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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 10 March 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.

### HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION NATIONAL LAW (NSW) AMENDMENT (REVIEW) BILL 2016

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

### AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

**The Clerk** announced the receipt, in accordance with section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of a performance audit report of the Auditor-General entitled "Managing unsolicited proposals in New South Wales: Department of Premier and Cabinet", dated March 2016.

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

#### Notices of Motions

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

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### MINING AND PETROLEUM INDUSTRY POLITICAL DONATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CORRUPTION RISK REDUCTION) BILL 2016

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Jamie Parker, read a first time and printed.**

#### Second Reading

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [10.13 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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It is time to restore the integrity of Parliament by extending the donations ban to the mining industry. The Greens objective in introducing this bill is to reduce corruption risk and ensure appropriate decision-making by removing the ability of those who would benefit from decisions of public authorities or public officials to make political donations that could exert influence on or otherwise affect the making of those decisions. This will be done in four ways: by prohibiting political donations from the mining and petroleum industry; by prohibiting the making of environmental planning instruments relating to extractive

industries at the request of persons who have made political donations or having regard to submissions made by such persons; by prohibiting the granting of certain planning approvals relating to extractive industries to persons who have made political donations or having regard to submissions by such persons; and by prohibiting the issue of mining authorisations or petroleum titles to persons who have made political donations.

The provisions of this bill have a legitimate purpose: to secure and promote the actual and perceived integrity of the Parliament and other institutions of government in New South Wales by reducing the risk to that integrity that may arise from undue, corrupt or hidden influences over those institutions, their members or their processes. The means adopted to achieve that purpose in this bill—the prohibition of political donations from those who might benefit and the prevention of those who have donated from possibly benefiting—are compatible with the maintenance of the constitutionally prescribed system of representative government. They advance those purposes by rational means that not only do not impede the system of representative government provided for but also enhance it.

These amendments are suitable as they have a rational connection to the purpose of reducing the risk of corruption and undue influence since they reduce corruption risk, ensure appropriate decision-making and minimise any perception of undue influence in the administration of environmental planning and assessment legislation, and mining and petroleum legislation, by preventing those who would benefit from decisions of public authorities or public officials from making political donations that could exert influence on the decision-making process. These amendments are also necessary in the sense that there is no obvious and compelling alternative, reasonably practical means of achieving the same purpose which has a less restrictive effect on the implied freedom of communication on governmental and political matters.

In *McCloy v New South Wales* [2015] HC 34, the High Court upheld the validity of a similar prohibition on property developers making political donations and on politicians accepting donations from property developers, finding that the prohibition did not impermissibly burden the implied freedom of communication on governmental and political matters contrary to the Constitution. The court said of that freedom:

The freedom under the Australian Constitution is a qualified limitation on legislative power implied in order to ensure that the people of the Commonwealth may 'exercise a free and informed choice as electors'. It is not an absolute freedom. It may be subject to legislative restrictions serving a legitimate purpose compatible with the system of representative government for which the Constitution provides, where the extent of the burden can be justified as suitable, necessary and adequate, having regard to the purpose of those restrictions.

I gave notice of this bill last November. Having arrived at the end of the parliamentary year, and there was still no action by the Premier to reduce corruption risk by broadening the ban on political donations, I took the initiative to address the concerns raised by the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. The issues raised by the ICAC are matters worthy of consideration by this Parliament. In the commission's October 2013 report titled "Reducing the opportunities and incentives for corruption in the State's management of coal resources", a number of corruption risks were identified as existing throughout the State's administration system to the coalmining industry. The report states:

The corrupt behaviour exposed in operations Jasper and Acacia did not occur as the result of a small loophole that was cleverly exploited. Rather, the perverse incentives and opportunities that are embedded in the existing coal allocation system have the capacity to distort the decision-making process on what and when coal deposit should be released, as well as a pathway that an allocation process will follow.

The report further states, in a manner that addresses the question of why it is overdue for this industry to join the ban donors list of property developers, tobacco and gambling, that:

It is inconceivable that in any other portfolio area of government such value could be corruptly transferred from the state to favoured individuals with relative ease. What, then, is so different about the allocation of rights to state coal assets from the way that the rest of government does business? The corrupt conduct uncovered by the Commission in operations Jasper and Acacia cannot simply be put down to a rogue minister for mineral resources. The state arrangements that relate to coal provided an opportunity not found in other parts of government for individuals to engage in corrupt conduct.

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For a government determined to safeguard its economic reputation, the commission's observations are damning:

The limitations of the state's policy and regulatory environment have had negative effects beyond the specific corruption exposed by the Commission and have restricted the return the state has obtained for its assets during the boom period for coal prices. Perceptions of sovereign risk (in the broadest sense of unpredictable policy changes and shifting discretionary decisions) have been heightened and the reputation of the state as a desirable investment destination has been tarnished.

The perception that the state is beholden to mining companies as a result of the additional financial contributions taken from them at the exploration stage has generated community anger about coal mining.

There we have it: the Independent Commission Against Corruption in its report in 2013 not only identified the specific issues around a corruption risk in the mining and extractive industries but also identified very clearly the state of community anger about this issue and the fact that an expose of corruption which ICAC undertook was not about an individual Minister or some loophole but about systemic corruption. The Mining and Petroleum Industry Political Donations Legislation Amendment (Corruption Risk Reduction) Bill 2015 extends to the mining and petroleum industry the current bans on political donations from the tobacco, alcohol, gambling and real estate development industries. Despite an appeal by a cashed-up developer in October 2015, the High Court of Australia found that New South Wales laws which ban specific classes of political donors are constitutionally valid. There is no excuse not to include the mining and petroleum industries in this ban. In fact, as highlighted by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, it is prudent to do so.

Corporate donations have a corrosive influence on democracy and undermine confidence in the political system. That is particularly the case in the mining and resource sector where decisions of government determine the success or failure of major resource projects. This legislation will secure and promote the actual and perceived integrity of Parliament and other institutions of government in New South Wales. We know this is certainly overdue; the community is highly sceptical of the integrity of politicians as a whole, after the long line of Labor and Liberal members of Parliament who have been exposed by ICAC over the past few years. Elections should be about the contest of ideas, not the contest of cash. Whether it is cash in a brown paper bag in the back of a Bentley or buying a table at a fundraising event, the community needs to be sure that politicians are not being bought. The lid was lifted in August 2015 when energy giant AGL announced it had voluntarily ended all political donations. In a written statement, the company said:

While political donations from companies like AGL are not prohibited under legislation, we recognise that the community perception is that they may constitute undue influence from 'big business' on Government.

What an indictment on this Parliament that corporations were recognising before this Parliament did that political donations, even in regard to their perception, is a major issue. This Parliament lags behind not only community perceptions but also the perceptions of large companies such as AGL, which has taken a

step that this Parliament has feared to take. The community is right to perceive undue influence. It is public knowledge that AGL's external auditors had previously exposed incomplete and inconsistent disclosure of political donations relating to the very period in which the company was applying to drill more than 100 coal seam gas wells near Gloucester. Fairfax Media reported in August 2014 that AGL gave almost \$100,000 to the New South Wales Labor and Liberal parties while seeking approval to drill 110 coal seam gas wells near Gloucester on the mid North Coast, but only half of those donations were apparently disclosed to the planning department, which recommended the project proceed. It was further reported:

Between the application and its approval by the Planning Assessment Commission on February 22, 2011, AGL donated a further \$39,300. Of that, Labor received two donations of \$13,750 and the bulk of the remainder went to the Liberals, including for several meals with then opposition leader and later premier Barry O'Farrell, who won a landslide victory in the subsequent March 2011 elections.

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Commenting on the issue of AGL's political donations disclosure and integrity under the planning system, University of New South Wales constitutional law expert George Williams highlighted the need to overhaul corporate donations. He stated:

There's the larger issue of what [corporations] should be entitled to donate in the first place. Corporate interests don't donate money unless they hope to get something in return.

Putting aside the "areas and omissions" in the AGL's donations disclosures I place on the record the list of donations declared to the New South Wales Electoral Commission in the period 2003-14: Resources companies in general donated \$1 million to three parties—Labor, Liberal and The Nationals parties; lobbyists donated \$1.8 million; the Minerals Council of New South Wales donated \$120,000; AGL donated \$123,000; New South Wales Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group donated \$106,000; Sydney Gas donated \$71,000; Nathan Tinkler donated \$50,000; Santos donated \$38,000; BHP donated \$26,000; Xtrata donated \$27,000; Centennial Coal donated \$19,000 and Gugarat NRE donated \$24,000. These were all donations made by various entities to political parties.

Since the last Federal election fossil fuel companies have donated almost \$3.7 million to the Labor, Liberal and The Nationals parties and for what purpose? No wonder there is a community perception that big business was splashing cash to ensure undue influence. Of course the Government may say, "Well, the donation limit is now only \$5,000 and that limit does not pose any undue influence on government." If it is such a small amount of cash and the influence is not there, why not just include mining companies in the list of prohibited donors? It is a corruption risk exercise the Government should lead. Companies like AGL have already made such decisions, citing the perception risk around political donations and the corruption issue carried within it. It is a step the Government should take and in light of the tainted history of planning and development decisions in New South Wales it is necessary to restore community confidence in the integrity of the planning system at both State and local levels.

The community remains disgusted at the alleged rorting of political donations exposed by the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] in 2013. There is a political ecosystem in New South Wales where vested interests and some politicians are interdependent and often planning decisions have been seen to be compromised in the process. It is disturbing of course that this week we have seen the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy labelling farmers and others protecting their land and water from coal seam gas as eco-fascists. The Greens condemn any acts that risk life and condemn the draconian new offences that target anti-CSG and coal seam gas protesters. Many of them are so active because of what they have seen as a rotten and influence-ridden political donation system. Many of those taking direct action against coal seam gas projects are farmers who feel they must act to protect the land and water from being poisoned or destroyed.

Recently I read about a 64-year-old farmer who was locked on to the gates of a Santos project

out of concern for water resources and his family's farming future. These people are not eco-terrorists, as the Minister would describe them. They are people who care about the country and looking after it. They want to make sure there is no undue influence in the system so they are taking action. This is another reason why the Government should ensure that these political donations are banned, not only because of the perceived interest but also because it will make a statement for what this Government stands; that these donations are not necessary and that the Government stands apart from those who would accept these donations. When one considers that the cap is relatively low, as the Government has argued, why take the money?

Does the Government care more about paying back political donors and doing the bidding of the NSW Minerals Council than caring about farmers and communities in regional New South Wales? We see a pattern of ever more aggressive policing, reducing fines on mining companies where they can and expanding police powers to crack down on protesters and attack our civil liberties. We must make sure that these farmers and communities have the right to protest. They feel they have to go to that extent because there is a clear perception, as demonstrated by ICAC in its report, that there is interdependence between politicians, political donors and these companies. The Government can wipe that slate clean and make sure that in this case these political donations are not accepted.

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In conclusion, the bill will reduce the risk of corruption. It will restore integrity to Government decision-making and help to clean up politics in New South Wales. This has been the stated aim of the Premier. Now it is time for him to back up his words with action. It will make a significant difference to the way that this Government is perceived. It will help the Government to make a strong stand against donations of this type and ensure a clean and effective political system without the influence of donations from mineral and petroleum companies.

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

#### **PARLIAMENTARY EMERGENCY EVACUATION EXERCISE**

**The SPEAKER:** An emergency exercise to evacuate the building will now be conducted. Members are asked to follow the instructions of the wardens. I shall leave the chair until the ringing of one long bell.

*[The Speaker left the chair at 10.30 a.m.]*

*[The bells having been rung, the House resumed at 10.59 a.m. with the Deputy-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) in the chair.]*

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** I thank everyone for their cooperation in the emergency exercise to evacuate the building. I am sure I speak on behalf of the Speaker in thanking everyone for their support.

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

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

##### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 12 November 2015.**

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [11.00 a.m.]: As Minister for Family and Community Services, I lead for the Government



in debate on the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2015. The purpose of the Opposition's bill would appear to be to try to improve the safety of children. In reality, this bill fails to do that. In fact, it does precisely the reverse. When looking at any issue concerning children one must consider what is in the best interests of the child. That is a difficult and challenging question. It must be considered in a holistic way to ensure that a child's welfare is addressed.

The current legislation, the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act, sets out the essential aspects of child protection in New South Wales. As Minister for Family and Community Services, I can say that throughout this State there are 83 community service centres manned by extremely committed professional officers who, every day, seek to ensure the safety of children and young people. It is always a challenge. It is a serious challenge when an increasing number of parents in our society, unfortunately, are addicted to substances such as alcohol or drugs. An increasing number of parents have mental health issues and disability issues. As a result of those issues quite often there is an intergenerational lack of parenting skills and lack of understanding.

It is with that background that we look carefully at what is proposed by the Opposition. Having examined it carefully, I am extremely concerned that the Opposition could consider—perhaps with the best of intentions—this to be an appropriate bill. It is not an appropriate bill. I am surprised that the shadow Minister could even think it would be appropriate to bring such a bill into this place. The bill does not have the support of those who operate in the child protection community. It does not have the support of the Law Society of New South Wales. It does not have the support of those who understand the complexities of child protection.

In New South Wales we always look at issues in a careful and proportionate way to determine what is in the best interests of the child. We look at the best way to ensure that their safety, welfare and wellbeing are paramount. The principal object of our legislation is to look at what is in the best interests of the child. The Government cannot support this bill because it is a mandatory sentence on parents, on parenting. That is effectively what it says. I understand why the argument can be put, at a simplistic level, by the Opposition that in certain instances where parents have committed certain offences they should be excluded from being able to parent. I am sorry to say that that shows a remarkable lack of understanding from the Opposition. It reeks more of an effort to buy relevance than any serious effort to protect children.

Clearly there are circumstances where a parent who has committed a serious criminal offence may not be an appropriate person to actively parent their child. It may not be appropriate for them to be the primary caregiver for that child. Our current system, as laid out in legislation approved by this Parliament—the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act—makes it very clear that those factors can be taken account, and indeed are taken into account right now, without the need for this amending legislation from the Labor Party.

At the moment the system takes a holistic approach. The best interests of the child are considered, first of all, by officers in the Department of Family and Community Services [FACS]. If an officer feels that a child should be removed from the biological parent or parents then that can be determined by a court. At each stage all the factors that are in the best interests of the child are looked at. To make it mandatory, through legislation, that because of an offence committed by a parent at some point in their lives that person cannot parent any child in the future is counterproductive. It is ludicrous.

According to the shadow Minister for Family and Community Services, the bill is modelled on a South Australian bill. I note that the shadow Minister did not say that it is modelled on a South Australian Act. It is modelled on a South Australian bill that apparently has not been passed. That speaks volumes about whether this is a bill that this Parliament should pass. Keeping our children and young people safe will always be a challenge. It is challenging for the community and the Government. From time to time it is necessary to revisit the legislation to ensure that it works in the best interests of children. Based on the professional opinion of those who understand child protection, I say that this bill does not go to the

protection of children. This bill simply says that because a parent has committed an offence, albeit a serious offence, that parent cannot be allowed to parent in the future.

I would have thought that Labor Party members, if they had any sense of their history, traditions and what they purport to represent, could not possibly penalise a parent forever for a past crime, and penalise the children of that parent for the past crime of the parent. It is beyond me how this bill passed through the shadow Cabinet and the caucus. There is no way that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government would ever condone condemning a parent to never being able to parent on the basis of a mandatory sentencing structure. That is what this bill proposes. It is sensible that such decisions are taken in a calm, cool atmosphere, based on all the facts. That is what the current legislation requires.

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In fact, the current situation is that each issue is dealt with on its merits, and of course dealt with by a judge. The judge is able to hear all the circumstances. It is indeed remarkable that the Labor Party, whose origins are allegedly about looking after people, is so far removed from the reality of how to care for children and young people in family situations.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** It's disgraceful.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** It is, as the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy says, disgraceful. I think it reflects very poorly on the understanding of these issues by the Labor shadow Cabinet and its intellectual capacity. I conclude my address by stating again just how much the Liberal-Nationals Government values the frontline workers. These are the people who, day after day throughout the 83 community service centres across this State, receive reports of children at risk of significant harm. They have to weigh up, in a very holistic and caring way, what is in the best interests of that child and how we can best look after that child. To impose on those professionals what this Labour Party wants to in this legislation—that is, to mandatorily remove their capacity to make careful, deliberate and considered decisions about a child's welfare by effectively removing any possibility of a parent being able to parent—is indeed most inappropriate and unreasonable.

I state very clearly for the record that those frontline officers in Family and Community Services undertake a tough job. I have talked to them and visited their offices across the State—from the far north of the State to the Western Division, the southern parts of the State and indeed across Sydney. Wherever I go I see incredibly committed people. The staff of FACS do an extraordinary job, and it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the work they do to protect our children. The New South Wales Liberal Party and The Nationals will continue to support them in their endeavours. We do not expect that they will get it right every time. We would like to think they will get it right but we understand that it is a difficult professional decision whether to remove a child when a risk of significant harm report has been made.

It is indeed a very challenging question, because the removal of a child from his or her family will have lasting and profound effects on that child. We hope that sometimes it leads to a better outcome. But, sadly, all too often it does not, and that is the challenge for the officers who are making those decisions. I make it very clear that, as they make those decisions, the Liberal and The Nationals members in this place and I as the Minister will be backing those officers. We will ensure, through our opposition to this legislation, that they will continue to have the appropriate discretion to make a holistic decision about a situation and not be forced to make a particular decision that will almost certainly in many cases not be in the best interests of the child. We oppose the legislation.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I recognise in the public gallery this morning visitors from the Young Women's Leadership Seminar, which has been organised by the Parliamentary Education Unit. I welcome all participants to the New South Wales Parliament. I think it is fitting that they are attending the seminar in the week that we celebrate International Women's Day. It is a pleasure to have them at the Parliament and I trust they will enjoy their day.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON** (Charlestown) [11.13 a.m.]: I support the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Protection from Serious Offenders) Bill 2015, introduced by the member for Bankstown. I do so because I firmly believe that, as lawmakers, we have a responsibility to ensure the safety of all children. Every child has the right to grow up in a safe home. Our communities, our electorates and our constituents are rightly outraged and upset when they hear of instances where a child has not been safe in their own home. This outrage is supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which at article 19 states:

States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

I am proud to be an elected member of this place, and a member of the Labor Party. The Labor Party has advocated, and continues to advocate, on behalf of the most vulnerable and voiceless in our community. It is the party that champions equity and fairness for all. Nowhere is unfairness more evident than when a child is killed by a person whom our society rightly expects should love, care and protect them—that is, a parent or guardian.

Fundamentally, the purpose of the bill is to protect the existing and future children of parents who have committed murder, manslaughter and other serious offences against their own children. The objects of the bill are to ensure that, subject to some exceptions, any person found guilty of the murder or manslaughter of a child or young person, or of certain other serious offences in relation to a child or young person, where the offender was the parent or guardian of the victim, will automatically have his or her future children removed from his or her care at birth or will be prevented from residing with, approaching or contacting them. The bill will also provide for the issuing of restraining notices so that any person found guilty of such an offence may be prevented from residing with, approaching or having any contact with a child or young person.

Certainly, we on this side of the Chamber believe the rights of the child must prevail over the rights of those parents or guardians who cause serious, violent harm to their children. The bill will help ensure that those who have ended the life of a child will be prevented from ever destroying the life of another child or young person for whom they are supposed to care. There is no higher duty for the State than to protect our children. Our current child protection framework is insufficient and the bill before us attempts to address this. The preparation of the bill follows three devastating cases that resulted in the death of innocent children—Ikicia Leach, Bailey Constable and Chloe Valentine. These stories should be enough to convince the Government of the urgency of this proposed reform.

In 2012 in South Australia four-year-old Chloe Valentine's mother and her mother's partner forced Chloe to ride and repeatedly crash a 50 kilogram motorbike, which caused her death. Chloe's mother and her partner videoed Chloe repeatedly crashing the motorbike. When Chloe's own grandmother saw her at the hospital on life support before her death Chloe was so swollen, bruised and broken that at first she did not recognise Chloe. Chloe's mother and her partner left the hospital as soon as the life support was turned off and neither was present at her death. Disturbingly, before her death Chloe had been the subject of at least 22 child protection notifications to Families South Australia, which is South Australia's equivalent of our New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services.

The coronial inquest into the death of Chloe Valentine examined the circumstances of Chloe's life

and death. The Coroner found that the child protection authorities in South Australia had mishandled her case and that there was a need for reform in this area. The South Australian Coroner made 21 recommendations in order to prevent other children from suffering the same fate of neglect and harm as Chloe. The first of those recommendations was that the Children's Protection Act 1993 be amended to provide that a child born to a person who has a conviction in respect of a child previously born to them for manslaughter by criminal neglect, manslaughter or murder will, by force of the Act, be placed from birth under the custody of the Minister. This recommendation resulted in the South Australian Labor Government introducing legislation that provides for the automatic removal of a child from a parent or guardian with a previous serious, violent conviction against their own child. South Australia was the first State to do this.

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The next heartbreaking story is that of Bailey Constable. In 2013 Nathan Forrest pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of four-year-old Bailey, the son of his de facto partner, Jessica. A post-mortem found that Bailey died of multiple injuries—his body bruised all over with old and new injuries. Bailey's forehead, cheeks and the back of his head were bruised. There were old cuts across his nose and he had black eyes and injuries to his buttocks. Forrest was sentenced to a maximum of eight years in jail and was to serve a non-parole period of six years. During the trial the court heard that young Bailey had told his maternal grandmother of Forrest's repeated physical abuse of him. Bailey had been treated in hospital only days before the fatal attack for a black eye and other injuries.

The final example I have is the devastating death of Ikicia Leach. In 2007 Benjamin Leach was convicted of the manslaughter of his seven-week-old daughter, Ikicia. Baby Ikicia died after being sat on by Leach—possibly for up to 15 minutes. Leach was sentenced to four years and seven months imprisonment, but served less than four years. Following his release from prison, Leach changed his name and settled with a new partner, without disclosing his crime to her. In fact, he told her that his crime was armed robbery. A short time later, Leach and his new partner had a child together. Under existing New South Wales legislation any person who has committed offences against a child is automatically placed on the Child Protection Register and is subject to strict reporting obligations. The register means that offenders will likely be prevented from working with children again. However, currently under existing New South Wales legislation there is no specific provision that prevents a person such as Forrest or Leach from living with and parenting a child again.

Currently, if there are reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm a report can be made to the Child Protection Helpline. But as we have learnt from the recent focus, domestic violence—violence that happens in the home—is hard to detect. The current child protection framework is simply insufficient and this is just not good enough for our children. The argument has been made that removal of a child from the care and protection of a person should continue to be done on a case-by-case basis. But if a parent has committed a serious offence against a child it is a significant indicator that all future children in their care will be at risk. The legislation should reflect this fact.

We reiterate that the offenders whom these amendments are targeting must be kept at the forefront of this argument. This legislation focuses on offenders who capitalise on their own children's vulnerability. It targets parents who have committed murder, manslaughter, assault causing death, acts done with intent to murder, wounding or grievous bodily harm with intent, reckless grievous bodily harm, sexual abuse and female genital mutilation against their own children. For the perpetrators of those horrendous crimes there can be no second chances. However, in the case of significant mitigating circumstances the bill contains exceptions and safeguards, for example, where the offence occurred because of an illness or condition, or circumstances that no longer exist. There is also a right to appeal decisions before the Children's Court.

I thank and commend the member of Bankstown for her hard work in drafting this private member's bill. As legislators, we have a responsibility to ensure the safety of all children. The bill before us helps in this continuous pursuit. For the perpetrators of these horrendous crimes, there can be no second chances. We owe it to Ikicia, to Bailey and to Chloe to do everything in our power to protect

children from these perpetrators. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Nick Lalich 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 ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [11.24 a.m.]: I oppose the Wyong Special Area (Protection) Bill 2015. This bill would halt the development of the proposed Wallarah 2 Coal Project, located at Wyong on the Central Coast. If passed, the Wyong Special Area (Protection) Bill 2015 would mean that planning approvals would not be given under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 for the prospecting and mining of any mineral, and for petroleum prospecting and production on, over or below the surface of land in the proposed Wyong special area. The ban would also include State significant development.

The Government opposes the bill not only because it would sterilise the development of resources in New South Wales but also because it would undermine the integrity of the State's independent planning assessment framework. The Government subjects all mining proposals, including the Wallarah 2 Coal Project, to a rigorous, independent planning assessment framework. The framework includes consideration of social, environmental and economic factors. This bill would stymie the State's well-established planning assessment process, and the negative consequences of overriding the planning framework could extend well beyond this one project. Ruling out the Wallarah 2 Coal Project through legislation, with disregard for the State's independent planning assessment framework, is not cost free. It will add to perceptions of sovereign risk associated with investment in New South Wales and increase the risk premium on investments in resource developments in this State.

The implications of the bill are statewide because it could impact on all resource projects in New South Wales. The Wallarah 2 Coal Project has already been subject to rigorous environmental impact assessment as part of the usual planning procedures in place for all resource projects. The Korea Resources Corporation, the project proponent, has undertaken extensive exploration, environmental monitoring and assessment, community consultation, and technical and economic analysis of the project. The requirements of the New South Wales planning approvals process and the need for the project to proceed through the Commonwealth approvals process mean that, should the project be granted final approval, this will be done only within the strict environmental assessment envelope in place in New South Wales.

If approved, the project will also be required to meet all the environmental security deposit and rehabilitation requirements managed by the New South Wales Division of Resources and Energy. Given the rigorous planning and environmental requirements already in place, the project, if approved, will be proceeding within tight controls. The bill, if passed, would lead to the sterilisation of resources in the State, the loss of investment and employment in regional New South Wales, and would almost certainly increase perceptions of New South Wales as a jurisdiction with high sovereign risk—because it would override the independence of the State's planning assessment framework. For those reasons, the Government does not support the bill.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN** (The Entrance) [11.27 a.m.]: I support the Wyong Special Area (Protection) Bill 2015 and commend my colleague the member for Wyong for initiating the process to draft this bill. The Wyong Special Area (Protection) Bill 2015 fulfils a promise made by Labor during the last election and protects the Central Coast against a broken promise by this Government. The bill acts to prohibit the grant or renewal of any new petroleum title in relation to land in the Wyong special area, which is defined

as the land subject to certain exploration licenses and an authorisation granted under the Mining Act 1992—namely, EL6514, EL491 and A405.

The bill also acts to prohibit the approval of any development for the purposes of prospecting or mining under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 as well as cancelling any such planning approvals given. The current exploration licences are held by the Wallarah 2 Coal Project, which this bill acts against. The Central Coast, through the Australian Coal Alliance, has been fighting that project to protect the Wyong water catchment area for some time. I note the tireless advocacy of Mike Campbell and Alan Hayes, who are integral to the dedicated group of people around the Australian Coal Alliance and who have been fighting on behalf of the Wyong and the broader Central Coast communities to stop the Wallarah 2 Coal Project going ahead.

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It is a matter of record that prior to the 2011 election the Labor Government rejected an application by Kores to build the Wallarah 2 Coal Project. The application was rejected after consideration of an exhaustive range of factors and because the then Government was listening to the local constituency. The Labor Government rejected the 2011 proposal because there were simply too many factors pointing towards the potential for the water catchment area to be damaged, which would put the Central Coast water supply at risk. It is also a matter of public record that the Liberal Party promised in writing not once but three times to not let the Wallarah 2 Coal Project go ahead. The then Leader of the Opposition, Barry O'Farrell, said, "No ifs, no buts." I think he was standing on a table, was he not?

**Mr David Harris:** He was; a picnic table.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN:** He was standing on a picnic table. That is how much authority his promise had.

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

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

#### **WOMAN OF THE YEAR AND ABORIGINAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY** (Oxley) [11.31 a.m.], on behalf of Ms Katrina Hodgkinson, by leave: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes International Women's Day was celebrated on 8 March 2016, followed by the announcement of the New South Wales Woman of the Year Awards on 9 March 2016.
- (2) Notes the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs sponsored the inaugural NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award 2016.
- (3) Notes that the four finalists for the NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award were: Dana Clarke; Kirstie Parker; Nikita Ridgeway; and Rhonda Radley.
- (4) Notes the four finalists for the NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award all strive to promote reconciliation and cohesion in their communities across a range of fields.
- (5) Congratulates Dana Clarke on being awarded the inaugural NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award, noting that under her leadership the Burrun Dalai Aboriginal Corporation has grown from a small non-government organisation to the largest rural service provider of out-of-home care and family support services with an annual turnover of \$15 million.

I am proud to be part of a Government that takes the time to acknowledge successful and inspirational women through its NSW Women of the Year Awards, which this year included the inaugural NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year award. I congratulate the Hon. Leslie Williams as the first Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on instituting the Aboriginal Woman of the Year award. At the ceremony yesterday we saw a wonderful array of women. I am particularly proud to note that Aboriginal Woman of the Year Dana Clarke is part of the famous Clarke clan from Kempsey. I am so proud of Dana for the amazing work she does around Kempsey, which I will discuss further shortly. The NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year award recognises Aboriginal women who continue to promote reconciliation and cohesion by improving relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. All nominations are a testament to the outstanding contribution women make to industry, community and society.

I will outline the achievements of the other deserving shortlisted finalists in the Aboriginal Woman of the Year award category. Finalist Kirstie Parker is a Yuwalarai Aboriginal woman originally from north-western New South Wales. With more than 25 years of experience in community leadership, management, journalism and communications, Kirstie has been a passionate advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and a constructive contributor to national dialogue about issues relevant to all Australians. She is a director of Reconciliation Australia and was elected co-chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. In that role she co-chaired two important national non-partisan campaigns for equality: the Close the Gap Steering Committee around Indigenous health and life expectancy and the Change the Record Coalition around Indigenous incarceration and experiences of violence.

Kirstie helped to forge the unprecedented alliance of Indigenous and ethnic organisations behind a successful community campaign supporting the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, and she remains a key influencer in the process to meaningfully reform the Australian Constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their rights. Since October 2015 she has been the Chief Executive Officer of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence based in Redfern, which delivers life-changing programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially youth.

Finalist Rhonda Radley is a Birrbay woman from Port Macquarie. She is passionate about her connection with the land, and promotes reconciliation and cohesion by sharing her cultural knowledge through stories, dance and language. Rhonda sits on the Local Aboriginal Land Council Board, Werin Aboriginal Medical Service, and the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group. Rhonda is a member of the Gathang Language Group where she advocates for Aboriginal languages to continue to be taught, integrated and spoken. She is also the elder in residence at the University of Newcastle, TAFE campus. Yesterday I had the opportunity to spend some time with Rhonda. It was a moving experience. She is a genuine, kind-hearted person who desperately and deeply wants the best for her community. Apart from telling me about her visit to Government House on the eve of the awards presentation she spoke mostly about her work to improve the lives of local Aboriginal people.

Rhonda has started a movement called Djiyagan Dhanbaan, meaning Strong Sister. This movement creates opportunities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women to come together. Djiyagan Dhanbaan showcases artistic expression such as culture, music, language and dance to the wider community. Rhonda identified that Aboriginal women residing in Port Macquarie were asking for opportunities to connect with the land, language and culture. That story has been captured in the ABC Open documentary entitled *Aboriginal women stepping into their power*.

Nikita Ridgeway was the third shortlisted finalist. I thought she might be a Gumbaynggirr person, because there are many Ridgeways in the Nambucca region, but she is not. Nikita is an advocate for women in business, and is recognised as a successful businesswoman and entrepreneur both within her community and nationally. Nikita is the founder and owner of Boss Lady Creative Design Agency and she strikes quite a pose. She is also the founder of Dreamtime Ink Australia, the world's first all Australian

Aboriginal tattoo company that has created a worldwide platform for Aboriginal tattoos.

Co-founder of the National Indigenous Basketball Championships, Nikita has also co-founded Redfern Records Entertainment and the National Indigenous Hip Hop and R and B BUMP Awards. Nikita was recently featured in the International BBC series *30under30* and is nominated in the *Forbes Asia* magazine series featuring *30 Under 30 Asia*. Nikita created the 2015 South Sydney Rabbitohs' Indigenous jersey. She is a strong role model for youth and has an urge to give back to the people who have supported her.

My colleague the member for Tweed will soon discuss Dana Clarke's work in Kempsey in more detail. Yesterday she spoke about the problems in out-of-home-care and captured the attention of the whole room. Dana told us that 34 per cent of children in out-of-home care are Aboriginal. We must fix that. I listened to the Minister for Family and Community Services speak earlier today. He is doing extraordinary work in overseeing out-of-home care. We all have our shoulders to the wheel with Dana in our efforts to reduce the number of children in care, keep families together and make them stronger. I look forward to continuing to work with Dana. The New South Wales Government congratulates all of the finalists on their commitment and achievements. It is a privilege to highlight their work in the House today.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [11.38 a.m.]: I join with the member for Oxley in recognising the Woman of the Year and Aboriginal Woman of the Year award nominees and recipients who were honoured yesterday at Parliament House. I join in her comments regarding Aboriginal Woman of the Year Dana Clarke.

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I knew all of the Aboriginal Women of the Year finalists. In particular, it was wonderful to see Nikita Ridgeway, whom I have known for a very long time. I support the motion and congratulate the nominees and winners of the Women of the Year and inaugural Aboriginal Woman of the Year awards. Around our State there are thousands of women who deserve to be rewarded. At the award ceremony Gretel Killeen made the point that women are the foundation of not only families but also communities. Members from both sides of the House embraced these awards—in fact, there were not too who did not nominate a local hero.

I particularly recognise the inaugural Aboriginal Woman of the Year award, presented by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mrs Leslie Williams. Aboriginal women are often overlooked and as we saw yesterday there are many, in fact thousands, of Aboriginal women across this State who are worthy of acknowledgement. All the finalists make invaluable contributions to not only their Aboriginal communities but also the broader community across this State. Kirstie Parker, a Yuwallarai woman, has acted as a leader in our community for many years in various fields, including the media and as the co-chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. Kirstie now works at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence at Redfern. Rhonda Radley, a Birrbay woman, focuses on Aboriginal languages and art through her organisation Djiyagan Dhanbaan, which means stronger sisters.

Nikita Ridgeway, whom I mentioned, is a young entrepreneur who has proved that young Aboriginal woman can be strength unto themselves. She has founded several successful businesses across multiple industries and is a brilliant role model for young Aboriginal women. The winner of the inaugural Aboriginal Woman of the Year award was Dana Clarke. I have known Dana for many years. I was both thrilled and moved to see her awarded this great honour. She is a Worrimi woman and Chief Executive Officer of the Burrun Dalai Aboriginal Corporation. As the member for Oxley said, she spoke about the number of Aboriginal children in care. It is inconceivable and an enormous shame to this State and this country that 35 per cent of the children in care in this State are Aboriginal—the highest in the country.

I join with the House in congratulating Dana on receiving her award. Dana said that she is not often a sook or lost for words, but she was yesterday when she received her award. Dana runs the largest accredited rural Aboriginal out-of-home-care provider, and that is no easy task. Aboriginal women



have a history of acting as pillars of strength for their communities, and it was fantastic to see recognition of some contemporary examples of those pillars of strength. Yesterday we also saw the Women of the Year nominees from each electorate assembled at Parliament House to receive their certificates. Liz Messieh from my electorate was one of those women. It was a wonderful event and all of the women were worthy of far more praise.

I will now make a brief comment on Dana Clarke's work. For two years or so in the former Labor Government I was the Minister for Community Services. I know firsthand the tragedy of every child, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, deemed to be in such an unsafe situation that they have to be taken into care. Indeed, some of those children are deemed by the courts to be in such danger that they will never be reunited with their families and will live in out-of-home care until they reach 18 years of age. It is not only the physical damage and neglect, but also the psychological damage that those children suffer. This becomes intergenerational damage, which is a great tragedy.

Dana works with Aboriginal children affected by that intergenerational poverty and violence, and we cannot forget the effects of the stolen generations. Recently this Parliament looked in a very real and serious way into the stolen generations. The intergenerational effects of removal, the breaking down of culture and connection to country and, most significantly in this case, the breaking down of connection to family, which is so fundamental to how one identifies as an Aboriginal person, is probably the most disastrous. Once again I congratulate everyone who was nominated yesterday. I thank the Premier and the Ministers who attended the presentation. I also recognise that it was truly an event that crossed political lines, and that is the greatness of recognising women. I repeat, women hold families and communities together.

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [11.45 p.m.]: The New South Wales Government continues to acknowledge and celebrate the incredible contribution women make to the community of New South Wales. The 2016 NSW Women of the Year Awards ceremony hosted by the Minister for Women is just another example of this. At this event the inaugural NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award was presented to an outstanding member of the community. This award was created by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to acknowledge the calibre of the many capable Aboriginal women who worked tirelessly for the betterment of their community. The inaugural NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award recognised the outstanding work of Dana Clarke, who contributes to her community in the electorate of Kempsey and is well respected in the wider community for her success and leadership.

Each woman who was nominated for an award is an inspiration and should be very proud to be recognised by her peers as having made an exceptional contribution to improve the lives of others. In my electorate of Upper Hunter we have exceptional women leaders who are at the forefront of Aboriginal empowerment in New South Wales. Under OCHRE [Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment], the Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs in the Upper Hunter, we have initiatives being driven by strong women. One particularly impressive lady is Leanne Ellis, who is the daughter of well-respected elder Barry French, who is very well-known and respected in the community.

Leanne maintains strong and passionate views and practices to ensure that she reaches out to every child in her area of responsibility and provides guidance, support and practical encouragement leading to a fulfilling future for our youth—a future not only of hopes and dreams but also of achievable outcomes and self-perpetuating positivity. Often these attributes are overlooked. However, we must not forget that whilst hopes and dreams are important we also need to show our kids and other members of the community that they are achievable.

One of the initiatives is local decision-making, which sets out a pathway for communities to have more control in the design and delivery of government services, and to better support community priorities, including economic development. This is not an easy task. I am encouraged that this initiative is being led by Auntie Jean Hands, who is the chair of the Northern Regional Aboriginal Alliance and a strong advocate for the Aboriginal and wider community of the Upper Hunter. It is well recognised

throughout society that women often bear the brunt of the emotional and physical responsibilities of households and communities. The week of International Women's Day is an excellent opportunity to publicly acknowledge the inspirational women who have achieved so much. The Government is ensuring that Aboriginal women are being duly recognised.

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**Mr DAVID HARRIS** (Wyong) [11.49 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak to this motion. I thank the member for Cootamundra for putting this motion forward and I thank the member for Oxley for taking it over in her absence. It is pleasing that there are occasions in our Parliament when we all join together to congratulate outstanding people. Although we are divided on some issues we are all very supportive of issues such as this. It is a fantastic initiative this year to create the inaugural 2016 NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year award as part of the Women of the Year Awards. I acknowledge both the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister for Women for taking that initiative and including that category in the New South Wales awards.

I understand very well the strong role that Aboriginal women play in their communities. When I was at teachers college I shared my accommodation with a number of people, one of whom was Maxine South who is a young Aboriginal woman from the area of Brungle, which is down near Tumut. Maxine ended up marrying my best friend and we remain very good friends today. I learned a lot about the role of women in Aboriginal communities, particularly while getting to know her mother, who played a very prominent role in Maxine's family. We get together on occasions and meet up with all of Maxine's sisters, and the whole South family and have a really good time.

The award of Aboriginal Woman of the Year is a very important acknowledgement of the role that Aboriginal women play in the community and I join everyone in congratulating the finalists for the Aboriginal Woman of the Year: Kirstie Parker, Rhonda Radley, Nikita Ridgeway and the winner, Dana Clarke. The curriculum vitae of all of these women show their commitment and great contributions to their local communities. I think everyone was moved to hear of their contributions to the community. There are some fantastic Aboriginal women in my community of Wyong who have made an incredible impact.

I particularly enjoy my association with Aunty Bronwyn, who is part of the Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council and who, as part of a group that worked with the University of Newcastle, put together the Darkinjung Aboriginal language dictionary. I was told very late last night that I will be taking over the Opposition's role of shadow spokesperson for Aboriginal Affairs. It is a role that I take very seriously and, with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I will work very hard to ensure that we achieve good outcomes for Aboriginal communities across New South Wales.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [11.53 a.m.]: I support this motion on the inaugural 2016 NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year award. Like many members in the Chamber, I was present at the awards ceremony yesterday and was very impressed with the quality and standard of the contributions that women all over this State make to their communities. I take on board earlier comments that women in our communities are the bond—it has been called the rock. The contributions of many women go unsung and this is a small way of thanking them, on behalf of the Parliament and the people of New South Wales, for their continuing work.

I was honoured to be present at the inaugural 2016 NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award and to see the impressive calibre of the women nominated. I congratulate the member for Cootamundra on bringing forward this motion and I also congratulate the member for Oxley, who is a fine member who understands the contributions of Indigenous people in our areas. I come from the North Coast so I know how important their contributions have been and will continue to be, particularly in the Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council with which I have an extraordinarily strong rapport. My area has a very large population of Torres Strait Islanders, as well as people from Samoa and Vanuatu—people from all over—and I continually support them. But I am always amazed at how strong the aunties are within the wider Indigenous community, and how they are strong supporters of their culture and their youth.

Dana Clarke from Kempsey was the winner of the Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award. It upset me considerable to hear say at the ceremony that about 35 per cent of children from Indigenous backgrounds are in foster care. That is a terrible statistic and we should do all in our power to bring that figure down. Indigenous people are extraordinarily important to our community; they have made significant contributions and will continue to do so. Dana Clarke is very impressive. She has worked in the areas of Aboriginal health, domestic violence prevention, child protection, sexual assault and mental health for more than 25 years. I acknowledge the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs for being instrumental in creating this award. I also acknowledge the Minister for Women. She was in my electorate recently to launch a fairly significant program on domestic violence.

I note that in her contribution the member for Canterbury mentioned the cycle of domestic violence. It was acknowledged that 80 per cent of current domestic violence offenders have grown up in very violent environments. We should continually work together on this issue. I congratulate Dana on being awarded the first NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year. I am sure that next year we will see many great people nominated. Dana is recognised for her passion and advocacy of the needs of Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care. I know that the member for Oxley will continue to support her and work with her into the future for the betterment of the whole community.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY** (Oxley) [11.57 a.m.], on behalf of Ms Katrina Hodgkinson, in reply: I appreciate the comments and the contributions of the member for Tweed, the member for Upper Hunter, the member for Canterbury and the member for Wyong. They were all important sentiments given in a very bipartisan way, as they should be, because it is only with a bipartisan approach that we can do what Dana wants us to do and that is to get that statistic of Indigenous children in foster care down. On reflection, that statistic is very similar to the number of Indigenous people in our corrective services system. We must take an honest and collaborative approach.

I had a wonderful conversation yesterday not only with Dana but also with Rhonda Radley from Port Macquarie, a Birrbay woman, about some of the challenges we face. The exciting thing about the Indigenous community is the connection to family.

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I will share a story. During our Royal Far West bike ride on Monday morning participants rode their bikes from Stuarts Point to Bowraville Central School, a beautiful school with a great principal, a great heart. That school is a safe haven to so many students from the Bowraville community. I was so inspired by this beautiful girl, Kashana Jarrett, who was elegant, smart and sassy; she was just amazing. We were chatting away—she had her cousin beside her—when she looked at me and said, "Well, she's really my sister. I look after her." Then she said, "Where's your family". There were 109 cyclists present and I was taken aback. I said, "That's a really good question. The kids are at school and my husband is at home. I wish my family was here with me at this moment, now that you have said that." But that was her first instinct. It was about family.

We have a lot of work to do to protect communities and families from the trauma that is out-of-home care and the foster system. I note the comments of the member for Canterbury about the stolen generation but we must move on. I am a big supporter and I say that as a white person: move on quickly, but we need to look at and explore other ways that are genuine. I believe that an open adoption system is an appropriate focus to look after the babies so that they can have as full a life as possible. The Minister for Community Services has recently held some forums around open adoption and people in the system say that it is good. Even some of the birth mothers say, "I get to be involved in a family that is showing me another way to live life." We all must push for that as it is really good, but it cannot be done with the terrible secrecy of the past. It must be done openly and honestly and in the best interests of all the children and the families. I express my thanks to Dana for all the work she is doing; we will continue to work hard. I say to Kirstie Parker, Rhonda Bradley and Nikita Ridgeway that they did themselves proud. In addition, I congratulate the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Leslie Williams, on including this award within our Woman of the Year process. It is a fine addition. We should celebrate our great Aboriginal women in

New South Wales.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **WOMEN IN POLICING**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [12.02 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Liverpool Local Area Command on hosting the 100 Years of Women in Policing baton relay event at Bigge Park.
- (2) Thanks Liverpool Superintendent Peter Gillam and his unit for organising the local event to welcome the baton relay to Liverpool.
- (3) Acknowledges that women have come a long way in 100 years and now make up more than 35 per cent of the NSW Police Force.
- (4) Acknowledges the contributions made by women over the past century who have dedicated their careers to protecting and serving their communities as police officers.

I am proud to move this motion today that acknowledges the contribution that women have made to policing in New South Wales over the past century and their contributions to community and safety. I had the great pleasure to be part of the statewide celebration for female police officers when the NSW Police Force Women in Policing baton relay came to Liverpool. The relay event has visited stations throughout the State and came to Liverpool on Wednesday 19 August 2015, hosted by the Local Area Commander, Chief Superintendent Peter Gillam. It was a real pleasure to be joined at this event by Commissioner Scipione, Deputy Commissioner Burn and Assistant Commissioner Mennilli.

At this event it was wonderful to hear stories from female police officers about their journeys and their achievements throughout their time in the NSW Police Force. Celebrations to mark 100 years of Women in Policing began back in March 2015 at the Women in Policing expo at Darling Harbour. I am pleased that the baton relay had visited the majority of the State and that it was celebrated in the Liverpool and nearby Green Valley communities. I shall speak about the history of women in our Police Force but before I do, I draw attention to the NSW Police Force of today.

The numbers of women in the Police Force are at record highs, with the NSW Police Force some 16,795 strong. As at August 2015, 829 female probationary constables have been allocated to commands in the west and south-west of Sydney since 2011. In 2014 women comprised 26.9 per cent of sworn personnel. This is a great achievement when one considers that in 1982, only 34 years ago, females comprised only 3.3 per cent of the force. The role of women in the NSW Police Force has evolved from two probationary special constables who were the community's social and moral guardians to now comprising 35 per cent of the force. It is definitely worth noting that when these initial two positions were advertised, over 500 applications were received.

During the Second World War the total number of women in the NSW Police Force increased to 14 and in 1947 the women's duties also came to include traffic duties. It is hard for some of us here today to imagine that it was not until 1961 that women, no matter their profession, were given permission to continue working after they were married. In 1915 the first female police officers did not wear uniforms and their role was entirely administrative. It was not until half a century later that women in the Police Force were equal with their male counterparts and the title "special constable" was finally dropped.

Many policewomen in my area have gone above and beyond for their community. In 2012 I was pleased to see Detective Sergeant Christie Houldin honoured at the Police Officer of the Year awards in Liverpool for her work on Strike Force Woodville, which was an investigation into claims of child prostitution. The award was given for showing compassion to the victims and a determination to catch those responsible. In 2014 Detective Sergeant Houldin received the NSW Police Force south-west metropolitan region award for helping to solve a 1970s Liverpool sexual assault case. During the course of the investigation Detective Sergeant Houldin researched and tracked evidence and information to support the victim's statement and version of events. Gathering evidence and information to obtain a warrant of arrest took almost 18 months to complete.

Detective Sergeant Houldin said that the work was satisfying not only for her but also for the victim as no matter how long ago a crime was committed a victim never stops being a victim. In 1970 Liverpool local Senior Constable Gwen Martin was one of three female police officers to achieve a Diploma in Criminology from the University of Sydney. She then went on to be accepted as one of the first women in the detectives training course and was named the Most Outstanding Policewoman in 1973. I note also Liverpool Licensing Officer Sergeant Jillian Gibson who was quoted in the *Liverpool Champion* as saying:

We are given the same respect and rights as any of our male counterparts and it has become commonplace for women to be placed in positions of rank and responsibility.

Being a police woman allows you to take your experience as a mother, sister or a daughter and a member of the community and use it.

We are front-line police, we are behind the scenes and we are on the cutting edge of new technologies and influence.

They are fabulous words and we should encourage them in their endeavours. Women in the Police Force today are treated equally and are often moved into places of rank, for example, current Deputy Commissioner Catherine Burn. The NSW Police Force should be proud of its achievements in equality. If only all industries and professions were afforded this level of equality. As a female member of Parliament I am honoured to represent my electorate and to show women that there are no boundaries and that they can pursue any profession regardless of their gender. I am also pleased to acknowledge and celebrate 100 years of women who have dedicated their careers to protecting and serving their communities as police officers.

One hundred years ago it was a very different place in this Chamber, out in the community and of course in the Police Force. Women did not hold the same ranks as their male counterparts but they did push through those mindsets and worked their way up from strictly administrative positions to front-line police work and senior rankings. It is important for us to remember and acknowledge the women who have come before us and paved the way for our current and future generations of women. I commend all our policewomen across New South Wales and thank them for all they do for our community. In particular, I thank Chief Superintendent Peter Gillam for organising the event.

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**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [12.09 p.m.]: I speak today for the first time in my capacity as shadow Minister for Justice and Police. But this debate is not about me; it is about women. I join the member for Holsworthy in saying that the women in the NSW Police Force do a remarkable job. We have come a long way as a State; it is fantastic to see policewomen of rank. The motion moved by the member for Holsworthy mentions the baton relay held in Bigge Park as part of the event to mark 100 years of women in policing. The motion also thanks Superintendent Peter Gillam, whom I have met on many occasions in south-west Sydney, for organising the event. As a local, I know that many people attended the event, in August last year. It was a great day. How fitting it is that this motion is being debated in the week that we celebrate International Women's Day.

Paragraph (3) of the motion acknowledges that women have come a long way in 100 years and now comprise more than 35 per cent of the NSW Police Force. Let us work to ensure that that continues to rise. It is important that there be a balance of men and women in the Police Force. Paragraph (4) of the motion "acknowledges the contributions made by women over the past century who have dedicated their careers to protecting and serving their communities as police officers". I publicly thank the women police officers in Fairfield. I see that the member for Drummoyne is talking right now to the member for Tweed about the wonderful women who do a great job in their local area commands.

I note that they are nodding their heads in agreement. Well done, the member for Drummoyne. I will mention two special officers in the Fairfield local government area, Ece Hasan and Zarina Munguia, who work tirelessly to promote social harmony and cohesion. These officers work with members of our multicultural community to resolve issues and ensure that there is harmony within the community. I note that the member for Cabramatta is in the Chamber. We share the Cabramatta Local Area Command across our electorates. He too acknowledges the hard work of the women in the Cabramatta Local Area Command.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** Hear, hear!

**Mr GUY ZANGARI:** There has been much change in 100 years. We need to go further to encourage women, and men, to join the police. It is an honourable and noble career. I am sure members on this side of the House would support the Government in its efforts to ensure that the Police Force attracts the right people for the job, both men and women. I place on record my thanks to Fairfield Local Area Command. Many of the local area commands in south-western Sydney participated in the police open day last year, including Green Valley, Cabramatta, Liverpool and Fairfield.

The community engagement was fantastic. It was put together under the leadership of Superintendent Peter Leonard. The sections of the Police Force that took part in the day included PolAir, Marine Area Command, the Mounted Police Unit and the Dog Squad. My children were very interested in patting the horses and dogs. Some great photos were taken. One of the most enjoyable things about the day was the touch football competition between women police officers and members of the multicultural community. We all know who the winner was.

**Mr John Sidoti:** The member for Fairfield.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI:** No. The member for Fairfield was a spectator and did not participate. I never confuse physical ability with actual skill on the field. Someone should take a point of order on the unruly interjections by the member for Drummoyne and the member for Tweed. The event was about bringing people together. It demonstrated what women police officers can do to bring about social change and cohesion. The member for Cabramatta and I have been to the NSW Police Force Academy in Goulburn and witnessed a number of fine young women being attested into the Police Force.

We have visited the academy on a number of occasions. It is very cold but very enjoyable. I cherish seeing the joy expressed by not only the new constables but also their families. Every day our women police put their lives on the line. That is no laughing matter. They do not know whether they will come home at the end of the day. It is dangerous. I indicate to the member for Holsworthy that Labor supports the motion. It is fitting that we are debating it this week, just after International Women's Day. I commend the motion to the House.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I ask the member for Tweed and the member for Drummoyne to leave the Chamber if they wish to have a private discussion. Members should be able to contribute to the debate without hearing continual chatter in the background. It is annoying.

**Ms ELENi PETINOS** (Miranda) [12.16 p.m.]: I speak in support of the motion on 100 years of

Women in Policing, moved by the member for Holsworthy. This is an important motion and marks a milestone in the history of the NSW Police Force and our great State. In 2015 the NSW Police Force celebrated 100 years of Women in Policing and 50 years since women were first sworn in as constables and given the full powers of a police officer. I congratulate the participants in the successful baton relay held on 3 September 2015 to commemorate the occasion.

One hundred years ago women played a very different role in society and the workforce. In 1915, when the New South Wales Police Department advertised two positions for female police, it received more than 500 applications. Two applicants, Lillian Armfield and Maude Rhodes, were chosen and were sworn in as probationary special constables. Working conditions for the first female police officers were challenging. They met with resistance from both the men in the Police Force and the public. A hundred years later things have drastically changed. Female officers represent more than 35 per cent of the sworn police officers of today's NSW Police Force, a figure that dwarfs female representation in most other law enforcement and emergency services.

This is a remarkable achievement in such a short time and underscores the commitment of the New South Wales police to be egalitarian and serve the community. Women have been able to achieve distinguished careers in the Police Force. I understand that there are currently 14 female superintendents. Although the culture has changed there are still some units of the force that have little to no female representation, including the highway patrol's Motorcycle Response Unit and the Tactical Operations Unit. I hope that at some point that imbalance can be remedied.

I commend the Police Force for implementing the recommendations of the Ronalds report, the report of the inquiry into sexual harassment, intimidation and bullying of female officers. I applaud the proactive stance that the NSW Police Force has taken in promoting talented women as well as developing and refining their skills. In 2012 the NSW Police Force Leadership Directorate conducted its inaugural Women's Leadership Program. I hope that such programs continue.

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As a woman, I am proud of the hardworking female officers in the NSW Police Force. It would be remiss of me not to take this opportunity to commend the dedicated female officers from the Miranda and Sutherland local area commands. I take this opportunity to acknowledge some of the officers working in the Sutherland shire who have more than 20 years of service: Sergeant Robyn Anderson, Chief Superintendent Donna Adney, Leading Senior Constable Amanda Mason, Detective Sergeant Belinda Abdy, Executive Officer Andrea Ratcliffe, Detective Senior Constable Nicole Walton, Senior Constable Tracey Bell, Sergeant Jacquelin O'Riordan, Sergeant Lee Buttel, Sergeant Bridget Turk, Senior Constable Marion Flanagan and Sergeant Melissa Thompson.

In particular I would like to congratulate two notable senior police officers. Sergeant Robyn Anderson has worked as a police officer for 31 years, 28 of those at the Sutherland Local Area Command [LAC]. Since 1997 Sergeant Anderson has dedicated her service to training and development as education and training development officer. She was promoted to the rank of sergeant in 2004, and has been awarded the National Police Service Medal, National Medal and the third clasp to the Police Medal.

Sergeant Melissa Thompson from the Miranda Local Area Command recently celebrated her 20 years of service. She began her career in Wollongong and worked for several LACs before becoming a general duties sergeant at Miranda in 2008. She has worked as a domestic violence liaison officer, and spent nine years of her career as an education and training development officer. She attended the Victorian bushfires in 2009 and the earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2011, for which she received an Overseas Humanitarian Award—Clasp Christchurch. We should all be proud in New South Wales of what women have achieved in the Police Force and I congratulate everyone who has been involved in celebrating this milestone in our history.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [12.20 p.m.]: I support the worthy motion moved by the member for Holsworthy which honours the 100 year commitment of women in the NSW Police Force. As the

Assistant-Speaker would know, last year the relay started at the top of the State in Tweed Heads, and I had the honour of being part of the relay for its first section. Women have made an enormous contribution to the NSW Police Force. They have not just filled specialist roles like domestic violence liaison officers. I pay tribute to Bec Couch, one of the leading policewomen in the Tweed. We recently had the honour of having the Hon. Pru Goward visit, and the Government has funded an Indigenous domestic violence program. They do a fabulous job, including in outreach and liaison.

In my short time as the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services I often had the honour of going to State Crime Command. I also travelled to the south-west regions, the north-west regions and all over the State. I was continually impressed by the dedication and commitment of the women in the Police Force. The member for Holsworthy has already mentioned Deputy Commissioner Catherine Burn. Catherine does a magnificent job and was the officer in charge of the police operation around the Lindt cafe siege. She conducts herself with honour and is committed to protecting the people of New South Wales.

Recently I had the honour of sitting next to Ken Moroney, a former police commissioner. One of the things Mr Moroney told me, and he considered this to be an honour, was that he was the first commissioner to enable women in the police to carry handguns. So we have come a long way since women first joined the Police Force. The relay in my electorate was supported by people from all walks of life—from emergency services to members in the community. Women make such an important contribution; they are very wise. I thank the member for Holsworthy for moving this motion in a week in which we celebrated International Women's Day and NSW Women of the Year Awards in this place.

A lot more can be done in this area as women with specialist skills have much to contribute. At present women comprise 30 per cent of the NSW Police Force. I have had the privilege of visiting the NSW Police Force Academy at Goulburn on a number of occasions and have seen more and more young women choosing policing as a career. We must focus on their abilities and their strengths and support them in their endeavours. I know that every member in this House fully supports the officers in the NSW Police Force. Recently we gave our police greater powers to keep our streets safe.

I have been on patrol with local police when they have been called to domestic violence incidents at 3.00 a.m. or 4.00 a.m. and I have seen first-hand the calming effect of female police officers, particularly if children are present. It helps to take away some of their terror. I support the motion moved by the member for Holsworthy and thank her for doing so as it is a valuable recognition of the fine contribution women have made to the NSW Police Force.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [12.24 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Fairfield, Miranda and Tweed for their contributions to debate on and support for this motion. It shows that members from both sides of the Chamber care deeply about recognising women in the NSW Police Force—something that all members should acknowledge. The member for Fairfield mentioned his local area command. I know he spends much time with and puts a lot of effort into his local area command. It is an important body in his area that promotes social harmony and cohesion, which is important in a multicultural community. I am aware of the work that my local area command does in Liverpool and what a difference the police make in that community, so I am grateful he recognised the contribution of the Fairfield Local Area Command. I agree with him that having 35 per cent women in the Police Force is great but there is room to improve and to increase that figure to closer to 50 per cent, which definitely is our goal.

The member for Miranda mentioned her local area commands and some of the women who are involved. In particular she mentioned the work that they are doing to reduce bullying and intimidation and to increase leadership—something from which all industries and professions can learn. It is important to have these procedures in place. I wanted the member for Tweed to contribute to the debate today as his electorate is where the relay started. It was important for him to make a contribution to highlight the anniversary of 100 years of Women in Policing. I thank him for his contribution.



It is important for all of us to celebrate and acknowledge the women who have come before us and who have paved the way for current and future generations, in particular, policewomen. As has been said in this debate, big achievements have been made in the past 100 years of women in policing. As has also been mentioned, in 1982—which is not that long ago—only 3.3 per cent of the Police Force were women. That percentage has now increased and stands at more than 35 per cent today. There are record highs in the number of women working within the Police Force. Many women are not paid members of the NSW Police Force; they volunteer with the Police Force and should also be acknowledged for the time that they give and the efforts that they make. Whenever I attend Community Safety Precinct Committee meetings at Liverpool and at Sutherland police stations it is usually the volunteers who help with the running of the day.

**Mr Geoff Provest:** They are the VIPs.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** They are the VIPs—the Volunteers in Policing. That is a great acronym for them because they most certainly are VIPs. In fact Mrs Catherine "Kate" Murray was awarded the 2016 Holsworthy Woman of the Year Award, and I chose her for the work that she does volunteering at the Liverpool police station and helping to create a safer community. I also acknowledge her husband, Graeme, because he works as well. But as we have a Woman of the Year category I wanted to acknowledge Catherine in that.

I am excited that the \$22.9 million state-of-the-art Liverpool police station will be opening soon. It will provide much-needed upgraded support facilities for the Liverpool police and to date is one of the largest single developments of a police station undertaken by the NSW Police Force. I know it will assist both the men and women of the force and provide them with the support and facilities that they need to undertake their role. Once again I commend all our policewomen across New South Wales and our Police Force in general. I thank them for all the work that they do in the community.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

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#### **NEWCASTLE LOCAL AREA COMMAND**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [12.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the deployment of the latest round of 131 new officers to the NSW Police Force but that no new officers will be assigned to the Newcastle LAC.
- (2) Notes that the Government has not delivered on the new police station at Glendale which was promised prior to the 2011 election and will not consider opening a police station in the Wallsend electorate.
- (3) Urges the Minister for Police to assign some of these new officers to the Newcastle LAC and to better protect the residents of Wallsend by opening a police station in the electorate.

In August last year 131 new officers joined the NSW Police Force. Of those, six were assigned to the northern region of the State—one each to the Hunter local area commands of Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens and the Central Hunter—compared with 49 assigned in the Sydney metropolitan region, 27 in the north-west region and 21 in the south-west. The southern region of the State received 15 probationary constables and the State's west got 13. Not one new officer was assigned to the Newcastle Local Area Command. This failure speaks to a broader disinterest on the part of this Government when it comes to

policing in the western suburbs of Newcastle, a disinterest that extends all the way back to 2011.

People in the Wallsend electorate have long memories. They remember the then shadow police Minister, Mike Gallacher, saying on local radio that a Liberal Government would build a new police station at Glendale. They remember overwhelming community support for a new police station at Wallsend. Of course, Mr Gallacher became the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the wake of the 2011 election. But the Liberal Government reneged on its promise and failed to deliver a new police station at Glendale. Despite a debate in this Parliament following a petition that attracted more than 13,000 signatures, the cries of the community for a new Wallsend police station fell on deaf ears. Now, as 131 new officers have joined the force, not a single one has been assigned to the Newcastle Local Area Command.

The Wallsend electorate straddles three local area commands: Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Central Hunter. Until the 2015 redistribution, there was not a single police station inside the electorate. This meant that Wallsend residents, particularly those in the western regions, were stuck with long response times and a noted lack of police visibility. In May 2012 I hosted a community forum specifically to reach out to and hear the concerns of my elderly constituents. The overwhelming theme of that meeting was concern about law and order—particularly, the lack of police presence in Wallsend and in Newcastle more broadly. Since then, a number of people have come to my office and complained that response times in particular have been lacklustre. It is a common theme at street stalls across the electorate, particularly in Beresfield and Tarro—the local station at Beresfield is open just one day a week and is, locals have told me, consistently understaffed for their needs.

Last year I attended a meeting at the 2322 Men's Shed, which covers Beresfield, Tarro and nearby Woodberry, which was ostensibly about men's shed issues but it became overwhelmingly about police presence—or lack thereof—in the area. It is a theme repeated throughout many of my interactions with constituents: police, police, police. A young constituent in Jesmond told us that it took two days for a forensics officer to arrive to examine his new car after a costly break-in smashed two windows and badly damaged the back seat. Another gentleman, who was viciously assaulted in the car park at Jesmond Shopping Centre, waited for three hours for an officer to come and take his statement—and Jesmond is only seven minutes down a major road from the Waratah police station. Imagine how much longer he might have waited were he in Maryland or Fletcher? It is 15 minutes from the Waratah police station to Maryland, and 18 minutes to Fletcher.

In situations where seconds count, minutes are an eternity. Even those people who are relatively close might be left waiting, as the Newcastle Local Area Command extends as far as Stockton. I have spoken many times in this Chamber about the need for increased police presence in the Wallsend electorate, and this requires better resources for the Newcastle Local Area Command. Our police officers do the best they can with the limited staff and resources they have been allocated by this Government, but they need more. In the next round of allocations I urge the Minister for Justice and Police to afford the Newcastle Local Area Command its due. This Government must live up to its promise, and heed the calls of the people of Wallsend, to open another police station in the Wallsend electorate. It is about time.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.34 p.m.]: The Government opposes the motion. My ears are still ringing with the comment by the member for Wallsend that the people of Wallsend have a long memory—which I am sure they have. I refer members to *Hansard* and an extract that states:

I remind the House and the good folk of Wallsend that in addition to Mayfield and Swansea police stations, Wallsend police station was closed by the former Labor Government—

I am sure the Opposition will never forget that.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** They copped that?

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** Definitely. Police numbers are at record highs under this Government, with authorised strength currently at 16,679—more than it has ever been. The commissioner appropriately determines the allocation of officers based on operational requirements. The last thing the police need is politics or politicians determining where officers go. We should leave it to the experts. The Liberal-Nationals Government has added 873 positions to the NSW Police Force since December 2011, 58 of those in the six local area commands in the Hunter. The site of any police station is determined by the NSW Police Force after careful consideration of operation requirements. This Government seeks advice from the people in the know, the people on the front line and from those who should be making the decisions. Our police know best what they need to do their job to protect our communities.

For this reason the Government has spent millions to fund a major redevelopment of Belmont police station and to upgrade Morisset and Toronto police stations in the Hunter's Lake Macquarie Local Area Command. The new Belmont police station has been fully operational since 9 November 2015 and is a well-resourced station that provides first-class general duties policing, a custody suite and specialist policing units. The new Morisset police station will also go live in 2016—a fantastic resource that will ensure policing in the Hunter can serve the community for generations to come. Toronto's police station is also underway and we look forward to its going live next year.

Wallsend will continue to be well served by officers from the Newcastle City and Lake Macquarie local area commands. While these officers may not be rostering on and off from a police station within the electoral boundary, that does not mean they are not out on patrol, solving crimes and keeping the community safe. The Government is committed to high-visibility policing and will boost the authorised strength of the NSW Police Force to 16,795 over this term of government. The NSW Police Force uses intelligence-driven rostering and strategies to target known offenders and crime hot-spots by deploying police to those places and at those times when crimes may be expected to occur.

Local area command senior management teams aim to ensure that there is an adequate number of police officers rostered on duty to match expected demand. It is the best use of resources. The community of Wallsend may be assured that the current tasking and deployment model operating in the region provides a high-quality service and the much-needed flexibility to deploy to areas of the greatest need, based on crime trends and intelligence. The Government is committed to that ensuring our hardworking men and women in blue have what they need to get on with their job. This Government is confident that policing in the Hunter is well resourced for now and into the future.

I admire the member for Wallsend as a good local member. I want to allay her concerns and assure her that this Government will do its absolute best.

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I am happy to acknowledge that the member for Wallsend is not a person to play politics with an issue. Like many members in this place, she only wants the best for her local area. However, just because a local command is not in front of view does not mean that the strategies behind the scenes are not delivering results. The average Joe in an electorate does understand how behind-the-scenes policing strategies operate. As local members of course we should push to ensure that those strategies are adequate, and I only want the same in my electorate. The high-visibility approach is great but rest assured that police stations are a lot like fire stations—when there is a fire a truck will not only come from the station down the road; trucks will come from all areas to meet the demand. It is important to take that into account. As I said, this issue is not political but the best use of our resources is to deploy them in areas where they are needed most. For that reason we oppose the motion.

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP** (Newcastle) [12.40 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend, which calls on the House to note the deployment of the latest round of 131 new officers to the NSW Police Force but also note that no new officers will be assigned to the Newcastle Local Area Command [LAC]. It asks the House to note that the Government has not delivered on the new police station at Glendale that was promised prior to the 2011 election and will not consider opening a police

station in the Wallsend electorate. Finally, it calls on this House to urge the Minister for Justice and Police to assign some of the new officers to the Newcastle LAC and to better protect the residents of Wallsend by opening a police station in the electorate. Even though Newcastle is the second largest city in the State and the seventh largest city in the country, not one officer from the new deployment of 131 officers went to Newcastle. I find that quite astounding, but it seems to fit the pattern of this Government. The Government sells a port for \$1.75 billion and gives us a pittance. It will sell the poles and wires and give us a pittance. It is now selling off our public transport system in Newcastle.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** What?

**Mr TIM CRAKANTHROP:** Yes. It is unbelievable. What sort of quality will the public transport sell-off produce, I ask? In August this year 131 new officers joined the police force. Of these, only six were assigned to the northern region of the State. None were assigned to Newcastle—the second largest city in the State—compared with 49 officers assigned to the Sydney metropolitan region, 27 to the north-west region and 21 to the south-west. The southern region of the State received 15 probationary constables and the State's west got 13. As I have said, Newcastle is the seventh biggest city in Australia and the second largest in New South Wales. We need more officers. Why are we being left to fend for ourselves? Not one new officer was assigned to the Newcastle command.

When the Newcastle LAC was formed stations were closed at Carrington, Adamstown, Lambton, Wallsend, Mayfield and Hamilton. Following those closures we received many representations from Stockton constituents about the need for more police in the Stockton area. We even received a letter from Ethan Muddle, a young child who wrote to me regarding his concern about the lack of police in the Stockton area. Even a child noted that removing police from the area causes a safety problem, but this Government does not seem to be able to see it. If the police in the Newcastle LAC cannot properly serve Stockton residents how can they stretch their resources to assist the Wallsend electorate? The Wallsend electorate straddles two local area commands: Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. The closest LAC is Newcastle. If we cannot reinstate the Wallsend command why not get moving on the promised Glendale police station? Our police officers do the best they can with the limited staff and resources this Government has allocated to them, but they need more. In the next round of allocations I urge the Minister for Justice and Police to afford the Newcastle LAC its due. I also ask that he honour the promise made prior to the 2011 election and deliver the new police station at Glendale.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [12.44 p.m.]: I oppose the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. Like my colleague for member for Drummoyne, I have a lot of sympathy with and respect for the member for Wallsend. She does a very good job and is an excellent local member. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the member for Newcastle, who comes into this place and calls on the Minister for Justice and Police to assign police officers when that is clearly an operational matter. Those of us who have been in the job even for less time than him understand that it is the responsibility of local area command [LAC] police to talk to their senior officers and organise additional staff if they need them.

I am proud to say that as a local member I speak regularly with my LAC. I am sure the member for Wallsend does too. Our police do an outstanding job. As members of this place, it is our responsibility to ensure that our LACs are supported in their entirety. Only a few days ago in this place I was howled down by members opposite when I spoke in support of my LAC. That was very disappointing. Obviously the member for Wallsend did not interject. The reality is that this Government has strengthened police numbers in New South Wales. We now have 16,679 officers on the beat. It needs to be explained to the member for Newcastle—who has left the Chamber—that it is the job of the commissioner, not the Minister for Justice and Police, to determine the appropriate allocation of officers based on operational requirements. Since coming to power in 2011, the Liberal-Nationals Government has added almost 900 positions to the NSW Police Force. Fifty-eight of those officers were allocated to the local area command in the Hunter.

**Mr Mark Coure:** It's 180 every year.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** That is a lot of police officers. Most local area command officers will say that police stations do not arrest criminals; that is done by police on the beat. Having police stuck in buildings does not increase officers' ability to capture criminals. Every LAC does an outstanding job. I will use Brisbane Water LAC as an example. It does not need extra police stations because it undertakes proactive policing. There has been a dramatic change in the way that on-the-ground policing is done in New South Wales. The NSW Police Force is incredible proactive. Police speak with the public regularly through social media and use other devices to catch criminals.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Where has the member for Newcastle gone?

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** He has left. It is a disgrace. As I said, the reality is that police stations do not catch criminals.

**Mrs Melinda Pavey:** That's a good line.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** That came from my local area commander.

**Mrs Melinda Pavey:** That is so good.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** It is. He is so proud of the fact that his police spend all their time on the beat and not tucked away in a police station. While it may make the average person feel comfortable to have a police station in their area, it does not stop crime. Crime is stopped through the proactive policing undertaken by the men and women who put their lives on the line every day. While I commend the member for Wallsend for bringing this matter to the House, we cannot support the motion. I oppose the motion. We have an increased police presence in New South Wales and this Government is 100 per cent behind increasing those numbers further. We are also committed to ensuring that our hardworking men and women in blue are able to get on with their job. The Government is confident that policing in the Hunter is well resourced now, and will be into the future.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [12.48 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. The member for Wallsend works extremely hard for her electorate and I thank members opposite for acknowledging that.

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The member for Wallsend made the point that there are not enough resources in her area. The member for Drummoyne, who is no longer in the Chamber, said there cannot be a fire truck on every corner. I accept that. But Wallsend is a large growth area and it requires more resources. Indeed, I commend the member for Wallsend for her dedicated advocacy over many years on behalf of her constituents. The member for Drummoyne also mentioned the new state-of-the-art police station at Belmont. I agree with him that this will be an excellent facility, but Belmont is an awful long way from Wallsend. This is another example of the problem we are seeing with the closure of the Toronto Roads and Traffic Authority office. When services are placed in areas around Lake Macquarie the geography and population growth are not being taken into consideration, and in time this will present a serious problem. Indeed, the member for Wallsend has raised this issue because it is important that we have facilities that service not only the broader community but also the western suburbs of Newcastle.

The member for Wallsend was right to bring this motion before the House. Members on both sides of the House agree that the police in New South Wales do a fantastic job. There is no question about that. I have met with most of the police at Belmont and Newcastle police stations. They are all great people and a wonderful help to the member for Wallsend and to me—for which we applaud them. But the Government needs to have a good, hard look at the location of police stations and understand that the population in areas such as Wallsend is growing at a considerable rate. We also need to make sure that new officers are allocated to those areas. I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [12.52 p.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Drummoyne, Newcastle, Terrigal and Swansea for their considered and courteous debate. It is nice that we can disagree in a polite way and yet still achieve some agreement. We all agree that it is not a question of the ability or the hard work of our men and women in blue. Indeed, we all agree that they work exceedingly hard. I would not like to be a police officer; it is a very difficult and challenging job. I often wonder how they remain positive given the challenges they face on a daily basis. It is probably the toughest job one could have. I thank the member for Drummoyne for his considered debate. Yes, I do have a long memory—as do the people of Wallsend. I also acknowledge that well before my time as a member of Parliament the then Labor Government made a very bad decision when it closed the Wallsend police station. It was a long time ago and it was a bad decision. If I had been the member for Wallsend at that time I would have argued with my own government about the closure. It was the wrong move, and we have not really recovered from it.

I agree that the best decisions are based not necessarily on what the pundits say but on what the community says. My debate today has been based on what the community has told me about response times. Every time I attend a street stall or talk at men's sheds people raise the issue of response times and the invisibility of the police. That is not a criticism of the police; rather, it is a concern that we need more police on the beat. There is nothing like seeing a police officer wandering around to make the good people feel safe and the crooks feel bad. I reinforce what the member for Swansea said about Belmont police station. It is great that Belmont, Morrissett and Toronto police stations are being built or rebuilt, but the Lake Macquarie region is a long way from the Wallsend electorate—around 40 minutes on a good day. Geographically those officers cannot be responsive to my area. In fact, they are so busy serving all the wonderful conduits and little bits of land around the lake they do not have the time to come anywhere near Wallsend. It is great that the new stations are being built but it is not relevant to the argument about needing a police station at Wallsend.

I repeat that it is all about what the community wants, and the community has asked me to give this advice to the Government: People want better response times and a more visible police presence in the area to feel safe. The member for Newcastle is also feeling the pinch. His constituents missed out, as did mine, on new police officers being assigned to the area. I agree with the member for Terrigal that we all support a proactive and twenty-first century police force. But I also believe not having a police station in your electorate, or anywhere near your electorate, does not help the community feel safe. People want to see more police and more police visibility. We need more resources, more funding and we need more staff, particularly in the Wallsend area. As I said, we were hit hard by the closure of the Wallsend police station many years ago, which has never been reopened. I urge members to support the motion and thank them for being so considerate during this debate.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 37**

Ms Aitchison

Mr Atalla

Mr Barr

Ms Burney

Ms Car

Ms Catley

Mr Chanthivong

Mr Crakanthorp

Mr Daley

Mr Dib

Mr Harris

Ms Harrison

Ms Hay

Ms Haylen

Mr Hoenig

Ms Hornery

Mr Kamper

Ms Leong

Mr Lynch

Dr McDermott

Mr Minns

Mr Parker

Mr Piper

Mr Robertson

Ms K. Smith

Ms T.F. Smith

Ms Washington

Ms Watson

Mr Zangari

Ms Doyle  
Ms Finn  
Mr Greenwich

Ms McKay  
Mr Mehan  
Ms Mihailuk

*Tellers,*  
Mr Lalich  
Mr Warren

**Noes, 47**

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

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

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

**Pairs**

Mr Foley  
Mr Park

Mr Baird  
Mr Grant

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

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

**LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 14/56**

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

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [1.03 p.m.]: I thank the House for the opportunity to comment on the Legislation Review Committee's digest No. 14 for this Parliament. The committee commented on two of the three bills introduced into Parliament in the sitting week commencing 23 February 2016. The committee also commented on three regulations. The committee noted that the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW) Amendment (Review) Bill 2016 will commence by proclamation. While the committee generally prefers legislation to commence on a fixed date or on assent, the committee acknowledged that some flexibility may be required with this bill due to associated administrative changes.

The committee also commented on two issues in the Transport Administration Amendment (Authority to Close Railway Lines) Bill 2016, which amends the Transport Administration Act 1988. The bill retrospectively authorises works to close a railway line from Lilyfield to Rozelle. The committee said this may impact on the rights of others; for example, if an individual has commenced litigation in relation to the railway line. However, the committee made no further comments, on the basis that the railway line has not been used in more than 20 years and the amendments address uncertainty in the legislation.

The bill also empowers the Minister to authorise the closure of a railway line in the greater metropolitan region if the Minister is satisfied that the closure is required for State significant infrastructure. At present, an Act of Parliament is required to close a railway line. The committee observed that the bill delegates the decision-making power of the New South Wales Parliament to a Minister. However, the committee acknowledged that the Minister could only exercise this power in certain circumstances. The committee also noted the practicalities and efficiencies of delegating limited power to a Minister. For those reasons, the committee made no further comments.

The committee highlighted the Liquor Amendment (Fees and Other Matters) Regulation 2016. This regulation extended the temporary freeze on liquor licences and other authorisations within the Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct, including Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, from 5 February 2016 to 19 February 2017. Affected establishments face restrictions in obtaining new liquor licences or extended trading authorisations, varying or revoking licence conditions or changing the boundaries of their premises. The committee said these restrictions could have an adverse impact on the business community. However, the committee made no further comments as the restrictions were initially introduced to deal with alcohol-related violence, and the freeze is being extended pending completion of a statutory review of the relevant legislation.

The committee drew attention to the Mining Legislation Amendment (Harmonisation) Regulation 2016, which updated the penalty notice offences in the Mining Regulation 2010. Some penalties have increased significantly. For example, the penalty for obstructing the holder of an authorisation has increased from \$250 to \$2,500. While large increases in penalties can sometimes result in excessive punishment, in this case the increases are associated with broader changes to the mining legislation framework. The committee therefore made no further comments.

Similarly, the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Bicycle Riders) Regulation 2016 also increased some of the penalty notice offences for bicycle riders in the Road Transport (General) Regulation 2013. For example, the penalties for not wearing a helmet and holding onto a moving vehicle increased from \$71 to \$319. However, the committee made no further comments as the changes are intended to improve road safety and have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders. That concludes my remarks on this digest. I thank the committee staff and members for their input. I commend Legislation Review Digest No. 14/56 to the House.

**Mr DAVID MEHAN** (The Entrance) [1.08 a.m.]: I wish to comment on the report of the Legislation Review Committee meeting held on 8 March 2016. I support the comments made by the committee chair and I thank the committee staff for professionalism of the highest order in the support they give from week to week. In relation to the Road Transport Legislation Amendment (Bicycle Riders) Regulation 2016, the committee noted that the penalty increases were quite significant. The Labor Opposition moved to refer the penalty notices back to the Minister for comment given their excessive amounts. Penalties are moving from an average of \$71 to a minimum of \$319 up to a maximum of \$425. The committee noted the penalties are excessive. When we come across issues such as this it is within the committee's power to ask for feedback from the Minister. But time and time again this committee tends to let things through due to the Government's majority representation on the committee. It sometimes begs the question whether the committee is wasting its time.

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Again I note that the committee should be doing some work. We get our meetings done in less than five minutes. The committee should be doing some work; it is an important committee. The member



for Upper Hunter is an excellent chair and we receive excellent support, but there is more the committee could do to improve the quality of the legislation and regulations that go through this House and to hold the Government to account.

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

**Report noted.**

#### **COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**

##### **Report: Review of the 2013-2014 Annual Reports of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption**

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

**Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE** (Epping) [1.10 p.m.]: Today I speak on the first report of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] in the Fifty-sixth Parliament, which was tabled on 8 March 2016. The committee's role includes examining each annual report and other reports of the ICAC and the Inspector of the ICAC. This report is the result of the committee's review of the 2013-2014 annual reports of the ICAC and the Inspector of the ICAC, and is the first annual report review to be conducted by a committee in this Parliament. The main theme that arose from the committee's review was the adequacy of oversight of the ICAC. The committee has made two recommendations in this regard. The community rightly demands that corruption, wherever it exists, be stamped out. To that end, the ICAC was established to investigate, expose and prevent corruption in the New South Wales public sector, and to educate the community about corruption and its effects. The ICAC has been invested with formidable powers to carry out its work. Hence, there must be comprehensive oversight of the ICAC to ensure such powers are never abused.

The Inspector of the ICAC plays a vitally important role in providing oversight of the ICAC. In carrying out this role, the inspector may act on complaints received from the public, or initiate audits or investigations of his own. The current Inspector of the ICAC, the Hon. David Levine, AO, RFD, QC, began his term in February 2014. However, the Office of the Inspector was vacant for a period of four months prior to Mr Levine's appointment. The inspector received an unprecedented volume of complaints last year and, although the inspector requested an assistant inspector to assist him in his work, the appointment of the new Assistant Inspector, Mr John Nicholson, SC, was only finalised in February this year.

The committee is concerned to ensure that the work of the ICAC is scrutinised comprehensively at all times. The committee has therefore recommended that procedures for recruitment of inspectors and assistant inspectors be improved to avoid any future periods of vacancy in these positions. I turn now to the inspector's ability to access the ICAC's materials. The Independent Commission Against Corruption Act enables the inspector to access any of the ICAC's materials and records, and the inspector is not subject to the ICAC in any way. However, the Commonwealth Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act prevents the inspector from accessing telecommunications interception material held by the ICAC in the course of conducting audits.

The committee considers that unimpeded access to interception material is of vital importance if the inspector is to properly assess the legality and propriety of the ICAC's procedures. The committee has therefore recommended that the Attorney General write to her Commonwealth counterpart seeking an amendment to the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act to enable inspectors of law enforcement and integrity agencies to access intercept material for audit purposes.

I turn now to the committee's review of the ICAC's work in the 2013-2014 reporting period. As part of its review, the committee held a public hearing with senior ICAC staff on 7 August 2015. The

committee sought detailed information from the ICAC on its assessment and investigation procedures seeking, by way of example, information about the ICAC's decision-making procedures in relation to its investigation of Crown Prosecutor Margaret Cunneen, SC, in Operation Hale. However, the commissioner, while providing an overview of the ICAC's processes and procedures, deflected a number of the committee's questions by relying on section 64 (2) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. Section 64 (2) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act prevents the committee from investigating particular conduct or reconsidering the ICAC's decisions, findings or recommendations.

The committee is charged under section 64 (1) (e) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act to examine the functions, structures and procedures of the ICAC. To properly conduct this role, the committee must be provided with sufficient information to understand the ICAC's functions, structures and procedures. This will allow the committee to ensure that the ICAC is operating within the limits of its legislation. The committee acknowledges the restraints imposed by section 64 (2) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. However, the committee does not accept a narrow interpretation of that section. Advice received from the Crown Solicitor confirms that questions relating to particular conduct or investigations are a legitimate exercise of the committee's powers where the questions are for the purpose of reviewing the way in which the ICAC conducts its functions, and its investigation and decision-making procedures.

The committee strongly affirms the important role of the ICAC in stamping out corruption in this State. However, the ICAC must be accountable for the formidable powers it has been given. The inspector and the committee together provide an accountability framework to monitor and review the ICAC, and the committee will continue to use its oversight powers robustly to scrutinise the ICAC's use of its powers. The committee is currently reviewing the report of the Inspector of the ICAC into Operation Hale and will have further comments on the oversight arrangements for the ICAC when that review is completed. In closing, I thank my fellow committee members for their contributions at a time when there is considerable public attention on the work of the committee. I thank also the committee staff for their professionalism and support. I commend the report to the House.

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

**Report noted.**

*[Temporary Speaker (Mr Adam Marshall) left the chair at 1.17 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

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## **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Mayor of Temora, Councillor Rick Firman, and his general manager, Mr Gary Lavelle, guests of the member for Cootamundra. Welcome to Parliament this afternoon. I also welcome 30 students and their teachers from Presbyterian Ladies College, Armidale, guests of the member for Northern Tablelands.

I wish a happy birthday to an integral member of my team in the Speaker's Office, Joe Andrade. I wish a very happy birthday also to the member for Cootamundra. Finally, I wish a very happy birthday to the member for Wollongong. How old is she? I know, because 1951 was a very good year. Happy birthday, Noreen.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** I am sure the member for Shellharbour has wished her a happy birthday.

**The SPEAKER:** I will not be wishing the member for Kiama a happy birthday because he does not deserve it.

## **TRIBUTE TO JON ENGLISH**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge the very sad passing of Australian entertainment legend Jon English. He is fondly remembered by people of my vintage, the class of 1951, and everyone after that. I thank the member for Oxley for bringing it to my attention. Jon English was born in Hampstead, London, in 1949. He moved to Australia when he was 12. I am given to believe that 10 years ago he moved to the mid North Coast, living in Bellingen and later Boambee. I understand that the member for Tweed, when working in the club industry, regularly booked his act. Many of us are familiar with his talent. Jon English was a star of stage and screen. His legacy of songwriting and music will be enjoyed for generations. Vale, Jon English.

#### **ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE**

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Governor:

DAVID

ent House  
Governor  
9 March 2016

HURLEY  
Governm

Sydney,

General David Hurley, AC, DSC (Ret'd), Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that he has reassumed the administration of the Government of the State.

#### **QUESTION TIME**

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

#### **LIDCOMBE LAND REZONING**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Premier. What action will he take to prevent his candidate for Auburn, former Liberal mayor Ronney Oueik, from receiving a \$30 million windfall gain from the rezoning of land in Lidcombe and to prevent such an incident from occurring again?

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**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am not sure that question conforms with the standing orders but I will allow it. There will be no interjections. Speakers will be heard in silence. Interjectors will find themselves removed from the Chamber.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** As the Leader of the Opposition knows, if he has an allegation to make then he should make it, for heaven's sake. He comes in here and continues to make slurs. We always wait for the smear of the day. We come in and wonder what is going to be the smear of the day. That is it. If there is an allegation, make it. If the Leader of the Opposition has something to say then he should send it to the appropriate authority. He should not use question time as a place for stunts and smears that have no substance. The Leader of the Opposition has come in here and—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members who raise spurious points of order and use the opportunity—as I warned against yesterday—to argue their point at the microphone will be instantly placed on three calls to order. Does the member for Maroubra have a point of order?

**Mr Michael Daley:** Yes, I do. My point of order goes to Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Then I rule the Premier is being relevant. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

**Mr Michael Daley:** What action will the Premier take? That was the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time. I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time. When I say that members should resume their seats I mean it.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I have been pretty clear: if the Leader of the Opposition has an allegation then he should make it, and make it to the appropriate authority. If he wants to come in and make smears, he should do so. Those opposite know there is an independent planning process. They can continue to use this place to make smears if they want to continue to do so. But it is no wonder that there is such unrest on the opposition side on the back of the tactics of this leader. I would have thought that they would expect far more. We do not have to look further, to see why the Leader is under such pressure, than the magnificent reshuffle we just saw. It has been a spectacular—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Bankstown has a point of order. I am warning her. She was the worst offender yesterday of using the opportunity of taking a point of order to just yell into the microphone across the Chamber. I am warning the member for Bankstown—that is all. Does the member for Bankstown have a point of order?

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** Yes, my point of order goes to relevance under Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I thank the member for Bankstown. I will rule on the point of order. The member for Bankstown will resume her seat.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** The Premier has been asked a very simple question about a \$30 million windfall for the former mayor of Auburn.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Bankstown to order for the first time. I will decide on relevance. I call the member for Bankstown to order for the second time. I ask the Premier to return to the question.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The member for Bankstown has gone from No. 9 to No. 10 on the Opposition frontbench. So there is a little demotion that has happened there. I am trying to understand what the Leader of the Opposition has against his deputy leader, for heaven's sake. For 24 hours there he was out in new suits. He came marching in—

**Mr Michael Daley:** What does the Premier have against the people of New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time. There is no point of order. The member for Maroubra does not have a point of order.

**Mr Michael Daley:** He is letting Ronney Oueik undertake a \$30 million rezoning. Why doesn't the Premier sort him out?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Maroubra to order for the third time. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I have never seen, in the history of reshuffles, a reshuffle where not only the deputy leader but also the Leader of the Opposition both got demoted. It is a world first. I have never ever seen that before.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** Point of order: it goes to Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have not called the member for Bankstown. I call the member for

Bankstown to order for the third time. I call the member for Bankstown.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** Point of order: it goes to Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Bankstown will resume her seat. The point of order is upheld.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** We have asked the Premier a very specific question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I upheld the point of order. The Premier has the call. I ask him to remain relevant to the question.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I will, and I will finish it here. I think what this Parliament is seeing very clearly is that there is a lack of leadership from the Leader of the Opposition. He is using this Chamber to bring in smears that have no substance and that go nowhere. He is doing it regularly. If he wants to do that, he can. But we on this side of the House are going to get on with looking after the people of New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Bankstown should not argue with me. It is about the very worst thing that she can do, especially after yesterday's performance. I will not allow it to continue today. Members will find themselves removed from the Chamber. I do not care if I have to remove one, two, three, five or 10 of them. Whoever wants to argue with me will find themselves removed from the Chamber, including those on the Government benches. If members want to argue with me, they will be removed from the Chamber. Members will be heard in silence. A number of members speaking in the Chamber yesterday were treated with utter contempt and disrespect. I will not allow that to continue.

## **NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** My question is to the Premier. How is the Government delivering for all of New South Wales? And are there any alternative approaches?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government benches, the Premier does not need any assistance. The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I thank the member for Terrigal for his question. He is doing an outstanding job up there in Terrigal. He is a great representative on the Central Coast, doing everything for the Central Coast, as it turns out. We are very proud to be looking after regional New South Wales. We are very happy to look after the regions across this great State. There is no greater place to look at to see what we are doing than the Central Coast. It is a great place and a great part of this State and we are doing a huge amount for it. Obviously we have seen more jobs—indeed there were 30,000 jobs added last year, which is a fantastic development in terms of the economy. We have also promised significant redevelopments at Gosford and Wyong hospitals of \$589 million.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** There is \$400 million of roads funding. There are new Service NSW centres opening across the coast. There are new ambulance stations at Wyong and Toukley. We continue to look after the people of the Central Coast. We are doing similarly in the Hunter. We are making a fantastic investment across the Hunter, and over 19,000 jobs have been added in the greater Hunter area including Newcastle. There is the revitalisation of the city of Newcastle, which I know "Crackers" is against but we are for. We have invested over \$1.5 billion in Hunter road projects and \$448 million for Hunter health services. The Hon. Gillian Skinner is on this. She is working up there. Everywhere we turn there is action on hospitals. We are seeing this everywhere. There is the redevelopment at John Hunter hospital.

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There is the new Maitland hospital. There is much excitement. Even down in the Illawarra there is great excitement because the member for Kiama and the Speaker are looking after the Illawarra by doing a great job down there. The Albion Park Rail bypass, the Shellharbour Hospital, the Foxground to Berry bypass—they are all underway and happening.

We have taken the approach that the best way to look after the people of New South Wales is to put the best team together. I have seen that the Opposition has tried to make a similar response today and tried to get the best possible team together. I have never seen a Leader and a Deputy Leader demoted in their own reshuffle. They can make the decisions around it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time. This is my last warning to the member for Canterbury.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Point of order: Standing Order 129. What is the relevance? There is no relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! You did not listen to the question.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** It was about regional New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! "Any other alternative approaches" was the rider on the question. There is no point of order.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Should he be talking about policy?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maitland will resume her seat. She is just being funny at the moment and it is not very funny. The member for Maitland has to listen to the question before she can question a ruling on relevance, and she did not.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** It is bad enough that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had 24 hours with his new suit, and he was very happy and everything was going good. He left this Chamber striding around very happily but then—

**Ms Kate Washington:** Point of order: Standing order 129. I fail to see the relevance of talking about a deputy leader's choice of suit.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** If it was not bad enough to take Treasury off him, where did it go to?

**Mr Luke Foley:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Luke Foley:** Mike, I will tell you who to—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I will wait until the House comes to order. The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure will come to order. The disrespect for each other is extraordinary.

**Mr Luke Foley:** My point of order is relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! He is being relevant to the question he was asked.

**Mr Luke Foley:** I will tell you who to demote: your corrupt mate in Auburn, Ronney Oueik. Why don't you demote him?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time. It was a totally vexatious point of order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Your troops love it. He has decided to give Treasury to the member for Keira. We all like the member for Keira—no, we do; maybe it's 50:50.

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order:

**The SPEAKER:** Order! If it is a point of order on relevance, the Premier remains relevant to the question he was asked. Does the member for Wyong have a different point of order?

**Mr David Harris:** No, it was the same one. He was saying good things about Wyong and all that he was building and I want to hear more about that.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Wyong to order for the first time. It was another opportunity to use the microphone for no valid point of order. I cannot hear the member for Terrigal for the rabble on my left. People who like to object when others interject on them but are quite prepared to interject the entire time in question time are always hypocritical.

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

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Point of order:

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Do you sense the kind of mood I am in this afternoon?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** I certainly do.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! What is your point of order?

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Madam Speaker, I am as dismayed as you are about the state of the House,

**The SPEAKER:** Order! You are usually part of it.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Under Standing Order 128 (3)(a) the question asked for an opinion and we have ended up with a broad-ranging response which clearly has nothing to do with the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. Member for Cessnock, that was not a very good try.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I read through all of Keira's qualifications to be shadow Treasurer—

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Point of order. The convention in the House is that the Premier should refer to members by their correct title and he has failed to do that with the member for Keira.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! What did the Premier say? I heard him say the member for Keira. If it is not the case the Premier should refer to members by their correct title.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I could not find any qualifications, but over the summer I heard a story about a high-speed rail proposal and the new shadow Treasurer for the Opposition was on television backing it in. He did not go and talk to the member for Maroubra because in the detail of that proposal was a \$75,000

tax on existing homes across houses up and down that line. That is the sort of person they put in to be a shadow Treasurer but he did not talk to the member for Maroubra.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! This is my final warning to the member for Keira as you are on three calls to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** He did not take it to any costings—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Keira under Standing Order 249.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Keira left the Chamber, accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members could have expected that today from me.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am harsh today. The member for Keira was on three calls to order and I warned him. I am not going to have what happened yesterday.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We will continue to look after New South Wales, which is what we have done from the day we came into government and we will continue to do so. While the Opposition continues to talk about itself it will continue to be irrelevant to the people of this great State.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! "Go get him, Cheryl", to quote the member for Maroubra.

**Mr Michael Daley:** She always gets her man.

**The SPEAKER:** My word, we always get our man. Are you going to be next? How many calls to order are you on?

**Mr Michael Daley:** You never know your luck in a big city.

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

### **LIDCOMBE LAND REZONING**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** My question is directed to the Premier. What action will the Premier take to investigate the circumstances of the Lidcombe rezoning that has benefited Ronney Oueik, a person the Premier previously endorsed as a fantastic candidate and highly respected in Auburn?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am not sure that that question conforms to the standing orders. Premier, do you wish to answer it?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** What's your allegation?

**Mr Michael Daley:** What action will you take?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. He is already on three calls to order.



**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** What's your allegation?

**Mr Michael Daley:** That's my allegation—to investigate the circumstances of the rezoning.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Maroubra under Standing Order 249.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Maroubra left the Chamber, accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]*

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** If this is what the Opposition is going to continue to do, it is going to be a very, very long year.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Hello Prospect?

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** How did your promotion go?

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** Good mate.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** You have reached the top of your career.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** In fact, you have over-achieved.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury is on three calls to order.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Point of order: The Premier knows he should direct all comments through the chair and not across the table to members opposite.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Resume your seat. I ask the Premier to direct his comments through the chair. I call the member for Prospect to order for the second time. The member for Prospect will come to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The member for no prospect. It will take a lot more than that, mate.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Londonderry to order for the third time. I warn the member for Bankstown. Members from one side should not cast aspersions on the other side. It does not happen both ways, does it? No. The Premier has the call.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! If you want to whinge you will be out the door.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I am not the only one in this State to be disappointed in the approach of the Opposition. On the matters being raised, if the Opposition has allegations to make, make them as there are appropriate authorities to deal with them. But I would have thought that the time of Parliament could be used for things that are in the interests of the people of this State. I would have thought the Opposition would be interested in what the Government is doing in health.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! A few more Opposition members will be on three calls to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** In health, by the time we get to the end of this term more than \$10 billion will be spent in infrastructure across this State. That is what makes a difference to people's lives.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove for member for Londonderry under Standing Order 249.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Londonderry left the Chamber, accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]*

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**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I would have thought that the Opposition might be talking to the Treasurer about the record number of jobs that have been created in New South Wales.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I hope it is a valid point of order.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. It was a fair question that asked the Premier about a rezoning that took place in Lidcombe by a council he sacked recently. He obviously knew there were some problems.

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

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** He knows that the mayor has obtained a \$30 million windfall.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Bankstown will remove herself from the Chamber for the rest of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Bankstown left the Chamber at 2.40 p.m.]*

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I would have thought they would be focused on the great things we are doing in education. I think they can see the benefits of the funding that is flowing to some of our most disadvantaged students.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Our caseworkers are doing incredible work in the department of the Minister for Family and Community Services.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Minister for Planning has put together incredible plans for this State. I would have thought that is what the new team would be focused on, but no. It is great to see the member for Kogarah in the new team as shadow Minister for Water. Apparently he is very good with leaks, so it is an appropriate title.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I hope the member for Wollongong does not have any props with her today.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** I could find a prop if you would like me to.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am sure you could. I am not going to give you a free pass out of here just because it is your birthday.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** My point of order is that the Premier is inciting members to interject. He is doing everything but answering the question.

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

**Ms Noreen Hay:** He could not lie straight in bed.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wollongong will remove herself from the Chamber for the rest of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Wollongong left the Chamber at 2.41 p.m.]*

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Whilst today's slur has come in, the good news for the people of this State is that this Government is getting on with looking after them. We will continue to do that. No matter what members opposite want to use this time for, we are interested in the people of New South Wales, just as we should be.

#### **COUNTRY SERVICE DELIVERY**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government transforming service delivery in country New South Wales?

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I thank the excellent member for Northern Tablelands for his question. He has seen firsthand the transformation that has taken place across the regions under this Government. He has seen country towns receive a remarkable injection of infrastructure including hospitals, schools, police stations, roads and rail. Country people can now access the brand new infrastructure that was promised and denied to them for 16 years. It has been delivered during the first and second terms of this Government. The transformation in service delivery across regional New South Wales has also been extraordinary. We understand that we have a lot to do because of 16 years of neglect.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members who wish to have private conversations and are not interested in regional New South Wales should leave the Chamber. The member for Strathfield will remain silent.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** Since we came to Government in 2011 the challenge of improving service delivery has been immense, but we have got on with the job and a massive transformation has taken place already. An example is mobile phone coverage. It is unacceptable for mobile coverage to drop in and out as people travel throughout regional New South Wales as tourists or on business. We will not stand for that level of service. Thanks to the excellent work of the Minister for Regional Development, 800 mobile blackspots are being addressed with significant funding. Those improvements are being rolled out across the State and they will make a real difference to service delivery in regional New South Wales. Let us also look at what is probably the most outstanding transformation in service delivery—Service NSW. Under this Government 32 Service NSW centres have been opened in regional and rural New South Wales.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** That outstanding service is being provided under the guidance of the

wonderful Minister for Finance, Services and Property, who should be congratulated. All of the agencies in regional New South Wales are beloved by their communities. I thank the Minister for his work. Local constituents used to loathe the thought of going into a service centre to renew their licence or take care of their business with the State Government. They are now excited and enjoy going there. They are met by a concierge and receive a wonderful level of service.

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

**Mr TROY GRANT:** The transformation does not stop there. I note there has been a fairly significant transformation on Opposition benches. I take this opportunity to welcome the new shadow Minister for Justice and Police. I hope he understands that service delivery in our hospitals, schools and by our police is incredibly important in regional New South Wales. I am sure he understands that it is an enormous honour to represent police officers because they do a remarkable job.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is being respectful towards the shadow Minister. Does the member for Lakemba have a problem with that?

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I am looking forward to working with shadow Minister Guy Zangari. I ask that he join with me to ensure that we always support the police on the front line because they do an incredible job for our communities. One of the first challenges for the shadow Minister will be to question one of his own. We understand that the scourge of crime in regional New South Wales emanates from the scum that belong to the outlaw motorcycle gangs of New South Wales. That absolute scum that resides in regional New South Wales preying on communities, carting drugs up and down highways, infecting our children—

**Mr David Mehan:** Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. The Deputy Premier was asked about service delivery, not motorcycles

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Premier is being relevant to the question. There is no point of order. The Deputy Premier has the call. Government members will come to order.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I am sure the shadow Minister knows exactly what I am talking about. Outlaw motorcycle gangs have a significant impact on regional policing resources and that affects their service delivery. I would like to see where the shadow Minister stands on an issue. It shocked me when one of his colleagues came into this House on 24 February and blasted the local police commander in Gosford.

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

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 73. The Minister is attacking another member of this House. This is not the appropriate venue for that. There are other methods available to him.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I understand the point of order. I will listen further to the Minister. At this stage I do not his statement constitutes an attack on another member. I would not allow it if that were the case.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I would not do that, but in this place we have the right to ask those who represent key portfolios about where they stand when someone on their team puts on the parliamentary record their lack of support for their local police and possibly the most popular local area commander in New South Wales.

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! This is not an attack on the member. The member for Wyong will resume

his seat. I am listening to the Minister. I do not consider it an attack at this stage.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I refer members to *Hansard*. I intend to table a document that concerns me more. The very same member who criticised the police was photographed—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Premier must identify the publication or I will regard it as a prop. Is it a photograph from the *Daily Telegraph*?

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**Mr TROY GRANT:** Yes, it relates to a Mary Macs fundraising event. It is a photograph of the member for Gosford with the president of the Central Coast chapter of the outlawed motorcycle gang the Mongols. Where do your loyalties lie? What are you going to do about her? Are you going to call her to account and support the police or are you going to let her consort with criminals?

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Premier will resume his seat. I direct the member for The Entrance to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for The Entrance left the Chamber at 2.49 p.m.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Premier has completed his answer. The member for Port Stephens will be heard in silence.

## POLITICAL DONATIONS

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON:** I direct my question to the Minister for Local Government. Will the Minister commit to introducing caps on political donations and campaign spending for local government, as recommended by Kerry Schott's expert panel, in time for the next local government elections?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I thank the member for Port Stephens for her question. It is not very often in this House that we get a policy question or a question directed to local government from the Opposition. The Government has made, and continues to make, a number of changes through the Local Government Act. We are continuing to look at reforming local government in this State on behalf of the people of New South Wales. I make it clear that every day another council is in the headlines for all the wrong reasons. There can be no doubt that what we have seen unfolding in local government over the past few weeks, few months and, indeed, the past year shows that local government reform is long overdue in New South Wales. It will be great to wake up one morning and read about local government for all the right reasons. It will be great to have councillors serving the interests of their communities and not putting their self-interest first.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Auburn council has been sacked and is under public inquiry. Hurstville council, Murray Shire Council, North Sydney Council and Botany Council—

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Who is the member for Auburn? It is none other than the Leader of the Opposition, who is silent and who says nothing about his local council. He did not say anything until this Government—

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order—

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

**Ms Jodi McKay:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. As the Minister said, this is a policy question about donation caps.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister is being relevant to the question he was asked.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Could the Minister even mention the words "donation caps"?

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The Leader of the Opposition is the member for Auburn. He did not say anything about Auburn council until we called a public inquiry into it. Then he stood in this Chamber and welcomed it. Those on this side of the House are taking the tough measures that are needed across this State to ensure we have a strong system of local government. What about Botany council with allegations of fraud of \$4.2 million?

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** There are questions. Those opposite want to engage in a fear and smear campaign, but I can tell them what has been going on. There are allegations at the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. Where is Mayor Ben Keneally?

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order—

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** He has been missing since the end of last year.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Cessnock to order for the first time. The Minister will resume his seat.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The Minister's answer is not relevant to the question that was asked.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Minister has remained relevant. The Minister has the call.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** At Botany council we have allegations of a \$4.2 million fraud, but this goes back a decade. The question is: Who would have been the mayor of Botany a decade ago? It would have been the member for Heffron. This occurred under his watch. We have people appointed to positions—

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

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have ruled that the Minister remains relevant. The member for Charlestown will resume her seat. I remind the member for Port Stephens that she is already on three calls to order. The member for Port Stephens will cease interjecting.

## **REGIONAL TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** I address my question to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. How is the Government boosting transport infrastructure and delivering better services for regional New South Wales?

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

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his question. He, like

some country members in this place, knew what life was like under Labor when our electorates were starved of vital funds for infrastructure, hospitals, roads, ports and the like. It was very pleasing to see the good member opening his hospital a couple of months ago with the Minister for Health. I can also pleasingly say that Bega hospital was opened this week with a transfer of patients. We have built hospitals right round country New South Wales and we are also building the appropriate transport links to those hospitals. It is tremendous to know that those on this side of the House are taking care of every citizen in this State, not just a select few.

This Government has also been investing very heavily in roads. Importantly, this year \$1.9 billion will be spent on country highways. All the major regional highways are getting an injection of funds. In the coming months we will see the opening of a special part of the Pacific Highway—namely, a site that has largely been a memorial to the Kempsey bus accident. That area of the highway has now been duplicated in memory of the 35 people who lost their lives in that tragic bus accident so many years ago. Investment in our regional highways is important to country people because it helps to save lives and protect communities.

Under Rebuilding NSW the Government is investing \$6 billion in regional infrastructure to address a wide range of needs, including dealing with freight pinch points. We are helping our farmers and miners, getting produce from paddock to plate and making sure we are able to get the commerce-related benefits delivered. We are also delivering \$500 million for the Fixing Country Roads program, which will greatly assist our agricultural communities. We are investing some \$400 million in country rail and \$300 million in multipurpose health facilities, which are there to assist smaller communities in particular.

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We are investing \$300 million in regional growth, tourism, the environment and recreational pursuits, \$300 million for schools, \$200 million for the Bridges for the Bush program and, of course, \$2 billion for major infrastructure, particularly in freight corridors. At the same time, we are investing heavily in our regional airports. It is pleasing that the Government has made available, in particular for local government, \$95 million to go into regional airport infrastructure to assist regional airlines to take advantage of enormous opportunities in regional New South Wales. At the same time, the Government has been working hard on the deregulation of air routes to assist in that area. It was pleasing to see Rex, in particular, and a number of other airlines take advantage of those opportunities as a result of the Government deregulating some of those routes. Air routes have been reintroduced into Mudgee, Cobar, Cooma and Narrabri.

In relation to the \$95 million that has been made available for local government, we are in the midst of assessing some of those infrastructure proposals which will go a long way towards providing the regions with enormous opportunities. We have also accelerated \$520 million into 880 local projects being delivered by local government across regional New South Wales. Those dollars go such a long way in small communities. We are investing \$208 million in the Resources for the Regions program and \$115 million in water security for regions, including in the Illawarra, for which the member for Kiama, the Parliamentary Secretary, has been advocating.

Another issue that is important to country communities is water and sewerage, and the Government has been busy investing money in that regard. Thirty-five projects in the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program are receiving \$221 million. Those are the types of investments that are occurring outside Sydney. I reject any notion that this Government is focused purely on Sydney—one has only to look at the extensive infrastructure program that has been rolled out across regional New South Wales. This Government is proud of its infrastructure program. Many members in this place know and remember what life was like under Labor when it was in government and what it did to the rest of New South Wales.

#### **POLITICAL DONATIONS**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. In light of the

Minister's earlier answer and his comments concerning the member for Heffron, and given that an Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry heard that a fraud on Bathurst council went unnoticed for years, what was the Minister doing when he was the mayor of Bathurst council and that fraud was being perpetrated?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That question verges on not conforming with the standing orders. It hardly comes within the Minister's portfolio. Does the Minister wish to answer the question?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Yes, thank you. I make it clear that, unlike the Labor Party, the Baird-Grant Government recognises that local government has an extremely important role to play in serving communities across New South Wales.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** We are getting on with the job of long-overdue reform to ensure that local councils are serving local communities effectively.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Government members want to see councillors serving their communities to the highest standards.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** Point of order: Madam Speaker, I refer you to Speaker Murray's ruling—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I do not care. You do not have to refer me to previous Speakers rulings.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** As the Minister, I will continue to take this opportunity—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Is this part of the plan of the member for Prospect?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** —to thank those councillors who continue to serve their communities with professionalism and integrity. I make the point that most councillors across New South Wales do the right thing.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order and have some respect for each other. I place the member for Prospect on three calls to order.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Unfortunately, there are times when councillors betray the public's trust. Every now and then when allegations come to light that councillors are hiding their pecuniary interests, acting in their own financial interest or colluding to deliver financial benefits to each other, we will take measures to investigate those allegations.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** When serious allegations are brought to my attention we will take necessary measures to deal with them. On 21 January this year we announced a public inquiry into Auburn council, to be conducted by Commissioner Richard Beasley, SC.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will stop shouting.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** At the same time, I issued a notice of intention to suspend the council for the duration of the public inquiry. On 10 February I formally suspended Auburn council for the duration of the public inquiry and appointed Viv May as the administrator. I am advised that at an Auburn council meeting



recently the administrator made a number of important decisions that will go a long way towards restoring that community's confidence. These actions have not been taken lightly.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** To suspend a democratically elected council is one of the strongest powers I have as Minister, but these actions are necessary. They are in response to serious concerns about Auburn council's perceived decision-making in relation to planning and development matters.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I share the community's concern about ongoing issues relating to potential conflicts of interest and the perception that decisions may have delivered inappropriate benefits to some councillors. It is vital that wherever those perceptions exist they are looked into to restore the community's faith in the system of local government in this State.

**Mr Luke Foley:** Madam Speaker, I am begging you to grant the Minister an additional two minutes.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Request denied. Members are showing a lack of respect when the member for Castle Hill is on his feet waiting to ask a question.

#### **MEDICAL CANNABIS**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** My question relates to medical cannabis, and some of the dopes on the other side of the House should listen carefully.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I wish the member for Castle Hill had not introduced his question in that manner. Nevertheless, it is not worthy of being ruled out.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** My question is directed to the Minister for Medical Research.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** Your hair is a little bit grey these days.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Prospect knows I do not like those sorts of comments. I remind the member that he is already on three calls to order.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** How is the New South Wales Government leading the nation in research into medical cannabis?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I thank the member for Castle Hill for his question and for his interest in this issue. The New South Wales Government is determined to ensure that New South Wales residents receive the best treatment and the most compassionate care. That means we cannot be afraid to take bold public policy steps to improve lives and health care. That is why we are investing \$9 million into clinical trials and \$12 million into our Centre for Medicinal Cannabis Research and Innovation. We have committed to clinical trials to further explore the use of cannabis in three areas: providing relief for patients suffering from severe paediatric epilepsy; chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting; and symptom relief for terminal illness.

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On 27 July last year the Premier and I were at Calvary Mater Hospital in Newcastle to announce Australia's first medicinal cannabis trial. That trial is set to enrol patients next month. It will be the first time in Australia that patients will receive cannabis as part of a scientific medical cannabis trial, an extraordinary achievement from this Government. We have also secured a whole program of trials for paediatric epilepsy—some of the work that has given me the greatest pride in my career and as a

member of Parliament.

I have met parents who have been told that there is nothing they can do for their child; parents have been told they can only watch as their child continues to have hundreds of seizures and may ultimately lose his or her life. Watching these parents burst into tears when we revealed the program of trials for children with paediatric epilepsy was one of the most meaningful moments of my career. In October 2015 we signed an historic memorandum of understanding with GW Pharmaceuticals to support a suite of activities using cannabis-derived products.

When we first considered medicinal cannabis products for treatment of paediatric epilepsy our clinical experts told us that the products being developed by GW Pharmaceuticals were the best available and at first its door was closed. But the desperation of the children and their parents meant we could not give up and I was determined that GW Pharmaceuticals would hear us out. When I met the chairman and the chief executive officer in London they were hesitant but obviously we turned them around. We are thrilled that New South Wales children will now access these world-leading drugs as result of our determination.

The program consists of compassionate access to Epidiolex for a small number of children whose epilepsy is so unrelenting they are not able to participate in clinical trials, an investigator-led phase II clinical trial of CBDV for children with severe childhood epilepsy; and an investigator-led phase IV access study of Epidiolex together with local medication safety data that will support an application to the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration to make the product more widely available if it is proven effective; and access to the GW Pharmaceuticals trials program for children with epilepsy secondary to tuberous sclerosis complex and infantile spasms.

I am pleased to advise the House that compassionate access is scheduled to begin as early as April this year. That means New South Wales children will have access to a new drug—children for whom no other drugs have worked. On 26 February this year the Premier and I announced the start of our third cannabis trial. This third trial, to be led by researchers from Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, will help us better understand the role medicinal cannabis can play in providing relief to patients undergoing chemotherapy. Fighting cancer is one of the toughest times in someone's life, let alone having to deal with the tumultuous effects that chemotherapy can have on the body.

The trial will be a world first and I am advised we expect that a number of leading cancer care sites across New South Wales, in metropolitan and regional areas, will join in the trial. Last year the Premier asked me to take on this important role of finding a pathway to safely access medicinal cannabis for some of our most vulnerable patients in New South Wales. In just over a year we have committed to clinical trials, identified research groups, identified products and secured them, announced all three clinical trials and established a \$12 million Centre for Medicinal Cannabis Research and Innovation. We have given hope to people who were told they had reached the end of the road—people who had thought there was nothing else to try to treat the disease.

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

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I am proud of the leadership role of the New South Wales Government in relation to medicinal cannabis. I am proud of our Premier for having the courage and determination to back these trials and I look forward to continuing to work to provide relief to some of the sickest people in New South Wales. It needs to be understood that we were determined to invest in safe and effective medicinal cannabis products that clinicians would use—or would want to use—because they have confidence that the products have been scientifically and rigorously tested; that is the difference. It made it a very challenging and resource-intensive process but it is and was the right thing to do. This Government delivers on its commitments, which again shows that we are leaders when it comes to supporting vulnerable people in New South Wales.

## WOMEN'S REFUGES

**Mr JAMIE PARKER:** My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing. Considering the full funding cut to the important domestic violence work of the Women's Family Law Support Service, does the Minister agree with the Chief Justice of the Family Court, who said, "to lose this service for women in need is a sad indictment when governments, both state and federal, are committed to assisting families that have experienced family violence."?

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I thank the member for Balmain for that question. His question highlights just how well a substantive policy question can be asked in this place and when members do so how practically members can hopefully achieve outcomes for their constituents. What the member has highlighted is also an issue of concern to the Government. Marrickville Women's Refuge, of course, has been doing amazing work for many years and, as the member would be aware, the New South Wales Government currently provides funding to the Marrickville Women's Refuge under the Service Support Fund. This fund is aimed at ensuring provision for crisis accommodation and outreach support throughout the Sydney district.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! If some members find this subject matter amusing I suggest that they leave the Chamber.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** The service, particularly in that area, is very much focused on supporting Aboriginal women and children who are leaving domestic and family violence or who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The issue of funding for the particular worker to whom the member refers is a little complex in the sense that funding arrangements through the New South Wales Government to date have been to provide those services for accommodation and outreach support, particularly crisis accommodation, as I said. I think what has happened is that the Marrickville Women's Refuge, under former funding arrangements, has been able to fund a worker who went to a Federal court—the Family Court—to support women.

Clearly in the normal course of events the New South Wales Government would not be the government responsible for providing funding for a service in a Federal court; that is, the Family Court. But when the issue was brought to our attention—I think it was just before Christmas—I had discussions with the Hon. Pru Goward particularly in the context of her being the Minister for Women, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and we both agreed that the service being provided was a critical one. So we agreed with Her Honour completely. As a result we wrote to the Attorney-General, George Brandis, on 11 February. In that letter we stated:

We write regarding an urgent funding issue for the Women's Family Law Support Service (WFLSS) at the Sydney Family Law Courts.

In the second paragraph we noted:

The Prime Minister's commitment on behalf of the Commonwealth Government to ensure all women in Australia and their children are safe at home, on the streets and online is a commendable stance in supporting women experiencing domestic violence. Their safety during and after separation is a critical component.

We went on in that letter to point out that because it is so critical we believe that the funding should come from the Federal Government and the funding should be made available on a continuing basis. The latest advice I have today is that when I asked my office to follow up this week they told me they have spoken to the Attorney General's office but that the issue is still under consideration. That is not a position that the New South Wales Government is prepared to accept. We urgently want the Federal Government to provide clarity around that funding.

Having said that, we are not going to allow that important work to be discontinued. While we await the decision of the Federal Government, I place on record that the Premier, Minister Goward and I are strongly suggesting to the Federal Government that this is a position that should be funded by the Federal Government. We appreciate that the Federal Government is complex. While we work that out, arrangements will be made to continue the funding. We understand that it is approximately \$75,000 per annum, although there has been no formal letter to the district. The New South Wales Government will continue the funding for the next 12 months.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** That is a very good decision.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** Thank you. Hopefully, that gives adequate time for the Federal Government to resolve the issue. On behalf of all members of this House, I thank the Marrickville Women's Refuge for its amazing work.

**The SPEAKER:** Good job! Well done to the member for Balmain.

### **REGIONAL PLANNING**

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning. How is the Government planning for the future of regional New South Wales?

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

**Mr ROB STOKES:** I thank the member for Cootamundra for her question. I acknowledge her advocacy on behalf of her very important region and on behalf of all the citizens and communities of southern New South Wales. Today I am a little sad, for two reasons.

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

**Mr ROB STOKES:** I am sad that so many members of the Opposition are not here to listen to what I have to say. I take heart from the fact that they, along with hundreds of thousands of our fellow residents, are watching proceedings on the internet.

**The SPEAKER:** They are in a happy place, Minister.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** The second thing that I am a little sad about is the reflection on the Planning portfolio. Planning is important. Regional planning is really important. The talk about planning being a demotion I find an affront. I am sure I speak for the member for Maroubra as well. I want to reach out across the Chamber with real love and pull him into the bosom of the planning family. I am angry about it. In the immortal words of Moving Pictures, from their 1982 signature album *Days of Innocence*:

What about me, it isn't fair  
I've had enough now I want my share.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Is the point of order about relevance?

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Absolutely.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I was about to take a point of order. The Minister is speaking about planning in regional New South Wales.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** The Leader of the Opposition takes more than he gives. That is something

that we should reflect on. Regional planning is really significant. The Leader of the Opposition said today that the appointment of the deputy leader to Planning was important so that he could focus on Sydney's growth. Sydney's growth is important, but the Leader of the Opposition needs to recognise that New South Wales is about more than Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Three million people—40 per cent of the State's population—live outside the metropolitan region. We must think about them as well. One-third of this State's gross State product comes from regional New South Wales: \$138 billion a year. That is why it is really important that we plan for our regions, in a strategic and tactical sense, in determining development applications.

I turn to strategic planning. For the first time in this State's history we are ensuring that there is a seamless, strategic spatial plan across every region of New South Wales. We have already finalised the Illawarra-Shoalhaven plan. I congratulate the member for Kiama, and Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra on his exhausting—no, exhaustive—input into the preparation of the plan. Last week I was in the beautiful Tweed with the member for Tweed, who works hard for his community, and other members in the Northern Rivers region for the launch of the draft regional plan for the North Coast. In really exciting news, this week we have released new codes for complying development in the bush, to increase the pace at which development assessment can occur there. That concerns low-impact developments and agricultural infrastructure such as farm sheds and machinery sheds. The codes assist the sorts of industries that will bring jobs to regional New South Wales and invest money in the bush. That is something everyone in this House can agree on. Regional planning is important. Our regions are the lifeblood of our State.

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

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Blacktown should not feel left out because he does not live in the regions. What is the member's point of order? I direct the Clerk to stop the clock. This is an attempt to take up the Minister's time.

**Mr John Robertson:** Not at all. I ask that the Speaker use discretion and not grant the two-minute extension, simply because for two and a half minutes the Minister recited a song that bore no relevance to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I would not have expected that from the member for Blacktown. There is no point of order. The Clerk will restart the clock.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** The bigger question is: What does the member for Blacktown have against 1980s pop icons?

**The SPEAKER:** The Clerk will restart the clock.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** The regions are important. Regional planning is important. We know that we have to do everything we can to encourage investment, not just in Sydney, where it is easy. We need to encourage investment where improved infrastructure is needed. That is what this Government is getting on with: providing better bridges and roads, better opportunities for more jobs and better communications for the bush. The Government is strategically planning for these new opportunities. Making it easier and quicker to build homes in convenient locations in rural communities and regional towns is a really important part of the growth in New South Wales.

Many of us will be sad that this sitting week is coming to an end. In exciting news, the upper House inquiry into regional planning begins in this Parliament building tomorrow. I encourage those who would like to know more to come back tomorrow and engage in the exciting area of regional planning.

**Question time concluded at 3.27 p.m.**

## **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**.

### **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**.

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

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## **BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**

### **Financial Year 2015-16**

**Debate resumed from 25 February 2016.**

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.29 p.m.]: It is a great day to discuss the budget estimates and related papers for the financial year 2015-16. I pay tribute to the Premier, the Hon. Mike Baird, and the entire Baird-Grant team for its wonderful leadership of this State. In the past five years they have taken New South Wales from being number eight among all States and Territories to number one. New South Wales is now the number one economy. It is important that New South Wales is number one in terms of economic growth and development because if the State is not in a secure economic position it cannot generate jobs. I note that New South Wales is creating the largest number of jobs of any State or Territory. In fact, it has also recorded the greatest economic growth in Australia.

None of this would be possible without the tough decisions the Government made many years ago. I note that our great Minister for Health is in the Chamber today. She is working hard, as usual. I place on record my thanks to the Minister for her firm commitment to the Westmead Hospital redevelopment. The Government has committed \$900 million to this redevelopment, which has started already. I speak about that in more detail later in my contribution. The New South Wales Government is spending a record amount on infrastructure, and Parramatta is certainly a beneficiary of that infrastructure spend. I acknowledge that the Minister for Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs, the member for Baulkham Hills, is at the table. He is doing a fine job. I thank him for being here and for his interest in Parramatta. Parramatta is not only the centre of Western Sydney but also, some would say, the geographical heart of Sydney. Government members know that responsible government is about understanding that we do not have an unlimited budget. That is why we made the tough decisions in 2011 and 2012.

**Mr David Elliott:** And we're investing it all in Parramatta

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Baulkham Hills. A fair bit of it is going to Parramatta. We are very proud of what we have fought for and we are very proud of the commitments of the New South Wales Government. I know that Temporary Speaker Gibbons is also very supportive of Parramatta and the investments being made there. In fact, I think she is speechless about the commitment to Parramatta as the capital of Western Sydney. I know that her electorate of Holsworthy will benefit from all her hard work. There is no-one more committed to the electorate of Holsworthy than the member for Holsworthy, and I pay tribute to her.

One of the difficult decisions that we took to the electorate at the 2015 election was the poles and wires transaction to unlock and recycle \$20 billion worth of infrastructure investment. Again, I thank the health Minister and I note her fantastic efforts investing in health infrastructure. Part of that investment of nearly \$1 billion in the Westmead Hospital precinct will come from the poles and wires transaction. It is a great investment that will have many long-term benefits. As the member for Baulkham Hills said, the New South Wales Government is investing billions in Parramatta. I put on record again my thanks to the Premier. I also thank also the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, who was the Treasurer from 2014 to 2015, and our current Treasurer, who has been in that role since 2015. The Minister for Health has another commitment and is leaving the Chamber. I thank her for all her work. What a wonderful Minister she is.

Clearly this Government is committed to delivering for the people of Western Sydney. In 2015 the Government committed to billions of dollars of investment. I have talked already about the investment in health care and Westmead Hospital. We have seen more than \$100 million in education investment. A sports precinct is being developed in Parramatta and there is an arts and culture commitment. I will talk more about that later. The Government has also made commitments regarding our heritage. I know that the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning is a great fan of heritage. He does a wonderful job. He is committed to preserving the many heritage buildings and areas in Parramatta, especially the North Parramatta precinct and the other assets such as Hambledon Cottage, Experiment Farm Cottage and Elizabeth Farm.

Parramatta has the largest collection of early European and colonial buildings in the whole of Australia. We want to open them to the public and to drive tourism in the area. I am sure that members will agree that Parramatta should be known for its heritage above all else. It has been described by many as the birthplace of modern Australia. We need to do a bit of work and consider how to maximise our opportunities and overcome the challenges to make it all come true. Investment in this area will certainly help. The budget outlines fantastic investment in parks and in roads and transport. But the New South Wales Government's commitments do not stop there. As part of the decade of decentralisation, the Government's has committed to decentralising public service jobs. This is being achieved. It was announced recently that 1,800 jobs will be moved from the inner city to Parramatta. I welcome that decision and thank the Minister for Education for his commitment to relocate those jobs to Parramatta.

We have identified a site in Phillip Street, and it is a very exciting time. I also commend the Hon. John Ajaka, the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Multiculturalism. Perhaps I should not mention this in front of Temporary Speaker Gibbons, but I will anyway—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! I would not.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I commend the Minister for his commitment to multiculturalism and to Parramatta, and I commend the Government for its investment in Western Sydney and Parramatta. I refrained from saying what I was going to say—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! The member for Parramatta was wise to do so.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I thank Temporary Speaker Gibbons, and I take her warning as a subtle hint—or perhaps not so subtle. It is a privilege to talk about the Westmead Biomedical Precinct. When finished, it will be second to none in Australia. In fact, it will be one of the largest biomedical precincts in the world. The Government has committed \$900 million to a massive redevelopment of the Westmead Hospital precinct. This hospital redevelopment is going full steam ahead. It has been decades since major improvements were made to that hospital. Of course the precinct includes not only Westmead Hospital but also the Children's Hospital, which is another fine facility. This fully funded project will drive future enhancements of clinical services.

I know that Temporary Speaker Gibbons is very interested in clinical services, given that the Liverpool Hospital is in her electorate. I have heard good reports from the electorate of Holsworthy about her support for her local hospital. Like the Liverpool Hospital precinct, Parramatta has medical research and mental health services, which will be enhanced. Almost \$1 billion will be invested in the Westmead Biomedical Precinct. I am sure that Temporary Speaker Gibbons is as excited as I am that the Government is investing in the biomedical precinct at Westmead in Parramatta.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** I am.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I can see the joy in her eyes. I know that the Minister for Corrections is also very excited about it. The Norwest Private Hospital, which is also a very good hospital, is in his electorate. It is nearly as good as Westmead Hospital. I know that the Minister also supports the Westmead Hospital redevelopment. When complete, the Westmead hospital precinct will include a world-class biomedical and biotechnology cluster. It will employ more medical staff, researchers and professionals—together with the construction jobs created during the life of the project. It will have more beds, more operating theatres and more facilities to cater for the growing population in Western Sydney.

Work has already commenced on the redevelopment. Late last year I joined the Minister for Health for the start of work on the new multi-deck car park facility. There will be something like 2,800 car parking spaces on the ground. That may sound like a lot, but I assure members that the number one complaint I hear about the hospital is that people cannot find parking. I hear that from not only staff but also visitors and patients.

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**Mr David Elliott:** That is the first and second complaint.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I acknowledge that interjection from the great Minister for Corrections; it is the first and second complaint. Patients tell me that, with only two-hour parking in adjacent streets, outpatients must leave their treatment halfway through to put more money in the meter, which creates a physical problem. The multi-deck car park alone is a \$70-odd million investment. It is essential for patients undergoing lifesaving treatments, their visitors and the great staff—nurses, doctors, allied health workers—to park safely and conveniently. They should not have to drive around the block for hours looking for a parking space. Last year I was honoured to join Premier Mike Baird, the Minister for Health



and the member for Seven Hills—who is a new but highly successful member—to unveil the stage 1 concept. I note that the development will be complemented by light rail. I have not seen the exact route but I hope that it will go down Hawkesbury Road—

**Mr David Elliott:** You have light rail, heavy rail, trains, buses and ferries.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** That is exactly right.

**Mr David Elliott:** And taxis, Uber.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** No, we do not use the "U" word, Minister.

**Mr David Elliott:** I am making sure we clarify that. Have you got an airport?

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Speaking about an airport, I was at the very fast train summit recently. I thank the council and the chamber of commerce for Western Sydney. A fast train was proposed.

**Mr David Elliott:** Why not? You've got everything else.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I agree. But we do not have everything else; there are a few more little toys that we could have.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** You need a very fast train to get out of Parramatta.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** The member for Cabramatta would be welcome in Parramatta. I was in the Lakemba electorate recently for the Chinese New Year celebrations but I did not see him.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** You didn't tell me about it. I would have met you there if you had told me.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** The next time I go there I will ask you to take me to lunch.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** Come and have lunch with me.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** We could do the car-washing thing. No, we do not do that. I will return to the budget estimates. Before the Minister interrupted me I was referring to light rail. I will also outline some of the wonderful items in the budget and the commitments by this Government to the great electorate of Parramatta and the whole of Western Sydney. This will be a game changer for Western Sydney, not just Parramatta. Construction of the multi-level car park has started. The decks will go up this year and it will be completed in 2017. That will be a welcome addition to Parramatta. Construction is due to start on the new acute services building, which is expected to be completed in about 2019. In 2020 targeted refurbishments are planned for the existing hospital, which is vital infrastructure for Western Sydney. *[Quorum called for.]*

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

I thank the Premier for completing the quorum and saving not only the State but the whole House. Exciting things are happening in the Westmead Biomedical Precinct. I will outline why the Westmead Hospital complex will be so important in the future. We know that one in 10 Australians live in Western Sydney, which is some two million people, and over the next 20 years the population will grow by another one million people. That is a significant increase. Importantly, more than 10 per cent of those people will be over 70 years of age and we expect outpatient visits to the hospital to grow from 2.6 million to more than four million per year. Make no mistake, the ageing population is increasing throughout our community, which presents new opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed. That is why \$1 billion is such an important investment not only in Parramatta but also in Western Sydney, including the

great electorate of Baulkham Hills.

**Mr David Elliott:** We have a fire station.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** The Minister has a fire station in his electorate.

**Mr David Elliott:** That's all I have got.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** As the Minister for Emergency Services, he would be very interested in fire stations. I know that the firemen, the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service are very complimentary of the Minister's support for them. They often talk about it. The member for Cabramatta is very keen on the fireys too. It would be great if he would give them a little more support.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** I love the fireys.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** We all love the fireys.

**Mr David Elliott:** They can hose your car down and give it a wash.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Yes, because the coupons have gone. I have digressed. The wonderful Westmead Hospital precinct employs some 12,000 to 15,000—depending on the calculations—and 800 researchers. Something like 16,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students attend the precinct. By 2031 it is estimated that there will be around 25,000 high-knowledge, high-value jobs in our local area. They are the jobs for the future, in the areas of education, medical, clinical, research practices. As well as directly creating jobs, there will be benefits from the clustering of complementary services and businesses. In fact, Westmead Hospital, the Children's Hospital, Westmead Private Hospital and the research institutions—whether it is the Children's Medical Research Institute or the Millennium Institution—offer biomedical care. The principle of agglomeration of services applies through the strategic leveraging of those partnerships and the synergies that are developed. It will be not only a jobs hub but also a knowledge and innovation hub, which is obviously important to the future of Parramatta and Australia as a whole.

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Of course, the Government cannot do that alone. We need partnerships in our investments. I have mentioned the Millennium Institute, but we also need to make strategic partnerships with other entities such as Western Sydney University. The board of trustees has committed \$50 million towards stage 1 of a new campus and I thank the Vice Chancellor for that. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

I thank members for the extension of time. It gives me such delight to talk about Parramatta and Westmead but I will move onto more things in a moment.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** It doesn't matter, Parramatta.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I thank the member for Cabramatta, because I know he is a big supporter of Parramatta—although perhaps not the football team.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** I'm a fan of Parramatta.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Thank you. Western Sydney University will open a new campus in the precinct. The \$50 million stage 1 investment will grow over time. It is not only about the teaching of doctors or nurses; it will also stimulate business and provide other forms of education.

**Mr David Elliott:** Such as the arts.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** It could be the arts. We certainly support that. Let us talk about the Powerhouse

Museum for a moment, because it has been the cause of some controversy. Some naughty people in the inner city and eastern suburbs have not wanted to give the people of Western Sydney access to arts and culture. I assure everyone that this Government makes no apology for supporting arts and culture in Western Sydney. It makes no apology for moving the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta. We are proud of our commitment to address the imbalance between the funding of arts and cultural institutions in eastern Sydney and Western Sydney where there will be strong future growth. The Westmead Medical Precinct redevelopment fits well with the Government's strategic plan for growing Western Sydney. Madam Temporary Speaker Gibbons, I know you are particularly interested in the economic arc between the Westmead Medical Precinct, the Parramatta central business district and the Camellia Precinct.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** The member knows I am.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** We will develop the Camellia Precinct. The racecourse there aspires to be the Bellagio of Western Sydney, which is quite an aspiration. The economic arc will also extend to the research and education hub at Rydalmere and Western Sydney University, to the Silverwater industrial estate and through to Olympic Park and Wentworth Park. Madam Temporary Speaker Gibbons, you are interested in that economic corridor because you are interested in jobs in Western Sydney. It will be anchored by the light rail, which I am sure you are aware of. The streets for the light rail have not been finalised, but the routes have been announced. It is great news that the light rail will connect Westmead and the North Parramatta Heritage Precinct, which will have approximately 2,700 extra homes and \$100 million worth of investment—

**Mr David Elliott:** And Carlingford?

**Dr Geoff Lee:** We will be up there soon. The \$100 million investment will be used to restore and adaptively re-use the space to make it the finest early European colonial heritage precinct in Australia. It will be like the Rocks, only bigger and better. The light rail will link the precinct to the Parramatta CBD, where jobs will grow from the 50,000 we have at the moment to 100,000 over the next 20 years. From there the light rail will travel to Camellia, where we have announced a planning proposal for another 10,000 homes in the north-west corner and a new suburb. That area will be close to the racecourse, otherwise known as the Bellagio of Western Sydney. The light rail will then turn left to link up with Western Sydney University, and the research and education hub. It will then continue to Carlingford.

These are exciting times for the people of Telopea because Minister Hazzard has just announced a \$2.5 billion redevelopment of the area. That suburb is sometimes not known for the greatest things, but we want to redevelop the suburb and give everyone new opportunities. The existing social housing has reached its useful life and is a bit depressing. We will knock it all down and build a new, planned community that will have services people demand, including light rail. In addition, we will offer an integrated approach to design by establishing a 70-30 split between private and social housing.

**Mr Mark Coure:** That is progress.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I acknowledge the member for Oatley. What he does not say in his speeches he makes up for by his presence in the Chamber. He, too, is a supporter of Western Sydney. He has often said that we should take all of the services out of Oatley and give them to Parramatta because he recognises the importance of Parramatta. I place on record my appreciation for the member for Oatley.

**Mr Mark Coure:** My mother-in-law is from your electorate.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** That is right. That is why the member supports our hospital redevelopment. I will return to the leave of the debate; I only have five minutes left to speak about the wonderful Parramatta. The light rail is not only a transportation project; it will be a transformational opportunity for the places it will link. It will be a catalyst to develop suburbs such as Telopea. The other line that we will build from Camellia will run across the small peninsula and open up what is currently an industrial wasteland. That

area will be transformed into a new waterfront living suburb. It will be a vibrant community with schools, parks, recreational facilities and shopping centres.

We will build a new bridge over Duck Creek and take the line into Silverwater and across to Olympic Park. The Leader of the Opposition is very keen about that, I do not know why. The line will then run on to Strathfield. Even the member for Strathfield agrees with that for some reason. The light rail will form the economic corridor I spoke about. Evidence shows that light rail changes the way in which cities and economies develop. It is a transformational catalyst that causes people to switch their mode of transport from cars to public transport. The project is about making Parramatta the best and most innovative city—a city everyone will want to live in. The light rail will provide a fantastic opportunity for us to embrace the future.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Tell us more about Duck Creek.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** My ancestors had a farm by Duck Creek. My father remembers swimming in it, but that must have been many years ago because it is not so pretty now. In order to make Parramatta more livable we will also conduct a Green Grid pilot. We will soon talk to Minister Stokes about that. That project will link workplaces and homes through green spaces so people can walk or cycle from home to work. They will be able to enjoy the parklands and not have to always travel on the streets. All great cities have great walkways and pedestrians paths. The Minister and member for Baulkham Hills is very excited about the Green Grid pilot. I know he has argued in Cabinet for more funds for Parramatta.

**Mr David Elliott:** I have.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Indeed he has. I know that for a fact. Parramatta will also receive the country's first vertical public high school and vertical public primary school, which is very exciting. Arthur Phillip High School will be transformed into a 14-storey school.

**Mr Mark Coure:** It will not be horizontal.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Absolutely not. All my citizens are very upright and that is why a vertical school makes total sense. It will be a state-of-the-art flagship school of the future. It will have adaptable learning spaces and wireless internet. It will offer different pedagogies and provide opportunities for team-based as well as individual work. Madam Temporary Speaker Gibbons, I know you are very excited about it too. I thank you for your support for not only the school but also WestConnex, the light rail and the stadium. I have not mentioned the stadium, which will receive an investment of more than \$300 million. The member for Sydney is a really nice guy, but to oppose the Powerhouse Museum being moved to Parramatta was absolutely beneath him.

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**Mr David Elliott:** Political suicide.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** Maybe not for him. But I return to the leave of the debate. This is outstanding government by Premier Baird and Treasurer Berejiklian, particularly in its support of the electorate of Parramatta and our future.

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [4.00 p.m.]: The member for Parramatta has just made a wonderful contribution about his electorate. He was able to do that because his electorate has received a great deal of funding in the past couple State budgets. I agree that Parramatta is a wonderful city. In Labor's 16 years in office we certainly maintained Parramatta as a wonderful city and, hopefully, under the stewardship of those opposite, it will stay that way. Parramatta will eventually be the central business district of Western Sydney. I note that I have been a supporter of the Parramatta Eels since the 1960s, and even though Parramatta is not of my political persuasion I will always stay an Eels supporter.

I make a contribution to this take-note debate on behalf of the people of Cabramatta. Today I was

hoping to be able to thank the Baird Government for giving my local community the much-needed investment in services and infrastructure that it needs; instead, I have to give those opposite another serve for once again neglecting my electorate. Not once has this Government made any sort of decent investment in Cabramatta. For example, I have been asking for an easy access lift at Canley Vale station but to no avail.

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

**Mr NICK LALICH:** The Government cannot find the money for an easy access lift at Canley Vale station. In this year's budget we got nothing; not one new dollar. I wonder how much the Premier's electorate got? The electorate of Manly received \$3 million—that is \$3 million more than Cabramatta. How much did the Treasurer's electorate get? The electorate of Willoughby got about \$395million. It is good to see that the Baird Government is looking after itself. In the meantime Cabramatta received no new funding for its local Fairfield Hospital. The community has been calling out for a dedicated paediatric emergency department. The need for this department was highlighted last year when a young child was left highly distressed after witnessing a man headbutt a glass window in the emergency department at Fairfield Hospital. The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, Emergency Department Design Guidelines state:

...there must also be a separate paediatric area for the treatment of children.

Those guidelines are best practice. They are in place across most hospitals in Australia but, once again, our community and our children get second best. Following severe funding cuts to the health budget the services provided by Fairfield and Liverpool hospitals have deteriorated. The doctors, nurses and staff at our local hospitals are doing everything they can, but they are being stretched to the limit. There are just not enough beds or staff to help with the increasing number of patients attending those hospitals. Patients at Liverpool Hospital are waiting for hours to be transferred from ambulance stretchers to the emergency department. Last year one patient who had suffered a stroke was left on a stretcher for two hours—that is not good enough in a First World country.

Our local police got nothing in this budget. The Cabramatta Local Area Command does a great job and I am proud of the work they do under the leadership of Superintendent Wayne Murray. And whilst our local officers are working harder than ever, they are not getting the resources they need to help them do their job. Police have been crying out for the return of live monitoring closed-circuit television [CCTV] in crime hotspots. This was pulled when our police lost funding. I call on the State Government to fund those CCTV cameras in Cabramatta. Live monitoring will mean that officers can stop crime as it is happening, instead of getting there after the dirty deed is done. Unfortunately, preventing crime in Cabramatta is not a priority for this Government.

We also received no new funding for schools and students. In last year's budget the Government continued the funding to Cabramatta High School that the Labor Party had committed—\$6 million—when it was in government. But this year our local schools got nothing. This Government would not even give Bonnyrigg Public School the crossing supervisor, commonly known as a lollypop person, it asked for. The school has more than 300 students. Those students and their families use the crossing every school morning and afternoon. The principal, teachers and the parents and citizens association have asked for a crossing supervisor. We have been told no, not even for the sake of improving the safety of our children. This shows the disdain this Government has for the people of Western Sydney.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! The Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs will come to order.

**Mr NICK LALICH:** The Baird Government also gave Cabramatta no new funding to meet the huge demand for social housing in our area. This is despite a 10-year waiting list for vulnerable families to

access public housing. My community also got nothing to improve local public transport services. For years we have wanted a lift at Canley Vale train station for the elderly, people with prams and people with disabilities. We have pleaded with the Government, and that includes please from local businesses and local communities, but our pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

Cabramatta is also in desperate need of a commuter car park. The former Labor Government had budgeted for a \$30 million car park to be built at Cabramatta, but things changed under the O'Farrell Government. New plans were made and that car park was forgotten. I said to the O'Farrell Government, "If you are taking the \$30 million away from Cabramatta, please give us enough money to build another two decks on the council car park in John Street." That has never been forthcoming. I also asked the O'Farrell Government, "Of that \$30 million, please give us enough money to build an easy access lift at Canley Vale station." That request landed on deaf ears. The O'Farrell Government took the \$30 million away from Cabramatta that was budgeted for but, unfortunately, because the contract was not signed the Government had the opportunity to wipe the contract.

The former Labor Government had committed to building a new commuter car park; this was one of the first projects the Liberals axed when it came to government, along with Cabramatta's popular free 88 shuttle bus. The bus was running half to full all the time, but they said it had to be nine people per kilometre travelled. If you have nine people for every kilometre travelled that is a very full bus. Labor supplied that free shuttle bus to the people of Cabramatta and the Liberals took it away—they kept it at Parramatta and removed it from Labor areas.

My community is also facing a youth unemployment crisis. Youth unemployment in the Fairfield City area currently stands at 16.6 per cent, compared with the State average of 12.8 per cent. This must be dealt with urgently or we will see a new generation of young people falling through the cracks. The Baird Government continues to fail to invest in our young people. The Cabramatta electorate did not get any additional funding to support young people with further training and education. Instead, the Government has continued on its merry way with its slash and burn policy for TAFE colleges. What this Government has done, and is continuing to do, to TAFE colleges is horrible. TAFE has a special place in my heart: When I was young I attended Granville Technical College where I received an electrician qualification. We are already seeing the results of this Government's TAFE policy.

Since this Government came to office our TAFE colleges have lost 3,600 teachers. Courses have been cut and students are paying huge increases in fees, which families are struggling to pay. TAFE registered 22,000 fewer enrolments for the most useful, nationally recognised trade qualifications this year. Across this great State there are 30,000 fewer students enrolled in government-funded vocational training of any sort because of the skyrocketing cost of courses. It seems that instead of school leavers accessing training in private colleges, which the Government wants, they are sitting at home just having a rest. That can only cost taxpayers more money in the long run as youth unemployment spikes. We will also soon be facing labour and skill shortages in the construction and aged care industries.

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Cabramatta has some 1,800 businesses and 86.5 per cent of them are considered to be small businesses with fewer than four employees. We were that in this budget we would see some investment in training, in small businesses and in jobs for our region, but, again, our businesses got nothing. When Labor was in government we did not forget the people of Cabramatta. Labor built Cowpasture Road and the Camden Valley Way; it gave passengers at Cabramatta train station a lift and a ramp; it built the memorials at Cabra Vale Park; it invested millions of dollars to upgrade local schools and high schools; and it spent \$395 million to redevelop Liverpool Hospital.

Labor also established the Community Building Grants program, which provided \$400,000 annually to community organisations, but that has been cut by the Liberal Party to \$300,000. A cut of \$100,000 makes a big difference when so many people in our area are in need. This year our community organisations will get just \$300,000 to share amongst themselves. That money will go towards helping them to continue supporting our vulnerable families, and elderly and young people. All I am asking for, on

behalf of the community, is a fair go. We want this Government to look at the needs of Cabramatta and invest something from this budget to address the issues I have outlined today.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.11 p.m.]: I make a contribution to debate on Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2015-2016. When speaking about the budget we should put it into context. In 2011 the Coalition Government went to the election with a promise to make New South Wales number one again.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** But it hasn't happened yet.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** I heard the member for Cabramatta talk about 16 years. They were 16 shameful years. The people of New South Wales said that it was time for a change and they elected the Coalition Government to make this great State number one again. Prior to Labor coming into government all those years ago New South Wales was the premier State—the number one State. But during the 16 years of the former Labor Government, New South Wales dropped from being number one to being last. We said that we had a five-point plan to turn New South Wales around: We would improve the economy, improve services to New South Wales, deliver on the infrastructure, introduce accountability and improve the environment. We have delivered on that plan.

Standard and Poor's, and CommSec say the economy has improved. We have the lowest level of unemployment in all of Australia and business confidence is up. We have more new house starts than we have had in the past 40 years—and house starts are the driver of economies. We have been able to do that through the policies that we have delivered. The St George Bank State economic report, CommSec's State of the States report and the ANZ report—all independent agencies—say that New South Wales is number one and has been for numerous months. In that time we have delivered the trifecta: We have increased infrastructure, we have improved services and we have reduced unemployment. Amazingly, our expenditure is less than revenue. For the past 10 years of the former Labor Government its expenditure was greater than revenue. Imagine running a household in which expenditure is greater than income, but that is what Labor delivered and we inherited. We have been able to turn that around.

For the past four years, \$64.5 billion has been spent on infrastructure—a record amount for New South Wales. Of that, \$25 billion has been spent on roads, and of that \$25 billion, 70 per cent—\$19 billion—was for roads in regional New South Wales. Some people say all these things are happening in Sydney, but we are seed funding projects in Sydney, which is great news for the regions because \$19 billion out of the \$25 billion is going to regional New South Wales. In health we have increased the number of nurses, with more than 4,000 new nurses on the front line, and we have a record infrastructure spend right across regional New South Wales with new hospitals in Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and Parkes. Through Restart NSW we are starting on other regional hospitals such as Kempsey hospital and the Manning hospital. We have also delivered on education with more teachers, and for law and order there are more police on the front line.

My electorate of Myall Lakes is on the Mid North Coast, which is internationally renowned as Australia's water playground. To the south there is the Bombah Broadwater, Boolambayte Lake, Myall Lakes, Smiths Lake, Wallis Lake, and all the tributaries and the islands. To the north there is the mighty Manning River—156 kilometres of navigable waterways and the only delta formation in the southern hemisphere. In the hinterland is one of the top 10 destinations identified by Destination NSW—Ellenborough Falls, the longest single-drop waterfall in the Southern Hemisphere. There is almost 200 kilometres of pristine beaches on our coast, including the location for movies such as *Adoration*, which was filmed at Seal Rocks and at Forster Main Beach. It is an idyllic location and this Government is delivering for Myall Lakes.

In relation to roads and bridges, the Bulahdelah bypass has been completed, which means that the entire length of the Pacific Highway from the southern end of the electorate through to the northern end of the electorate has been duplicated—it is dual carriageway all the way. Even though that

duplication has been completed, we are not finished upgrading the highway. Every year safety upgrades are being completed. Greater Taree City Council has received a 261 per cent increase in roads funding and some of the projects that have been completed in that area include the Duffs Bridge and the Marlee Bridge. More than \$6 million has been spent on ensuring that the iconic Martin Bridge crossing the Manning River, which is on so many logos of clubs, organisations and councils in that area, is structurally sound and has upgraded safety features.

The local area has also received \$7.5 million for Avalon Road, which is part of Main Road 90. Greater Taree City Council also received \$2.25 million to complete work on The Lakes Way North, and \$1.1 million for the intersection of The Lakes Way and Blackhead Road. Great Lakes Council has also received \$2.25 million for The Lakes Way South, and the council has completed 3.31 kilometres of upgrades from just north of the Smiths Lake turnoff—including an upgrade of the intersection where there is a steep winding road that had drainage problems, culverts and cheese cutter wire—down to Tarbuck Bay.

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The \$2.25 million upgrade of the Lakes Way north resulted in the laying of 700 metres of straight road that had no drainage issues, culverts or cheese cutter wire. The local council was only able to upgrade 700 metres. People need to understand that what is important is not the amount of money that is allocated but the bang for the buck—what council does with its funding.

The Health budget across New South Wales has received an enormous boost over the past five years. Money has been reallocated so that funding goes to the front line to provide more nurses and doctors; indeed more than 900 new doctors are being delivered. In the Myall Lakes electorate health services have increased, resulting in more doctors and nurses. At the Manning Base Hospital over the past four years there have been two new intensive care specialists, two new anaesthetists, a new general surgeon, a new nephrologist, a new cardiologist, a desperately-needed oncologist for the first time, an obstetrician, a stroke unit, several new midwives and new registered nurses. Equipment in the hospital has been improved and new beds have been installed throughout the precinct.

Cape Hawke Community Private Hospital in the Forster-Tuncurry area has chemotherapy chairs and six new renal chairs. The Manning Valley area, through a public-private arrangement, has magnetic resonance imaging facilities and a cardiac catheterisation laboratory that has been doing diagnostic work but soon will be starting interventionist work. This is tremendous news for health services in the Manning-Great Lakes area. However, most people are interested in the redevelopment of Manning Base Hospital, which previously had a new emergency department, a new mental health unit and a new community health unit. Stage one of a three-stage process will now begin with the redevelopment of the back half of the hospital and funding of \$20 million for the planning has been finalised and is with Treasury.

This Government has delivered record numbers of police to New South Wales, requiring an increase in the budget. The authorised strength in the Manning-Great Lakes Local Area Command has been boosted by 16, comprising 12 general duties police and four detectives. Police equipment has been upgraded, including a mobile command centre and planning is in progress for a multimillion dollar upgrade to Taree police station. I commend local police for the phenomenal job that they do. Members would remember hearing on the news recently about the horrific situation where police executed a search warrant on a property in Elands where an eight-year-old child had been locked in a container for several weeks. Police also found under a hydraulically moving deck a further two containers and within those containers was a hydroponic set-up for cannabis.

In the past few weeks police have raided the Rebels bikie gang headquarters at Taree and Gloucester, arresting nine people on charges relating to the horrendous drug ice, firearms and other offences. Further raids were carried out on a trucking company in Taree that was supplying and dealing in the drug ice. Those police are to be commended. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research figures for the Manning-Great Lakes Local Area Command show a drop in many categories of serious crime, or at least



a plateau; there has been no increase in any of the crime categories. Figures often go up and down relative to the arrest rate with drugs so with the increased arrests I expect to see a spike in those numbers in the near future.

In education New South Wales under this Government was the first State to sign up to Gonski. We did so because we realised that those in regional and lower socio-economic areas would benefit the most. The Minister for Education and the Government started introducing policies before Gonski came out because of our relationship with those on the committee, for example, Kathryn Greiner and Gonski. Through dialogue with the Minister, the office and the department we knew that things such as Local Schools, Local Decisions would be included in the Gonski reforms. We introduced those reforms before we even signed up to Gonski. What does Gonski mean for the Myall Lakes electorate?

We have RAMS. The Independent candidate at the last election during a committee meeting referred to that as being repairs and maintenance so it was irrelevant. Of course RAMS stands for resource allocation model, which means that every child in New South Wales receives the same amount of funding at the same base rate but as the needs of a particular child increases so does the funding towards that child. In 2013 the RAMS funding for schools in my electorate was about \$4.5 million but it is now \$11.5 million. What are the principals doing with the extra money? They have the ability to employ extra staff. They are employing a specialist remedial teacher and three or four assistants to provide more intensified one-on-one lessons and assistance to individual children with problems.

We know there are students who are falling between the cracks; they attend high school without having the foundation stones of education. In fact, we find some students are attending university without having the foundation stones in place. RAMS funding identifies those children early and provides remedial intensive assistance for students. It could be one-on-one in a private area but even though the role of the assistant teacher is to look after a particular child, rather than the stigma and embarrassment of one-on-one teaching, the assistant teacher may go into the classroom and assist other children but at the same time target the particular child or children who need assistance. That is a fantastic initiative for my electorate.

There are also two connected community schools in my electorate. Connected communities are being trialled in New South Wales and of the more than 2,000 schools in New South Wales 13 are part of the trial, two being in the Myall Lakes electorate—Taree High and Taree Public School. Those schools were selected because of their high Aboriginal population and children with need. I speak with the principals of both schools on a regular basis and they report they are receiving fantastic outcomes. For Taree Public School a fantastic outcome is to get the children to go to school in the first place. One cannot educate a child if he or she does not attend school.

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The school is introducing programs to encourage them to come to school, such as a breakfast club, first thing in the morning. It has created time-out rooms. The school is also promoting community involvement through the Connected Communities program. It fosters a connection between the school and the community the children come from. The school has several Aboriginal liaison officers who are part of both the school and the community. We were able to obtain funding for Aboriginal education resources at the school. Classrooms in the school display a number of Aboriginal cultural items, items of significance. This promotes a connection between the school, the children and their community. In the past four years a considerable amount of money has been allocated to new schools and school infrastructure in regional New South Wales.

**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.**

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) [4.31 p.m.]: For too long government after government in New South Wales has seen the need for local government reform but has put it in the too-hard basket. The history of this State is replete with attempts to reform local government. The same arguments against reform have been trotted out, decade after decade. I thank residents who have signed the petition and provided an opportunity to talk about reform in this House today. This time, the Government is taking action. There will be reform to local government in New South Wales. I acknowledge the Attorney General, the member for Vaucluse. She is a strong advocate for her constituents, and her contribution to this debate is welcome.

Sydney needs councils that are willing to look beyond their own boundaries, to understand their role in regional leadership and their responsibility for building the network of neighbourhoods that comprise the city. Sydney needs councils that can help us to deliver the housing, jobs and infrastructure that this growing city so urgently needs. We need a modern, connected system of local government that reflects the way we live. Ultimately, communities will be the beneficiaries of local government reform, through better services, better infrastructure and better value. This Government is committed to reforms that will benefit every community in the future. That is why the Government, as part of those reforms, has put forward a number of merger proposals.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I remind the member for Port Stephens that she is already on three calls to order.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** This has been a four-year journey. The local government sector came to the Government more than four years ago and asked it to help the sector to remain sustainable for the long term. It asked for government help to keep delivering the essential services and infrastructure that our communities deserve. That was the genesis of the Fit for the Future process.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I direct the Clerk to stop the clock. I call the member for Shellharbour to order.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Over the past four years there has been extensive research, analysis and consultation. We have consulted with every council in New South Wales. We have commissioned independent assessments. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] found that two-thirds of councils were not fit for the future. We have collected feedback from communities and stakeholders. We have asked councils to name their merger preferences. Unfortunately, some councils want nothing to change. They have taken the view that local government reform is necessary but not in their backyard. They are saying, "Leave us alone; we are okay." I note that some councils also put forward a merger preference when asked. It is unfortunate that some are advocating for no change and have made a number of claims that are without factual basis.

They say that rates will go up and that the quality of services will go down. They talk of loss of heritage and loss of trees. They say that swimming pools will close and senior citizens' centres will close. It is simply not true. We know that fewer councils are only part of the solution for Sydney. Experts have been telling us that for decades. But while the Government has been focused on delivering meaningful change, better services and facilities for New South Wales communities, it seems some councils have been focused on delivering anti-merger campaigns. They say that they are advocating on behalf of the community. The reality is that they are advocating for themselves.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Wyong and the member for Port Stephens from the Chamber for the remainder of the day.

*[Pursuant to standing order the member for Wyong and the member for Port Stephens left the Chamber at 4.36 p.m. accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]*

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The Independent Local Government Review panel, as part of the Fit for the Future assessment, found that:

Taxpayers should not be expected to increase grant funding indefinitely to support councils that are unnecessarily small, lack capacity and build excessive costs into the system.

The overwhelming finding of that report was that properly managed mergers produce stronger, more effective councils and, importantly, that community identity can be maintained. George Brougham wrote in a letter to the *Wentworth Courier* on 24 February that when councils merged in Melbourne in the 1990s the sun rose the next day, the bins were still collected and the public gardens were maintained. The Government put forward its proposal and is undertaking an extensive process of community consultation. Reports on that consultation are being prepared by independent delegates. They will go to the Local Government Boundaries Commission for comment. No decision has been made on any matter. I will consider the reports from the delegates and the boundaries commission before making a decision.

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [4.37 p.m.]: I would like to know why, when a petition is presented by more than 10,000 people in the electorate of Vacluse, we have not yet heard from the member for Vacluse. I would like to know why the member for Vacluse is not the first person to stand up in this Chamber and advocate for the interests of the people in her area. I would like to know what her view is. She has spoken locally about being opposed to the forced amalgamation. Does she adhere to the decision of the Executive, as Attorney General, or does she back local people?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Drummoyne will resume his seat.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** The Westminster principle is quite clear. If she does not support the Government of which she is a member, she should resign. Is the member for Vacluse going to stand with the people of Woollahra or with her own Government? I will tell members what the policy of the Government was when it was elected. This is a letter written by the Leader of the Liberal Party, the Leader of The Nationals and Paul Toole, the member for Bathurst. It says:

We believe the amalgamation of councils should only be as a result of mutual agreement.

It should not be forced by State Government intervention.

That was the written promise given by the then leaders of the Coalition parties and the current Minister for Local Government, when he was a candidate. Not only that, a newspaper article headed "Toole: it's a promise" quoted the member for Bathurst as follows:

Mr Toole reiterated the NSW Liberals and Nationals' long standing opposition to forced council amalgamations.

"A Liberals and Nationals government will also ensure there are no forced council amalgamations," Mr Toole said.

That is the position. I seek leave to table those documents.

**Leave not granted.**

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**Mr RON HOENIG:** The Liberal and Nationals parties went to an election last March. Did they

seek a mandate from the people? They went to an election that they could not lose. If ever they were going to use up some political capital and get the support of the people then that was it. They could have gone to the people and said that they could no longer adhere to their written promise. We kept asking the Government whether it would adhere to its written promise and it refused to reply. This local government reform concept was initiated by local government; the Minister was perfectly right about that. Very few people in this House disagree with the concept that reform is needed. But there is a right way in which to do it, and there is a way in which to do it that is competent.

The Government had Professor Sansom conduct a review. The Government could have referred it to the boundaries commission two or three years ago. Even if the Government wanted to bodgie up the boundaries politically, if it had done it through the boundaries commission at least it would have got councils that worked instead of this proposal to which the Woollahra Municipal Council is opposed. The Government keeps talking about communities of interest. I ask the Government members: What is the community of interest between La Perouse and Watsons Bay? Can Government members tell me that?

Where are the council chambers going to be? Are they going to be in Double Bay? Is the member for Maroubra going to have to take his public housing tenants from South Maroubra to Double Bay to access council services? Are they going to add to the Double Bay economy? They would not even have enough money to spend at the Sheaf Hotel in Double Bay. That is what this Government is talking about with this proposal, which is just stupid. Woollahra council wanted to stand alone. The Government had a policy of no forced amalgamations. Even if it could not sustain that why did the Government not go to the council and say, "Look, you are not sustainable. You cannot stand alone. You must come back to us with another option." I can tell the Government that neither Waverley council nor Randwick council want Woollahra added to their area for the very same reason.

The Minister promised Randwick council that if it complied with Fit for the Future, it would be supported. The Randwick-Waverley merger was found to be fit for the future, and then the Government decided to add Woollahra to it. The only thing I am surprised about is that the Government did not shove Woollahra into the Sydney council area to try to gerrymander it and get rid of Clover Moore. That is the thing that really surprised me in relation to this. Those who know anything about Woollahra, and I have to say that those opposite should know more about Woollahra than I do—and my children went to Moriah College—would know that most of that population does not go south of Bondi Junction. There is effectively no community of interest in relation to this proposal. Is it any wonder that the Tories of Woollahra have lost confidence in their own government?

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I acknowledge Councillor Toni Zeltzer, the Mayor of Woollahra Municipal Council, in the public gallery. I hope all our visitors are enjoying the show.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON** (Vaucluse—Attorney General) [4.42 p.m.]: I too welcome local Woollahra residents to the public gallery today, in particular Mayor Zeltzer. I debate this petition and discuss the important issues raised by those who have signed it. The future of Woollahra Municipal Council is something that many in my community are passionate about. This reflects their civic pride and a real sense of shared identity. Like them, I love the areas represented by Woollahra Municipal Council and its community—most of which fall within my electorate of Vaucluse. It has much to do with what is unique about the area.

We reach out to Sydney Harbour and to the coast. We value our deep and rich history and heritage which is directly linked to early colonial Sydney. We nurture our tree-lined streets and we are custodians of our flora and fauna and the unique beauty of our national parks. What is more, we warmly welcome others who come to visit and to live. We are diverse, we are generous and we are proud of that all. It is that sense of community spirit that binds us. Our Woollahra councillors have served the community well over the years. Councillors give generously of their time, intellect and passion to make our community a better place. I take this opportunity to thank them strongly for their commitment. Our council has an exemplary record. It manages its finances prudently and acquits itself professionally, and

for this we are also thankful. I acknowledge that opinion is divided on the potential benefits of council amalgamations.

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It must be remembered that we are part of a wider community—not just in the eastern suburbs but in the city more generally and in our great State. Communities are more than a nameplate on a rate notice. Communities are about shared priorities—like open spaces, lifestyles and history. Community is not defined by lines on a rate notice. The line defines who picks up rubbish, runs libraries, and maintains roads and footpaths, but these services do not make up the community—people do.

That brings us to the matter at hand. Our current system of councils across New South Wales reflects the past, not the future. Relatively small, stand-alone councils have worked well but can they deliver all the infrastructure, services and support in as cost-effective and coordinated a way as large councils can? This Government is committed to transforming the system of local government and ensuring that the best possible services, support and infrastructure is available across New South Wales. The current merger proposal process continues with the community consultation on local government reform that began back in 2011. All communities across the State deserve the very best now and for generations to come. We must have the best for all in my local communities. As the local member, I will always work hard to support this outcome.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [4.45 p.m.]: Woollahra Municipal Council area includes my constituents in parts of Paddington, Woollahra and Edgecliff. They tell me that they do not want their services disrupted and they do not want their rates raised by an unnecessary forced amalgamation with Randwick and Waverly. Woollahra residents overwhelmingly support keeping their council as a standalone. Eighty-one per cent of those surveyed expressed support for existing boundaries and 80 per cent opposed forced amalgamations. More than 10,000 people have signed this petition. The council does not support the proposed merger.

Councils play an essential role in creating attractive, prosperous, healthy, safe and sustainable places to live, work and do business. It is vital that they reflect their communities' wants and needs, as Woollahra council continues to do. But the Government's plan to reduce Sydney's councils from 43 to 25 does not respect the community's wishes. There are a number of risks for Woollahra council residents. Independent analysis by Woollahra council identifies potential rate increases of up to 53 per cent under the proposed merger. This defies the Government's stated justification for forced amalgamations: lower rates.

While last year the Government committed to maintaining existing rates for the next four years, we are yet to see guarantees, and rates will likely rise after this period. A larger amalgamated council may not be able to cater for the specific neighbourhood policies that have protected Woollahra as rules get standardised and local expertise is lost. Woollahra council's local environment plan and development control plan recognise the uniqueness of the heritage conservation areas of Paddington and Woollahra and provide specific protections. These go beyond heritage protections in other areas, which recognise only facades, to also protect interiors. This has occurred partly due to the local knowledge within the council; a larger council is less likely to be able to produce such locally sensitive policies.

As with all councils earmarked for amalgamation, grassroots local representation and access to decision-makers are at risk, with fewer opportunities for community input to policy development. Efficiencies will not necessarily improve because larger organisations need more administration and management resources. There will be short-term costs and disruptions as staff, planning controls, rating categories, services and IT systems are combined. The council successfully argued in its Fit for the Future submission that it is economically viable and able to deliver community and social benefits. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] identified Woollahra Municipal Council as being fit for the future on all criteria except the Government imposed size criterion.

There is no evidence that merging financially weak councils would make an economically

sustainable council that delivers the same or better services, and there are real risks for financially strong councils such as Woollahra. Woollahra is a unique area and there is no social or economic reason to change its local governance structure. The proposed amalgamation agenda seems to be more about "bigger is better" ideology and gerrymandering by those in power. It is not what our community has asked for. I acknowledge the work of the Mayor of Woollahra and Councillor Luise Elsing, who are in the gallery today. I know that the concerns about what the Government is doing have got to the stage where they have sought legal advice, which they have provided to the Government. The passion of the 10,000 petitioners shows that this fight is far from over.

**Ms JENNY LEONG** (Newtown) [4.48 p.m.], by leave: I support the petition against the forced amalgamation of Woollahra council. I acknowledge the Mayor of Woollahra, who is in the public gallery, and the more than 10,000 people who have come together to sign this petition. It is quite bizarre that the Minister for Local Government—the person who is forcing this amalgamation on the council—is the one in this Chamber who is talking about a petition against forced amalgamations. One could read that as being a small change of heart, but I do not hold out too much hope. Let me be clear: The Greens are opposed to any forced amalgamations. We support strong, local representation and, unlike this Government, we are supporters of democracy.

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**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Kiama will come to order. The member for Rockdale will come to order. The member for Oatley will come to order.

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** We are supporters of local representation, just like the 81 per cent of residents of Woollahra who have said that they do not support an amalgamation. This is an overwhelming majority. A forced amalgamation with Randwick City Council and Waverly Council will yield no discernible returns or gains for Woollahra residents, and poses devastating consequences. There is not a single report that supports this amalgamation. The Baird Government has refused to release reports from KPMG analysing the costs and impacts of 35 forced council amalgamations. If the Government's business case setting out the reason for this amalgamation were robust and gave unambiguous support for its politically driven merger plans, it would certainly have been released.

We are watching very closely the legal action and the challenge that is played out. We think that the Government should be very concerned. It appears to be that the argument presented by Woollahra council is that the Government is improperly using section 218A through to section 218F of the Local Government Act to force council amalgamations when those sections were intended only to facilitate voluntary amalgamations—not forced amalgamations. As the Minister said when these provisions were being inserted into the Local Government Act:

This bill proposes amendments to the Local Government Act to assist councils which seek voluntary amalgamation.

It is interesting that the Minister for Local Government has tabled this petition when he is the one who is forcing this reform agenda, which is being driven by an unprincipled and undemocratic right-wing Coalition Government. The Greens remain committed to working with Woollahra residents and communities across the State, whether they be in those councils of Marrickville, Leichhardt and Ashfield that are covered by my electorate, or those with Woollahra that are being forced to amalgamate because it just makes things easier for this Government to push its agenda through. It will silence local community representation. As a result, the Government will continue to be able to destroy our communities and to make our cities less liveable. I congratulate everyone who signed this petition.

**Discussion concluded.**

**Pursuant to sessional order Community Recognition Statements proceeded with.**

## **COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS**

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## JORDAN HARWOOD

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [5.52 p.m.]: I congratulate 21-year-old Jordan Harwood, who is a third-year apprentice at Tuncurry Smash Repairs, who competed in the World Skill Apprenticeship competition, State level, and got a silver placing, being just one point off gold. He was ably trained by the owners of the business, Steve McCall and the manager, Sean McCall. Jordan is passionate about his Indigenous culture and has undertaken a TAFE course to improve the use of the Gathang language. He is also a voting member of the Local Aboriginal Land Council. In October 2016 Jordan will attend the national round of the World Skills apprenticeship competition where he hopes to take out gold.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! Standing Order 56 requires all members in this Chamber to be seated unless they are speaking. If members wish to have private conversations they should do so outside the Chamber.

## SHINE CHOIR

**Ms TRISH DOYLE** (Blue Mountains) [5.53 p.m.]: I congratulate members of the Shine Choir. Formed in 2012, Shine brings together a diverse range of singers, some with previous singing experience and others who are just discovering their talents. They perform whenever and wherever they have the opportunity to. Under the leadership of Nicole Giezekamp-Bakija—a trained opera singer—Shine is heading for New York to perform in the Lincoln Center for Performing Arts as part of the Distinguished Concerts International New York [DCINY]. Taking Shine to New York is no easy feat. With crowd-funding helping to realise the choir members dream, they have garnered support from all corners of our Blue Mountains community and beyond. Their passion and commitment shines through the many, many hours of practice. I acknowledge Nikki for her tireless efforts over the past three years. Without her vision and energy New York would remain a dream. I also acknowledge the choir members for their many hours of hard work, including my friends Roger Grealy and Angelique Henson. Shine Choir is doing the Blue Mountains City of the Arts proud.

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## TRIBUTE TO BRUCE GRIMLEY

**Ms ELENi PETINOS** (Miranda) [4.54 p.m.]: I acknowledge Mr Bruce Grimley of Miranda, who will sadly be stepping down as President of the Miranda RSL Sub-Branch this Sunday 13 March 2016. Whilst Bruce has served as president for the past four years, his active participation in the sub-branch has spanned more than 30 years. His dedication and tireless advocacy as president will not be forgotten, in particular his legacy in relocating and refurbishing the Miranda War Memorial from Central Road to Seymour Shaw Park. Bruce has also devoted his energy to Gynea Community Aid, organising the men's group that meets regularly and offers companionship and comradery to those who attend. Bruce is an example of a local hero—although being as humble as he is, he would never admit it. It is the hard and often thankless work of people like Bruce that not only makes our shire the best place to live, work and raise a family, but also embodies the Australian spirit of giving back. I thank Bruce for all that he has done for our community and extend my best wishes for the future.

## TRIBUTE TO RHODA ROBERTS

**Ms TAMARA SMITH** (Ballina) [4.55 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge the incredible work of well-known writer, director, producer and patron of the arts Rhoda Roberts. From 1992 to 2014 Rhoda was producer of Vibe Australia. She was also creative director of Sydney New Year's Eve and festival director of the Garma Festival, produced by the Yothu Yindi Foundation. She was a co-founding member of Australia's first national Aboriginal theatre company, the Aboriginal National Theatre Trust. She is currently Head of Indigenous Programming, Sydney Opera House; Creative Director, Rhoda Roberts

Gallery and Events; and Festival Director, Boomerang Festival. Rhoda is a member of the Bundjalung nation, Widjabul clan of northern New South Wales and south-east Queensland. The Boomerang Festival, held in conjunction with the Byron Bay Blues Festival, brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from all over Australia showcasing an array of music, dance, theatre, comedy, film and visual arts. Rhoda Robert's Boomerang vision brings people from all over the world to the Byron shire to celebrate and appreciate world-class artistry and the oldest living culture on the planet.

### **RIVERWOOD COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [4.56 p.m.]: I acknowledge the wonderful work that Riverwood Community Services does to support and develop a safer community in Riverwood and the St George area. Riverwood Community Services was established in 1974 and has been serving the community ever since. Riverwood Community Services provides high-quality programs to individuals and the community in the areas of aged care, disability services, youth work, family support, children's services and domestic violence. Recently I met with the chief executive officer of Riverwood Community Services, Ms Pauline Gallagher, to discuss the challenges faced by the organisation and to receive an update on local issues and concerns. I congratulate Pauline and her team at Riverwood Community Services on all they do to assist those in our community to be empowered and supported, and for advocating for some of the most vulnerable people in the St George area.

### **JUNIOR LIFESAVER OF THE YEAR DYLAN BARRETT**

**Ms KATHY SMITH** (Gosford) [4.57 p.m.]: On Sunday 14 February I am proud to say that Dylan Barrett, a young man in my electorate, won the 2015-2016 Newcastle Permanent Junior Lifesaver of the Year award. Dylan is a 14-year-old student of Gosford High School and is an active member of Ocean Beach Surf Life Saving Club, doing nippers each and every Sunday. He also plays tennis at Woy Woy Tennis Centre and soccer for Woy Woy Soccer Club. The Newcastle Permanent Junior Lifesaver of the Year award recognises achievements of under-14s in surf lifesaving as well as contributions that have been made to surf lifesaving at all levels in the community. Clubs across the State are invited to submit one male and one female nominee for the award. Following the initial nomination, the nominee undertakes a process that is divided into a theory test, signals, a scenario and a final interview. I thank Dylan for his contribution to keeping our local community and visitors safe, and congratulate him on this outstanding achievement. The Central Coast is in good hands.

### **AVOCA KAYAK CLUB MEMBERS OLYMPIC SELECTION**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [4.58 p.m.]: Today I congratulate two outstanding champions from Avoca Kayak Club on the Central Coast. Nineteen-year-old Riley Fitzsimmons and his teammate Lachlan Tame will be heading to the Rio Olympics after qualifying at the Kayak National Titles in Perth last week. Lachlan and Riley will join a seven-man team for Canoeing Australia to represent Australia in the Rio Olympic Games in August this year. Riley Fitzsimmons began his career in 2012 and exceeded his expectations when he joined the senior crew last year in the world championship, when he realised that the Rio Olympics were a possibility.

"It's been all sacrifices but it's paid off and I'm so pumped right now," Fitzsimmons said.

Both men have put their heart and soul into training for this year's Olympics and we wish them well to bring home gold.

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### **CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION OF SYDNEY TAMILS**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT** (Prospect) [4.59 p.m.]: 4.59. On Saturday 5 March I was pleased to be a guest at the Catholic Association of Sydney Tamils silver jubilee with Bishop Joseph Ponniah of Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. For 25 years the Catholic Association of Sydney Tamils has been a voice for



Catholic Tamils, particularly in my Western Sydney electorate of Prospect. Millions of Catholics reside in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. In fact, Catholics make up 6 per cent of the Sri Lankan population. Thousands are now proud to call Australia home, whether they came to escape persecution, make a new start in life or were born here. I thank the committee of the Catholic Association of Sydney Tamils, made up of Thayaharan, Antonitte Jesuthan, Santhiya Sylvester, John Kennedy, Anton Priris, Arul Sylvester, Charles Pitchai, Dhamayanthy Rajendra, Mercy Sylvester, Jovan Titus, Reverend Father Robert William, Michael Jesuthan, Victor St George and Madonna Gnanapragasam, for organising a great event and for their leadership in our community.

### **MILTON SHOW**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.00 p.m.]: As part of the wonderful Milton Show last weekend a special event occurred that involved the re-enactment of an event that happened 100 years ago through the town of Milton. The special event involved the assembling of a team of 24 bullocks just as they had been a century earlier when they were photographed in the main street before they continued their journey further south, transporting a boiler to Bimberamala near Nelligen. To accurately recreate the event the closure of the Princes Highway through Milton was required, necessitating input from Shoalhaven City Council, the NSW Police Force, and Roads and Maritime Services [RMS]. With limited lead time and in effect only days to work together, the agencies cooperated in the best interests of the community to ensure that the dream of the Milton Show Society could become a reality.

I thank Sergeant Adam Cooper for his support, leadership and cooperation. I also thank Wayne Schnoor and Ben Stewart from Shoalhaven City Council for their assistance and determination to work with the community and for their leadership. However, RMS was the agency that needed to ensure the safety of all concerned as it had to consider vehicle traffic diversions through Milton, where narrow streets always present a challenge. In particular, I acknowledge Danny Benedetti, RMS traffic commander, without whom the event would not have occurred. Finally, I thank for her intelligent, considerate and visionary leadership Renae Elrington, RMS regional manager, who is an exceptional asset to the team in the Illawarra.

### **NEWTOWN HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ms JENNY LEONG** (Newtown) [5.01 p.m.]: I draw the attention of Parliament to the recent announcement by Newtown High School regarding changes to its uniform policy. I congratulate the students who have lobbied successfully for an updated policy that removes reference to gender and allows students to wear the uniform they feel most comfortable in. I acknowledge the staff and administration of Newtown High School who are responsible for implementing the change to the uniform policy. It is an important revision that reflects the diversity of students and recognises the need to be inclusive of such diversity. I congratulate Newtown High School on offering a safe and supportive environment that allows students to focus on their education without fear of intimidation or harassment. I hope that other schools and workplaces follow the example set by Newtown High School in promoting an inclusive and supportive environment by removing unnecessary gender-based rules and protocols around clothing.

### **CLARENCE VALLEY BMX CLUB**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.02 p.m.]: I offer my congratulations to the Clarence Valley BMX Club, which had four of its members achieve five Australian plate rankings at the Australian national championship titles held recently at Bathurst. Stacey Brown was successful in the 13-14 girls 24 inch class and took out fifth place ranking in the final. Tahlia Marsh took out two Number 7 Australian plates, one in the 13 girls 20 inch and one in the 13-14 girls 24 inch class. Josh Marsh took out the Number 7 plate in the 15-16 boys 24 inch class and Nick Marsh took out the Number 4 plate in the 17-24 men's 24 inch class. I make special mention of all other members of the club

who participated at the national championships, including Alex, Ryan and Jake Hyatt; Britney and George Cole; and Brendan, James and Greg Brown. I congratulate all of the athletes on their wonderful achievements.

### **OAK FLATS RURAL FIRE BRIGADE**

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [5.03 p.m.]: Although we will not face Christmas for another nine months, I take this opportunity to record the fantastic work of the Oak Flats Rural Fire Brigade in spreading the spirit of the festive season over the past 34 years. Every year the Oak Flats Rural Fire Brigade bands together with the St Vincent de Paul Society as part of the annual Vinnies Christmas Appeal. When the appeal started 34 years ago the Oak Flats Rural Fire Brigade collected one washing basket full of food. Last year the crew collected enough food, toys and cash to help 800 local needy families. I pay tribute to the Oak Flats Rural Fire Brigade and to the St Vincent de Paul Society for the contribution they make to helping local families in need.

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### **WINSTON HILLS GIRL GUIDES**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR** (Seven Hills) [5.04 p.m.]: This afternoon I recognise the great work of the Winston Hills Girl Guides, especially Kay Stoddart and her unit, the Winston Hills Gumnut Guides. I want to make mention of their fantastic efforts last Sunday 6 March when they joined me and the Hills community for the Clean Up Australia Day event at the Third Settlement Reserve in Winston Hills. I was amazed to see how willing the guides were to protect such an important historical site from the scourge of litter. It is fitting that shortly after International Women's Day we celebrate our leaders of tomorrow who are being nurtured through the Girl Guides movement at Winston Hills. Not only are they learning lifelong skills that will make them community focussed, independent, successful women but they are having fun and making friends at the same time. The Girl Guides at Winston Hills is an invaluable part of the Seven Hills community and I commend them and their great work to the House.

### **BATTLE OF VINEGAR HILL**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [5.05 p.m.]: I recognise the commemoration held on 6 March for the Battle of Vinegar Hill. The commemoration was held at Castle Hill Memorial Park. It was the 212th anniversary of the 1804 clash between Irish and other rebel convicts and the armed forces and armed militia of the colony. Many of the Irish were veterans of the 1798 Irish rebellion. They rose in Sydney, having heard of Emmet's rebellion in Ireland. The master of ceremonies for the event was Mike Bailey. Councillor Susai Benjamin welcomed attendees on behalf of the host, Blacktown City Council.

A special address was provided by historian Jeff Kildea, who is known to many of us. Also addressing the event were John Lazanas of Castle Hill memorial parks and Allen Drew. The member for Prospect was also present. Sean Flavin and Tom and Christine Gleeson from Friends of Vinegar Hill have been crucial to ongoing commemoration of the events of 1804 and participated in the most recent event. Music was provided by Eileen McCann and the Simply Voices choir. The Australian Battle of Vinegar Hill speaks to important themes in Irish and Australian history. It was a pleasure to attend the event. Erin go bragh.

### **TRIBUTE TO JON ENGLISH**

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY** (Oxley) [5.06 p.m.]: I acknowledge the very sad passing of Australian entertainment legend Jon English. Born in Hampstead, London, 1949, he moved to Australia with his family when he was 12. Ten years ago he moved to the mid North Coast, living at Bellingen in the Oxley electorate, and later at Boambee. The mid North Coast was proud that he chose to reside in our region and many local performers, like my mate Deb Leaney, have enjoyed performing alongside him over many years.

I reminisced today with the member for Tweed, who during his time working in clubs throughout New South Wales and later in the Tweed regularly booked John English. He reflected that Jon loved life and lived it hard but he was always the consummate professional. He said he was a delight to work with and could be guaranteed to fill a venue. I remember seeing Jon English at the Twin Towns club in the 1980s. I left the concert overcome with the power of his performance. The very talented member for Tamworth, Kevin Anderson, who was lucky enough to jam with Jon on a number of occasions, said that he was an incredibly generous performer and Jon let him take the lead on *Hollywood Sevens*, an experience he will never forget. Jon English was a star of the stage and screen and his legacy of song writing and music will be enjoyed for generations. Tie me six ribbons. Vale Jon English.

### **TRIBUTE TO DR PETER BENSON**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG** (Macquarie Fields) [5.07 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to talk about Dr Peter Benson, a retired 91-year-old dentist and former proud Hurlstonian from 1938 to 1942. Dr Benson still lives on the property where he was born and has seen our community change from farmland to being filled with families from all over the world calling Ingleburn home. He lived through the Great Depression and at a time when he did not have electricity at home and caught the steam train to school. He has camped on the Amazon River and explored Iran, yet his heart and home is always Ingleburn.

Despite his age, Dr Benson is still active in our community. His garden is both his passion and his retreat. After receiving his dentistry scholarship, for which he wrote his thesis on how hypnosis can help pain management, he opened practices in south-west Sydney. He counted former Prime Minister E. G. Whitlam, AC, QC, as both a valued patient and a dear friend. His philosophical views came from his father. He tells me, "It is better to be lucky in life than rich". Spoken like a true gentleman. As a proud Hurlstonian, he wants to make sure other kids in south-west Sydney obtain the same Hurlstone education experience at Glenfield. It is a privilege for me to represent people such as Dr Benson.

### **BENJI MARSHALL, EX SERVICES JUNIOR CRICKET CLUB**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [5.08 p.m.]: I recognise today Armidale 13-year-old and O'Connor Catholic College year 8 student Benji Marshall who, much like his namesake, has caught the imagination of the sporting fraternity. Benji, who plays for the Ex-Services Junior Cricket Club, has found himself atop the My Cricket Australia batting averages list. It is a compilation of batting averages not just in Armidale but throughout the country and encompasses every age group and gender from juniors to the senior competition. This year in 12 innings he has been dismissed only once. He has a run average of 510, well ahead of the second highest average in Australia at the moment. In his last innings Benji had to score 45 runs to achieve the highest average in Australia and he did so easily, making another 50 runs before retiring.

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I also acknowledge Benji's father, Robert, who has thrown numerous balls to Benji in the cricket nets and note that the bat Benji has hit more than 1,500 runs with was a \$10 special. Well done, Benji.

### **MS JILL HALL, FEDERAL MEMBER FOR SHORTLAND**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [5.10 p.m.]: Tonight I pay tribute to Jill Hall, the Federal member for Shortland, on her wonderful parliamentary career. Jill has announced that she will retire at the upcoming Federal election. She has served the community for more than 30 years, her career spanning local, State and Federal politics. Indeed, Jill served in this place as the member for Swansea from 1995 to 1998 before making the move to Canberra where she has served as the Federal member for Shortland for more than 18 years. Our community has the utmost respect for Jill Hall.

The greatest testament to a politician's work is that our constituents know that they can come to us for help. Jill has that trust. When I was campaigning for the 2015 election every second person would

tell me stories about the excellent representation they received from Jill. I still often hear people say, "I know Jill, she helped me." Jill is hardworking and tenacious and will never give up the good fight. She will be warmly remembered as a champion for the rights of Australians with disability as well as the great Labor idea of equality for all.

### **LEADERSHIP ILLAWARRA PROGRAM**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.11 p.m.]: This week in Parliament I was very pleased to host a joint luncheon with the member for Shellharbour for participants in the Leadership Illawarra Program, which is supported by Regional Development Australia Illawarra. I acknowledge chief executive officer Natalie Burroughs, who is also chair of the Leadership Illawarra Program Steering Committee, chairman Eddy De Gabriele, and deputy chair Warwick Shanks.

The program participants included Tony Elshof, Family Services Illawarra, Coordinator, Communications, Information and Marketing; Jen White, principal of Jen White Communications—Jen was formerly the deputy editor of the *Illawarra Mercury*—Heather Marciano, Greenacres, NDIS transition project manager—Heather was instrumental in the development of the IRT Kemira facility at Kanahooka, which I joined with Minister for Disability Services John Ajaka to officially open recently—Dr Alison Freeman, UOW Enterprises, Academic Governance and Performance manager; Sarah Wilson, Bellambi Neighbourhood Centre manager; Michael Willis, Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Aboriginal employment advisor; Nick Guggisberg, Kiama Municipal Council, Community and Cultural Development manager; Michelle Formosa, Wollongong City Council, Land and Asset Systems Coordinator; and Michael McKeogh, owner, Fibre Optics Design and Construct—Fibre Optics Design and Construct has won a number of local awards for business.

I also acknowledge the representatives on the steering committee, including Janine Cullen, OAM, who is the president of the Illawarra Business Chamber and principal of the Power of One Media and Communications; and Graham Lancaster, principal of Lancaster Law and Mediation. [*Time expired.*]

### **TET FESTIVAL 2016**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [5.12 p.m.]: I recently attended the 2016 Tet Festival at Fairfield Showground. The Vietnamese Community in Australia, New South Wales Chapter (VCA), hosts the Tet Festival each year to celebrate the Lunar New Year. The celebrations bring tens of thousands of visitors from across Sydney. The crowds of people, who come from all walks of life, join in to embrace and celebrate the New Year with their Vietnamese brothers and sisters.

This year my Tet Festival experience was very different. I was invited by the VCA to be a special guest judge on its talent show "Tet Factor". The atmosphere on the evening was remarkable. I do not recall a single period where there was not a smiling face as far as the eye could see. I commend and thank the president of the VCA New South Wales Chapter, Mr Tang Ha, David Nguyen, Tu Le, and the organising committee for its outstanding work putting together the 2016 Tet Festival. We all look forward to seeing what the 2017 celebrations have in store.

### **ISABELA GONZALEZ, QUEEN'S GUIDE AWARD**

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT** (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) [5.12 p.m.]: There are few more noble and longstanding endeavours that young people can undertake these days than being a scout or girl guide. The goal of Girl Guides Australia is to be Australia's leading organisation for girls and young women in leadership and professional development. It is very fitting that the seminal award granted to girl guides who excel is called the Queen's Guide Award. I have said before in this Chamber that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is the poster girl for public service across the Commonwealth. I am pleased to congratulate the Hills local, and a future shining light for service and commitment, Isabela Gonzalez, upon receiving the Queen's

Guide Award. I look forward to celebrating with her tomorrow night.

**Community recognition statements concluded.**

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

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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**TRIBUTE TO MRS SINILIA RADIVOJEVIC**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [17.13 p.m.]: Tonight I commend and celebrate the achievements of a local resident whose timeless commitment, care and compassion has made her an invaluable hero for those in need throughout our community. I speak of Mrs Sinilia Radivojevic. Sinilia migrated to Australia from Spain in 1984. Since her arrival she has been a volunteer with the Cancer Council. In that time Sinilia has also been involved in a range of community-based advocacy campaigns. Sinilia has devoted a large amount of time to youth development in soccer as an assistant media manager during the 1993 FIFA Youth World Cup championships in Australia and at the Barcelona Olympics Media Centre in Barcelona, Spain, in 1992.

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In recent years, Sinilia has been championing the cause for the Fairfield Relay for Life in our local area. Since its inception, the Fairfield Relay for Life has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to go towards cancer advocacy, research and support. Sinilia's fundraising campaigns have included hosting the Biggest Morning Tea, functions at local clubs and a range of other works through the Cancer Council.

Sinilia's dedication is not localised to the Cancer Council and their ongoing activities. Sinilia gets out in the community and digs in deep. To facilitate the needs of cancer patients in our region, Sinilia has taken it upon herself to organise gift baskets or hampers that contain groceries and necessities for the patients. These hampers are presented to cancer patients upon their diagnoses or when they are returning home after surgery or treatment. Groceries and day-to-day necessities are just one of those things patients and their families often do not think about in such difficult and debilitating times. When asked what prompted her to begin making hampers for the cancer patients, she responded, "When you are committed to doing something, make sure you do it properly." On top of the tangible assistance Sinilia provides on a regular basis, she also provides hands-on assistance with forms, paperwork or other difficult issues when patients are too sick or unable to take care of matters themselves. Her kindness truly knows no bounds. It is no wonder so many people herald her as a local hero.

Within Sinilia's incredibly busy schedule she continues to find time to work towards new initiatives that will better the lives of residents in the region. One such example is the ongoing campaign Sinilia and other members of the Cancer Council have been driving to assist cancer patients in our region who are attending hospital for cancer treatment. To date, they have successfully secured 30 free parking spots at Westmead Hospital for patients who are attending to undertake treatment for their cancer. This change has made a huge difference for those patients, as they will no longer have to choose between their medications or onerous parking fees when attending to receive treatment. This campaign has not ended with Westmead. Sinilia is working with a Cancer Council committee to advocate for 100 free parking spaces for cancer patients to be made available at Liverpool Hospital.

At Liverpool Hospital cancer patients are required to pay the full parking rate, which is \$25 per day. Pensioners are required to pay \$5 for all-day parking. Although \$5 may not seem like much to some, if one considers the ongoing parking costs for someone who is required to purchase medications and pay for ongoing treatments, and add that on top of the usual cost-of-living expenses, it becomes evident that parking at the hospital to undergo potentially lifesaving treatment rapidly adds up to be unaffordable. Now consider these ongoing parking costs for an individual who is undergoing radiation treatment, who may

undergo chemotherapy, blood tests and a number of other check-ups while admitted to hospital. The patient may need to stay in hospital for several days. The fees continue to add up. I wish Sinilia and the Cancer Council the very best in their campaign for better services and a better quality of life for those who are impacted by cancer throughout New South Wales.

Sinilia is also looking to create an award for a number of youth volunteers who assist cancer patients and go above and beyond the call of duty. The initiative flows through to a more grandiose plan to create the Fairfield Support Group—a long-term dream of Sinilia's—that would serve as an all-round support network that cancer patients could visit to get advice and support, to share experiences and to utilise a number of specific services that would benefit those who are battling cancer. This group would be a vital support service for those who are young, old and in-between, and would tackle smaller things like massages, hairdressing, beauty tips and weight gain while spearheading the more debilitating issues such as depression, isolation and the disconnection that may occur within a family support network.

### WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Minister for Health) [5.18 p.m.]: I am extremely proud of the very large number of women involved in the delivery of health care who were recognised in the 2016 New South Wales Women of the Year Awards. Among them were three women I nominated. First, I appointed Dr Alex Birrell to the 2016 Local Women of the Year Honour Roll for the North Shore. She is a former vet, a PhD and MBA graduate, and an entrepreneur. She is the current chief operating officer of PAFtec, a Sydney-based company developing wearable and easy-to-use respiratory protection.

I awarded Alex \$2.19 million through the 2015 Medical Devices Fund to further develop her CleanSpace respirators—the smallest and lightest powered respirators in the world. These respirators have the potential to vastly improve the protection of healthcare workers from high-risk airborne infectious diseases. Under Alex's stewardship the company has also been awarded several commercialisation grants, international awards for design and innovation, and export awards. In 2010 Alex co-founded Heads Over Heels, a not-for-profit initiative aimed at helping women build high-growth businesses. Alex was the winner of the *Australian Financial Review* and Westpac 100 Women of Influence business enterprise category in 2014.

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Another of my nominees, Dr Dharmica Mistry, was awarded the 2016 Harvey Norman Young Woman of the Year. Dharmica is an exceptional researcher devoted to life-changing medical research around early breast cancer detection, which will impact upon women around the world. She is an inspiration to young women considering a future in medical research and microbiology. The core focus of Dharmica's work is to commercialise a universal groundbreaking breast cancer screening test. She is developing this test through BCAL Diagnostics, a company she co-founded in 2010. I first met Dharmica last year, when I was proud to award her a \$10,000 international engagement scholarship. Dharmica was an outstanding graduate from the NSW Medical Device Commercialisation Training Program. She is also a deserving recipient of the 2015 Young Scientist Award.

The third of my nominees was Professor Sally Dunwoodie in the category of the Premier's Woman of the Year 2016. Although she did not win the award she was a finalist, and I am very proud of her work. Sally, an internationally renowned biomedical researcher at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute, is driven by the belief that every child deserves a healthy start to life. She has dedicated her life's work to helping babies born with birth defects, and she heads the largest Australian genome sequencing initiative in congenital heart disease. Last year I was delighted to award Sally \$370,000 through the NSW Genomics Collaborative Grants Program to further this research. Her love of science also drives her to mentor young people, especially women.

I was delighted to be in the audience last year when, as a former student of Queenwood High School in my electorate, Professor Dunwoodie was a guest speaker. From the response and the reaction of the students, parents and teachers in the room, she was obviously a great inspiration to all of them.

These were just some of the wonderful women who were nominated. Many women who are involved in the delivery of health services either through hospitals or research, such as those I have just outlined, or through fantastic community organisations, were nominated by members across the Chamber—Labor, Liberal and crossbench. I commend every one of those women.

### UPPER HUNTER MINING INDUSTRY

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [5.23 p.m.]: It was with great disappointment that I heard the news that BHP Billiton has advised its Mount Arthur employees that a series of workforce changes will be implemented in the coming weeks to secure the economic sustainability of the thermal coal operation in Muswellbrook in my electorate of Upper Hunter. Unfortunately, 290 people will lose their jobs. Although I understand that the company has taken this tough decision to secure ongoing economic sustainability and to protect remaining jobs at the plant, I feel deeply for those who will lose their jobs.

A retrenched workers program has been made available by the New South Wales Government to assist affected mine staff. Under this program, affected workers can undertake training to upskill or to enter a new career pathway to fill local skills needs. Apprentices and trainees are also supported through the Continuing Apprentices Placement Service, which matches apprentices and trainees with new employers so they can continue their training and gain their qualification.

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My thoughts at this time are with those workers who are affected and their families. I will continue to work hard to encourage business growth in the Upper Hunter electorate, including in the mining industry, to highlight the benefits that our region has to offer potential investors and the job opportunities that business growth affords our communities. Importantly, the mining industry is such an important industry for the Upper Hunter electorate. Despite the tough times, mining continues to make a major contribution. The NSW Minerals Council's latest expenditure survey for the 2014-15 financial year, now completed for a fourth year, demonstrates the scale of mining's contribution to the communities of the Upper Hunter.

In the last financial year there were 4,436 people directly employed in mining and sharing in \$553 million in wages and 985 local businesses supplying the mining industry, sharing in \$837 million in purchases. This represents a \$1.4 billion injection of spending into the Upper Hunter electorate. In the Singleton local government area the survey found that mining companies directly injected \$700 million into Singleton's economy in 2014-15, an important contribution despite tough times for the industry. This \$700 million in direct local mining spending in Singleton included \$266 million in wages to 2,125 full-time employees and \$433 million on purchases, with 561 local businesses, along with the community contributions and payments to local government. This spending in the Singleton local government area represents 35 per cent of the gross regional product of Singleton.

In Muswellbrook mining companies directly injected \$672 million into Muswellbrook's economy in 2014-15. This \$672 million included \$191 million in wages for 1,534 full-time employees and \$481 million on purchases with 287 local businesses, along with the community contributions and payments to local government. This direct mining spending is estimated to have contributed to over 40 per cent of the gross regional product of Muswellbrook. Those facts show the importance of the mining industry in just those two local government areas in the Upper Hunter electorate. We are going through a significant downturn in the mining industry. However, production continues to grow and exports continue to grow through the port of Newcastle, which is the largest coal port in the world.

The mining industry is significantly important to the wider Hunter region. It employs 11,189 people and deals with 3,417 businesses that supply the industry. It also represents around 23.5 per cent of the gross regional product of the Hunter region. While we are experiencing tough times, governments, both State and Federal, need to do everything they can to support people and assist them to transition when unfortunately they lose their jobs—as announced at Mount Arthur this week. We need to put programs in place—and we have done that—to develop their skills to move into other industries or perhaps keep them

going for a little while longer. However, at the end of the day we need to also maintain a diverse economy in the Hunter, and I think the statistics show that we have that.

## GOVERNMENT FISCAL MANAGEMENT

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT** (Prospect) [5.28 p.m.]: I address the House on the Baird Government's ongoing waste of taxpayers' money, especially in the seat of Prospect but also throughout New South Wales. The Baird Government prides itself on good fiscal management, which is a fallacy, but refuses to accept responsibility for its major financial failures. I will refer to some of them, such as the learning management and business reform [LMBR] program, otherwise known as the Department of Education information technology bungle—over budget and three years late. Costs are already at \$587 million, more than \$200 million over budget. Indeed, the cost could go as high as \$1 billion. If the Government had not wasted that money, it could probably have upgraded Fairfield Hospital alone some 33 times. Western Sydney schools would have new classrooms, upgraded facilities, extracurricular activities and, in some cases, a constant and reliable power supply.

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Next is advertising. A total of \$6.5 million was spent on the Tomorrow's Sydney campaign, which did not provide any meaningful information. It comprised lots of pretty billboards with pretty people who provided nothing for the people of New South Wales.

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

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** The Opal man cost \$5 million. How many morph suits were made with this \$5 billion blowout? Is it enough for the Baird Cabinet? The Premier would probably wear a morph suit in question time if it increased the number of likes he received on Facebook. I will talk about the money wasted on the Premier's social media budget in a moment. The Stoner Sloth campaign cost \$350,000. That was a complete waste of money. What impact did the Stoner Sloth have? I look at the member for Ryde with his new hairstyle and beard and wonder if he is following the Stoner Sloth. The council amalgamation campaign cost \$750,000—another waste of money. The Government spent \$170,000 on logo design after it had already developed a number of new logos, including logos for the New South Wales Government and NSW Now. How many times do we need to redesign the waratah?

Let us look at the consultancy fee blowouts. It cost a total of \$30,000 to look after the Premier's social media accounts for 51 days. A consultant tweeted Premier Baird's experience of watching *The Bachelor* when he had "man flu". The same consultant made a video of Mike Baird reading Twitter and listening to Taylor Swift. As if that was not enough, there was a long form Facebook post of Mike Baird having a hissy fit over criticism he received about the lockout laws. It cost \$137,000 to teach employees in the Department of Family and Community Services how to speak and write plain English. This Government paid PricewaterhouseCoopers \$4million for three months of work on gap analysis on a new information technology software in Treasury. What does this financial incompetence mean for the hardworking people of New South Wales? Train fare increases between Western Sydney and the city amount to \$959 a year per commuter. Self-funded retirees have been excluded from using the gold Opal card, which increases their daily fare from \$2.50 to \$9.

**Mr Stuart Ayres:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson):** Order! What is the member's point of order?

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** No points of order are allowed in private members' statements.

**Mr Stuart Ayres:** Point of order—

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson):** Order! The member for Prospect is correct. Points of order are not permitted during private members' statements. The member for Penrith will resume his



seat.

**Mr Stuart Ayres:** No quorums are required during private members' statements.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** I ask that my time be extended. In addition, the Baird Government wasted \$50,000 a day for six days—a total of \$310,000—on market research in the form of focus groups when attempting to decide whether to increase public transport fares. I do not need a focus group to tell the Baird Government to stop wasting taxpayers' money. The Premier's solution of raising the GST is the best one he has come up with to date. The Premier is trying to slug working families with a 50 per cent increase in the GST. Instead of using the GST increase—if it ever happens—to cover his financial mismanagement, the bulk of new GST revenue would only line the pockets of the corporate sector in the form of corporate tax cuts.

**Mr John Sidoti:** Point of order—

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** To show where the Premier's priorities lie, he suggested that corporations should get four times more money than hospitals in the form of corporate tax cuts.

**TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson):** Order! What is the member's point of order?

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** That would be \$8 billion extra cash for corporations— [*Time expired.*]

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**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.33 p.m.]: It is convention in this place for members to use private members' statements to speak about their electorates, to praise people of note and to point out good things that are happening locally. It is disappointing that the member for Prospect has used his time not as an opportunity to talk about the wonderful things that are happening in Prospect but to further a political agenda.

We on this side of the House will not be lectured about waste and mismanagement. Opposition members are the biggest hypocrites on this topic. Who can forget the dodgy pink batts scheme, rolled out and administered by Labor? Who can forget the school hall rip-offs, where millions of dollars were spent on halls that were not needed? What about all the dud green schemes, such as the solar bonus scheme, rolled out by the former Leader of the Opposition? We will not be lectured on waste and mismanagement by hypocrites in the Opposition.

### **LOFTUS PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr LEE EVANS** (Heathcote) [5.35 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the plight of one of my local schools. In fact, it is the school that my boys and I attended: Loftus Public School. An update of the toilet facilities is desperately needed. The school was built in the 1950s. The toilet block was built at the same time. The local community and the school parents and citizens association have been advocating for an upgrade of the facilities. It is high time that this happened. I have been speaking to the Minister and other areas of government to try to find the money to upgrade the toilet facilities. There are many issues with the current facilities. Children have been involved in incidents with the toilets and the fittings. It has been reported to me that one child lost the tip of her finger when it was caught in the door locking mechanism. I understand that that has been fixed, but the underlying issue is that these toilets are 60 years old. They need an urgent refresh and update.

I attended Loftus Public School, as did my two boys. My eldest son would not use the bathrooms at Loftus Public School. That was more than 15 years ago, and he still shudders at the thought. I have been working closely with the parents and citizens committee over many months to bring attention to the facilities, to orchestrate a change. The Loftus parents and citizens committee has bombarded me with more than 150 petitions from families asking me to push for the improvement of the amenities. The parents and citizens association at Loftus has had a strong and supportive community base for many

years. It has raised an inordinate amount of money for various projects to support the children and their school. The children of Loftus Public School deserve a modern standard of amenities at the very least.

### TRIBUTE TO GRAHAM CHAPMAN

**Mr STUART AYRES** (Penrith—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport) [5.37 p.m.]: I make a private member's statement on behalf of the good people of Penrith. Standing Order 108 allows me to do that. I acknowledge the wonderful work of Mr Graham Chapman in developing the Memories of Penrith page on the Facebook site. Whilst reminiscing about his childhood in Llandilo, Graham had the idea of bringing to life the thousands of photos that people across the Penrith region have, allowing them to share stories of their own childhoods. On that evening in 2013, he uploaded a single photo. Many more came after that. From humble beginnings the popularity of the page spread like wildfire, reaching more than 10,000 "likes" within 24 hours. It has now grown to the point where it has more than 35,000 online fans. Graham has gone on to successfully develop the Memories of Sydney and Memories of Blue Mountains pages. One need only view the old photos and read the comments to understand how these pages have touched thousands of people not just in New South Wales but around the world.

Memories of Penrith has not only provided enjoyment for all those who have viewed it; it has also been beneficial in many practical ways. For example, it has helped locate the foundation stone of the building that first provided electricity to the Penrith region. It also brought to light the plight of one of our oldest buildings, Thornton Hall, resulting in its preservation and restoration. UrbanGrowth is doing a good job at the Thornton development site. The Facebook page has helped to educate an entire city on many topics, from how Penrith once hosted the largest outdoor speedway in the country, to how it was the site of Australia's first plane and balloon flight, to how an infamous name such as Jack Donahue, or the Wild Colonial Boy, was captured and killed at Bringelly, just south of Penrith.

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Graham has helped us to relive amazing old images from iconic tourist attractions such as the African lion safari, Bullen's animal world, Australia's wonderland, the magic kingdom, the Mount Druitt water works and other great family fun places that have existed in the greater Penrith and Western Sydney region over the years. He has helped us relive the opening of some iconic infrastructure such as the M4 motorway and Warragamba Dam, which was built by immigrants who came here from all over the world and helped construct one of this State's largest infrastructure projects. He has showcased amazing photos from when Penrith was just a horse and cart town and Jamison Road, the main road in Penrith, was just a dirt road.

Memories of Penrith highlights, as Graham says, an era long gone but never forgotten. He is also planning to launch a website, *MemoriesofPenrith.com.au*, and is currently working on a book release of the same name. In fact, Memories of Penrith has even solved a number of mysteries, including finding the family of a guard tragically killed at Emu Plains prison after being bitten by a redback spider more than 60 years ago. Graham describes his greatest achievement as "joining together two people aged in their seventies who met again and fell in love after not seeing each other for 50 years". It is amazing what a Facebook page can do, particularly when the person behind it is someone as passionate about bringing people together from across the Penrith region as Graham Chapman.

I congratulate Graham Chapman and pay tribute to all those who support the Facebook page from the local region and from around the world. More importantly, Graham has also committed, at a moment's notice, to use Memories of Penrith as an information source to protect our community in times of impending danger or natural disaster. Graham is always there for the Penrith community and the Memories of Penrith Facebook page and website are testament to his commitment and dedication to the people of Penrith and the Blue Mountains. I am sure that Graham Chapman has a full understanding of Standing Order 108.

### WOMEN'S REFUGES

**Ms TRISH DOYLE** (Blue Mountains) [5.41 p.m.]: Tonight I discuss some of the issues that came out of a domestic violence roundtable that I held recently in my electorate. Before I do that, I acknowledge that people on all sides of politics and across the spectrum are concerned about this issue and want to do the very best they can for those in their electorates. I also welcome Jenny Aitchison to the shadow ministry as the shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. I have recently discussed with her some of the issues that arose at the roundtable.

I invited some of the workers, who do their level best at the coalface in this difficult area of domestic violence, to sit around the table and discuss where the gaps are in service delivery and what the problems are. We discussed some of the success stories as well and the hopes that we hold onto as we make changes. Fifty local workers from specialist women's services, health services and community welfare services attended this domestic violence roundtable consultation. I was fortunate to learn from some of the most experienced and skilled workers from the sector.

Having a range of services represented meant that we were able to take a holistic view of the problem of domestic violence and look at what needs to happen to make sure women and children's safety is at the centre of decision-making. The keynote speakers were Roxanne McMurray from Save Our Services and Natasha Ley from Youth Action. At the roundtable we heard about how women's refuges in this State have, sadly, been reduced from 83 specialist services to 14. This is not a good state of affairs. There has been a refusal to acknowledge that this was a mistake and that it places women and children at risk across the State.

In my electorate of the Blue Mountains we lost Blue Gum Women's Housing. Blue Gum provided exit housing for women and children who required medium-term housing once they moved on from the crisis accommodation provided by the local women's refuge. We heard about how the main problem facing domestic violence services is the issue of capacity. There are simply not enough specialist services and dedicated beds for women and children who have taken the first steps to escape domestic violence. Refuges are forced to turn women away. It is estimated that only one out of every two women requiring safety finds a place to stay. Anecdotally we know that many women, having been turned away, give up and return to the perpetrator rather than face homelessness with their children.

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Many sleep in their cars with their kids.

Domestic violence is on the national agenda like never before and it is also getting greater coverage in the media, yet many of the basic elements of an effective domestic violence system are not yet in place. So in the new order, known as Going Home Staying Home, only 33 out of the 78 homelessness services have 24-hour on-call staff. This Government believes that a 24-hour phone line is enough. Try telling that to a woman who, in the middle of the night, must find a safe place to stay rather than put up with one more night of violence at the hands of her partner.

When a woman and her children are turned away from a refuge, the solution, according to the Government, is temporary emergency accommodation. There is a massive over-reliance on temporary emergency accommodation. Whilst this does provide a roof over some heads it does nothing in respect of providing advocacy, legal support, crisis counselling, assistance to secure future housing, support for traumatised children and referrals to other services—all the things that the specialist women's refuges did for women and children who accessed their services.

The existing domestic violence services have been inundated by requests for assistance. It seems that the Link2home telephone service does not have adequate knowledge of what services on the ground actually do, the location of services and distances. Women are being referred to services that may be 100 kilometres away, yet they have no transport to get there. What happens to a woman and her children once she is out of the crisis stage? Where does she go? We are all aware of the housing crisis in this State. For women leaving domestic violence this is a major barrier to being housed in a private

tenancy.

There are a few urgent things that we must focus on: the immediate review of the impact of Going Home Staying Home on women and children escaping domestic violence; the separation of domestic violence services from homelessness services; and ensuring that funding is prioritised, as promised, for the 24/7 access issue. We need staff and bed resources, not just a few telephone lines.

### **WAGGA WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE**

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.46 p.m.]: I inform the House of a wonderful event that occurred in Wagga Wagga today: the opening of the new Wagga Women's Health Centre. I will give a brief history of the Wagga Women's Health Centre. In the late 1970s a handful of Wagga Wagga's general practitioners were prepared to freely prescribe oral contraceptives. Alderman Mary Kidson, the only woman on the Wagga Wagga City Council, took up the campaign to improve local family planning services. Extensive lobbying culminated in a public meeting in July 1978, attended by 60 people. Further meetings were held and there were encouraging turnouts, with generous pledges of money from the community, leading to the opening of the centre at premises in 131 Edward Street.

Much work had to be done to transform what was a badly run-down house into a facility that was comfortable and operational for support services. That was officially opened in October 1979. In February 1981 the centre relocated to Morrow Street and continued to operate without funding. Since 1985 the centre has been funded by NSW Health through its Non Government Organisation Grant Program. The centre, which moved to 92 Morgan Street in June 2011, has a local management committee of interested community members. Those at the centre are very proud of their lobbying, energy and commitment, and of the hard work that has been done to get to this point.

Today the opening of the new centre, which was recently relocated to Peter Street, was made possible because of fundraising by the local community. The premises at previous locations of the centre were all rented. I am pleased and very proud to say that the community got together, under the chairmanship of Genevieve Smith, the fundraising chairperson, to raise more than \$500,000 to purchase this centre. Today Dame Marie Bashir attended and officially opened this centre. The centre aims to improve the health status of women by providing a unique, holistic, woman-centred approach to primary health care.

The centre's aim is to blend medical and clinical services and a range of counselling, health promotion, education, self-help and consumer advocacy services. It also aims to provide women with the knowledge, skills and resources to enable them to take more responsibility over factors that adversely affect their health. The centre operates from a feminist perspective that links the causes of ill health in women to social factors. This perspective is informed by the World Health Organization's definition of health as a complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, nor merely the absence of disease.

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The Wagga Women's Health Centre is managed by a community-based committee and is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation. I place on record my warmest congratulations to its board of management, president Helen Mundy and committee members. I also thank Genevieve Smith for managing an outstanding fundraising campaign, together with a committee comprised of the Federal member, Michael McCormack, me, the Wagga Wagga City Council, mayor Rod Kendall and others. We all put our shoulders to the wheel. Dame Marie Bashir was the official guest at a fundraising dinner in Wagga Wagga when approximately \$50,000 was raised.

I refer to Doug Priest, a well-known builder in our community. We could not have renovated and moved into the building without Doug, who did it for what seemed like a very small amount of money. I thank Doug and all tradesmen for their work. The Wagga Women's Health Centre is an important service that delivers health advice not only to the women of Wagga Wagga but also the entire region. Women come to the centre from as far afield from Tumbarumba, Cootamundra, Griffith, Hay and throughout the

region to access the services. I also commend the wonderful hardworking staff for going about the day-to-day management of the Wagga Women's Health Centre at its new address, 22 Peter Street. I also thank everyone for their donations or goods in kind. It has been a wonderful success story when the community got together and championed this cause to bring about better health outcomes for women.

## **M1 NOISE BARRIERS**

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [5.51 p.m.]: I raise three issues in the House this afternoon. The first involves the need for permanent noise barriers to be installed along the M1 parallel to the Flinders estate in my electorate. This estate has been developing rapidly over the past 20 years. The upgrade to the M1 along Oak Flats to Dunmore is seeing an increase in traffic volumes and consequently increased noise pollution. This increased noise pollution is having a daily impact on the lifestyles of many Flinders estate residents. Local residents led by the tenacious Mr David Harries have signed a petition, which I forwarded to the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight in August last year.

The Flinders estate was developed well in advance of the upgrade to the M1. The M1—previously known as the Princes Highway—had a route further to the west of its current alignment, and now runs parallel to the South Coast rail line. There is a noise barrier placed further to the south of the Flinders estate to cope with noise from the South Coast line. But there is a gaping hole of 500 metres, leaving many residences subject to acute noise pollution. I have asked the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and the Minister for Planning for a meeting to discuss the need for the installation of noise barriers to provide permanent relief for the residents of the Flinders estate. The residents living adjacent to the M1 at Dapto and the Illawarra's northern suburbs have had permanent noise barriers installed. There is no reason why the residents of the Flinders estate should be treated differently.

I have also raised in this place on a number of occasions the need for the Government to get serious about the infrastructure provision for the other growth area of my electorate at West Dapto. The statistics are clear: nearly 20,000 new dwellings, more than 56,000 people and up to 10,000 new jobs will be the story of the single largest greenfield housing development area outside of the Sydney Basin. It is estimated that \$1.2 billion in infrastructure investment will be needed to support this growth. It is completely unrealistic for any level of government—Federal or State—to expect it is possible for Wollongong City Council to shoulder this costly burden alone. All levels government must work together regardless of political affiliation if we are to see this exciting urban growth area to develop. I acknowledge that the current State Government has provided funding under the Illawarra Infrastructure Fund for the Fowlers Road extension. I am hopeful that funding allocated for this project will be released so it can start sooner rather than later.

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Between 2010 and 2013 a further \$41 million was provided by the former State and Federal Labor governments to assist the council to deliver important extensions and upgrades to West Dapto's road network. During the last election campaign I pledged that, if elected, Labor would allocate \$46 million from our Illawarra Infrastructure and Investment Fund to build new on ramps and off ramps along the M1 at Kanahooka, and Fowlers and Emerson roads at Dapto. I will continue to lobby for this infrastructure during this term of Parliament. Later this month I will be briefed by Wollongong City Council officials on the wideranging infrastructure needs of the West Dapto urban growth area. This growth centre will, in my view, one day become a mini city in its own right. I can see the day when it perhaps becomes a new State electorate to be represented in this place. It is in the interests of both major political parties to be attuned to the needs of the West Dapto urban growth area.

Finally, this evening I pay tribute to Warilla Public School. Warilla sometimes gets a bit of a bad rap and is stereotyped as a typical socioeconomically disadvantaged area. I do not ever see it that way because, while many in this community face tough circumstances, locals are salt of the earth Australians just seeking a good old-fashioned fair go. Warilla Public School has this week made Warilla stand taller and made it very proud. The school, led by principal John Thompson, achieved outstanding results in the 2015 National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy testing. Warilla Public School achieved

those fantastic results because it was selected for the National Partnerships on Improving Numeracy and Literacy Program by the former Federal Labor Government. If ever there was an example of how extra resources for schools achieve enormous benefits for students, Warilla Public School is a showcase. As the local member, I am very proud of all the schools in my electorate. But this evening I take the opportunity to place in the *Hansard* for all time recognition of the fantastic achievement of the principal, staff and students of Warilla Public School.

#### **MINISTER FOR AGEING, MINISTER FOR DISABILITY SERVICES, AND MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURALISM MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE VISIT**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [5.56 p.m.]: I inform the House of the recent visit to the Myall Lakes electorate by the Hon. John Ajaka, the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Multiculturalism. The Minister's visit started at Foster High School, where the Minister made an announcement in relation to the Premier's volunteering in schools program. Five students were awarded certificates for volunteering at the school and in the community. We then went to Club Foster, where we opened the 2016 series of the Myall Lakes Seniors Concerts. The concerts receive funding from the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Myall Lakes is the oldest electorate in New South Wales so it was the first electorate to roll out these free Premier's concerts. The aim is to bring to regional areas the type of entertainment to be found in Sydney and internationally, and certainly the seniors concerts featured entertainment of an international standard that was enjoyed by almost 3,000 people.

Before the concert started we took the opportunity to present awards to two outstanding women from the Myall Lakes electorate. The first was Maureen Turner, who has been actively involved with Riding for the Disabled in the Manning Valley for a considerable number of years. Maureen received a State Community Service Award for her involvement with Riding for the Disabled, which has helped a number of young people to represent our area and compete in riding events at State and national levels. A number of these riders were presented to Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall when the royal couple was last in Australia. It was a great honour for those young people.

The second person to be presented with an award was the Mayor of Great Lakes, Jan McWilliams. She was presented with the New South Wales Local Woman of the Year Award in recognition of her 20 years of work in the community at local government level. She was also awarded the Myall Lakes Local Woman of the Year Award 2016. She previously won the Emeritus Mayoral Award and has received numerous other awards for her contribution to the community.

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Jan McWilliams has served on the council for 20 years and been mayor since 2008. She is also a patron of a number of organisations, one of which is the Great Lakes Women's Shelter that opened officially in January this year. I am also a patron. The shelter is a fantastic organisation driven by the community along with a women's shelter organisation. It has received funding from local businesses and the Government, and is already helping a number of women in the Great Lakes area.

From there the Minister and I visited Old Bar to officially open the Dundaloo Support Services group home in Old Bar Road, which is a magnificent residence for people with disabilities. I remember many years ago when people with disabilities were placed in dormitories in institutions and left there. They now live in proper group home settings with an assistant. It was great to be part of that. I congratulate Dundaloo chief executive officer Shelly Sabey, whom we met at Old Bar. The Minister and I then went to Taree and toured Valley Industries with its chief executive officer, Trent Jennison. Both Dundaloo and Valley Industries began more than 60 years ago. Valley Industries was one of the first—if I can use the old term—sheltered workshops. It operated a business of a quasi-commercial nature and provided clients with a real and worthwhile job that gave them a purpose and raised their self-esteem. It was a whirlwind tour for the Minister, and I appreciate his attendance.

#### **COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS**

**Ms JULIA FINN** (Granville) [6.01 p.m.]: Today I place on record the enormous concerns of the people of Granville at the Baird Government's proposal to excise Parramatta City Council's Woodville ward from the City of Parramatta and merge it with the southern part of Auburn City Council and Holroyd City Council. This came as a nasty surprise, dropped on us just before Christmas when people were distracted. It was not even suggested before the proposed boundaries were released, except for a leak to the *Daily Telegraph* some months earlier—and then no-one believed it. They could not imagine separating Granville from Parramatta.

I strongly oppose kicking Granville, Guildford and Merrylands out of the City of Parramatta. They have been part of the city for more than 70 years. Granville was originally established as Parramatta Junction in the 1850s, when the first western rail line was built. It was later named after the Earl of Granville. Granville has been linked to Parramatta since its earliest days. I am a former Lord Mayor of Parramatta, as were my two predecessors as member for Granville. Former Deputy Premier Jack Ferguson, who represented much of the same area, started serving the local community on Parramatta City Council and was the deputy mayor. Current Lord Mayor Paul Garrard has represented Granville, Guildford and Merrylands on Parramatta City Council for more than 40 years.

**Mr John Sidoti:** He's a good man.

**Ms JULIA FINN:** He is. During construction of the council's Parramatta Square project, Parramatta City Council is holding most of its meetings in Granville Town Hall. The Parramatta Two Blues—one of the oldest club rugby teams in Sydney, dating back to 1879—play their home games at Granville Park and have done so ever since the Cumberland Oval fire in the 1980s. The links between Parramatta and Granville could not be stronger. At one of the inquiry sessions we were told, quite bizarrely, that the City of Parramatta's boundaries are as proposed because the M2 and M4 form natural boundaries at ground level and people do not cross them. Anyone remotely familiar with the area knows that the M4 is a viaduct from east of James Ruse Drive to west of Church Street. It is entirely permeable at ground level, with a cycleway running along its entire length as well as pedestrian and vehicle access. It is heavily trafficked by pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

I am not opposed to the Woodville ward merging with Holroyd because there is something fundamentally wrong with Holroyd; it is just that Granville is part of Parramatta and should remain so. On numerous occasions I have publicly backed Holroyd council's Hands Off Holroyd campaign and its desire to remain as a standalone council. More than 10,000 people—or more than 10 per cent of the population—signed the Hands Off Holroyd petition, which I spoke to last year. A total of 87 per cent of residents surveyed wanted Holroyd to remain a standalone council. Holroyd met every key performance indicator to be considered fit for the future except for the ill-defined "scale and capacity" that was speculated to be around 250,000 residents, which this new proposal still does not meet.

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With a population of 111,000, Holroyd is not a small council area. Holroyd's survey results mirrored my own discussions with Holroyd residents about mergers: they hate the idea. At least they have known about this merger for the last few years. The residents of Granville have been kept in the dark and are furious about being kicked out of Parramatta. They know this is a key part of the Liberal Party's plan to gerrymander boundaries of the City of Parramatta and remove a traditionally Labor area to make it easier for the Liberals to win control of the strategically important council and its lord mayoralty. Around 600 residents signed a petition to keep the Woodville ward in Parramatta and that petition formed part of a submission made to the recent public inquiry. At that inquiry not one speaker said that the new council was a good idea.

By removing the areas from Auburn City Council where most of its rates are generated and placing them in Parramatta leaves the largely residential southern portion with Granville and Holroyd. There was general consensus that the council is being set up to fail. It will not be financially viable. The proposed council will contain many suburbs that are typified as disadvantaged. The Auburn, Granville and Guildford postcode areas are in the top ten poorest in New South Wales. These people cannot afford to

pay high rates to make up for the shortfall of commercial and industrial ratepayers in their cities. Services will suffer. Layered over that is the community's less than stellar view of Auburn City Council's governance record. Needless to say, they do not want to have anything to do with it, and the recent suspension of the council has not changed anyone's view.

The KPMG report supporting the proposed merger identified net savings for the new council of \$43 million over 20 years. Like many of us, I would like to look at the report and the detailed assumptions underpinning its rosy view of amalgamations. I am assuming they are detailed. The estimates on reduction in councillor expenses are wrong and have been shown to be wrong. The area presently has 25 councillors. With a reduction to 15 councillors and projected remuneration increases there will not be a saving of \$2 million. Contrary to the Government's optimistic view, everyone I speak to believes that the new council will go broke well before the 20-year projection. My message and that of the community I represent is clear: Keep Granville, Guildford and Merrylands in the City of Parramatta and abandon the crazy forced amalgamation of Holroyd, Auburn and Parramatta's Woodville ward.

### **AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS**

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS** (Ku-ring-gai) [6.06 p.m.]: "Hero" is a frequently used word in the English language. It is too often used to describe sporting prowess and so rarely used to acknowledge selfless feats of personal sacrifice. That is why I have always taken an interest in the announcement of the community and national award winners on Australia Day. On Australia Day we recognise people who often are not recognised outside of their family and friends—in other words, the quiet achievers. Whether through decades of community service, medical research or service to the arts, the military, the public or people with disability, the community owes them a great deal of gratitude.

On Australia Day this year I was fortunate to be able to rub shoulders with some of these local heroes at a ceremony at Bi-centennial Park at West Pymble in the Ku-ring-gai electorate. In the hustle and bustle of life we do not have time to smell the roses. We buzz around our suburbs in our cars and do not even know or simply forget about some of the beautiful places around us. Many of us will know and frequently cross a rail overpass on the Pacific Highway at Turramurra. But many of us may not have noticed the beautiful garden beside the bridge and railway line on the south side of the highway. I have seen people congregate there on Saturday mornings as I drive to my son's sporting events curious about what is going on.

It is the location of the Turramurra Lookout community garden, a quaint slice of paradise in our ever-growing city. It has led to John Dailey being named Ku-ring-gai Citizen of the Year. I am informed John Dailey is a 43-year resident of the suburb and the driving force behind the community garden. He is the man who helps organise the 50 or so volunteers from a whole host of community organisations who keep the garden going. I am happy to be taking up John's invitation to meet and have morning tea with his group this Saturday. What John does is so much more than help to maintain a garden for the rest of us to enjoy. He is the conduit between community groups, local schools and residents who are happy to lend a hand and learn about gardening from each other in the process.

Another fine local group of volunteers is the Ku-ring-gai Shed. The Ku-ring-gai Shed, formerly and more informally referred to as the Men's Shed, is a worthy recipient of the Outstanding Service to the Community award. I had the pleasure of visiting the shed at St Ives Showground last year in my first year as the member for Ku-ring-gai and was most impressed by the sense of community and mateship that exists there. In a time when there is a growing awareness of mental illness and depression, the shed is a much-needed tonic to loneliness. Some of the 200 registered members have lost their life partners and the companionship they find at the shed is priceless in tough times.

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I am pleased to see that the talent pool in Ku-ring-gai is so strong that the judges could not decide between the finalists in the Young Citizen of the Year category. This year the honour has gone to two winners. Nick Bennett from Gordon has been a member of the scouting movement since he was six and



last year, at just 18 years of age, he became the youngest ever Australian to serve as Assistant Contingent Leader for the 23rd World Scout Jamboree in Japan. Nick has achieved the highest awards in scouting for his age. A surf lifesaver, an accomplished classical musician, a fundraiser for CareFlight and an Indigenous mentor, he is a thoroughly deserving recipient of the Young Citizen of the Year award.

Another Gordon resident, Ashlee Jaensch, is also a thoroughly deserving recipient. Ashlee was awarded joint Young Citizen of the Year for her voluntary work with such groups as Rotary and through her work with the Rural Health Student Network. She also spends her personal time travelling to Granville Boys High School to provide support to Pacific Islander students. Congratulations Ashlee, you no doubt have a big future ahead of you. I also pay tribute to the national recipients of Australia Day honours who live in my electorate of Ku-ring-gai. Michael Keats from Pymble now has the letters "OAM" after his name for his contributions to the bushwalking movement and as an author. Michael is not one to walk out of the bush, wherever it may be, without chronicling every detail in words and photographs so that others may enjoy their experiences as he does.

The Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] was awarded to Killara's Arthur Brawn in recognition of his service to community, in particular to Rotary International, of which he has been a member since 1984. There is none more deserving of an OAM than Lady Joyce Beattie from Warrawee. Lady Joyce, who has been a member of Warrawee Bowling Club—just around the corner from my electorate office—since 1956 has not kept her love of bowls to herself; rather, she has shared it with others, in particular those with disabilities. Just a year after joining the club Lady Joyce founded the Therapy Bowling Program to help the rehabilitation of people with disabilities through outdoor activities. Congratulations to each of these outstanding Ku-ring-gai citizens on their contributions to our community.

#### **MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES COUNCIL OF NSW YOUTH CONFERENCE**

**Mr CHRIS MINNS** (Kogarah) [6.11 p.m.]: On Saturday 7 November 2015 I had the great pleasure of attending the Multicultural Communities Council [MCC] of New South Wales youth conference on the role of youth in multicultural Australia, which was held at Parramatta Town Hall. I addressed that conference on the importance of multiculturalism in our society and acknowledged that the youth of today have a vital role to play. I was invited to open the conference by the chairman of the Multicultural Communities Council of New South Wales, Dr Anthony Pun, OAM, who resides in Kingsgrove in my local electorate. The electorate of Kogarah is a very diverse place. Multiculturalism is fundamental to our harmonious and thriving community. Indeed, almost half of the population in my electorate was either born overseas or has at least one parent born overseas.

In June 2014 the Multicultural Communities Council of New South Wales was formed at Hurstville. It has a unique arrangement, namely, it is not a peak body of community cultural organisations nor is it controlled by a distinct group; all speak with one voice. Its board is made up of people from very diverse backgrounds—Chinese, Indian, Sri Lankan, Nepalese, Bangladeshi, Korean, Vietnamese, Lebanese, and Egyptian to name a few. No cultural community group is excluded. Its single purpose is to ensure that our nation has a harmonious and seamless multicultural society that does not fracture along racial, cultural, political or religious divides. I commend the MCC for recognising that if Australia is to hold onto the finest example of a multicultural society it must invest in our youth. Only the youth of our nation will enable this great legacy to survive and prosper.

Multiculturalism is a dynamic force. It will develop according to community expectations, shifting demographics and changing needs. Indeed, the youth will carry this positive multicultural story into the future, that is, regardless of a person's heritage they can feel safe and prosper in this great country. My observations of the young people at the youth conference instilled me with a great sense of confidence that we are heading in the right direction and that when these young people eventually assume leadership roles we will be in safe hands.

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Apart from Dr Pun, many people are working hard behind the scenes to ensure that the MCC is a

success story. Mr Ajmer Singh Gill, President of the Sikh Council of Australia, prominent for his work in that community and the MCC, was instrumental in transforming the idea of a youth conference into a reality. The conference was organised and run by young people. It was the voices of the young that we heard. I am informed that students from Granville TAFE formed the organising committee for the conference, namely Alice Odeh, Simon Rees, Iram Jacob, Maarouf Elkhalel, Chanchal Gahonia and Oula Nader. Perhaps I did not do as good a job at pronouncing their names as they did at organising this conference, but they did an outstanding job. They presented and featured various guest speakers throughout the two days. Multicultural NSW was a co-sponsor of the event and it is hoped that the agency will support the MCC as it continues to work with young people, seeking to define the role of youth in a multicultural Australia and encouraging young people to embrace and participate in such a vital issue for our society in the future.

An organiser of the MCC and of the event was Mr David Dawson of Bexley, a resident in my community. He is someone with a passionate commitment to a multicultural Australia and someone who is prepared, in his post-work career—in retirement, effectively—to donate hundreds of hours of work. I am sure other members have similar residents within their communities who selflessly, for no other reason than they want to make Australia a better place, donate hundreds of hours of work to organisations like the MCC and others. And they do it for the simple reason that they believe in a diverse and prosperous community. I pay tribute to David Dawson, who is also responsible for writing most of the words in my speech today. He selflessly did not include himself in any of the acknowledgements, which is a real testament to his selflessness and his dedication to our community.

#### **DEPUTY POLICE COMMISSIONER NICK KALDAS**

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.16 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by outgoing Deputy Police Commissioner Nick Kaldas, who has served this State with great distinction in the NSW Police Force for 34 years. He graduated from the New South Wales Police Force Academy in 1981 and later worked for more than 10 years as a hostage negotiator. Mr Kaldas arrived in Australia with his Egyptian parents and his sister in 1969. He already spoke English, French and Arabic, having attended a British school in Cairo. His Australian life began in the multicultural inner-western suburb of Marrickville. There his brilliant career in law enforcement was born. This may well have provided him with his gift in later years for bringing the police and the community together.

During his impressive time with the NSW Police Force, Mr Kaldas ran the State's homicide squad for 10 years and was responsible for conducting a number of high-profile murder investigations including those of Samantha Knight and former member of Parliament John Newman. He also headed up the armed hold-up squad and has led our counterterrorism efforts. Nick has spent his working life serving and protecting the people of New South Wales. In 2004, he spent eight months in Iraq training local police and led the United Nations Special Tribunal for Lebanon investigating the 2015 assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri.

In 2013, former Premier Barry O'Farrell put Mr Kaldas in charge of bringing an end to the spate of shootings occurring in Sydney's south-west. This represents a pattern in Mr Kaldas's distinguished career—that of bring opposing forces closer to a peaceful resolution. I read that while attempting to rebuild the Iraqi police in 2004 after the fall of Saddam Hussein, he put up a sign in the office quoting T. E. Lawrence, which read, "Better the Arabs do it tolerably than you do it perfectly." He had a profound understanding of not only the language but also the culture—a very valuable commodity in that part of the world at that time. Nick Kaldas is a true man for all seasons and one who will be sadly missed from our enforcement agencies.

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Nick Kaldas is a man who stood up for what he believed in and was not afraid to front a parliamentary inquiry, confronting the then NSW Ombudsman over his handling of the two-year investigation into the police bugging scandal. The parliamentary inquiry concluded in February that Mr

Kaldas was owed a formal apology by the Government. I understand he is still awaiting that apology. His reputation is such that he has been swamped with messages of support and good wishes from thousands of front-line police, community leaders and members of the public. Nick's reputation worldwide is such that, if the *Daily Telegraph* is correct, his expertise will now be used in the international arena—in the United Nations—bringing justice to the victims of persecution. I cringe to think what qualities or, indeed, qualifications are needed to be a police commissioner. Nick Kaldas is perhaps, as one journalist put it, the best police commissioner New South Wales never had. I am proud to count him as both a friend and a constituent. He has my best wishes for a brilliant future. Thank you, Nick.

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.20 p.m.]: I, too, acknowledge the outstanding contribution that Nick Kaldas has made to this State. He represents everything that is good about the NSW Police Force and he embodies what is best about public service. He has given 34 years of his life to ensure that the people of this State can feel safe, protected and go about their business. He has made a significant contribution and our State, indeed our country, is better because of his service. I also note that he represents what is best about our country. He came to this country as a 12-year-old from Egypt and he rose to the most senior levels of the NSW Police Force—the first person to do so from a non-English-speaking background. He did so with distinction. We wish him the best of luck in his future career and again we thank him for his service—we are the better because of it.

#### **CLARENCE VALLEY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.21 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about the growing need for mental health services in the Clarence Valley. I spoke on this issue in the House during Mental Health Month last October, when I spoke about attending a specially convened meeting hosted by Skye Sear, the manager of the New School of Arts Neighbourhood House. The meeting was called in response to a spate of youth suicides and to enlist community support for mental health solutions. It seems like groundhog day because of late there have been further suicides in the Clarence Valley, some involving young people. Another public meeting was called last Monday to look for solutions.

I commend organiser, Janita Cooper, for calling the meeting and the 100 people for attending. Although people suffering mental illness think they are in a vacuum, in a world of despair with no hope, they are absolutely wrong, and that was proved by the attendance at the public meeting on Monday night. This is a community problem and it needs a community solution. Yes, we need mental health workers in the Clarence Valley and yes, we need a headspace centre in the Clarence Valley, but that alone will not solve the problem of suicide. Communities that have a headspace centre and extensive mental health services continue to experience suicides. This is a bigger problem than saying that the Government can fix it. Mental health problems cannot be fixed overnight.

It is glaringly apparent that early detection and prevention are equally important to having mental health services on the ground. There is no doubt that we need services in the Clarence Valley for people suffering mental illness, but those services are simply treating the symptoms. We must get to the root of the problem. We must stop the machines from breaking rather than focusing on them when they are broken. I do not mean to be callous or frivolous by equating human beings to machines, but, to me, it seems like an assembly line with more and more machines needing repair. We must fix the assembly line so that fewer machines are broken. Yes, we need mental health workers to help those who are currently suffering from mental illness, but we need a whole lot more. In 2014, there were 2,864 suicides in Australia—almost eight per day. Lifeline Chief Executive Officer Pete Shmigel has said it is time for the Federal Government to act, and he is right. He said:

Between 2002 and 2013, for example, Scotland implemented a 10-year national strategy and action plan that achieved an 18 per cent reduction in suicides. Over the same period, Australia saw a 20 per cent increase.

The Federal Government needs to have skin in this game. We need a whole-of-government approach and a whole-of-community approach. A positive suggestion from the community forum last year was to extend the Smile Program of school mentoring to high schools in the Clarence Valley. This particular program is used by the principal of Woolgoolga High School. The program was introduced to a select group of year 11 students who are identified as mentors for other students in the school and year 11 students are inducted into the program each year. We are told that Woolgoolga High School has had some positive results as a result of the program. The fact is that kids do not want to talk to adults about mental health issues; they want to talk to other kids.

I am firmly convinced that if we are to deal with mental health issues before they end in tragedy we must start in our schools and embed it as part of the curriculum, not as part of the formal curriculum but more underlying and subliminal. The message about mental health and wellbeing must be delivered every day—day in, day out. Teachers and students should naturally be on the lookout for those students who appear to be having problems and talk to them and their parents or carers. I am very pleased that the New South Wales Government is delivering more school counsellors to help promote and deliver wellbeing services to our kids. There are 236 new school counselling-psychologist positions and more than \$51 million is available for wellbeing services.

I congratulate the New South Wales Government on allocating funding for the wellbeing of students in the Clarence Valley under this program. There is no single solution to treating mental health patients. One that may very well suit the Clarence Valley is a LikeMind centre. LikeMind is a new way of providing mental health care by co-locating triage, assessment, care coordination and discharge planning services. It brings together local partners that specialise in mental health, drug and alcohol, physical health and social needs, making sure people get access to the integrated help they need. The centre even helps with links to employment and housing services.

A major strength of LikeMind is that anyone can walk into the centre without an appointment or a referral from a health practitioner or organisation. I know that it is a model preferred by the Northern NSW Local Health District and while it was unsuccessful with its expression of interest last year, I hope it continues to push for such a facility in the Clarence Valley. I will do everything I can to make it happen in the Clarence Valley.

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.26 p.m.]: It is fitting that the member for Clarence raises this important issue in a week when the national suicide rate is at its highest level in 13 years. This year alone more Australians will die from suicide than will be killed on our roads. It is a national disgrace and something needs to be done. I commend the member for Clarence for his advocacy on this important issue. In my view we as a State Government, combined with the Federal Government, need to spend as much money on suicide prevention campaigns and mental health awareness campaigns as we do on road safety campaigns. Those campaigns have had a huge impact on reducing the number of road deaths because they have increased public awareness. We can and must do the same for mental health and suicide prevention. What we do know, though, is that there is no silver bullet to solving this problem. That is why we need a range of measures such as more head space, more support, more acute care and more early intervention services. This is not a partisan issue; it is something we should all work together on to make sure we get a result because it is important for the future of our country.

#### **DARRELL TREE CROSS OF VALOUR PRIZE**

**Mr GLENN BROOKES** (East Hills) [6.27 p.m.]: The Darrell Tree Cross of Valour [CV] Prize is a nationally run competition conducted by the Australian Bravery Association. This award is open to all students in years 8 and 9 across Australia to enter. The purpose of the award is to allow students to recognise the acts of bravery by others in our community and gain an understanding of the Australian honours system. The competition asks students to consider those who have contributed to Australia's history through their acts of bravery, those ordinary Australians who have done extraordinary things for

others.

I inform the House that this year's winner of the Darrell Tree CV Prize is Harrison Walther of Picnic Point High School in my electorate. Harrison's essay questioned what it was about human nature that would make someone endanger themselves at great personal cost in order to benefit a complete stranger. Harrison's essay did this through highlighting three individuals who had undertaken heroic feats. The first individual highlighted was John Thurgar, who rushed into a minefield to retrieve another man who had been injured when his truck hit a mine.

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The second was Darrell Tree, who rescued a man from a truck which became live after coming into contact with powerlines. Harrison investigated Sergeant Walther Brown who received the Victoria Cross for giving up his seat on a life raft during the evacuation of Singapore in World War II. Unfortunately, that decision cost him his life. Harrison's essay taught us it is not in fact bravery that is rewarded but acts of selflessness towards others. Many of us do things that are considered to be brave, but it is doing brave acts that benefit others that should be rewarded. It was a great essay from a talented young student in my electorate and I congratulate him on winning the prize.

I also acknowledge another student from my electorate, Jasmine Zande, who came third. It is a real credit to Picnic Point High School to have two students from their school do so well in this national competition. We must always look for opportunities to honour those in our community who have committed selfless acts for others. A competition such as this, which encourages our youth to look into the lives of those who have committed tremendous acts of bravery, is another way we can further highlight their actions. I congratulate all who participated in this national competition and thank the Australian Bravery Association for administering it.

## LUNAR NEW YEAR

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [6.31 p.m.]: I had the pleasure of joining my local community to celebrate the Lunar New Year at the beginning of February. The Lunar New Year is by far the most important annual event in the Chinese and Vietnamese communities. It is one of my favourite times of the year and, like many others, I look forward to taking part in those celebrations. The Lunar New Year celebration never fails to impress as it attracts more and more people every year. It was great to see families, the young and the elderly from different backgrounds join in these celebrations. It shows how well multiculturalism works in our country, especially in Cabramatta, which is one of the most culturally diverse communities in Australia.

The Lunar New Year celebrations give me the opportunity to try various foods that are on offer. I can never get enough because I constantly come across delicious recipes that entice my taste buds. The thousands of visitors and I enjoyed the music and cultural performances, including the line dancers. Those displays, along with the fireworks and traditional performances, never fail to impress the many attendees who come together to rejoice in celebrating the Lunar New Year. It always gives me great pleasure to celebrate with my community. This year I attended various celebrations, including the Vietnamese Tet Festival at the Fairfield Showground, the Lunar New Year celebration at Canley Heights and at Freedom Plaza in Cabramatta. This year we welcome the Year of the Monkey. The monkey is lively and active, which perfectly describes this place. I thank the many organisations that make the Lunar New Year festival in my community possible. The hard work involved in organising the events always results in an enjoyable and fantastic outing.

I thank Mr James Chan, OAM, Mr Vincent Kong, Jensen Tran and all of the hardworking staff and volunteers from the Australian Buddhist Society for their work in preparing for the New Year celebration at the Minogue Lay Temple. I was delighted to be joined by my Labor parliamentary colleagues the member for Fairfield and the member for Prospect for this wonderful celebration. I congratulate Fairfield City Council and the sponsors of the Lunar New Year celebration in my electorate, particularly those in the Cabramatta central business district. The celebrations attract people from across the State and I thank

the staff and volunteers for their fantastic efforts in organising the event, which ran smoothly. I also thank the other associations who invited me to their celebrations.

The Lunar New Year is a time to reflect on what has passed and to make wishes or prayers for the future.

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Importantly, it is also a time for families to get together and enjoy one another's company. I am grateful to represent such a diverse community, where we celebrate all beliefs. As we welcome in the Year of the Monkey I wish everyone a very happy, healthy and prosperous New Year. In Chinese it is: "Gong Hey Fat Choy". In Vietnamese it is: "Chuc Mung Nam Moi".

### **JENNIFER ARMSTRONG, CRONULLA WOMAN OF THE YEAR**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [6.34 p.m.]: Men and women across the globe celebrated International Women's Day this week by making a pledge for parity. On International Women's Day we celebrate women's contributions to social, economic, cultural and political achievement, and we commit to do more to achieve universal gender parity. It was a pleasure to mark this important day, albeit one day later, at the 2016 NSW Women of the Year Awards yesterday, along with the Premier, the Minister for Women and a large crowd of nominees, members of Parliament, friends and family. The accomplishments of every one of the award recipients, whether in medicine, education, social services, law, science, sport or the arts, are testament to the extraordinary talent, ambition and compassion that these women possess.

This year's very deserving recipient of the special Premier's Award for Woman of the Year also happens to be the 2016 Cronulla Local Woman of the Year, Jennifer Armstrong. Jen is the founder of the Beauty Bank, a charity that collects toiletries and other beauty products for women in need, particularly women experiencing domestic and family violence. For someone who feels alienated and vulnerable, a kind gesture, no matter how small, can make an immeasurable difference. Confidence and self-esteem are essential to rebuilding one's life after the trauma of violence, and this is the core focus of the Beauty Bank's efforts. The Beauty Bank has helped more than 3,000 women, men and young people since 2013. Thanks to Jen's effort and dedication, it is now the signature charity partner of the Cronulla Sharks.

This charity is a labour of love for Jen Armstrong, who is herself a survivor of domestic violence. Jen had a 10-month-old child and was six months pregnant when she left a violent relationship four years ago, following police intervention. She had no money, no furniture and nowhere to live. Around that time, another local charity, the Dandelion Support Network, helped Jen out with some children's products when her son was born. In that package was a bottle of body wash. That \$20 bottle of body wash changed her life. It was a small gesture that Jen says made her feel special. It gave her the confidence boost she needed. It subsequently provided her with the inspiration to start a charity that would help others in the same situation to feel special and valued.

Jen said that through this charity she wanted to acknowledge mothers in adverse circumstances in particular and say to them, "You are doing a great job." These days, Jen is also a popular leadership speaker for corporate organisations and schools, educating others about the effects of domestic violence and the power of resilience. She is a third-year student at the University of Western Sydney, studying for a Bachelor of Business and Commerce, with majors in sports management and advanced business leadership.

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As the Cronulla Sharks stadium operations coordinator, Jen has a keen interest in developing strong community partnerships to raise the awareness of important issues like domestic violence, to educate and to contribute to fundraising. It is important to recognise that domestic and family violence is a community issue and not just a women's issue. Jen has focused her efforts on not just supporting victims but also educating the broader community about the impacts of this insidious crime, a crime that costs the New South Wales economy an estimated \$4.5 billion each year.

Remarkably, in addition to being a single mother of two Jen also provides foster care for a third child. Jen is a true leader who strives each and every day to make a difference in the lives of others. Her motto is, "You will not define me; I will define me." Jen is in so many ways the embodiment of that philosophy. So I congratulate Jen once again on everything she has achieved. It was wonderful to see her recognised yesterday for her work alongside so many other amazing women. Jen Armstrong is an inspirational role model to women and girls and her exceptional focus, her passion and her spirit have made an indelible impact on literally thousands of lives. So I am extremely proud to see this outstanding Sutherland shire resident named the 2016 Cronulla Local Woman of the Year.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.39 p.m.]: I was also privileged to be there when Jennifer Armstrong was recognised for her wonderful work, particularly through the Beauty Bank. With such a positive attitude she undoubtedly turned around a very difficult situation into a positive community contribution. She is a wonderful inspiration and an example to us all, not just to women. I also commend the Minister for Women for convening what was again an outstanding occasion yesterday. I congratulate and commend the member for Cronulla for encouraging women in his area, and in particular for recognising Jen as a wonderful local woman. She is an inspirational example to everyone in New South Wales.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**THE HOUSE ADJOURNED, PURSUANT TO STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS, AT 6.40 P.M.  
UNTIL TUESDAY 15 MARCH 2015 AT 12 NOON.**

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