallabies reached their destination for a huge reception outside the Newcastle Town Hall.

The Wallabies eventually formed the nucleus of the 34th Battalion of the A.I.F., which endured

unimaginable conditions on the Western Front, sustaining terrible casualties. Among those who signed up at Gunnedah were Tom Torrens, Billy Richmond, Jack Dodd, Herb Pryor, Jack Bloomfield, Joe Stevens, Lance Tudgey, Pat Kelly, Fred and Jack Shaw, Dick Harwood, Jim Panwick, Gerry Lonsdale, Fred Church, Vincent Wortley, Les Turner and William Dwyer. Many of these were killed.

The Menin Gate Memorial on the Western Front records the names of 54,000 Allied troops, who have no known grave, among them Leslie Turner, of Carroll, and Tom Torrens, of the small community of Rosewarne on the western outskirts of town. They died in the 34th Battalion's assault on Messines Ridge on June 7, 1917, as did Curlewis soldier Robert George Sullivan, whose body was never found. Altogether close to 20 Gunnedah and district soldiers are listed on the Memorial.

That was an extract from *In the Line of Fire* by Ron McLean, which was published by the Gunnedah and District Historical Society Inc. and proudly reprinted in the *Namoi Valley Independent*. The description of events typifies the patriotism of the people of the Tamworth area. What a sight it would have been as the marchers went through each town and gathered men who were to leave their mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers and serve for our country, and some of whom would not return.

Many commemorations were held across the Tamworth electorate as part of the Centenary of Anzac. One event was the G.S. Kidd Memorial School re-enactment of the Wallabies march at which students dressed in period costume and paraded down the street just like the Wallabies would have done. It was a sight to behold. G.S. Kidd Memorial School Principal Sharne Turpin did a wonderful job of gathering together everybody who wanted to be involved, including students, parents, carers, grandmothers and grandfathers and police and emergency services personnel. It was my pleasure to be there and to be given the honour of speaking to the gathering about the importance of the Red Cross during the war. In fact, many people at the event were dressed in period Red Cross nurses' uniforms. During the war Red Cross nurses looked after prisoners of war and made sure that comfort baskets and messages from home were delivered to them. As part of the Centenary of Anzac it is important that we pay tribute to the great work of the Red Cross.

During the commemorations it was my pleasure also to attend a special one-off event at the Tamworth Town Hall, the performance of the play *Let's Never Forget*, which pays tribute to the more than 1,100 men from the Tamworth region who served in World War I. *Let's Never Forget* was conceived and written by Mr Bill Gleeson, OAM—a true friend of the Tamworth RSL Sub-Branch. The sub-branch did a magnificent job in ensuring that the play paid appropriate homage to those who served and those who never returned. I thank the Tamworth RSL Sub-Branch, playwright Bill Gleeson and director Jason Palmer for their work.

The Tamworth RSL Sub-Branch, an active sub-branch in our region, currently under president Bob Chapman, does a magnificent job. We thank the secretary, Jane McCarthy, as well. The efforts of these volunteers enable commemorative events to continue to be held each year. Efforts to include young people and relatives of those who served for this great country of ours should be encouraged. At Anzac Day commemorations throughout the Tamworth electorate crowds are growing and it is particularly fantastic to see the young people attending. As an ex-serviceman I am a proud member of the Tamworth RSL Sub-Branch and will do whatever I can at any time to continue to support the outstanding efforts of RSL sub-branches in the Tamworth electorate. Lest we forget.

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

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

## **BELMONT MOTOR REGISTRY**

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

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [4.31 p.m.]: I am proud that I am once again able to speak in this place on behalf of the Swansea electorate and on behalf of more than 11,000 people in east Lake Macquarie who signed the community-led petition to say, "Do not close the Belmont Motor Registry." I say "once again" because Greg Piper, the member for Lake Macquarie, kindly allowed me to speak to his petition, which gathered more than 11,000 signatures from residents on the western side of Lake Macquarie who are also against the closure of their motor registry in Toronto.

Greg Piper and I are in lockstep on this issue. Just this morning we both spoke on the need for Service NSW facilities to cover both the east and west of Lake Macquarie. I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for allowing me to speak on his motions. Like Greg Piper, I was overwhelmed by the efforts of the community, businesses and community groups in the Swansea electorate who assisted in the gathering of these 11,000 signatures. It was an enormous community effort and I received unprecedented support gathering every one of those signatures. I again take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the Belmont and District Residents' Action Group, who helped activate community members so that our message would be loud and clear to the Minister and the Government. And it was not a hard sell. I talked to hundreds if not thousands of local people who were angry but also very confused about the decision to close such a bustling, well-utilised service in an area experiencing population growth. People were also concerned about how the elderly and disadvantaged would be able to access services.

As we know, those on restricted licences are often not allowed to drive further than a distance of 10 kilometres. It is 17.4 kilometres from Swansea to the Warners Bay Service Centre. This means that those on restricted licences cannot legally drive to Warners Bay to have their licences renewed at the centre. Unfortunately, there is no direct public transport service between Swansea and Warners Bay. This means that older drivers must catch two buses, the quickest round trip taking two hours and four minutes. Add an hour to 1½ hours between trips to walk from the bus stop, transact business and get back to catch the next bus in time and we are talking a minimum of three hours to complete a transaction at Warners Bay Service Centre. This is a terrible outcome for older residents of Swansea.

The Minister will be aware that I continue to this day to have conversations with my constituents about the closure of the Belmont Motor Registry. Accessibility, parking, a lack of facilities and amenities, and blowouts in waiting times as a result of people being funnelled to Warners Bay from both sides of Lake Macquarie are all issues that people have raised with me often since the closure of the Belmont Motor Registry. The petition that I lodged in the Parliament on behalf of my constituents asks the Government to reverse its decision to close the Belmont Motor Registry.

It is now clear from the actions of Minister Perrottet that the Government has given no consideration to this request. Unfortunately, Belmont Motor Registry is now closed and it looks highly unlikely that the Government will listen to the 11,000 people who signed this petition to reopen its doors. For what purpose? The Government introduced this new service model based on the premise of efficiency and savings. Yesterday's Auditor-General's report has revealed that the Government's figures are rubbery at best. Services have been reduced and jobs have been axed. This is all as a result of a conservative ideological approach. The report explicitly says:

We found that this business case underestimated costs, overestimated benefits and the timeframe was too short to implement all the planned changes.

This is a Government that cannot be trusted. To ensure that the Swansea community gets the service delivery it deserves we now need to look forward. That is why today I call on the Minister for Finance, Services and Property to commit to establishing a full Service NSW centre in Belmont in the Swansea electorate. The people of my community deserve to be able to transact face-to-face business with the

New South Wales Government in a location which they can access. As an interim measure, I would welcome a Service NSW kiosk so that again people in my electorate can conduct their business with a helping hand if need be. I look forward to working with the Minister to make this happen. As I did on 8 September last year, I again invite the Minister to the Swansea electorate to see firsthand the chaos that this decision has created. I commend the 11,000 signature petition to the House. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET** (Hawkesbury—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) [4.36 p.m.]: This is typical Labor; Labor members do not know a good thing when they see it. They are the only people in this State who do not like Service NSW. I note that the member for Swansea talked about the Auditor-General's report. The best auditors of Service NSW are our citizens. Those on the other side of the House always forget the taxpayers. What do the real auditors, the taxpayers of this State, say about Service NSW? They love it, 98 per cent of them, and they do not complain. And those on the other side of the House never complain when we set up Service NSW centres in their electorates. I have heard no complaints from them. They come to the Chamber for these moments of camaraderie: "Keep fighting, Swansea. Come on, keep fighting." But they know this is a real success because 98 per cent of people in this State love it.

The empty shell rattles the loudest. What we see on the other side of the House are people with small minds. They do not understand that simply having service centres—whether they are Births, Deaths and Marriages, motor registries across the board or Fair Trading offices spread out across the State—is not efficient. What customers want—when they randomly, on the odd occasion, have to interact and transact with the New South Wales Government—is a very efficient and streamlined system, and that is exactly what they are getting. Now there is one website, one phone number and one app where people can do all their transactions in the one place at the one time. So while members on this side of the House—

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Can the Minister just mention Belmont? Would that be all right?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson):** Order! I uphold the point of order. The petition is about the Belmont Motor Registry.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** The point of order clearly demonstrates that those opposite do not understand Service NSW. My remarks are relevant because the petition is about the closure of the Belmont Motor Registry which is merging into a Service NSW centre. The good member for Lake Macquarie has an interest in this subject matter, unlike the rest of those opposite who do not understand the system. The member for Lake Macquarie is having a constructive discussion. I look forward to continuing to work with him to ensure that these communities get access to the best service delivery model. Gone are the Labor days with people wasting half a day at a motor registry and being grunted at by staff. People are greeted by a lovely concierge at Service NSW and receive efficient and fast service. They absolutely love it.

The Government is accountable to the taxpayers of this State and our great success story has been the revolution of Service NSW. Indeed, the fact that Labor is clinging to a small-minded, backward service delivery model sums it up. Just like the poles and wires, those opposite are living in the past. I have never met anybody who loves a motor registry more than the NSW Labor Party. They love them. Maybe it was the post-career they were looking forward to that is no longer available to them. The best asset of Service NSW is the people who work there. The Government has given them a buy-in into an organisation and they have revolutionised service delivery. I thank all those who work for Service NSW and apologise for those opposite, who do not understand the system. The people of Service NSW are doing a great job for the people of this State.

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [4.41 p.m.]: I implore members to take a deep breath and settle down.



**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson):** Order! The member for Lake Macquarie will be heard in silence.

**Mr GREG PIPER:** That also goes for the member for Clarence because he is getting ready to jump. I thank the member for Swansea for her hard work in raising a petition with more than 11,000 signatures before the end of last year. Some 11,000 constituents in my electorate also signed a petition. That means 22,000 people in our electorates are concerned about the loss of motor registry facilities in the area. Contrary to what the Minister has just said about those on this side of the House, which includes me, I think Service NSW is a fantastic idea. I have no problem with it transforming from a motor registry to a Service NSW centre but those services should be accessible to all. I heard what the Service NSW staff did to identify the appropriate location but, respectfully, the member for Swansea and I would say that in this case they got it wrong. Warners Bay is not an appropriate location however one models it. One might think that it is geographically in the right location and people drive past it on their way to work, but in reality it does not work.

**Mr David Elliott:** They can go to Bonnells Bay.

**Mr GREG PIPER:** The round trip for people in my area from Bonnells Bay—as I have explained to the Minister before—to do a simple transaction at Service NSW using public transport can take up to six hours, not counting the transaction. People using public transport need to be considered. For people from Swansea, on the eastern side of the lake, it is also a very significant trip. For the sake of efficiency, I would suggest to the people in those areas who need to go to the Service NSW centre that they should save up and get their birth, marriage and death certificates at the same time as they renew their driver licence. Of course, that is not a sensible thing to do. People do need to use this service from time to time but it is in a very difficult location and there are also parking problems. I thank the Minister for being in the Chamber but I again respectfully say that the staff of Service NSW got the assessment wrong. It is the wrong location. I implore the Minister to listen to the constituents of the electorates of Swansea and Lake Macquarie.

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS** (Ku-ring-gai) [4.44 p.m.]: The Lake Macquarie area of New South Wales is one of the most beautiful parts of our State, and I say that with all the prejudice of somebody whose grandfather was a medical practitioner at the lake and whose mother grew up in Teralba and Speers Point. I have many fond childhood memories of the lake. If my grandfather were alive today he would be proud of the Warners Bay Service Centre and support the closure of the Belmont Motor Registry. When I first got my licence at the Newcastle Motor Registry—and I am sure it was no different at Belmont—I had to take a picnic lunch to sustain me for the many hours of waiting that lay ahead. Gone are those bad old days.

The Government created Service NSW to streamline government services and reduce the time spent obtaining them. It is a one-stop shop for more than 800 New South Wales government services. Waiting times have been reduced from hours to minutes at Service NSW offices, so it is not necessary to have as many centres to provide those services. The former Belmont Motor Registry was only open from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday and did not open on Saturdays. For the convenience of the public the Warners Bay Service Centre has extended hours—namely, it is open from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. weekdays and from 8.00 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays. Google Maps confirms that it is only a 13 minute drive from Belmont Local Court, near the heart of Belmont, to the Warners Bay Service Centre. Any extra time that is spent getting from Belmont to Warners Bay will be more than made up by the efficiency of the service offered at the centre.

The Warners Bay Service Centre offers the community of Belmont and the wider area an improved service model. Since opening in June last year the centre has serviced around 94,000 customers. Service NSW has listened to the feedback and come up with some customer-focused options on top of the service offered at Warners Bay. Temporary mobile services are operating at Belmont and

Swansea to allow customers to access limited motor registry transactions and to assist with the change to the delivery of New South Wales government services in the region. The Warners Bay Service Centre has 21 team members. The Belmont Motor Registry had only six staff members. So the service and the number of staff have increased. This is an enhancement to the government services operated at the lake and the centre should be supported by those opposite.

**Discussion concluded.**

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

## **COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS**

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### **GEMMA MORGAN, LAKE MACQUARIE YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON** (Charlestown) [4.47 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge the tremendous work of one of my younger constituents, Gemma Morgan, who was recently awarded Lake Macquarie's 2016 Young Citizen of the Year. Gemma Morgan is a leading member of the Bright Minds Project, an initiative driven and designed by young people for young people to destigmatise mental health and provide information and resources to those affected by mental illness. This has included the development of a teacher reference guide, which will now become a resource for all schools and teachers across Lake Macquarie and the Hunter region. In 2015, despite it being her High School Certificate year, Gemma was a driving force in achieving objectives for the Lake Macquarie Youth Mental Health Forum. Gemma is an inspiring young woman and her work is strengthening our whole community. I congratulate Gemma on being awarded Lake Macquarie's 2016 Young Citizen of the Year. She is a worthy recipient.

### **ALANA CARTER, WORLD SUPERMODEL SOUTH PACIFIC**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.48 p.m.]: I inform the House that 23-year-old Alana Carter, from Kundle Kundle in the beautiful Manning Valley, has recently been crowned World Supermodel South Pacific 2016. She will travel to South Africa to compete for a position with Trump Models in New York. Alana and her family moved to the Manning Valley when she was quite young. Alana was homeschooled and thus able to join many local festivals and productions such as the Taree Arts Council production of *Miss Saigon* and the Flair Fashion Awards. Alana decided to enter the World Supermodel competition after reading about the pageant but never thought she could win. She follows a strict regime of diet and exercise and believes that dreams can be achieved through hard work and determination.

### **PENRITH VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**Ms PRUE CAR** (Londonderry) [4.49 p.m.]: On Tuesday 9 February I attended the Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce 2016 Networking Series launch. I was delighted to join fellow members from local businesses to hear about the chamber's exciting plans for this year. The Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce is an asset to businesses in our region and works to promote the area as a small business friendly region. My electorate is home to thousands of small and home-based businesses. Suburbs such as Jordan Springs are expected to have more than 2,000 small and home-based businesses operating by 2020. In other parts of my electorate many residents own and operate small businesses and are a huge contributor to local employment. I thank the Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce executive, including Gina Field, Robert Drage, Joh Dickens, Wayne Willmington, Amanda Wyllie, Cathy Glanville, Gordon Henwood, and Steve Roddick for their fantastic work and for inviting me. As a bronze member of the chamber, I look forward to many more events this year and continuing to work together to promote businesses and jobs in the region.

**BRUCE BELL, OAM**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [4.50 p.m.]: I congratulate Bruce Bell of Lurnea on being presented with an Order of Australia medal for his service to the community of Botany Bay and to Marine Rescue NSW. In the 1980s Mr Bell would navigate his boat along the Georges River to Botany Bay and volunteer with Marine Rescue NSW, which was then called the Australian Coast Guard. Mr Bell gave a substantial amount of service to this organisation and progressed from a patrol officer to the rank of commander of the Botany Bay unit. In 2003 the organisation to which he gave so much time and effort recognised his contributions by naming a marine vessel after him. It is great to see that he also has been recognised by the Australian public. Volunteering is important to our community and I wish more people would follow Mr Bell's lead. Once again, I congratulate Mr Bruce Bell, OAM, on receiving this honour.

#### **TRIBUTE TO RON McDONALD**

**Mr GREG WARREN** (Campbelltown) [4.51 p.m.]: It is with sadness that I acknowledge the passing of Ron McDonald on 17 December 2015. He was one of Campbelltown's great personalities and 1990 Citizen of the Year. Born in Condobolin on Boxing Day 1930, Mr McDonald moved to Campbelltown in 1952 and married his beloved wife, Ruth, in 1961. Ron was an active servant to his local community. He was the honorary finance officer of St John's Catholic parish, the treasurer of Group 6 Country Rugby League, and inaugural chair of Campbelltown Hospital and the board's treasurer. One of his proudest moments was when he carried the Olympic Torch along Queen Street during the Sydney 2000 Summer Olympics torch relay. However, Ron's most notable achievement was being a founding member of Campbelltown Catholic Club in 1965. Membership No. 4 is being retired by the club in recognition of his service. I ask the House to join me in remembering a decent and true community-minded man and in sending condolences to the McDonald family, particularly Ruth and their children Stephen, Mark, Anne, Andrew and Jacinta.

#### **ALISON BONHOMME, MIRANDA LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS** (Miranda) [4.52 p.m.]: I congratulate Alison Bonhomme, an inspirational woman, whom I was delighted to announce as the 2016 Local Woman of the Year for Miranda. Alison is a senior pastor of Shirelive and founder of Shirelive Women, an organisation established to gather, mentor and empower women to be actively engaged in their local community. She leads a large team of staff and volunteers who work on community service projects, including the recent renovation of four youth hostel facilities across the shire. At their Christmas gift-giving event, donations were distributed to vulnerable people, including refugee families, women and children in local shelters and to the Sutherland hospitals. The team also organises several community fundraisers. It is the hard and often thankless work of women such as Alison that makes our communities great places to live; they exemplify the Australian spirit of giving back. Alison is the embodiment of a strong female role model in our community. It is a privilege to acknowledge Alison's work and her passion to help others realise their great potential.

#### **BAULKHAM HILLS VENTURER SCOUTS AWARDS**

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT** (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) [4.53 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I advise the House that on Sunday, 28 February three Baulkham Hills Venturer Scouts will achieve the highest award in the scouting movement, the Queen's Scout Award. Lachlan Smith, Bailey Harris and Ben Kahane have provided outstanding leadership to the 2nd Baulkham Hills Scouts, Venturers unit, and their awards are well deserved. The effort of the three venturers represents the tremendous contribution the 2nd Baulkham Hills Scouts group makes to the Baulkham Hills community. Their engagement with their community is refreshing to see, as they are from a generation that is often more concerned with a detached, online community. The next generation will continue to benefit from the values and educational goals of the scouting movement.

#### **ST BISHOP COPTIC ORTHODOX COLLEGE**

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA** (Mount Druitt) [4.54 p.m.]: I congratulate the St Bishoy Coptic Orthodox College of Mount Druitt on making, for the first time, the top 100 schools for its Higher School Certificate results in 2015. This achievement is a credit to the school principal, Michael Atteya, and the teachers and staff. They are an inspirational group of dedicated people who have gone above and beyond the normal course of duty to assist their students. I congratulate all the year 12 students on this well-deserved achievement.

#### **MONA VALE SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) [4.55 p.m.]: I recognise that Surf Life Saving NSW is one of the largest volunteer movements in Australia, with 129 surf lifesaving clubs and 76,000 members. I ask members of the House to join me in thanking three brave young lifesavers from Mona Vale Surf Life Saving Club—Finlay Ashby, Lachlan Ashby and Jay Aitken—for saving three men from drowning off Mona Vale Beach on the weekend. On Saturday, the three young surf lifesavers, aged 13 and 14, were on patrol when they were told three men were in trouble.

With no time to think, they swam out on their boards and helped the men onto the front of each of their boards and then paddled into shore. The quick thinking and fast action of the three boys saw them putting their own lives in danger to save the lives of complete strangers. The crowds of people on the beach were clapping and cheering as they paddled back to shore. I thank Finlay, Lachlan and Jay for their quick thinking and fast action, and all surf lifesavers and volunteers who keep our beaches safe. I note that the morning patrol, despite the questionable leadership of its patrol captain, managed to get an incredible score for the spot inspection.

#### **BAHAYRA'S YOUTH ASSOCIATION**

**Mr JIHAD DIB** (Lakemba) [4.56 p.m.]: On February 7, I was honoured to join my colleague the member for Bankstown at the celebration of the Feast of St Maroun in Greenacre, organised by the Bahayra's Youth Association. It was a pleasure to be amongst a strong united community on such a significant occasion, which is the impending time of Lent. For more than 40 years the Bahayra's Youth Association has worked with young people as well as the community at large. I always encourage the opportunity for people from different faiths to come together to learn from one another. We are stronger as a community when we are united by our shared belief in the values of multiculturalism. I especially pass on my congratulations to the association's President, Mr Nasim Jelwan, and the many volunteers for their efforts, not only on this day but also for the many other days when they give their time. This is another example that our nation is made better through the spirit of community organisations and the willingness of people to volunteer.

#### **BRAD GEE, NSW AMBULANCE EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [4.57 p.m.]: I was thrilled with the announcement in January this year that paramedic Brad Gee was being honoured as the joint NSW Ambulance Employee of the Year. Brad Gee is stationed at Terrigal and has been with NSW Ambulance for 19 years. He said that he encourages people after a bad day at work "to go home and hug their families and hug their kids". Mr Gee was presented this award for his work in staff welfare as the district line manager for paramedics. His wife, Jade, worked in the NSW Police Force and understands the pressure and stress that goes with the role of a paramedic. Accompanied by his wife and two-year-old daughter, Poppy, Mr Gee said, "It just makes it all worthwhile. They are my grounding." Brad also received a bravery award for his actions during the storms on the Central Coast in 2007. Brad is well deserving of his Employee of the Year award. I congratulate him on his service to the people of New South Wales.

#### **FAIRFIELD CITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [4.58 p.m.]: On 22 January 2016 I had the pleasure of attending the Australia Day Awards and citizenship ceremony at Fairfield City Council chambers. This is a day to celebrate our nation's achievements and cultural diversity. It is also a time to recognise the achievements of so many wonderful people in our local community. I acknowledge all of the recipients at the ceremony awards: 105-year-old Ted Wale, Fairfield Citizen of the Year; Anna Tang, Young Citizen of the Year; Susan Fedoryschyn, Volunteer of the Year; and Nicola Bolger, Sports Achiever of the Year. These fine people have made a great contribution to our local community and I look forward to their continuing service in the years ahead. On that day, the 900th citizenship ceremony was also held at the Fairfield City Council chambers. Ten people pledged their allegiance to Australia and its people. The first citizenship ceremony was conducted in Fairfield in 1954 when eight new citizens took the oath. Since then, some 90,000 people have taken their pledge and become Australian citizens.

#### **AMY RIDDELL, CRICKETER**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.59 p.m.]: Tonight I offer my congratulations to Amy Riddell, who recently captained the ACT/NSW Country Cricket team to third spot in the Under 18 Female Cricket Australia National Championships. Amy is an extremely talented sportswoman who has excelled in hockey as well as cricket. An off-spinning all-rounder, Amy starred for the team, taking a total of 14 wickets for the campaign, including six for 21 off nine overs. Amy has once again been selected in the Cricket Australia's Under 18 Female Development Squad. I wish Amy continued success for the future.

#### **BODENE GILHAM, YOUTH FRONTIERS AWARD**

**Ms KATHY SMITH** (Gosford) [4.59 p.m.]: On Wednesday 17 February I had the pleasure of attending the New South Wales Youth Frontiers Awards ceremony in the Stranger's Dining Room at Parliament House. At the ceremony Miss Bodene Gilham, a year 8 student from Henry Kendall High School in my electorate of Gosford, was nominated in the category of Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing. I am proud to say that Bodene was successful in winning this category with her YouTube video, which gives real, practical and personal advice to teenagers who are experiencing bullying. Bodene was mentored for this project by Jane Goodwin, a 26-year-old PhD candidate at the University of Newcastle, who is researching in the field of psychology. I commend her for being such an excellent mentor. I congratulate Bodene on winning this award and I look forward to seeing what she achieves in what I am sure will be a very bright future.

#### **MICHAEL MAYTOM, BRAVERY AWARD**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [5.00 p.m.]: I congratulate Michael Maytom of Stroud, who was the first recipient of a bravery award at the Great Lakes Council's Australia Day Awards ceremony 2016. Michael was instrumental in saving lives during the super storm last April when he spread the word to evacuate after seeing the rapidly rising floodwaters. He physically assisted others at Stroud Showground to escape the flood's destructive path. Congratulations to Michael Maytom, a worthy winner of this year's bravery award.

#### **MASCOT RSL SUB-BRANCH**

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [5.01 p.m.]: Tonight I pay tribute to the Mascot RSL Sub-Branch, which recently honoured me with an affiliated membership. The Mascot RSL Sub-Branch is comprised of remarkable Australians who work tirelessly in the community to keep the spirit of Anzac alive through community events, Anzac Day memorial marches, Remembrance Day services and so much more. I recognise the outstanding contributions of the sub-branch President Paul Graham and Secretary Pamela Richardson, who organise and lead beautiful tributes to those who have served our nation in the most extraordinary way, particularly those who made the ultimate sacrifice. I am proud to stand amongst these esteemed members of our community, many of whom I regard as friends. I was moved and deeply

grateful to accept this honour and to join in commemorating those great Australians who sacrificed so much for the very freedom and opportunities that Australians enjoy today.

#### **KELLY DOYLE, SEVEN HILLS LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR** (Seven Hills) [5.01 p.m.]: I congratulate the Seven Hills electorate Local Woman of the Year award winner Ms Kelly Doyle, the co-founder of Foster Care Angels, a charity run by volunteers and funded by public donations that provides support to children entering foster care for the first time. Kelly is a dedicated and inspirational woman with years of experience with foster children. Entering foster care can be a traumatic situation for any child. Kelly and her charity aim to provide a positive placement experience by providing basic necessities in the form of care packages, which contain items such as bedding, toys, clothes, books, school items and other comfort items.

Care packages give vulnerable children a sense of self-worth and belonging. Foster Care Angels is working towards providing care packages to every child entering foster care, and I am firmly committed to assisting them in achieving this goal. I was delighted to be joined by the Minister for Women to name Kelly as the Seven Hills Local Woman of the Year and I look forward to welcoming Kelly, along with all the other Local Women of the Year, at a reception with the Minister for Women in March.

#### **HOLROYD CITY COUNCIL CREATIVE STARTS ART EXHIBITION**

**Ms JULIA FINN** (Granville) [5.02 p.m.]: On 29 January I was delighted to attend Holroyd City Council's fantastic Creative Starts art exhibition. Holroyd is a council that is close to its community, especially its young people. Creative Starts is a cultural program for the Holroyd area that aims to build connections between arts educational organisations, businesses, teachers and local young artists. The exhibition showcases the amazing work of Holroyd's 2015 Higher School Certificate visual arts students from seven local schools, whilst providing a platform to create art within the local community. As part of the program, prizes and certificates are also awarded. The launch of the exhibition provided an opportunity for public recognition of the emerging creativity of local young people and it facilitated cultural exchange. I congratulate Holroyd City Council and the young artists on this amazing exhibition, which is on display until the end of February.

#### **HASTINGS VALLEY MINIATURE RAILWAY**

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY** (Oxley) [5.03 p.m.]: On Saturday I had the absolute delight of being part of the official opening of the miniature railway carriage house and station at Yippin Creek Reserve, Wauchope. I salute the incredible work of the Hastings Valley Miniature Railway Society—President Ron Morris, Vice President Peter Clive, Secretary Mark Stoker, Treasurer Rob Neary and committee members Arthur Minter, Steve Harding and Gerry De Vries—and their vision in bringing this miniature railway station to life at Yippin Creek Reserve. I congratulate Bennet Steel, and O'Donnell and Hanlon on their support of the project with the supply of materials and I acknowledge Port Macquarie-Hastings Council for its community grants. In particular, I acknowledge the late Barry Mew. His brother was in attendance on the weekend to donate \$55,400 from his estate. That donation, coupled with a Community Building Partnership grant of \$42,500 from the New South Wales Government, ensured the construction of the facility. It was the culmination of a lot of community effort and support. Congratulations and well done.

#### **CHINESE AUSTRALIAN SERVICES SOCIETY**

**Ms JODI McKAY** (Strathfield) [5.04 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the hundreds of volunteers who support the work of the Chinese Australian Services Society [CASS], many of whom were recognised in Bankstown recently. I thank the Council of Elders: Kui Sang Lim, Peter Fong, Fat Leong, David Lo and George Poon. I thank chairperson Benze Leung, deputy chairperson Bo Zhou, vice chairpersons Anthony Pan and Dominic Sin, and directors Tao Bai, Louise Wu, Clifton Wong, Philip Ang, Teresa Chu, Hartono Arifin, Sean Zhang, Henry Huang and Reinnie Jiao. I acknowledge and thank Henry

Pan and Leng Tan, foundation chairperson and emeritus chairperson respectively. I thank them all for making our community stronger and more compassionate through the work of CASS.

### **KIAMA RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 p.m.]: On Saturday 24 October 2015 I attended the Kiama Relay for Life at Kiama Leisure Centre in Havilah Place, which raised an amazing \$100,000. I acknowledge and thank the Chair of the Kiama Relay for Life committee, Marie Dalton. Marie and her husband, Stephen, have dedicated the past several years to organising this annual event and I salute their efforts and hard work in the Kiama community in raising important funds for cancer. I also thank and congratulate every single person who was involved in this wonderful event, which is an important part of the Cancer Council's annual diary of events. The Relay for Life is a great event and I look forward to it continuing this year.

### **JOSEPH STALA-SMITH, NATIONAL HISTORY CHALLENGE STATE CHAMPION**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.06 p.m.]: I acknowledge an extremely talented year 6 boy in my electorate, Joseph Stala-Smith. Joseph is the school captain at St Patrick's Catholic Primary School in Asquith and, amongst other achievements, has just been judged a State winner in the National History Challenge competition for 2015. The National History Challenge is a research-based competition that gives students a chance to be a historian, researching world history, examining Australia's past, investigating their community and exploring their own roots. It emphasises and rewards quality research, the use of community resources and presentation style.

Joseph's entry was deemed the best in New South Wales in the Australian Wartime Experiences category. Joseph made a video entitled *The Legacy of Gallipoli* in which he focused on the leadership shown by Albert Jacka and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk at Gallipoli. I have met Joseph on a number of occasions and I know firsthand that he is a great young public speaker with plenty of potential. Joseph was awarded first place at the local Catholic Schools Public Speaking competition, at which I was honoured to be the guest judge. Joseph spoke about accidental discoveries, which focused on penicillin and vulcanised rubber.

Joseph performed so well that he went on to win the cluster final and gained selection for the diocesan finals. Joseph has a big future ahead of him and is doing a terrific job in his role as school captain. Joseph exceeds in everything he does at school. He is part of the Maths Olympiad and nearly always scores within the top 1 per cent of the International Competitions and Assessments for Schools competitions for maths, science, computers, writing and spelling. Amongst other things, he loves problem solving, reading and exploring technology. St Patricks' Principal Bernard Cummings and classroom teacher Anne-Marie Hutchins are very proud of Joseph and I am very proud to have him as a representative of the Hornsby electorate.

### **JOHN BLACK, NATIONAL RSL LAWN BOWLS CHAMPION**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [5.07 p.m.]: I inform the House that John Black from Wingham was a member of the New South Wales RSL lawn bowls team that won the Dr Sydney Krantz Memorial Trophy Interstate Series in Tasmania. The New South Wales team defeated Queensland in the final. John took up bowls in 1997 after he joined the Wingham Bowling Club. But this was not the first national championship for John; he achieved the same in 2013 and lost by just one shot in 2014. In December 2015 John was made a life member of Wingham RSL Sub-Branch and had previously been honoured with life membership of the Zone 8 Bowling Association.

### **CATHERINE MURRAY, HOLSWORTHY WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [5.08 p.m.]: I congratulate Mrs Catherine "Kate" Murray on

being awarded the 2016 Holsworthy Woman of the Year. Mrs Murray was nominated for her work in promoting and advocating community safety and for volunteering in the Liverpool area, and I was very pleased to nominate her. As a member of the Volunteers in Policing program and the Justice of the Peace and Community Safety Precinct Committee, Mrs Murray has worked towards creating a safer future for the residents of the local Liverpool area. This award recognised Mrs Murray's hard work and dedication to the local community and I was delighted that the Minister for Women was able to come out to the Holsworthy electorate and present the award to Mrs Murray at Addie's Specialty Tea Room last week. The Minister said:

It's the hard and often thankless work of women like Catherine that make our communities great places to live and embody the Australian spirit of giving back.

Chief Superintendent Peter Gillam, who also was present, said, "Kate is an invaluable member of our team." Once again I congratulate Kate on receiving her award.

**Community recognition statements concluded.**

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

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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#### **SOUTH WEST RAIL LINK**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [5.09 p.m.]: I advise the House of various issues concerning the South West Rail Link, which runs from Glenfield to Leppington. Services commenced last year in time for that year's State election. A series of issues with the South West Rail Link has been brought to my attention by train divers. One driver contacted me last year. He was very concerned about the structure of the line where it goes over Camden Valley Way at Leppington. He wrote:

The speed on that bit of track is 115 km/hr. But since last week the speed over a section of the track has been reduced to 60 km/hr in both directions (for a few days the speed was 10 km/hr in one direction) due to fatigue related issues to the infrastructure. There is also talk of the whole line being closed if there is heavy rain in that area.

He went on to say:

I am very concerned about my safety and the safety of our loyal customers who travel over that track in our trains every day. The rail line plus all the associated structures and building were "supposedly" built under budget and before time as mentioned by our esteemed transport minister Ms Berejiklian when she was our Minister. But from this infrastructure failing and a few other issues, one can question if any short cuts were taken in achieving this under budget project.

The driver is legitimately concerned about these safety issues in a brand new rail line. He also said to me:

The reason I'm bringing this issue to your attention is that I believe our safety is being compromised and talking to you it may bring some urgent attention to our plight. Sir, I hope this issue is not another Granville disaster waiting to happen.

The driver does not want to be identified given the inevitable consequences if he were. On 27 June last year, the original 115 kilometre per hour speed limit was changed to 10 kilometres per hour in one direction and 40 kilometres per hour in the other direction. A few weeks later this was increased to 60 kilometres per hour and 80 kilometres per hour—still well below the original and intended limit. Members of the Sydney Trains bureaucracy are trying to prevent information getting out. They say that these



events are entirely routine and that the restrictions were temporary. The problem with that piece of spin is that I was advised in January that speed restrictions were still in place—in other words, six months later there are still speed restrictions. There are also instances of train drivers being electrocuted or receiving electric shock. I have been told by a driver:

Another thing of concern arising from our troubled South West Rail Line is that one of our drivers got electrocuted last week on Tuesday 12 January in our stabling yard at Leppington. She didn't get any burns nor any damage but she still got a nasty shock from the button and/or the casing that the button was in that we press to get a green signal before we can depart the stabling yard.

The railway engineers came out to investigate and they found out that most of these electrified circuitry were not grounded or not grounded properly.

My correspondent also made these very good points:

Here the Government is telling its constituents that the railway is done so many hundreds of millions of dollars under budget and before time but they fail to tell us that the ongoing repairs and faults still exists ... way after the completion date. And at what cost? Who will be held responsible if one of us gets killed by the short falls that the railway has implemented? We get chastised if we as train crew do something slightly wrong, but the management and the powers to be get off scot-free when their system fails miserably.

A crew update No. 3 of 2016, dated 20 January 2016, issued by Majid El-Khatib, the Manager Operations, Train Crewing, Operations Directorate, said:

John Holland (Contractors) have cordoned off all platforms at Leppington stabling yard (yard and sidings) including those with the ground based warning systems.

He said:

It has become apparent that some light poles and crew platforms were not electrically insulated well enough from earth as required by design ... Crew are not to touch any of the cordoned off walkways and any lights. Entering and exiting a train is to be done by utilising the crew cab steps on the train, remembering to maintain 3 points of contact.

A notice issued by the depot management said:

- Following a review and update of the current situation regarding electrical safety in Leppington stabling yard all cab access platforms have been deemed unsuitable for use.
- All train crew are asked to please use the non-platform side of the cab to enter or alight from the train to ensure your safety.
- The unsafe condition of the platforms means that the GBWS is now not to be used. Please note that yard departures means are to be undertaken in 'GBWS degraded mode' i.e. town horn is to be sounded on departure from stabled position.

A Leppington stabling yard staff update signed by Stuart Middleton, General Manager, Trains Crew, identified two incidents involving electricity on 12 January and 14 January. That update said, amongst other things:

Our safety precautions mean crew must not enter any of the cordoned off areas or touch the lights in this area until you receive further instructions. Crew should use crew cab steps on the train and remember to maintain three points of contact.

It is extraordinary that a Government proclaims its infrastructure has produced something which is, yes, under budget and before time, but which has speed restrictions because of fatigue on a brand new railway line and drivers being electrocuted. It is an outrage.

### **TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL TYNAN, OAM**

**Ms ELENi PETINOS** (Miranda) [5.14 p.m.]: I commemorate but also celebrate the life of a great Australian, Mr Michael Tynan, OAM. Michael, a constituent of my electorate and a resident of the Sutherland shire for most of his life, was many things. He was a family man, an entrepreneur and a businessman. He was a philanthropist but, above all, he was a great individual. Humble in all aspects of his life, Michael was a courageous man, never shy in speaking his mind but always showing compassion and empathy to those around him.

Michael was born in the St George suburb of Carlton in 1935 and went to Marist Brothers High School in Kogarah. Leaving school in year 10, he worked at Hoxton Park on a dairy farm before working in the jewellery department of a general warehouse. By the age of 21, and with that entrepreneurial spirit and tireless work ethic that permeated every facet of his life, he started his own business in Kogarah—the first of many. There, on Monday mornings, a crowd would gather to watch the man of the match from the weekend St George Dragons fixture—a tradition that would continue throughout his career.

Michael was an avid supporter of a wide range of sports, including the Sharks rugby league team, but his interest in rally driving set the course of his destiny. Michael's love for rally driving led him to a fateful moment when he was offered a new Mazda 1500 Luce. His review of the car's ability and performance was so complimentary that Mazda offered him a franchise for the Sutherland shire. Three months later, on St Patrick's Day 1966, he opened a Mazda dealership selling cars from a Total petrol station on the Princes Highway, Sutherland. From this humble beginning the Tynan car empire named Tynan Motors started. It now employs more than 300 people across 17 franchises in seven locations including the shire, Wollongong and Nowra. His original operation is still located in the same place and is affectionately known as Tynan's corner. In 2013 his business was inducted into the Family Business Australia Hall of Fame.

Undeniably, one of Michael's most visible legacies is the Tynan badge stuck on the back of so many cars in the Sutherland shire. However, that is not his most significant legacy. Michael was first and foremost a family man—a man with an enormous capacity for love and generosity. He was married to Annette for 57 years. Her family also left a lasting legacy in the Sutherland shire region. In the 1960s, Annette's father, James, "Jimmy" Goyen developed the swampland at Gwawley Bay into the beautiful suburb of Sylvania Waters, where the Tynan family eventually moved. Together, Michael and Annette Tynan had five children: Francene, Kieran, Madeline, Daniel and Claire. I extend my condolences to them, and each of the grandchildren and great-grandchild, as well as to Annette, for their loss. The shire mourns with you. Our community will ensure that your father's memory will remain etched in the history of this place.

Michael Tynan was not only a successful business and family man, he was also a community man. Michael served on Sutherland Shire Council for 18 years from 1974 and was mayor between 1975 and 1978, and again between 1988 and 1989. He was passionate and dedicated in seeking out the best for his community. He was proud of our shire, of the values we imbued and the sense of pride the residents showed. Michael was a visionary and reformist for the region. He was instrumental in the Sutherland Leisure Centre and the Cronulla mall. He was a man who championed small business and smaller government, and he had a strong belief in giving it a go. He was a great Liberal: The counsel and wisdom he shared with many in the party cannot be understated.

But Michael's vision was not limited to the shire. He was a board member of the NRMA for 12 years and he served as deputy president for nine of those years. He brought unity to the organisation and

remained, as I am, a staunch supporter and advocate of the F6 extension. Lastly, Michael's passion for people, their health and wellbeing is typified by his support of Calvary Hospital in Kogarah for more than 35 years. He was chairman of the hospital board. His genuine ability to help those in need, especially when they were at their most vulnerable, typifies his altruism and solidifies his status as a great man. It is unsurprising that he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia, a Queen's Medal and an Australian Bicentennial Medal. He was a man of tremendous courage, hard work and faith. His faith was private but it guided his outlook. As Michael would often say, God bless. God bless you, Michael, and your family. Vale Michael Tynan.

## **GOULBURN ICE ADDICTION TREATMENT SERVICE**

**Ms PRU GOWARD** (Goulburn—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Medical Research, Assistant Minister for Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) [5.19 p.m.]: This afternoon I bring to the attention of the House our Government's commitment to tackling the insidious drug ice in my electorate of Goulburn. As we in this House know all too well, ice is a destructive drug. It rips apart families and the lives of users across New South Wales. Sadly, people and families in rural and regional communities have felt isolated and unsupported, with distances to treatment services a major barrier to seeking help.

I am thrilled to inform the House that the experienced Directions ACT was named the successful tenderer to run the treatment program, in partnership with the incomparable Ted Noffs Foundation, which will provide specific responses to youth with ice addiction. The mobile outreach program will target Yass, Collector, Gunning, Crookwell and Braidwood and be flexible to need. Some of those communities are very small, and until now they have had nowhere to turn.

Having attended forums in Goulburn and Bowral, and speaking with too many families who have been devastated by ice, I believe this service could not have come at a more crucial time for our region. As Leigh Pollack, the mother of an ice user, bravely told a hushed 230 people gathered in St Saviour's hall, her daughter's ice use had ripped into the heart of her family. Her husband, daughter and grandchildren have been deeply shaken. I acknowledge Leigh's courage, and the commitment of Leigh and her husband to their family. I think of so many others who have long struggled to find the right support.

The new service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is mobile and flexible and works in conjunction with police, government agencies and hospitals, which is vital to tackling the ice scourge. I take a moment to acknowledge our local police, who do such a great job of assisting the community to tackle this issue. I acknowledge our front-line nurses and hospital staff, community services staff, the staff of non-government organisations, and families who stand by users. I look forward to this program starting in the next few months and to seeing the benefits of it throughout the Southern Tablelands.

## **HOUSING INEQUALITY AND AFFORDABILITY**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT** (Prospect) [5.23 p.m.]: Today I address the House on housing inequality and affordability in the electorate of Prospect. New South Wales has experienced widening income inequality. It is the high earnings of bankers and senior business leaders that stand out as drivers of inequality in New South Wales today, not an elite living off inherited wealth, as was the case in the past. Families confront a vivid example of this inequality. The value of the house they own, and hence the imputed rent they receive from it, has risen by far more than their earnings. This is driving a new form of inequality between the insiders, who are already in the property market, and the outsiders, for whom the barriers to entry are too high.

Families on modest wages have to devote half their income to pay the mortgage or rent, leaving little left over. The rise in house prices is a straightforward failure to match supply to demand, coupled with inequitable tax and public policy. We also have a planning system that makes it hard to build new

houses and a State Government that does not invest in relevant infrastructure—namely, schools, health care, public transport and local jobs. This has led to high house prices and barriers to young people getting onto the housing ladder. This creates anger in the dispossessed.

After housing, the other major form of personal wealth in New South Wales is superannuation. Again, there are insiders, with generous occupational superannuation, and outsiders, who are unlikely to ever build up such an asset. Young people are now working hard to earn revenues that are being used to plug superannuation deficits. Deficits in superannuation schemes for older and retired workers have been closed to today's workers.

In both cases there is a clear pattern: the inequality between the generations. It is the baby boomers, born between 1945 and 1965, who have ended up with the valuable houses and the gold-plated pensions. This inequality offends our sense of fairness, but it also offends the hope at the heart of the modern Australian social contract that each generation will be better off than the one before it. This inequality in the ownership of wealth between generations is now a deep problem in the structure of our society in New South Wales. It is the result of political decisions that have been shaped by the interests of the incumbent generation. We see a generation failing to recognise the claims of future generations. Instead, it harnesses the power of modern government to protect its narrow interests. This is the key driver of a new and worse kind of inequality.

We must consider the effects of these policies on family structure. We must decide whether we care about the individual or the household. The family is one of the most effective mechanisms we have for the redistribution of wealth from rich to poor and across generations. Your position, relative to others in our society, affects your status and your ability to control your own life and health. We must all recognise that inequality matters. A renewed focus on inequality challenges both political parties. Any serious modern form of reform has to be honest with the electorate: If there is to be more money for public services, the electorate has to pay for them. There is not one group whose members are so rich and so numerous that their incomes or assets can be taxed to pay for education, health care and other benefits without the rest of us having to contribute more. We cannot simply tax the rich to pay for the welfare state. Instead, we need to appeal to mutual obligation of all citizens. It is then that we face the question of whether the people believe any longer that we are all in this together.

Modern society in New South Wales may now be too diverse for people to agree that we should all fund the welfare state. Bashing the rich then becomes an understandable but unworkable way out of this problem. As the gap in income and wealth widens, the Baird Government appears not to care. I have heard Government members argue in this House that wealth is a reward for exceptional talent and risk-taking. That is tantamount to arguing that the rich are rich because they are better than the rest of us. What rubbish! It is a series of accidents and chance events that puts some people on the path to riches and excludes others. The distribution of rewards is not shaped by some moral principle and we should not defend it by claiming that it is.

A pop star or a city whiz-kid may earn far more than a nurse, a police officer, a labourer or a scientist, but the market does not distribute its gains according to moral judgements on relative worth. Instead, there are real actions to take and policies to implement that will reduce inequality in New South Wales. Above all, younger generations must be given the chance to participate in our property owning democracy too.

#### **TRIBUTE TO SPIRO NOTARAS, OAM**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.28 p.m.]: It is with regret that I inform the House of the passing of a Clarence Valley legend. Spiro John Notaras passed away on 9 January after struggling to recover from a stroke he suffered in the middle of last year. Spiro was born on 3 December 1932, the son of Greek immigrants Jack and Muriel, who settled in the Clarence Valley and opened the Marble Bar Cafe with Spiro's uncle and his family. Fancy that: a Greek family running a cafe

in regional Australia! It sounds like a novel concept. It starts off as a familiar story of Greek immigrants in this country, but there is much more to the story of Spiro Notaras.

In 1952 Spiro's father and uncle, Jack and Tony, bought a timber mill at Lawrence. That was the beginning of Spiro's involvement in the timber industry, an industry that he was so passionate about all his adult life, right up until the day he passed away. Spiro and his brother, Brinos, carried on their father's legacy. They turned J. Notaras and Sons into one of the major businesses in the Clarence Valley and one of the major timber industries on the North Coast. Brinos ran the office until he was tragically killed in a motor accident in Coffs Harbour in 2005. Spiro ran the yard. After the death of Brinos, Spiro had to juggle both the office and the outdoor work. He was fortunate to have a loyal workforce and a most capable manager in Donna Layton. Donna was approached by Spiro when she was at TAFE—he had a good eye for talented people—and 38 years later Donna is still managing the sawmill. Most of the workers at the mill have been with Spiro for many years. A quarter of the staff have worked at the mill for more than 25 years.

Spiro reciprocated this loyalty. At 83 he did not need to run a timber mill, but he did so because he loved the industry and he wanted to ensure that his workers had jobs in the Clarence Valley. Spiro's love for the industry was galvanised when, during the last election campaign, Labor announced that, if elected, it would create a koala national park on the North Coast. Spiro was horrified when this announcement was made; he saw it as the final nail in the coffin for the hardwood timber industry on the North Coast. He was like the drover's dog, following the Labor candidate at every candidates meeting across the electorate questioning him on the merits of this policy and how Labor would save the industry and save jobs in regional New South Wales. He was relentless because of his concern for the industry that he loved so much.

Spiro often went to Germany to look at new machinery and innovative technology that would improve productivity and provide longevity to his mill. He was very much a forward thinker. Spiro's contribution to the Clarence Valley was not just in the timber industry and the people it employed but also in sport and the promotion of movie theatres in the Clarence Valley. Spiro excelled in every sport he participated in. He could well have been an Olympic athlete—he tied with Australian sprint champion Hec Hogan, clocking 9.8 seconds for the 100-yard dash. His speed made him a champion rugby league winger and he participated in other sports such as surf club races, rowing, swimming and rugby union. He loved his sport and he was a fierce competitor. He was very honoured to carry the Olympic torch into Grafton before the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

Spiro's father and uncle built the Saraton movie theatre in Grafton in 1926. It served the community very well for decades until it fell into severe disrepair. Spiro and his cousin Angelo and other family members took it upon themselves in 2008 to restore the Saraton with the aid of a New South Wales Government grant. They literally spent millions of dollars on restoring it to the point where it was one of the best regional theatres in New South Wales if not Australia.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** It still is.

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS:** I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Coffs Harbour; it is one of the best regional theatres in New South Wales. Spiro was an integral part of the social fabric of Grafton and the Clarence Valley. Whilst I am very pleased he was acknowledged with a Medal of the Order of Australia in the New Year's honours list this year I am saddened that he was not alive to be fully recognised by the Clarence Valley community. I am very proud to say that Spiro Notaris was a friend of mine, and I am enriched by his friendship. Rest in peace, Spiro, we will dearly miss you.

#### **TRIBUTE TO MAURICE GRAY**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [5.33 p.m.]: I regret to inform the House of the passing of Maurice Gray of Muswellbrook on Thursday 4 February 2016 after complications following a brief

illness. Many in the community of Upper Hunter mourned the passing of Maurice Gray, affectionately known as Maurie. He was probably the last commercial market gardener in the Upper Hunter and he was also closely associated with the greyhound club in Muswellbrook for more than 50 years. Along with my predecessor the Hon. George Souris, I and hundreds of other people attended his funeral. I was greatly moved by the eulogy presented by his son Richard. I will read a little from that eulogy now:

In this box, in the middle of the church, lies a man. He was a fine man. He was a good man. He was a generous, kind hearted and hardworking man. He always had a gentle warming smile on his face. He loved a chat. He was full of wisdom when he spoke. He is a local Muswellbrook legend. He was my hero.

Maurie was born at Wallsend, Newcastle in 1935, the second of four children to William Osland and Doris Gray. William Osland Gray was well known by the locals as 'Ozzy'. The family moved from Wallsend to Muswellbrook when Maurie was just 12 years old. Ozzy bought a five acre property on Kayuga Road for 600 pounds and Maurie attended Muswellbrook High School. However, Maurie was bored to tears by the school curriculum. He didn't like school. He thought he already knew all the answers, an attitude that never really left him throughout his whole life.

So Maurie left school at age 15, as soon as he was allowed to, and started working delivering milk on a milk run around the district and later at Muswellbrook No. 1 coal mine as a skip driver. During this time he met Katherine Amy Lennard at a dance in St Mary's Hall in Scone. In those days, that is how people met: at dances in halls around the district. Maurie frequented all of the dances. There was no dating.com or the like back then.

Anyway, Katherine, who I first knew by the name 'Mum', had quite an effect on Maurie because not long after they met, whilst down the mine Maurie fell head over heels off the skip and split his head open. Obviously he was in love. And it was at this point that Maurie decided mining black gold was not for him. Maurie would rather spend his life in a much more noble profession: as a vegetable grower.

So he started growing vegetables on the family's five acre block on Kayuga Road. It turned out that Maurie had quite a green thumb and his vegetable growing was a roaring success, so later he bought extra land adjacent to the block to create his renowned 12 acre vegetable farm on Kayuga Road.

Vegetable growing was Maurie's first passion and he continued with that passion for the next 60 years, supplying local businesses, including the local Woolworths store. After moving from Wallsend to Muswellbrook, Maurie's father Ozzy developed a keen interest in greyhound racing. Ozzy and Maurie were instrumental in the formation of the Muswellbrook Mechanical Coursing Club, or the dog track as we know it today.

When the club's broadcaster fell ill in 1966, Maurie took over the role and continued broadcasting the dogs at Muswellbrook for the next 50 years. Maurie's phrase "green light's showing; power's on; away goes the bunny; about to go" will forever live on in greyhound racing folklore. Yes, greyhound racing and broadcasting at Muswellbrook was Maurie's second great passion.

Maurie was also legendary throughout the community for his weather forecasting. This was a skill that went hand in hand with vegetable growing. It was a necessary skill. Until recently there was no help from the Bureau of Meteorology [BOM] and no assistance from rain radars. He didn't need it. Maurie could read the weather. Maurie would tell the BOM what the weather was going to do. Weather forecasting was Maurie's third great passion. Oh, and very few saw first-hand his talent for water divining. It worked very well for Maurie and set his property up with secure water till this very day.

Of course, these three great passions: vegetable growing, greyhound racing and weather forecasting were always secondary to Maurie's passion for his family, friends and community. Maurie was a great husband and father. With the help of Kath, he successfully provided for and raised three children through some very difficult times.

Two days before his passing, while he was in hospital, Maurie was still planning on how he could return to his beloved vegetable farm with the aid of an oxygen bottle and the assistance of some of his valued friends. He was always the eternal optimist, which was so refreshing and reassuring in this world. Maurie brought calm to chaotic situations. Maurie Gray is survived by his wife of nearly 60 years, Katherine, and sons Richard and Lindsay and their families. Sadly the Grays lost their daughter and sister more than a decade ago. For the family of Maurice Gray the loss of this powerhouse is immeasurable. Vale, Maurice Gray.

### **FREE GONG SHUTTLE**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [5.38 p.m.]: I speak today about a statement put out by the taxi industry in New South Wales, which is seeking to reduce the free Gong Shuttle service provided in Wollongong. The NSW Taxi Council has stated that it is concerned that the Gong Shuttle is making it hard for taxi drivers. The Taxi Council also stated that, in the wake of the Government's reforms of the point to point transport industry, which opens taxis to increased competition from ridesharing services like Uber, it believes the free shuttle has an unfair advantage. The *Illawarra Mercury* ran a story on this today, written by journalist Glen Humphries. I place on the record that this has nothing to do with the Government's reforms of the point to point transport and nothing to do with Uber; the taxi industry has been seeking to reduce the service provided by the free Gong Shuttle in Wollongong since prior to the 2011 election.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Shame!

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** It is a shame, and I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his interjection. What we have in Wollongong is the envy of most of Australia: We have a free shuttle service that does a loop from the university to the beach to the hospital. At the time the Labor Government introduced what was called the pensioner excursion ticket [PET]. Pensioners from around the area could get a train to Wollongong and then get on the free shuttle service to the hospital. This is important, because the assumption by the Taxi Council that if we reduce the shuttle service everyone is going to catch a taxi instead is ridiculous. Many of these people could not afford to travel by taxi. Rather it would restrict people from being able to get to the beach, the university and the hospital. It would make life very difficult. The former Labor Government actually increased the number of taxi vouchers to balance what might be an impact on the taxi industry.

I have a great deal of sympathy for the taxi industry. I use taxis frequently in the city and I find the drivers provide a good service and they are courteous. However, a competition problem is not fixed by doing away with a service that the Government was trying to get rid of long before competition became an issue. Competition problems in the marketplace are fixed by businesses working out competitive policies and finding solutions. This problem will not be fixed by removing a service like the Gong Shuttle. In my response to comments by the taxi industry today I have stated that I am very proud of the shuttle. Patronage of the Gong Shuttle is high, particularly among the aged and frail, and university students. I remind members that before the free Gong Shuttle began operating many people were assaulted and attacked when walking home late at night from the University of Wollongong. It is a fantastic university, but its location will make it very difficult for people to access using public transport if the Gong Shuttle goes.

Due to those problems the then Labor Government increased the shuttle service as part of the whole-of-picture public transport system for Wollongong, along with the pensioner excursion tickets and a voucher system. We do not want this Government to have an excuse to cut the funding of the shuttle

service or to reduce the service. We are proud of the service. In December 2010 then shadow Minister for Transport Gladys Berejiklian said that the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals were committed to the ongoing provision of the Gong Shuttle. Prior to the 2011 election taxi drivers were very aggressive in trying to have the service reduced and they put then Premier Kristina Keneally under a lot of pressure. Thank goodness the service was retained, and the people of Wollongong were the beneficiaries. I will be happy to provide assistance to the taxi industry, if that is needed. However, I will make sure that this Government retains the current funding for the free Gong Shuttle service.

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.43 p.m.]: I will make a brief comment about the Parramatta free shuttle bus as opposed to the Wollongong service. Obviously, the Parramatta service, with more than one million users a year, is better than the service in Wollongong. The Parramatta service is a most successful initiative. Then Minister for Transport Gladys Berejiklian made a funding commitment to the service of some \$600,000 per year. It was funded by the good Parramatta City Council, but is now funded by the wonderful New South Wales Government and the excellent Minister for Transport, Andrew Constance. The shuttle will be removed only when the Government delivers the \$1 billion-plus light rail project for Parramatta, which we have campaigned for. The Government will deliver that project. I reassure everybody that light rail is coming to Parramatta.

### **TRIBUTE TO SPIRO NOTARAS, OAM**

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.44 p.m.]: I join my colleague the member for Clarence in noting the passing of Spiro Notaras. Spiro passed away peacefully on 9 January 2016 at the age of 83 following a stroke from which he never recovered. Spiro was born in Grafton in December 1932, one of three children of Jack and Muriel Notaras, who were Greek immigrants from the island of Kythera who had settled in Grafton in 1905. Spiro had three children, John, Paul and Suzanne, as well as grandchildren, who spoke at his funeral. Spiro excelled in every sport he took on: track and field, athletics, swimming, rugby union and rugby league, sailing, rowing and surf lifesaving. He represented Grafton High School in athletics and swimming, and was enthusiastically involved in rugby league and rowing, both in and out of school hours.

At Newington College in Sydney from 1941 Spiro joined his brother, Brinos, in excelling in school sports such as athletics, swimming and rugby union. He competed successfully in many Great Public Schools [GPS] sporting competitions, winning the school's highest sports award in 1950. History repeated itself when his son, Paul, won the same award in 1983. As a member of the Woolgoolga Surf Life Saving Club he competed in events ranging from surf racing to surf boat rowing. He also played rugby league for the United Rugby League Club. Spiro was the lifesaver chosen to represent Woolgoolga in the 1954 Royal Surf Carnival for the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Australia at Bondi Beach in front of a crowd of 150,000. Spiro was chosen to carry the Olympic torch into Grafton before the 1956 Olympic Games. Brinos had carried it through the Bom Bom State Forest into town.

In 1951 Spiro returned to Grafton, where he worked as a projectionist in the local cinemas for a time. He and his brother, Brinos, with assistance from their father, bought the Lawrence Sawmill. The brothers also bought the TB Timms' Mill at South Grafton, and rebuilt and extended it. They supplemented their timber quotas with a licence for the small spotted gum logs from Glenugie and Bom Bom forests—a resource that was not wanted by the bigger mills—and developed processing technology and markets for hardwood flooring. The brothers reinvested every dollar they made into the business to better process small logs and improve drying and dressing operations for the production of high-value North Coast flooring. Spiro's technical knowledge was unsurpassed: His processing developments were decades ahead of all Australian research programs. His pursuit of improvement was the objective of everything he did. His shed is full of all sorts of ideas for product development; some worked and some did not, but that never slowed him down. Researchers are only now coming up with some of Spiro's old ideas.

J Notaras and Sons led the industry in the processing of spotted gum for flooring, milling of small



regrowth and thinnings logs, computer-managed drying systems, advanced dressing machines, high-value export markets for spotted gum, integrated product development and viable markets for by-products. The tragic death of Brinos in 2005 left Spiro to run the family business, which he did with the same commitment and dedication to excellence and community leadership that the company has maintained since its beginning. J Notaras and Sons is now recognised as the world's best producer of hardwood flooring, which is a notable feature of many Australian public buildings and structures. They all stand as memorials to Brinos and Spiro. Spiro most enjoyed using his flooring in buildings in and around Grafton.

Both Brinos and Spiro were committed to the development of the North Coast timber industry as very active members and leaders of the NSW Forest Products Association. They vigorously pursued a secure and reliable resource supply as the keystone of the industry, the foundation for ongoing investment and employment in towns such as Grafton, and a strong economic contributor to rural communities. There will never be a stronger or more vocal advocate for the timber industry in Grafton. Spiro never missed an opportunity to present to any local group, gathering or the media about forest industry issues. He was always seen at every political rally representing the importance of the timber industry to the local community. His knowledge was welcomed at every government inquiry—and there have been a lot of them. The New South Wales timber industry has lost the most important person it ever had as a leader, miller, researcher, developer and advocate.

In March 2008 Spiro, together with his cousin Angelo and two other members of the Notaras family, began restoration of the Saraton Theatre in Grafton, which was originally built by the family in 1926. "Saraton" is the family name spelled backwards. The restoration was completed in 2010 and the theatre is again screening films. Spiro Notaras represented the embodiment of an ideal Australian citizen. From humble beginnings, he rose to be a respected and valued member of his local community. He strived to uphold the ideals of good sportsmanship, team spirit and community obligation. He has maintained strong family ties but never at the expense of broader loyalties and commitment, and can claim a wide circle of friends and acquaintances. To have worked with Spiro in any aspect was to establish a strong and enduring friendship.

He contributed to the development of the timber industry in northern New South Wales, being at the forefront of innovation and technological advancement. His industrial achievements fostered a loyal workforce and a safe working environment for that workforce, while providing stable employment in the regional city of Grafton. He did not keep the benefits of success for himself and his family alone, but invested them in improving the heritage and enjoyment of his fellow citizens. He was proud of his city and his place in it. Above all, Spiro was a gentleman in the old-fashioned sense of the word. He was posthumously awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia—OAM—for his services to the timber industry and his community. I understand that he was advised of this honour prior to his passing. I thank Russell Ainley for initiating that nomination, which I supported. Vale, Spiro Notaras.

## **ALPINE REGION WEED CONTROL**

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [5.49 p.m.]: On 4 December I was in Tumbarumba shire for the opening of the newly constructed and beautifully presented National Parks and Wildlife Service Khancoban Office and Visitors Centre. The new building is a joint venture between Tumbarumba Shire Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and also serves as a command centre for emergency operations in and around Kosciuszko National Park. One of the most illuminating parts of the day was hearing about initiatives being taken to eradicate problematic weeds in the park. It is a shaggy dog story, with a twist in the tale.

On 30 December 2014 the Victoria Mountain Tramping Club was on an organised trek from Charlotte Pass over Mount Kosciuszko and down to Guthega. Bad weather closed in on the second day, with a white-out and 80 kilometre an hour winds. Further walking became dangerous and the group was not able to reach its usual camp location. In the morning one of the group noticed an unfamiliar plant, took

a photo and, when back home in Sydney, showed the photo to a botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens. The expert identified the plant as the infamous mouse-ear hawkweed. Fortunately, the hiker had noted the GPS reference for the infestation, and work began to survey and then to treat the area. This story gives an indication of the great difficulty involved in locating outbreaks of bad weeds as opposed to what we might call "ordinary" or "garden variety" weeds. Sometimes someone has to almost step on the weed to find it.

These invasive weeds are bad for business. Investment in orange hawkweed identification and control is estimated to have cost \$1.3 million over the past decade. New and emerging weed species are predicted to produce losses of more than \$66 million for the grazing industry annually. They are also a massive threat to the biodiversity of the alpine region. I will focus on one particular weed for a moment. Orange hawkweed is a sleeper weed and an invader. It has a lag phase, hanging on quietly for a while doing little and then suddenly taking off. Kosciuszko National Park is home to at least one infestation. Orange hawkweed has a pretty little orange daisy flower, forming a rosette. The plant is easy enough to find when in flower but very difficult to spot by foliage alone at other times of the year. Bushwalkers and their clubs play a pivotal role in spotting weeds like this one.

What is novel in Khancoban is that the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service has put two detector dogs on the case: a black cocker spaniel named Sally, and Connor the springer spaniel. Connor is one year old and Sally has just turned two. I understand that these are the first dogs in New South Wales to be trained for weed detection. Officially they are known as Weed Eradication Detector Dogs; less formally, as botanist puppies. The dogs underwent extensive preparations with trainer Steve Austin, and the training is ongoing. The dogs were taught to learn the smell of the plant and then associate proper action with a conditioned reinforcer, which in this case is the word "yes", indicating to the dog quite clearly that the behaviour is correct and that a reward is coming.

I have seen the dogs at work. The handler commands Connor to "work". The handler then takes the dog off the leash and sends Connor off with the command word "find". The dogs are certainly eager to please. These are early days for the dogs, but everyone is excited at their skill and their potential to find weeds lurking well hidden inside grassy tussocks. The dogs will prove particularly useful in searching areas that have been treated for weed infestations, as the officers aim to find the very last plant and cleanse the entire area. But dogs are only part of the future story. Technologies brought into the fight include helicopters, which take field officers into remote terrain, and unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, which will use software to detect the plants or their orange flowers. I thank weed management officer and dog handler Hillary Cherry, trainer Steve Austin, project research officer Jo Caldwell and Di Thompson, a member of the Southern Ranges Region Advisory Committee, for their work on the detector dog project. The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries has also been a great help with the weed action program.

I also express my appreciation to members of the Canberra Bushwalking Club and National Parks Association volunteers for the many years during which they have kept their eyes on weeds in the park, and I acknowledge the efforts of Greening Australia and the Green Army volunteers. Forty-eight volunteer bushwalkers assisted with the weed identification program in Kosciuszko this past summer, so we owe them a debt of gratitude too. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is always looking for volunteer bushwalkers to help, so please get in touch if you are interested. For those wanting to visit this amazing national park, the visitors centre at Scammell Street, Khancoban, is open from 9.00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. Monday to Friday, and every day over the summer season and school holidays except Christmas Day. Come and enjoy the magic of the high country in Tumbarumba shire.

## **WATERLOO SYDNEY METRO STATION**

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [5.54 p.m.]: I express my deep concern and outrage at the Government's recent decision to locate the Sydney Metro station at Waterloo, which I maintain is in completely the wrong place. The Government coupled its announcement of the location of the Sydney

Metro station with a decision basically to demolish the Redfern-Waterloo public housing estate and hand it over to private developers. As a result, thousands of people in the Waterloo area will be removed from their homes. The Minister for Social Housing did me the courtesy of advising me of the Government's decision, but I take issue with the decision-making process. I will not condemn him until I have had the opportunity to engage properly with him. However, as a matter of policy I will not support the decision to remove people from public housing in an area that the Minister and his predecessors have spent millions of dollars rejuvenating.

I focus the attention of the House on the lunacy of the proposed location, which is tied up with the developer. The appropriate place for an underground Sydney Metro station is in Waterloo, but not in the vicinity of public housing; rather, it should be located at Dank and Crystal streets. Locating an underground station within a 10-minute walk of Green Square and Redfern railway stations and a two-minute walk to Botany Road, where commuters can access buses to the central business district, is a ridiculous decision that highlights it is based on the intention to hand over public land to private developers. The Sydney Metro station should be at the alternative location because thousands upon thousands of home units have been developed and squished in between Bourke Street, Bourke Road and South Dowling Street, where roads are already gridlocked and congested.

The purpose of public transport is to move people. A metro station at that location could be utilised by residents of Green Square in the Zetland-Waterloo area, which is the largest urban renewal project in Australian history. Another 50,000 to 70,000 people will move to that location but currently there are not enough buses for those who live there and the roads are gridlocked. An underground metro should be developed not so that developers can make a quid, but to provide public transport for Sydney. Every great city in the world has an underground metro system—a fine people mover that links an entire city. This project's concept is smart but its implementation is ridiculous. I ask: Why does New South Wales have a history of various governments of different political persuasions making stupid decisions that do not deliver a properly integrated underground metro system? London, Berlin, Paris and New York—the list is endless—have successfully planned and developed a linked-up underground metro system.

A metro system should not be built to go from point to point; it should be elliptical, and linked and integrated with railway stations. When railway stations and metro stations do not service it, it must be linked with appropriate bus services. We must get people out of their cars and onto public transport. Public transport should be built not to serve developers but to move people and encourage appropriate population density increases. The proposed station location at the south-west corner of the Redfern-Waterloo public housing estate is simply designed to please developers. The example used by the Government of the Elephant and Castle station is about the worst model possible. The public policy concept of mixing public housing with expensive privately owned dwellings is a significant public policy challenge on its own.

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.59 p.m.]: I commend the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing, on his approach to addressing the significant social needs of people who do not have a house or who are living in housing that is inappropriate for their use. The member for Heffron has spoken previously about development in Waterloo. In Parramatta it is about renewal and increasing social housing. No-one denies the difficulties associated with social housing communities; they have a concentration of people with various issues who require assistance. The Government believes the right way to proceed is by adopting an integrated approach with a public-private mix in those communities. People in need will then not be dislocated and more housing can be provided for the 10,000 people on the waiting list in Parramatta alone.

#### **HAWKESBURY AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET** (Hawkesbury—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) [6.00 p.m.]: On Australia Day I attended a citizenship ceremony in Windsor, where I had the great honour of

welcoming 40 new Australian citizens as they adopted this wonderful nation as their home. It was a moving and momentous occasion. The 40 new Australians came from 15 different countries—from every corner of the globe—and on Australia Day 2016 they began a new chapter of hope in a nation that is unrivalled for the freedom, prosperity and opportunity it offers to those who embrace it. We are proudly an immigrant nation, and beneath the attractive veneer of sun and surf there are a great many features of the Australian culture that make it so attractive to the thousands who become Australian citizens every year.

Our values of mateship, sacrifice and service are illustrated through service in wars and helping each other in times of natural disaster. We have a generosity of spirit that is just part of our DNA. We have a love of sport and a competitive nature, and we delight in being the underdog and doing things others say we cannot do. We have a healthy respect for authority and our institutions, but a happy cynicism and larrikinism that means we do not take them too seriously. Despite that larrikin streak, we have a deep respect for the rule of law—a common understanding that we are free, but we must use our freedom in a way that does not serve our own interests but is mindful of neighbours and the common good. It is what makes everything tick, from our roads, our businesses and our courts to the great institutions of our democratic system of government. It makes prosperity possible.

We enjoy immense freedoms because of this: freedom of thought, speech, association, enterprise and religion. These freedoms are precious and many great Australians have fought and died for them. They are the reason that so many people, from all parts of the globe, seek to call Australia home. For new Australians, and indeed for all of us, the challenge we face and the obligation we bear is to pass these cherished values on to the generations who come after us. It is fitting that on Australia Day I also had the honour of attending the Hawkesbury Australia Day Awards to recognise and honour the outstanding achievements of everyday Australians in the Hawkesbury. Those Australians represent that spirit of generosity and service that is the lifeblood of our communities.

I congratulate all of this year's award winners: the joint Young Citizens of the Year, Blake Atkins and Blake Coaldrake; Volunteer of the Year Marjorie Pettigrew; Community Organisation of the Year Bowen Mountain Association; Hawkesbury Local Hero Award winners Jan Earle, June Greenhalgh, Valmai Turnbull, and Paul and Catherine Barber; Community Arts Award winner Macquarie Towns Art Society; Hawkesbury Cultural Heritage Award winner Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society; and the Hawkesbury Environmental Award winner, Macdonald Valley Association.

I congratulate the 2016 Hawkesbury Citizen of the Year, Paul Maher. Paul is a proud Hawkesbury resident and his service to the Hawkesbury community is invaluable. For decades he has dedicated his time and effort to community initiatives such as the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society, the Hawkesbury Environment Network, Boys Town and Hawkesbury Harvest. He is a vibrant member of the business community, with his own small business. Mr Maher is a member of the Hawkesbury Chamber of Commerce, and the Hawkesbury Liquor Accord, and participates in working parties for Hawkesbury Tourism. He is a mentor at local high schools and vocational education training programs. In short, Paul is a treasured Hawkesbury local. It is only through the tireless, selfless work of people like him that the spirit of opportunity and prosperity remains alive in our communities. I again congratulate Paul on his award. He is a living example to all Australians, new and old, of the values that make our nation great.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS**

### **DAPTO TAFE CAMPUS**

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [6.04 p.m.]: I will raise some issues of importance to my electorate. First, I place on record my community's total opposition to the Government's proposal to force the amalgamation of Shellharbour and Wollongong city councils. Following the Government's announcement of its intention to force the amalgamation of those councils and Kiama Municipal Council and Shoalhaven City Council, the local community's opposition has only grown stronger and louder.

Hundreds of local residents have spoken at public hearings and local rallies expressing their opposition. The Illawarra Regional Information Service in the Illawarra has surveyed local residents and the result is that 75.6 per cent of Shellharbour local government area [LGA] residents are opposed to a forced amalgamation with the Wollongong LGA; 56 per cent of Wollongong residents are opposed to an amalgamation with the Shellharbour LGA; and in Kiama, a massive 92 per cent are opposed to amalgamation with the Shoalhaven LGA.

Ahead of the 28 February deadline hundreds of residents in the region have lodged submissions with the Local Government Boundaries Commission. I have also submitted a six-page document to the delegate expressing my concerns and total opposition to the Government's plans. Earlier this week I voted to accord priority to a motion by the member for Heffron to debate the Government's plans. Unlike others in this place—in particular, the member for Kiama—I do not say one thing in the electorate and do another thing in the Chamber. My views are entirely consistent, as is my vote. I do not grandstand at public rallies for applause and then enter this Chamber and vote against a motion to debate council amalgamations. The member for Kiama never seems able to follow his mouth with his feet. I heard the member say on i98FM radio this morning that he did not see a "need to alienate the Government", and that it does not matter what motions are moved in this place because the Parliament will not decide this matter.

That is convenient for all Government members—all care and no responsibility—but their communities are beginning to realise that their representatives are trying to play them for fools. Government members—all of them—are astride a barbed-wire fence. Only one thing is certain: It will end in a heap of pain and leave a nasty mess. The Government has no mandate for the forced amalgamation of any council, least of all those in the Illawarra. The assumptions relied upon in the KPMG report have attracted widespread criticism. They only highlight the deep uncertainty and highly questionable assertions put forward in the Government's plans. Its plans are silent and vague on a range of other issues, including service delivery, employment rights of staff and the elected representation. I urge in my submission that the delegate recommend to the Minister for Local Government that the forced amalgamation proposal for all Illawarra councils should be withdrawn and not proceed.

I have previously raised in this place the Dapto TAFE campus. This week the Government finally confirmed that the Dapto TAFE campus has been removed from its secret sell-off hit list. It is understood that the site will now be leased for three years by the NSW Police Force for training purposes related to armed offenders and terrorism incidents. The Government has refused to confirm precisely what activities the police will conduct on the site. I will seek a briefing from the Minister for Justice and Police about that. The most important point is that the Dapto TAFE site will remain in public ownership. That has been my prime objective. I note the Minister for Skills took to Twitter earlier today to indicate that I had, according to him, "talked Dapto down". I can only say that I am pleased to have foiled the Minister's attempt at a \$2.5 million cash grab from greedy developers.

Last year I put a proposal to the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra that would possibly have seen Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) use the Dapto TAFE campus. I am pleased that the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary saw some merit in my proposal, which has widespread community support. On 22 January the Facebook page of the *Illawarra Mercury* received 700 "likes" for an article explaining the proposal. It attracted nearly 100 supportive comments. Aspect is an educational service for children with autism. Aspect's current Illawarra facilities are nearly at breaking point. While Aspect cannot utilise the Dapto TAFE campus, I expect the Government to work with me to identify other underutilised facilities in the Illawarra that may be used by this fantastic organisation.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.09 p.m.]: I was very sorry to hear the member for Shellharbour talk down our police and attack them in her statement. I am excited by the fact that as Parliamentary Secretary I have been able to secure reuse of the facility at Dapto. I was very pleased to work with Minister Barilaro and I congratulate him on making an important decision with Minister Grant. In relation to the priority motion the member for Shellharbour mentioned, she should be

aware that this Parliament will not decide the amalgamation issue. That decision will be made by the Minister for Local Government on recommendation from the NSW Boundaries Commission. The process was quite clear. Unfortunately, the member for Shellharbour did not attend any of the boundaries commission inquiries held in her electorate. If she had attended she would have some more credibility.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith):** Order! Government members will come to order.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** But, of course, she has no credibility on this issue. She did not bother to turn up. She vacated the field. That is what we would expect from a lazy, incompetent and hopeless member for Shellharbour.

### **BLACKTOWN AND MOUNT DRIITT HOSPITALS**

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [6.10 p.m.]: On 18 January it was my pleasure to accompany Minister for Health Jillian Skinner on a visit to Blacktown Hospital to welcome 42 new medical graduates on their first day of orientation as they started their one-year internships at Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospitals. Last month a record cohort of medical graduates commenced their year-long internship in New South Wales hospitals as a result of the Government funding 983 intern places in 2016 at a cost of \$107 million. This year we will have more intern positions than any other State or Territory and more than ever in New South Wales. The interns will rotate through Blacktown, Mount Druitt and Bathurst hospitals to gain rounded experience in different fields and at different localities, including rural experience in Bathurst. Blacktown Hospital, the closest major hospital servicing my electorate of Riverstone, is undergoing major infrastructure upgrades. Valued at more than \$300 million, stage 1 of the Blacktown and Mount Druitt Hospitals Project expansion is the State's largest infrastructure project and is due for completion this year.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Thanks to the good member for Riverstone.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** For the benefit of the Parliamentary Secretary, I might add that the former Labor Government was not able to begin the project despite many promises, which was much to the frustration of former Labor member for Blacktown Paul Gibson, who has commended this Government and Minister for delivering. At Blacktown Hospital the stage 1 works will deliver a new clinical services building for cancer, cardiac and respiratory medicine, and aged care. It is due to open in the coming months. A new car park, mental health centre, and other internal refurbishments and infrastructure upgrades have already been completed.

In June 2015 the Premier announced that the Blacktown and Mount Druitt Hospitals Project would receive an extra \$30 million towards the more than \$400 million stage 2 expansion works. The extra funds form part of the proposed \$1.4 billion hospital upgrade program announced in the 2015-16 budget. Hospitals all over the State are benefiting from that massive capital funding injection. As a result of the funding new doctors who started their careers in my area will become part of a system that will be able to expand to serve the growing needs of the State. I also point out that recurrent health funding has increased by more than inflation in every year under this Government. That is a significant achievement. It is why we can afford record numbers of nurses and medical interns, and increased numbers of allied health personnel.

The stage 2 redevelopment of Blacktown Hospital includes a new emergency department, intensive care unit and new operating theatres. It also includes more inpatient beds, expanded ambulatory care and a boost to women's and newborn health services. I look forward to seeing the real benefits to our communities as those major infrastructure projects at Blacktown Hospital are completed and put to good use to serve the people of Western Sydney. I congratulate and welcome those starting their medical careers at Western Sydney hospitals in 2016 and wish them well as they serve the health needs of our growing community.

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.14 p.m.]: I acknowledge the hard work of the member for Riverstone and the wonderful job he did in lobbying for the upgrade of Blacktown Hospital. Hundreds of millions of dollars will go to that facility, which has been neglected for so long.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Like I did at St George.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Through his hard work the member for Riverstone has given that hospital a wonderful gift, as has the member for Oatley in looking after St George Hospital. It would be impossible to find a member more passionate about his local hospital. I understand that the member for Oatley has also secured hundreds of millions of dollars to upgrade the St George facility. I could not be more proud of the member for Oatley and the member for Riverstone for being part of the team.

**Mr Mark Coure:** I am excited.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** It is great to see that the member for Oatley is excited about the prospect. I acknowledge the work of Minister Skinner to invest in our hospital system, especially the \$1 billion that is being invested in the Westmead health precinct.

**Mr Mark Coure:** How much?

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** That is \$1 billion in the Westmead health precinct. Once completed it will be one of the largest health precincts in the world.

## **KOGARAH ELECTORATE EVENTS**

### **DEATH OF WAYNE HAN**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS** (Kogarah) [6.15 p.m.]: Last Friday afternoon it was wonderful to attend and open the One Billion Rising event in the Kogarah town square. The One Billion Rising campaign is a global movement designed to end domestic violence against women. The campaign was launched internationally on Valentine's Day in 2012 and began as a call to action based on the staggering statistic that one in three women on the planet will be beaten or sexually assaulted in their lifetime. That means that up to 1 billion women globally will have been abused. The purpose of the event is to raise consciousness of the issues surrounding violence against women.

The statistics on domestic violence in Australia are troubling. A national survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that just under half a million Australian women reported that they had experienced physical or sexual violence or sexual assault in the past 12 months, more than 1 million women had experienced physical or sexual assault by their current or ex-partner since the age of 15 and one in four Australian women had experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner. It also found that one-third of women had experienced physical violence since the age of 15 and, staggeringly, that 64 per cent of women who experienced physical assault and 81 per cent of women who experienced sexual assault did not report it to police.

The event is commemorated in more than 200 countries worldwide. We were lucky enough to have Kogarah Community Services organise the One Billion Rising event in our area for the fourth time. At the event 400 attendees performed in a dance festival, including students from nine local dance schools, and 55 people participated in a flash mob. Mercifully, I did not have to dance and Kogarah Community Services did not make me do so. The message from the organisers was clear: They are determined to make a new consciousness—one where violence will be resisted until it is unthinkable.

While I have the attention of members I will also talk about the St George community's contribution to one of the largest annual events in the world, that is, Chinese New Year. I was lucky

enough to attend many Spring Festival events over the course of the past few weeks, including Hurstville City Council's Lunar New Year event in Forest Road that attracts up to 30,000 people, and the Chinese consulate event in Surry Hills, and on 7 February I attended the Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China [ACPPRC], Chinese New Year's Eve celebration banquet and illumination of the Sydney Opera House as well as many other events and celebrations.

It was wonderful to see so many families within my electorate participating in the Spring Festival. It is said that Chinese New Year events in Sydney are the largest in the world outside China. Although I am unable to determine whether that statistic is true, I can confirm that Sydney audiences are the most enthusiastic I have ever seen. I particularly thank ACPPRC President Mr Xiangmo Huang, Dr Frank Chou, and founding Chairman of Australia China Economics, Trade and Culture Association, Dr Fai Yuen Lam, for their tireless service to the Chinese Australian community and their work to celebrate Chinese New Year in Australia. I wish everyone in the Chinese community in Sydney good fortune, happiness, wealth and longevity.

Finally, I note the passing of Mr Wayne Han of Carlton, who was the husband of my electorate officer, Cheryl Han. His death has traumatised our community, the Labor Party members within and the Carlton Public School community. Wayne was a local boy, born and bred in the St George community. He worked tirelessly on behalf of Carlton Public School and the Australian Labor Party. He was an active member of the community who engaged in many events. His death has caused us all to pause and reflect on family, the sense of community and also, on a personal level, how close our office and team are in Kogarah. He is survived by his wife, Cheryl, and three wonderful kids Samantha, Michael and Brandon. I would like the House to offer its commiserations to them.

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.19 p.m.]: I too congratulate the Australian Chinese community and welcome in the Year of the Monkey—some would say the Naughty Monkey, especially as we know the Premier was born in the Year of the Monkey. And what a great Premier he has been. The Premier again lit the sails of the Opera House in red to signify our respect for the Chinese community both in Australia and overseas. As I have Chinese heritage I especially pay tribute to everybody who supports Chinese New Year, including the member for Oatley. He is a great supporter of the Chinese community. Every function I see him at, whether it is with the Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China or as on Sunday when he and I were at Chinese New Year celebrations with the Chinese Association of Greater Western Sydney, he is supporting the Chinese community.

## **SEVEN HILLS ELECTORATE SPORTING CLUB**

### **TIM HODGE, CHAMPION SWIMMER**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR** (Seven Hills) [6.20 p.m.]: In every great community there are great volunteers. In my electorate of Seven Hills we are blessed with literally thousands of volunteers who consistently give part of their daily lives for the benefit of others. These volunteers are found in all areas of the community and their sacrifices are not recognised anywhere near as much as they should be. One of the most common places volunteers have a presence is in sporting clubs and in roles such as coaches, managers and officials. Seven Hills has an extensive variety of sporting clubs with volunteers providing support and services to families. Those sporting clubs include soccer, netball, rugby league, little athletics, baseball, cricket, hockey, softball, bowling, and the list goes on.

One such club is the Phoenix Softball Club in Toongabbie. It is a friendly, family-based softball club with teams from under 7s to an open league. It is great to see a club with so many teams for girls and women promoting the benefits of exercise and an enjoyable healthy lifestyle. I was astounded to learn that local players have on previous occasions been selected to play for the under 17s, under 19s and open women's national Australian softball teams. Indeed, A-grader Kelsey Griffen was recently selected to play in the 2016 Australian junior women's squad and will be competing in July. Furthermore,



some players have played in the United States with American college softball teams. These amazing achievements could not have been accomplished without the enduring support of volunteers who run the Phoenix Softball Club. Those volunteers include the executive: the President, Donna McGrath; the Vice President, Sharon Trenbath; the Secretary, Linda Hogg; and the Treasurer, Sharon Bailey.

As a Government we support local sports clubs and the impact they have on the community. As a method of supporting such clubs, the Minister for Sport runs the Local Sport Grant Program, where grants totalling up to \$50,000 can be given for purposes including sport development, community events and facility development. This is a fantastic initiative that will provide a significant boost to our local sport clubs and, of course, the volunteers that assist in running them. I cannot wait to see the improvements to sports clubs in Seven Hills resulting from this program. All players gain health benefits by joining and participating in sporting clubs like Phoenix Softball Club.

That reminds me of the upgrades currently taking place at Westmead and Blacktown hospitals. I recently visited Westmead hospital to meet 73 new graduates beginning their one-year internship, and I think I was joined by the member for Parramatta for that visit. The effort these graduates have put into studying medicine must be commended. The hard work they do and the professionalism they demonstrated on that day certainly deserve note. They will soon become doctors and be amongst the best in the world. Whilst at Westmead I could see the construction sites where outstanding work is being done to increase the hospital's capacity. I am very fortunate to have a world-class facility in my electorate—and the member for Parramatta is very fortunate to have one in his neighbouring electorate. We look forward to seeing more exceptional progress during future visits.

While sport is often undertaken as a recreational and enjoyable activity, some of my constituents also engage in sport at a competitive level. For example, Tim Hodge of Kings Langley is a swimmer who has already achieved enormous success in his 14 years. Last November at the Pacific School Games in Adelaide, Tim won 17 medals from 18 events and smashed nine Australian records. For the 100 metres backstroke in his age and category, Tim is ranked seventh in the world. Words cannot convey just how incredible Tim's achievements are. However, he plans to aim even higher and compete at the pinnacle of his competitive sport.

Tim is now aiming to earn a place on the Australian Swimming Team to represent Australia at the Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro later this year. At just 14 years old, Tim has an extremely successful career ahead of him, and I wish him all the best in qualifying for the Paralympics at the Australian Open in April this year. Sport plays an important role in the lives of many people and promotes a healthy community. However, at the local level, we must recognise the tireless efforts of volunteers who run such sporting organisations. I commend the work of those volunteers to the House. I am proud to be the member for Seven Hills where such volunteers are in abundance.

## **A JOURNEY IN TIME: A HISTORY OF ST JOHNS PARK AND ITS PEOPLE**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [6.25 p.m.]: On Monday 16 November 2015, I had the pleasure of helping launch the book *A Journey in Time: A history of St Johns Park and Its People* at St Johns Park Bowling Club. This book details the untold story of the history of St Johns Park, an area in my electorate of Cabramatta. It was a great honour for me to be asked to write the foreword for the book. My connection with St Johns Park dates back to 1952 when I was a student at St Johns Park Public School. In 1987 I had the honour and privilege to represent the area as an alderman, then councillor, then Mayor of Fairfield City Council and, presently, the State member for Cabramatta. I feel I have a close affinity with the book and the history of this area, which has been my home for more than 60 years.

St Johns Park was originally the home of the Cabrogal people of the Darug nation who lived in the area for more than 30,000 years. The area was first seen by the colonial settlers on 27 April 1788 and was named after the parish of St Johns. The history of St Johns Park and the surrounding area began in 1803 when Governor Gidley King allocated two blocks of land to the Orphan Institution that he

established. Some of the land was used for agriculture purposes and the revenue was used to help finance the orphanage.

This book deals with the period from 1870 onwards, when large land grants were subdivided and smaller acreages were for sale. The area quickly developed into a farming community with a high percentage of migrant families, some dating back to the initial settlers. The majority of the pioneer families operated vineyards, market gardens and poultry farms. Their dedication to the development of the area's infrastructure such as churches, schools and community clubs is integral to the story.

Descendants of families that have a long and deep connection with the area have shared their stories in the book. It is amazing how many descendants from the people who settled in the area all those years ago still have a presence in St Johns Park and the surrounding area. My heartfelt thanks must go to the local studies librarian and writer of the book, Ms Vicki Movizio, for her dedication in bringing the history of St Johns Park to life in this book. Vicki's family is intertwined in the history of the area: She is the great-granddaughter of Francesco Gava, a pioneer of St Johns Park, and, through her mother's side, a relative of the Whiteleys store owners, an early and prominent family of Fairfield.

This project was no mean feat, as it has taken nearly three years of hard work to complete by a small but dedicated team of researchers and volunteers headed by Mr Romeo Menegazzi and the unwavering support of the Whitlam Library local studies librarian, Marilyn Gallo. The research team visited libraries and sifted through countless archives, contacting hundreds of people who contributed photographs and stories that reflected their recollection of how the area was in their time. Thanks to the generosity of St Johns Bowling Club and the club's President, Mr Paul Norris, for making the launch of this book possible. The club and surrounding park were central to community life in the early days. Indeed, in my primary school years we celebrated many sports carnivals at that park. Dedicated people and associations make it possible for us to leave the history of our area, as we remember it, to future generations to ensure that that history is never forgotten.

### **TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL MAUGHAN**

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.30 p.m.]: Tonight I pay tribute to Michael Maughan, a well-known and highly regarded figure in Parramatta. Michael recently passed away, following a long battle with cancer. Through good health and bad he worked tirelessly to help the community. Those in need remember Michael as being committed to helping the vulnerable and marginalised members of the community, as an uncle to many kids, and as someone who fought for things he believed in. Born and raised in the Central West towns of Forbes and Lithgow, he completed his high school years at Marist Brothers Parramatta. Indeed, it is on the Dundas and Telopea communities that Michael has left his biggest mark. Most notably he was instrumental in keeping the Telopea post office open.

Michael joined local community member Susan Salt and then Federal member for Parramatta, Ross Cameron, in the fight to have the post office reopened. He successfully tendered for the licence and then operated the post office with his partner, Sigrid Rottmann, until 2003. I am told that Telopea post office remains the only post office reopened by Australia Post. More than 20 years ago Michael became involved with the juniors and seniors at Dundas Valley Rugby Union Football Club. He did so many things to help—from coaching, to transport and fundraising. He campaigned successfully to stop the sell-off of the local sports club in Dundas Valley. Michael is fondly remembered by the players, their families and club members as someone you could always count on, someone who gave 110 per cent.

For 15 years Michael was an active member of the Carlingford Dundas Lions Club. He was a passionate advocate for Camp Lionheart, a charity that raises funds for children with life-changing conditions. Michael was Chairman of the Lions Nurses' Scholarship Foundation in 2012 and has held the positions of third, second and first vice president at the Carlingford Lions Club. He was also been involved with Rosehill Local Area Command as part of the Police Accountability Community Team [PACT]. He

worked with local police to keep the community youth club open. In 2013 he was awarded Parramatta Citizen of the Year. He was nominated for his years of service as an active volunteer, and for his community work and ongoing fundraising efforts.

Last month the local community celebrated the life of Michael Maughan. Those who gathered noted that Michael had served the community with pride and distinction. He was an inspiration to others; pursued purpose and achieved much for the community. Michael dreamt of making Parramatta a better place for all. Of his passing it was said that an important link in the community has been lost. Michael will be sadly missed. I offer my condolences to his family and many friends.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.33 p.m. until  
Tuesday 23 February 2016 at 12 noon.**

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