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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 22 March 2016

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AMENDMENT (ADVANCED METERS) BILL 2016

Bill received from the Legislative Council, introduced and read a first time.

Second reading set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

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[During the giving of notices of motions.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: Order! Yesterday we had a group from the University of Technology Sydney studying communications. I welcome our guests in the gallery.

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BIOFUELS AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 March 2016.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) [10.12 a.m.]: It is with pleasure that I lead for the Opposition in debate on this bill. The Biofuels Act 2007 was the first of its kind in Australia, introduced by the Lemma Labor Government in June 2007. It came from a proud lineage of innovative and future-oriented legislation that is the hallmark of Labor governments. It was the Wran Government that spearheaded the banning of lead in fuel, back in the 1980s, and it was a Labor Government that introduced Australia's first biofuels legislation. Labor based its commitment to biofuels on a number of grounds. First, we wanted to provide a price-competitive option for motorists who wanted to do something about the environment.

Secondly, we wanted to deliver a further stimulus for the regional economy by providing another market for farmers as well as an opportunity for new and expanded ethanol plants across regional New South Wales.

Finally, it was a homegrown source that helped to reduce our reliance on overseas fuel imports from the increasingly fractious Middle East. This was innovative legislation: the first in Australia. Labor pushed ahead against intransigence from the then Howard Liberal-Nationals Government. A Federal scheme was always preferable, but we were up against a Coalition Government that would rather let the market decide, even if it meant sidelining a homegrown, more environmentally friendly alternative. I note that at the time of the debate there was bipartisan support; the only voice of discontent, which is ironic for an environmentally positive initiative, was that of The Greens party. But, then again, the same people doing deals with the Liberals in the Australian Senate last week, the Stalinist faction, were controlling The Greens back then. So maybe it is no surprise.

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So we had a first for New South Wales, a first for Australia, and the Labor Government got to work with the fuel industry and other stakeholders in making that mandate work. For the first four years Labor achieved a lot. Good policy and in particular good implementation of policy does not happen by accident, as the mob sitting opposite are starting to find out. It comes about by consistent effort and resolve of purpose. The 2007 legislation worked by setting mandatory levels but allowing exemptions to be granted by the Minister on the advice of the expert panel to retailers. This was deliberately designed to keep the pressure on the majors, and to ensure that, in order to get an exemption, they had to demonstrate how they were going to meet the mandate through promotion, infrastructure rollouts and the like.

When the mandate was first introduced, the amount of ethanol sold in New South Wales by volume was less than 1 per cent. By the middle of 2011, it was hitting 4 per cent and the future was looking positive. There was a real groundswell in support. We had the major retailers working with us, and the first green shoots of investment in regional New South Wales were starting to appear. By the end of the decade, we were starting to get the confidence to push the mandate to 6 per cent. Then we had the disaster that was Barry O'Farrell—a Premier with no positive agenda and no vision but merely intrigued with internal Liberal infighting, paybacks, promoting friends and demoting enemies. One of those "frenemies"—

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order No. 76 on relevance. We are dealing here with the Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016. The commentary relating to the former Government is not relevant to the bill before the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Swansea to return to the bill.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Madam Speaker, the historical account of this legislation is vitally important. I am giving the bill some context.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will hear the member for Swansea further but I ask that the member stay within the realm of the bill.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: One of those "frenemies" was none other than the former member for Terrigal, Chris Hartcher. The former member for Terrigal, who, as I understand it, was more affectionately known as the "swamp fox" to Parliament back in his day, was no mate of Barry's and definitely no mate of biofuels. Apart from allegedly breaking electoral laws with his mates up and down the Hunter and the Central Coast, including the electorate of Swansea, the former member for Terrigal also worked furiously behind the scenes, as he always did, to undermine—

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the member for Swansea is enjoying herself but really she

should return to the leave of the bill, as I have asked her to. These matters are really extraneous to the bill.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I think that they are absolutely crucial to giving a historical account.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Swansea may well think so but I do not at this stage. The contents of the bill are very important, and I ask the member for Swansea to address the contents of the bill. It is important to us all.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is, and I am giving an historical account in a factual way.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not think any of that information is relevant to the bill.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: It is very factual.

The SPEAKER: Order! It may be in the opinion of the member for Swansea but it is not in mine. I have asked the member for Swansea to return to the bill.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: I will, Madam Speaker; I will just start back there again. Apart from allegedly breaking electoral laws—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Swansea is starting to do it again. I will sit the member for Swansea down unless she returns to the bill.

Mr Ray Williams: Point of order: I have listened intently to this portion of the debate by the member for Swansea. Madam Speaker, she is now canvassing your ruling and has done so three times. I would ask you to consider, if the member for Swansea does so a third time, to ask the member to cease debating this particular issue.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will certainly ask the member for Swansea to resume her seat if she does not return to the bill. I cannot see how the matters being raised by the member are relevant to the legislation before us. I ask the member for Swansea to return to the matter before us, or I will ask her to resume her seat and move on to the next speaker in this debate.

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: In 2011 the mandate was working and expanding biofuels in New South Wales up to 4 per cent. Biodiesel was starting to gain traction under a similar mandate system. Then there was confusion, uncertainty and backpedalling. What we lost and what we are trying to make up for today is the loss which took place during the last five years of the O'Farrell and Baird Government. Despite the unanimous support of Parliament in 2007, we knew there were opponents in Coalition ranks—the free marketeers, crony capitalists and Institute of Public Affairs [IPA] types, more commonly known as the "uglies".

We knew that they were there from accounts in the media and, quite frankly, from the nonsense that is spouted forth by some of those opposite in this House—and they are still here and spreading. We take this as a matter of fact on this side: There will always be an unhealthy part of the conservatives that will always back the market over society, large multinationals over small local businesses, private wealth over common good and greed over compassion. What is most disturbing when it comes to biofuels is that we know that there were some on the Government side who were still supportive but obviously unable or unwilling to do anything about it.

Take The Nationals, for example. In 2007 The Nationals members were falling over each other to get their support for ethanol on *Hansard*. They were even reprimanding the Government for not implementing a 10 per cent mandate overnight even though it would have caused calamity for the biofuel

cause and chaos for the fuel market in New South Wales. Nevertheless, one would have thought The Nationals would have taken on the biofuel cause when in government. But, then again, when have The Nationals ever spoken up for the interests of rural and regional New South Wales, particularly when they are thrown a few breadcrumbs by their Liberal masters in government?

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order: It is Standing Order 73. Could the member please come back to the leave of the bill? She is starting to get into areas that are not relevant to what we are talking about.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have been listening and the member was being relevant to the bill. I am presuming she will continue to be. There is no point of order at this stage.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: Time and time again, whether it is on the issue of coal seam gas, the right for farmers in rural communities to protest against coalmines or the cause of rural, locally grown fuel, The Nationals go missing in action. Again we see this with biofuel. Between 2011 and the present, with all the effort, policy design and promotion undertaken by Labor, we started to see the gradual decline in the amount of biofuel sold in New South Wales. Despite nearing 4 per cent under Labor, today it struggles at well under 3 per cent. It is commonly known in the industry that the O'Farrell and Baird Government were paying lip service to the Biofuels Act. Their hearts just were not in it, letting the multinational fuel companies get away with larger and larger exemptions. But, again, I guess the main purpose of the Liberal and National parties is to make life as easy as possible for big business.

The mandate was a strong signal for investment and jobs in rural and regional New South Wales. While the hope was for more than one producer to emerge—and there were positive signals in that regard under Labor—we at least had one producer, Manildra, on the South Coast, employing hundreds of workers. With the importance of Manildra for the local region, where were the local members? The former member for Kiama, Matt Brown, was a tireless Country Labor supporter of biofuels. His successor? Nothing—not even a whimper. He talks big, stomps around and waves his hands dramatically in this House—

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: I raise a number of points of order.

The SPEAKER: In defence of the former member for Kiama, I am sure.

Mr Gareth Ward: Not at all, because that would be misleading the House. Firstly, attacks on members—which is what the member for Swansea is seeking to engage in—must be by way of substantive motion. Secondly, the member is continuing to flout your ruling in relation to relevance. If she continues, I will move that the member be not further heard.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Swansea to confine her comments to the legislation before the House. I accept historical commentary and a context for the debate on the legislation, but I do not accept the member straying so widely from the legislation. If the member for Swansea is going to start an attack on the current member for Kiama, I will ask her to resume her seat because I have given her several warnings. I ask the member for Swansea to talk to the legislation.

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Ms YASMIN CATLEY: So Parliament gathers today to look at a series of amendments to the Biofuel Act 2007. I know there are many on that side of the House who would rather be repealing the Act, but Labor will always back legislation that backs the environment, backs the bush, and provides more fuel choice for motorists. That is why the Opposition supports the bill—and may I say commends the Minister for his efforts in this regard. I trust that the Minister is true to his words and intent as expressed when introducing the bill. It gives this side confidence that the fate of the mandate is, at least for now, not in the hands of the loony faction of the Liberal Party.

Besides the support of the Opposition, I am pleased to see the ongoing support of the member for Kiama and the NRMA for biofuel legislation. The NRMA's respect and esteem in the motoring public will ensure an ongoing champion for the biofuel cause—regardless of what the Coalition may or may not do. I note that the former President of the NRMA, Alan Evans, was an important player in implementing the biofuel legislation under the former Government and the current President, Kyle Loades, continues that support. So too was another former member—the Independent member for Tamworth and hopefully the former and future Federal member for New England, Tony Windsor. He is a role model for an aspiring member of Parliament who has the interests of country New South Wales close to their heart and mind.

The bill introduces a number of reforms to the way in which the mandate will operate, who it will include, as well as seeking more information from the retail industry on the day-to-day practicalities of selling ethanol blended fuels in the marketplace. First, the legislation amends the way in which it is determined who is, and who is not, part of the mandate. The original legislation focused on the major retailers, defined as a person who operates or controls more than 20 service stations. This picks up most of the market—including the likes of BP, Caltex-Woolworths, Coles, Mobil and 7-Eleven. But the market is a dynamic creature, and we need to adjust legislation to best fit market operations.

Section 4A of the bill redefines the target of the mandate as a "volume fuel retailer" as a person who operates or controls the operation at which three or more types of petrol or diesel are available and the total volume of petrol and diesel sold exceeds a threshold prescribed by regulations. Now, the devil is in the detail, particularly with the determination of the volumetric threshold. Hopefully, this will pick up the existing major retailers, as well as new entrants like Costco which may only have a few sites, but which sell a lot of fuel. The Opposition trusts that the Minister and his department will do the right thing here in setting an appropriate threshold—too high could exclude some major players and too low may endanger the livelihoods of many smaller, independent operators.

The Opposition was pleased to note the Minister's commitment to undertaking a regulatory impact statement. This should provide for sufficient consultation and input from stakeholders in determining an appropriate level. The Opposition will maintain a watching brief on this matter as it unfolds. The Opposition also notes the concerns recently expressed by the Australasian Convenience and Petroleum Marketers Association [ACAPMA]. The Opposition notes concerns that any volumetric threshold will need to take into account seasonal fluctuations for many smaller independent operators—for example, a coastal operator who may sell a lot in summer but less in the off seasons.

We also note the concerns about the potential devastating impacts of forcing smaller operators to convert tanks to those able to store ethanol—a corrosive liquid. Parliament and regulators need to be careful that the result of any regulation does not unnecessarily threaten the livelihoods of those less able to cope with consequential conversion costs. The Opposition notes the commitment of the Minister to work with ACAPMA and ensure the interests of small-to-medium sized operators are considered.

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It is disappointing that so much detail of the bill is unknown. The Government has had five years to get it right, but it has delivered a bill without detail. The real detail will be tied up in regulation. The Opposition will maintain vigilance over the regulation-making process because an effective, realistic and workable regulation will be pivotal to the success or otherwise of the bill and will be a central part of it. The Opposition notes the intent of the bill to gather more information on the industry, such as the sale of biofuel as well as implementation and conversion costs.

I agree with the Minister that if we are to better understand an industry as regulators, good data sets are important—so long as they are not ridiculously burdensome on operators, particularly small- to medium-size businesses. More information enables government to set rules that will reduce unnecessary red tape and to provide a more efficient regulatory framework for business. In 2006 former Premier Morris Iemma established the Better Regulation Office. The Opposition is a strong advocate of better rules and regulations supporting better outcomes for the community. The Minister has our support in this ongoing

endeavour.

On the same note, the Opposition supports the role of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] in reviewing a reasonable price for wholesale ethanol. E10 is a cheaper fuel per litre but it can also be less efficient under certain driving conditions, therefore, it is critical that the Government has the best understanding of the price structures within the fuel market. For ethanol-blended fuel to be price competitive and better value for motorists, it should be selling for at least 3 per cent less than regular unleaded fuel. While there are other reasons for New South Wales motorists to be using ethanol-blended fuel, such as the environment, the creation of local jobs and more sustainable fuel sources, we must remain cognisant of price differentials.

United Group is a market leader in biofuels and was the scene for which former Premier Iemma launched Labor's biofuel policy in 2007. It sells E10 for approximately 4¢ a litre cheaper. Some major retailers are reported to be selling E10 for less than 1.6¢ a litre cheaper. While ethanol sales are the subject of commercial-in-confidence negotiations, the role of IPART in the reasonable wholesale price of ethanol as well as the retail price of E10 across the broader market is a positive initiative that is supported by the Opposition. The removal of wholesalers from the mandate is supported by the Opposition because we agree that they have little control over what goes into people's cars at service stations. The Opposition also notes the commitment of the Minister to promote biofuel in New South Wales, which is commendable.

A bipartisan approach to biofuel helps give broader assurances to motorists that ethanol-blended fuel can be used in most cars these days. I would be interested to see more information on the proposed advertising campaign. The best way to promote biofuel is at point of sale. This Government has turned flashy websites into centrepieces of its operations, yet it slashes and burns services. We must ensure that any information campaign is an effective use of taxpayers' money and is pitched at the right level. The Opposition encourages the Government to continue to work with organisations like the NRMA in spreading the good news of biofuels.

Since taking on this role last year, the Minister has tried his best to right the ship that has blown off course following four years of mismanagement and confusion. Labor is rightfully proud of the many things it achieved while in office, such as tripling the health budget, tripling funding to education and TAFE, and record investments in emergency services, police and infrastructure. We were an innovative ambitious government, particularly concerning environmental measures. In 2003 the Carr Government established the world's first carbon emissions trading scheme, which Federal Labor would have done were it not for the Coalition and The Greens. We drove innovative government that slashed unnecessary red tape and created a Better Regulation Office within Premier and Cabinet to oversee the task.

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We enacted the nation's first mandate on clean, green biofuel. What we have seen since the O'Farrell Government and to date is nothing short of a wilful undermining—whether by neglect, design or incompetence—of an excellent scheme that provides choice for motorists, investment opportunities and confidence and jobs for rural and regional New South Wales. The Opposition trusts that this bill will begin to address the neglect of biofuels under the Coalition and turn the Government's attention to what can be done to consolidate and expand the biofuel industry in New South Wales. Labor in government made New South Wales a national leader in biofuels. We will continue to be tireless campaigners for clean, green energy sources that can be made here and employ local workers. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [10.35 a.m.]: I support the Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016. I note the support of the Labor Party as expressed by the Opposition spokesperson but I must remark that her contribution was a partisan diatribe that rarely touched on the measures proposed in the bill. The vast majority of the member for Swansea's speech canvassed issues other than those in the legislation. Disappointingly, she misrepresented one of the most significant changes in the bill and queried whether we might set the threshold so high it would exclude some major retailers. For the benefit of the member

for Swansea, in the Act a "volume fuel retailer" will be defined as:

- (a) a person who operates or controls the operation of a volume fuel service station (whether or not the person also operates or controls the operation of any other service station and whether or not the person is also a fuel wholesaler), or
- (b) a person who operates or controls the operation of 20 or more service stations, none of which are volume fuel service stations.

That is, the original "20 or more" threshold is unchanged. It remains in the Act. No major retailer will be excluded by any changes in this bill.

Ms Yasmin Catley: No, it doesn't. It is taken out.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: I invite the Opposition spokesperson to read new section 4A, which begins, "Omit the section. Insert instead". The words I just read are those that will be inserted instead. It does help to read the bill. The legislation extends the mandate including the 20-plus service station threshold to volume fuel retailers who do not own 20 or more services stations and therefore includes those who can sell a certain volume of fuel from a smaller number of service stations. It extends the net more widely to increase the number of service stations that are obliged to meet the ethanol mandate. Obviously, the intention of the bill is to have more ethanol made available for sale and more ethanol sold in the marketplace. That is the important change. Until today we have not made changes to this legislation since the original model was introduced.

If there was stalling on the sale of ethanol it is due to the design of the original package and, I would add, the conduct of the operators in the market. Some of the measures proposed in this bill address the conduct of those operators. Significantly, we will include in the regulations measures to determine the accessibility of ethanol fuel at service stations and ensure that it is made just as available as other fuels. We have heard stories of operators in the past who have had their ethanol bowsers out of order frequently or for extended periods or their ethanol bowsers operate more slowly than others to discourage people from using them. Measures can be implemented in the regulations to set the standards by which the sale of ethanol blend petrol can be regulated to ensure that it is as equally accessible to the customer as are other sorts of fuel. The amendments in this bill strengthen the Government's commitment to increase the use of biofuels by consumers in New South Wales.

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New South Wales has an ethanol mandate of 6 per cent per total volume of petrol sold in this State. In no year has this mandate yet been obtained. Recently members of the Queensland Parliament approved a biofuels mandate in its State. It is heading in the same direction as the Baird-Grant Government policy in New South Wales. The amendments in the bill draw on the recommendations of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] review of the ethanol mandate introduced in 2015. The IPART's recommendations are reflected in the way in which this amendment bill has been drawn up.

The main reforms contained in the bill are to extend the mandate to service stations that sell three or more types of diesel or petrol and that have fuel sales above a prescribed volume threshold; to remove the requirement for fuel wholesalers to comply with the mandate; to provide a transition period for service station operators who need time to comply; to provide exemptions to a fuel seller who cannot comply with the mandate despite having taken all reasonable steps to do so; to allow for an information gathering power for the retail fuel market so that data is available on the effectiveness of the reforms; and, importantly, to empower IPART to regulate the wholesale price of ethanol.

One of the major levers that has determined the success or lack of success of the ethanol mandate has been the price differential at the bowser. It is important that we empower IPART to ensure that ethanol blend petrol is sold at a price that makes it competitive and attractive to consumers so that it

is a realistic option. That is an important reform. I will leave it to other speakers to flesh out further details in the bill. I am confident that the outcome of this amendment bill will be positive for the wider community, in particular for regional New South Wales. Consumers will benefit from cheaper options to choose from at the bowser as well as stronger competition for sales in the industry. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) [10.41 a.m.]: I lead for the NSW Greens on the Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016, which amends the Biofuels Act 2007. Currently, the Act requires a certain percentage of the total volume of petrol sold in New South Wales by volume fuel sellers to be ethanol. Under section 6 of the Act, a volume fuel seller, being a major retailer or primary wholesaler, must ensure that the volume of ethanol sold is not less than 6 per cent. The ethanol mandate, which was set at 6 per cent in 2011, has never been met. According to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART], the proportion of ethanol to total volume of petrol sold has been declining in recent years and is currently at about 2.7 per cent. This bill introduces a range of measures in order to try to reach the 6 per cent target.

The Greens oppose the bill and recommend a number of amendments which have come out of our discussions with the Australasian Convenience and Petroleum Marketers Association [ACAPMA]. Those amendments will be pursued in the other place. We have also had discussions with other stakeholders. It is The Greens position that this legislation is totally anti-libertarian. It is hard to concede that a government, which says that market forces and the Keynesian free hand are in their DNA, would interfere with the decreasing demand for ethanol by consumers and artificially prop up a monopoly.

When the demand for a product, any product, in a marketplace goes down from 4.4 per cent to 2.7 per cent, economic realists usually adapt or innovate. What we have seen here is neither. We have seen a Minister deciding arbitrarily that the demand for a product—in this case ethanol—should be at 6 per cent. Despite the fact that consumer demand is at 2.7 per cent, instead of adapting by reviewing the whole ethanol concept or innovating in ways that allow the Australian ethanol industry to innovate and compete in the market and allow petroleum market forces to mirror actual supply and demand, the Government has insisted on a random percentage of ethanol fuel that retailers have to sell to prop up an artificial market. We also have only one provider.

Of perhaps even greater importance is the fact that small business franchises that make up 52 per cent of the petroleum retailers marketplace are the sites that are going to be vulnerable under this legislation. The 2007-08 legislation gave exemptions to those retailers with fewer than 20 sites and they did not have to sell blended ethanol fuel. To put these kinds of businesses in perspective, the average small retailer sells less than three million litres of fuel a year and its gross profit from fuel is around \$60,000. These same businesses, which previously did not have to comply with the mandate, may now be caught under this legislation if they sell three or more types of automotive fuel and/or they exceed the prescribed volume of petrol and diesel fuel sold within a reporting period.

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The Greens have been informed by the industry that those small-to-medium businesses now caught by this legislation will need to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to comply with the legislation in terms of infrastructure and reporting. The chief executive officer of the Australasian Convenience and Petroleum Marketers Association [ACAPMA] estimates it will cost \$326.6 million just for upgrades. In the first instance, the impact of this will be on small businesses to bear the cost and outlay. They will then pass those costs on to the consumer where they can. That is an obvious next step and, as commentators have suggested, this could lead to a price hike of 8¢ per litre.

Schedule 2 to the bill shows just how hard this will play out for small businesses and small-to-medium enterprises that fail to comply because of the costs associated with the necessary infrastructure upgrades that are required to accommodate ethanol-blended petrol at service stations. The wholesale removal of the definition of a volume retailer from the original legislation will substantially remove the original business safeguards afforded to small fuel retail businesses in New South Wales.

There are defences available to businesses in schedule 2 to the bill, such as new section 9A, Offence—failure to comply with minimum biofuel requirements. But the economic burden of infrastructure costs does not come under the economic viability criteria, which is mostly about price, and then there is "and other", which is usually read very narrowly.

If we are talking about protections at the defence stage, then a seller still has the extra burden of pursuing that through those legal challenges. My NSW Greens colleagues in the other place will be moving an amendment to this provision. At the heart of this debate and the supposed rationale behind the Government's heavy hand is that there are environmental and economic benefits. Before moving to the environment and the uneasy relationship, in our view, between an ethanol monopoly and the Government, it is worth underscoring that this is an artificial market being created by the Government against a falling consumer market demand.

Mr Gareth Ward: The Greens are now the bastions of marketing.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Welcome to the twenty-first century. There is also a removal of business safeguards and this mandate will put unnecessary financial strain on small-to-medium businesses, which will be passed on to the consumer. How is that good economics? My colleagues on the other side of the Chamber are laughing. They say how dare The Greens talk about economies of scale. Welcome to the twenty-first century. How is it good economics to artificially prop up a market and to monopolise? I turn now to the discussion on the ethanol mandate, which I tried to have in this place a week ago but was howled down.

Mr Kevin Conolly: It was the wrong debate, but you are on today. Go for it.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Be careful of glass houses, my honourable friend. Manildra has a monopoly and undue political influence. The Australian ethanol industry is small and highly concentrated: one producer in New South Wales and two in Queensland. Manildra, which is the largest producer, supplies around 69 per cent of Australia's production. According to a report on *New South Wales Country Hour* on the ABC in August 2015, the Manildra plant at Nowra on the South Coast is supplied by 6,000 wheat growers. It produces most of this nation's gluten and starch and ethanol is produced from waste from the company's food processing plant. Indeed, Manildra, as the monopoly manufacturer of ethanol in New South Wales, has significant political influence. In a story on 1 December, Dr John Kaye helped to expose this undue influence. I place on record that between 1 July 2010 and 30 June 2014 the New South Wales ethanol monopoly gave more than \$532,000 to the Liberal Party around Australia, \$395,000 to The Nationals and \$414,000 to the Labor Party.

Since 1998 Manildra has donated \$4.3 million to the Liberal Party, The Nationals and the Labor Party. In the period 1 September 2014 to 30 September 2015 Manildra met with nine Ministers on 20 separate occasions, including one meeting with Premier Baird, six meetings with Deputy Premier Troy Grant, six meetings with the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, Mr Anthony Roberts, three meetings with the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation, Mr Victor Dominello, and one site visit to the plant with the former Minister for the Illawarra, the Hon. John Ajaka. This line of political lobbying was covered in a *Sydney Morning Herald* article on 17 March 2016 titled "Manildra had 20 meetings with New South Wales Ministers before new ethanol laws introduced". I am not going to suggest any impropriety; however, I want to put on the record that that is rather unusual when one considers how hard it is for an ordinary citizen to meet with Ministers.

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Mr Gareth Ward: Not under this Government.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: Well, I throw down the gauntlet. It is interesting that it is okay for the Government to make these sorts of accusations about the Opposition and others but it is not okay when it is put to them quite politely. Environmental and employment benefits are overstated. In his second

reading speech, Minister Dominello said:

... using ethanol-blended fuel makes productive economic use of an agricultural waste product ... ethanol is a renewable resource. Ethanol is an important opportunity to reduce our reliance on oil imports and carbon dioxide emissions.

He also claimed:

... a vibrant biofuels market supports regional jobs.

Both claims regarding the environmental and employment benefits of enforcing an ethanol mandate are greatly exaggerated. The Australian Bureau of Resource and Energy Economics warned in 2014 that there are very small or no employment and environmental benefits from using blended fuels. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Australian Bureau of Resource and Energy Economics stated:

The annual cost of the program to the taxpayer is significant. Two of the key economic and environmental benefits from ethanol production, notably regional employment and greenhouse gas abatement, are estimated to be relatively modest but come at a high to very high cost.

That did not come from some left-wing lunatic; that was stated by the Australian Bureau of Resource and Energy Economics. When speaking to these claims, The Greens refer to the so-called DNA of the Government and we also like to engage with those kinds of factual enterprises such as the Australian Bureau of Resource and Energy Economics. Specifically in regards to greenhouse gas emissions, the report found:

... by any comparative measure this [use of ethanol in blended fuel applications] represents very high cost emissions abatement in terms of the taxpayer outlay per tonne of abatement generated.

The report found that the prioritisation of ethanol also reduces the competitiveness of other alternative and emerging fuels. According to this analysis, government intervention in the ethanol industry in New South Wales to enforce the mandate is not justified by reported employment and environmental benefits. Food security is also an issue. A key concern regarding ethanol is the diversion of food crops to make the fuel. In the Minister's second reading speech he claimed:

In New South Wales ethanol is predominantly made from starch as a by-product of wheat production. For our farmers ethanol production is the only viable use for this resource. Without a market for ethanol this by-product would go to waste.

However, there are reasons to believe that the feedstock that goes into producing ethanol is not a legitimate form of waste or by-product. A 2011 report by the Australian Productivity Commission, titled "Carbon Emission Policies in Key Economies: Responses to Feedback on Certain Estimates for Australia", noted that the Manildra Group uses 50 per cent waste product and 50 per cent raw product. The report noted that the Manildra Group, located in New South Wales, is the only company in Australia that produces ethanol from wheat feedstock and that this represents around 68 per cent of Australian ethanol.

At an inquiry into mandatory ethanol and biofuels targets in Victoria in 2007, the managing director of the Manildra Group stated that Manildra uses "something like fifty-fifty waste product and raw product". This undermines industry claims about greenhouse gas emission abatement, which hinge on the argument that feedstock is a genuine by-product that would otherwise have gone to waste. If raw product is being used, this grain is taken away from the food chain and it must be grown elsewhere. This would significantly impact the greenhouse gas abatement claims. The lack of transparency in the highly

monopolised industry is also not conducive to determining the legitimacy of the "waste stock" used by Manildra. As noted by the Australian Productivity Commission:

The ethanol industry in Australia comprises only a few producers, and commercial confidentiality concerns make it difficult to obtain accurate information on production levels and feedstock use.

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Finally, it does not solve the issue of fuel security. In his second reading speech, Minister Dominello claimed that "consumption of biofuels dilutes our dependence on foreign oil". The Greens agree that fuel supply and dependency is a critical issue. However, we disagree that an ethanol mandate, not supported by economic or environmental modelling, is the answer. As noted in a 2015 Senate committee report titled "Australia's transport energy resilience and sustainability", almost all of Australia's transport needs are met by oil-derived products including petrol, diesel and jet fuel. An estimated 91 per cent of Australia's transport fuel is imported either as oil to be refined in Australia or as refined fuel products.

Australia only has about 40 days' supply of fuel at any given time. Noting these stockholding figures, the NRMA suggested that Australia's total stocks of fuel and oil held within the country were not only precariously low but also set to decline. This legislation means that wholesalers will no longer be required to comply with the 6 per cent mandate. However, we have the ludicrous situation that they will still have to report their compliance. The Greens will take that matter up in the other place by tabling amendments at the committee stage of debate.

In a global economy that is building solar highways and solar space stations and where Tesla cars and hybrid vehicles are commonplace in Europe and America, and in a national economy where innovations like Australian transport fuel company Caltex has built what it believes to be the world's first off-grid, solar-powered truck stop and gas station, we have to conclude that this legislation and the mandate it enforces is stuck in twentieth-century thinking and, indeed, pre-Keynesian economic thinking of the early twentieth century. Surely we can do better than this.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [10.56 a.m.]: I speak in support of the Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016 and I commend the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation, Mr Victor Dominello, for bringing this bill before the House. The objects of the bill are:

- (a) to extend the categories of retailers of petrol or diesel fuel who must comply with minimum biofuel requirements, and
- (b) to impose additional requirements on retailers of petrol or diesel fuel to make petrol-ethanol blend available for sale, and
- (c) to remove the obligation for wholesalers of petrol or diesel fuel to comply with minimum biofuel requirements but retain their obligation to provide returns, and
- (d) to require retailers of petrol or diesel fuel who are not subject to the minimum biofuel requirements to provide returns in accordance with the regulations, and
- (e) to provide IPART with power to make a determination about the reasonable wholesale price of ethanol, and
- (f) to require all operators of service stations to provide a return principally for the purpose of setting an appropriate threshold in the regulations for compliance with the minimum biofuel requirements as proposed to be amended.

Since 2007 the Biofuel (Ethanol Content) Act has been enforced but, unfortunately, this legislation has been undermined and rorted by large petrol companies and two of the major fuel retailers, Coles and

Woolworths. The myths spread by the large fuel companies that ethanol is not good for vehicles are the main reason for the biofuels mandate not reaching its peak. Ethanol is used to power Formula One cars. Its use is mandated in many nations and States, such as California in the United States of America. Those countries and States know that ethanol is good for the environment. I was amazed to hear a member of The Greens speaking against this bill. The Greens are meant to stand up for the environment. As we know, the great environmentalists in this country are the farmers—the people that The Nationals stand up for.

The member for Ballina has absolutely no credibility on this matter, especially when she was speaking about the Manildra Group, which is a great Australian company. Ethanol is good for the environment and it is good for consumers. The Manildra Group is Australia's largest producer of fuel-grade ethanol. It employs 800 workers in country New South Wales and has plants in Nowra, Manildra, Gunnedah and Gilgandra. The Manildra Group uses 100 per cent of the products used in the production of ethanol. Manildra makes alcohol and the by-product is put through a desalination and water-purifying plant, with part of the end product being put back into the distillery and part used to irrigate crops for livestock feed. The hard mass left after the liquid is extracted is exported.

The member for Ballina implied that there was something wrong with the Manildra Group making political donations. All those donations have been declared and are on record. There is nothing wrong with Australian companies making political donations; that is what the community expects from companies. The member also said there was something wrong with executives of the company meeting with Ministers. Why would they not see Ministers? Any person, any business and any company can speak to Ministers about issues. What is worse is that The Greens purport to be holier than thou. The largest political donation in Australian history—

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Mr Gareth Ward: It was \$1.6 million.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: —was to the Australian Greens yet they come in here trying to say there is something wrong. Did they give back that \$1.6 million? No, they put it in their pocket. That is shameful. That communist political organisation called The Greens has come in here saying it has a message to give. The greatest danger to our economy, small business and small operators is The Greens and every single person in Australia should know and understand that. This legislation means that ethanol will have the required mandate. The reason it has not had that previously is not because consumers do not want it but because of the spin. The only pumps in service stations with "out of order" signs are the ones with ethanol fuel; all the other pumps work properly.

People inside the service stations repeat what the big fuel companies say to them, "No, you don't want to use ethanol in your car. It is not good for your car. It is bad for the car." It is good enough for Formula One cars, for many other nations across the globe and for many other States but it is not good enough for The Greens and those they stick up for—the big petrol companies in Australia that have been gouging consumers. This bill is all about standing up for consumers, standing up for a company that is a great Australian story and looking after jobs in regional New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [11.01 a.m.]: I speak on the Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016. I have significant questions about the ethanol mandate and am concerned that the Biofuels Amendment Bill will require more petrol and diesel retailers to provide E10, increasing the use of ethanol for fuel and creating impacts on food supply and the environment. Manildra, the sole provider of ethanol in New South Wales, says that its ethanol is produced from waste and I acknowledge that it has received certification under the principles and criteria of the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels, which includes food security criteria. But agricultural industries say that ethanol is pushing up feed prices, which highlights there is more to the situation than a new use for food by-products.

Converting food to fuel is wasteful and unsustainable. What guarantees are there that increases in ethanol supply will not result in food being converted to fuel or that new land will not be converted to production of grains for fuel? If new crops are grown for fuel, we run the risk of deforestation, land clearing, soil erosion, fertiliser runoff and salinity, which occurred in Brazil when it increased its production of biofuels. Climate change will increase the incidence of extreme weather conditions including droughts and floods, putting immense pressure on food supply. We need to question whether mandates on ethanol will ultimately add to this pressure. As populations increase here in New South Wales as well as globally, demand for food will only increase.

This is a global concern that affects the world's poorest. The 2007 and 2008 world food crisis created political and economic instability and social unrest in poor and developed countries. The crisis resulted from a number of factors including increased conversion of food to fuel. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is concerned about the impact of ethanol on global food security. I do not believe we should extend the mandate to additional retailers without first addressing these concerns. Ethanol already receives a full refund on the fuel excise making it excise free. The Government has cited environmental benefits, new jobs for regional New South Wales and increasing fuel security as justifications for expanding the program.

But a damning Bureau of Resources and Energy Economics report of February 2014 assessed the costs and benefits of ethanol production grants and found that there are only relatively modest regional employment and greenhouse gas abatement benefits. The benefits from pollution were also found to be modest and declining, with the shift to higher fuel and engine quality standards. The bureau found no real benefit to Australia's fuel security; in fact potential risks were identified. There are cleaner and more cost-effective ways to reduce our reliance on dirty fossil fuels. The Government could start by reinvesting the massive funds for the environmentally damaging WestConnex project in public transport and improve its support for cycling. The arguments for this bill simply do not stack up. Many have cited the massive political donations Manildra has made to the Coalition. The public will be the judge of that. I do not support the bill.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I welcome to the gallery Showgirl winner for this year Grace Eppelstun from Grenfell, runner-up Em Madge from Young and Queensland Showgirl Michelle Mesner. I also welcome the finalists in the Rural Achievers for the Sydney Royal Easter Show this year—Edward Thomas from Cooma, Wesley Rohr from Kandos, Emily Ryan from Coonamble, Aimee Snowden from Tocumwal, Jordan Hoban from Cowra, Sally Taylor from Belconnen, Hannah Kempton from Wagga Wagga and Tamara Biffin from Cawdor. Welcome to the oldest Parliament in Australia. We are currently debating the Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016 in which you would all be interested.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.05 a.m.]: I speak on the Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016. Regional members in this place know how important it is to support jobs and regional development. We know how hard it is to attract business and industry to our communities to ensure they survive and thrive. We know how important it is to secure the future of families that want to live in regional New South Wales. We know how strongly our communities feel about giving young people the opportunity to train, work and remain in regional New South Wales.

I declare at the outset of this address that the State's largest producer of ethanol, Manildra Group, operates in my electorate in the town of Bomaderry. Indeed, having grown up in Bomaderry, I know that Manildra loomed large on the industrial landscape. Every time I drive down Bolong Road the plumes of steam entangled amidst a labyrinth of pipework remind me that behind every single one of those stately white hard hats that bob around the plant is a person with a story and a life that relies on the viability and future of Manildra's plant. As their representative in this place, I proudly support the Biofuels Amendment Bill because I support jobs in regional New South Wales, I support regional industry and I support the use of ethanol, which is good for our environment.

According to an independent review of the industry, nationwide ethanol production delivers 3,000 direct jobs and a further 20,000 indirect jobs. The industry contributes \$402 million in gross domestic product [GDP] every year. The majority of these jobs are located in regional New South Wales. As the local member I know that my community relies heavily on the jobs provided by the ethanol plants in Nowra, in addition to cities and towns across New South Wales which are home to ethanol industry workers, including Manildra, Gunnedah and Narrandera. These are skilled, high-wage regional jobs that cannot be exported or outsourced. Given the huge strain on manufacturing and agriculture facing Australia, it is important that we continue to support the thousands of regional jobs delivered by the ethanol industry across New South Wales. I am confident that the outcome will ensure that the thousands of jobs associated with the biofuels industry remain secure.

I acknowledge also the member for South Coast, Shelley Hancock, and the Hon. Paul Green, in the other place. Together with our friend Minister Dominello, biofuels has never had greater champions on the floor of the Parliament because we know how important this industry is to our region. Since 1992 Manildra has been producing ethanol from starch, as part of an integrated manufacturing process, and today is Australia's largest producer of a range of ethanol grades for all applications—from high-grade beverage and pharmaceutical, to industrial and fuel.

In 2013 Manildra's Nowra facility was the first plant in the world to receive the internationally recognised sustainability certificate from the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials, an international collection of farmers, companies, non-government organisations, experts, governments and inter-governmental agencies concerned with the global sustainability of bio-materials production and use. Manildra maintains this certification through the implementation of Roundtable of Sustainable Biofuels environmental, social and economic principles and criteria. At the outset, I make it clear that I am a supporter of choice at the bowser and I am a strong supporter of small business, particularly those mum and dad fuel station operators who have had concerns about the costs associated with the implementation of the ethanol mandate.

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What this bill does not do is force motorists to use ethanol, but what it does do is protect consumers. What this bill does not do is force small service station operators to install ethanol blended fuel, but what it does do is provide for a regime of sensible exceptions. The Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016 represents a significant package of reforms aimed at ensuring that the objectives of the New South Wales biofuels mandate are met. The House should be aware that the biofuels mandate is also supported by the National Roads and Motorists' Association [NRMA], the State's peak motoring body, with more than 2.5 million members. Mandates concerning the ethanol content of fuel and consumption targets exist in more than 50 countries around the world, including the United States of America, Canada, France and Brazil.

I am fully aware of certain sections of the community that oppose the biofuels mandate on the basis of market interference. What those scholars conveniently ignore is the sheer level of brazen market interference engaged in by oil companies and associated cartels. Of course the oil companies do not like this product. Its very existence challenges their market by forming a component of a product they would otherwise prefer to do without. Why would they voluntarily supplant their sale of hydrocarbons with a cheaper agricultural waste product? The answer is that without incentives or compulsion they are very unlikely to do so. That is why a government mandate is required. I am not aware of any jurisdiction in the world where a strong and viable biofuels market has been successfully established and maintained without government intervention. If we want a sustainable and competitive biofuels market in New South Wales we need a strong and enforceable mandate and, if we are to have a mandate, we need regulation that protects consumers at the bowser.

The reality is that governments regularly intervene in the market to protect consumers against unchecked market forces. That is why we have agencies such as Fair Trading, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, the Energy and Water Ombudsman and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority, amongst others. It is important that

consumers be given a choice between E10, regular unleaded and premium fuels. It is important that we have more transparency in the market, including real-time prices available online and transparency in the true cost of ethanol production as it is passed through to the bowser. It is important that we encourage a viable and competitive homegrown biofuels industry. That is what this bill seeks to do.

For the most part, support for the biofuels industry has been bipartisan, with both major parties in this place striving to implement legislation that encourages the sustainable use of biofuels. I noted with interest an article by *Sydney Morning Herald* writer Sean Nicholls on 17 March 2016 which sought to highlight biofuels industry donations to political parties and meetings held with New South Wales Government Ministers. Let me be blunt: I will continue to pursue meetings with the Premier and Ministers to further jobs and opportunities in my electorate. I see this as not just a requirement but a core function of the role of any member of Parliament.

Manildra has donated to both sides of politics. This is publicly known because it has been publicly declared, in accordance with the law governing political donations. The reason that the meetings between New South Wales Government Ministers and Manildra Group are public is because the Government made them public as part of its reforms that require Ministers to regularly publish their diaries—an initiative that I note the Leader of the Opposition has not required his shadow ministry to match.

One of the greatest disappointments in this debate remains the position of The Greens in New South Wales, who have continued to vote against ethanol and biofuels legislation. Whilst I was pleased with The Greens support of this Government's measures to support Illawarra workers by deferring payroll tax payments connected with BlueScope's Port Kembla steelworks, it seems The Greens will once again be voting against legislation that supports cleaner fuel, a cleaner environment and a viable biofuels industry in regional New South Wales. One must ask why a party whose very name implies that it is concerned for the environment would oppose an alternative source of fuel based entirely on a by-product of starch production.

The Greens have been quick to point out that the Manildra Group donates to the Liberals, The Nationals and Labor but not to the Greens. Have we here a case of breathtaking hypocrisy? The Greens were the recipients of the largest political donation in Australian history in the run-up to the 2010 election campaign, from *wotif.com* founder Graeme Wood, at \$1.6 million. The Greens provided support for BlueScope Steel and its workers when their jobs were on the line, but why not support my electorate's largest private employer, with more than 300 jobs associated with Manildra's plant in Bomaderry?

What we have here is worse than a mere case of being "green with envy". As a previous chairperson of the Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, I have been a campaigner for the toughest campaign finance and donation laws in the country. I will never act for a person or company simply because they have donated to my side of politics. The situation with The Greens is as serious as that of someone who accepts donations and acts only due to those donations. We have here a party that claims to be committed to the environment and alternative sources of energy whilst at the same time voting against cleaner and more sustainable fuel sources out of spite, vengeance and bitterness.

What motivates The Greens is not that Manildra has donated to other political parties; it is that Manildra has not donated to them. They are using their political power to say no when, in stark contrast, they have said yes to other industries in similar positions. The fact that Manildra is virtually the State's only supplier of ethanol magnifies my point that, when one considers the previous approaches of The Greens juxtaposed with their approach to this bill, The Greens position as a vanguard of progressive ideology and clean politics has been damaged. I leave it up to The Greens members of Parliament to continue to show their true colours.

I make the point that support for an ethanol mandate has long been bipartisan policy. For the Government to step away from its long-held policy position leaves it open to criticism of sovereign risk—where companies invest off the back of political commitments, only to see those commitments

change. I am pleased this Government has continued to support a strong and robust biofuels industry in this State and has not been deterred by the lunatic fringe who wrongfully assert everything from "donations for deals" to "crony capitalism". It would be remiss of me not to thank the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation. Without his persistence and advocacy, I would fear for the future of biofuels and ethanol production in my region. He has weathered the slings and arrows of this debate. On behalf of a grateful community, including the member for South Coast and the Hon. Paul Green, I congratulate and thank the Minister and say, "Shame on The Greens."

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [11.15 p.m.]: I speak in support of this bill. I will be brief but clear. I have been a long-term advocate for biofuels and ethanol production in New South Wales. Biofuels reforms were commenced, as the member for Kiama outlined, under the Labor Government. The member for Kiama knows as well as I do just how important the 300 or so jobs at Manildra are to the local economy. I have had many opportunities to visit Manildra to look at the plant, and to look at the research on biofuels. The company made a significant investment of more than \$300 million based on assurances provided by both parties. There are people in this place who think that that is too bad. We do not. We consider sovereign risk to be very important. Every person in this place should consider sovereign risk to be very important.

I am an outspoken supporter of ethanol production in New South Wales. It brings economic benefits and employment to regional communities. It brings environmental benefits. It sustains local economies. The member for Kiama knows all too well that we in the Illawarra region have suffered greatly in the past two years from significant economic shocks. Thousands of jobs have been lost in mining, manufacturing and heavy industry. We will always stand up and fight for the 300 direct and multiple indirect jobs in the ethanol industry that men and women in our respective communities rely on every day. I will never turn my back on those people who rely on the salaries that large organisations provide in regional communities. The member for Kiama and I, along with the other members of Parliament from the Illawarra, know very well what it is like to live in a regional area. We are not a global economy. Job losses in industries such as this have a big impact on our community.

They can make or break a community. We are not Sydney. We are not the global city. We love living in regional New South Wales. We need to make sure that people do not think that the only place to get work is in large cities. Where possible, government has a role to play to ensure, through sensible sustainability processes, that jobs are retained in regional areas. If we were to follow a purist model we would not fund public transport; we would not fund health; we would not fund education. Why? All those things, if one runs them through any economic modelling, do not make any sense to the bottom line. But they make sense for jobs and for developing and sustaining regional economies. They make sense because of the environmental benefits that they bring to the community of New South Wales as a whole.

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Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) [11.19 a.m.], in reply: As members have heard the purpose of the Biofuels Amendment Bill 2016 is to provide motorists with more choice in fuel and to support the renewable fuels industry. Since assuming ministerial responsibility for the biofuels mandate nine months ago, I have sought to work collaboratively and constructively with all interested stakeholders to develop a workable solution, with the interests of the consumers of New South Wales being my number one priority. I would like to thank all stakeholders in the debate for their constructive and meaningful input to bring this bill before the House. I also thank the following members for their contributions to this debate: the member for Swansea, the member for Riverstone, the member for Ballina, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Sydney, the member for Kiama and the member for Keira. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by the Hon. Victor Dominello agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AMENDMENT (ADVANCED METERS) BILL 2016

Second reading

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) [11.21 a.m.], on behalf of Mr Anthony Roberts: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As this bill was introduced in the other place on 9 March 2016 and is in the same form, and the second reading speech appears at pages 54 to 57 in the proof *Hansard* for that day, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [11.22 a.m.]: I lead in this place on the Electricity Supply Amendment (Advanced Meters) Bill 2016 on behalf of the Opposition. My colleague in the other place the Hon. Adam Searle, Shadow Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, is the lead spokesman for the Opposition on this bill. I commend him for all the work he has done in this area. The New South Wales Opposition opposes this bill. We are very concerned that as part of this legislation the Baird Government plans to force households with solar panels to pay up to \$600 for these smart meters from next year.

This legislation will put pressure on up to 130,000 households to pay for the installation of smart meters if they want to continue to receive rebates for feeding power back into the grid. That is something we are obviously very concerned about. From the end of the year the amount for which households with solar panels can sell electricity back to the grid is set to plummet to as low as 4¢ per kilowatt hour as the scheme winds up. This is because, after the closure of the Solar Bonus Scheme, the Baird Government failed to put in place any requirement for a fair minimum feed-in tariff for households generating rooftop solar energy. In contrast, Labor committed at the 2015 State election to a mechanism for a fair minimum feed-in tariff for solar households.

This legislation, which has passed through the upper House, will also greatly increase the number of people able to install electricity meters, raising safety concerns about the level of skills that will be required of those performing this work and whether the industry has the capacity and capability to carry this out. The Opposition has, through the Hon. Adam Searle and others, also raised the concern that consumers could be locked into long-term contracts with retailers because they, as opposed to the householder, will actually "own" the meters. Labor voted against the bill in the upper House and also moved unsuccessfully to take the bill to a committee to analyse the real impacts of these rushed measures—something which we think would have allowed a more thoughtful and diligent process of working through this proposed legislation.

Labor is very concerned that the Baird Government is punishing the people who are trying to do the right thing by the environment. Energy retailers do not need to install an expensive new meter to check electricity generation and usage; they have all the information at their fingertips. But the Baird Government has pressed ahead regardless. Labor has fought to strike out smart meter charges as

unnecessary and unfair. It also moved to ensure those with rooftop solar electricity generation received a fair return for their efforts to generate clean and renewable energy to enhance our environment.

Labor also made efforts in the other place to ensure that those installing the meters have to have the same level of skill and accreditation as they do at present—to ensure the physical safety of not only themselves but also householders and the public. The significant risks of injury and death, as well as damage to property, are just too high to justify lowering the standards as proposed by the Baird Government. Unfortunately, because the Government has failed to respond properly to Labor's concerns, Labor is left with no choice but to oppose this bill.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) [11.26 a.m.]: I support the Electricity Supply Amendment (Advanced Meters) Bill 2016. I have always been interested in supporting ways in which government can promote competition. Since 1999, when I was briefed in a leading competition case concerning the opening up of the Northern Territory electricity market to competition, I have been interested in competition issues around electricity generation, transmission, distribution and retail sub-markets. This bill will prepare industry and market participants to transition to broader structural changes that are occurring in the New South Wales electricity market.

Smart meters bring a number of enabling technologies. Under this bill, metering will no longer be the responsibility of distribution businesses or form part of their assets. The bill will facilitate a competitive rollout of smart meters in a competitive market for qualified meter installers. Smart meters are very important as they will provide a solution to some dubious meter reading or non-meter reading practices that have emerged. For example, most of the electricity bills received by my household have been marked with "unable to read due to dog"—this despite the fact that in the 14 years that my family have lived in our home there has never been a dog on the property. The regular electronic messages sent by smart meters will solve the current meter reading errors.

Safety is a key concern and priority under this bill. The bill clarifies that retailers and meter businesses must have in place a safety management system to guide the meter installation process. The safety management system obligation on retailers and metering businesses forms the backbone of the safeguards put in place by this bill. This is on top of existing requirements. The obligation will reduce risk and ensure the success of the competitive rollout of smart meters in New South Wales. The safety management system puts in place measures to ensure that retailers and meter providers provide adequate training to all qualified electricians engaged to install meters. It ensures that retailers and metering businesses have appropriate safety and compliance testing in place for every meter installed by a qualified electrician. It requires retailers and metering businesses to continue to adhere to the safety standards that have served the meter installation process so well to date. To be clear, this bill does not amend any of the existing safety standards, which I will discuss in detail shortly.

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For completeness, the bill clarifies that all parties involved in the meter installation process are accountable for safety, not just the qualified electricians engaged to install the meters. In addition to these important safeguards, the amendment bill also includes a power to make regulation to impose minimum training requirements on qualified electricians engaged to install meters. This is a significant measure that sends a clear and unambiguous signal to all businesses involved in meter installation that the Government is prepared to take strong regulatory action to ensure that appropriate safety standards continue to be met. These measures squarely meet community expectations regarding electricity safety.

The existing prohibition on qualified electricians undertaking live electrical work will remain unchanged under this bill. If the removal or installation of a meter requires live electrical work then the electrical contractor will be required to engage an accredited service provider. Existing electrical safety standards for metering installation will remain unchanged under the new arrangements. These standards are set out in the Electricity (Consumer Safety) Regulations and include, first, the Australian-New Zealand Standard for Wiring Rules and, secondly, the Service and Installation Rules of New South Wales. These

documents set the safety standard and are currently in use.

The measures set out in the bill ensure that safety standards are front and centre in the meter installation process, and give confidence to the industry and community that these will not be compromised. Electricity is a major and important industry. It is the very lifeblood through which modern society operates. If anything, as time has marched on, electrical devices have become more and more important to the community. Therefore, reforms that encourage the efficiency of the electricity market are very important reforms to the operation of modern society. This bill comprehensively addresses all safety issues and concerns raised by a competitive rollout of smart meters and, particularly, opens up meter installation to competition. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [11.32 a.m.]: The Opposition opposes the Electricity Supply Amendment (Advanced Meters) Bill 2016 for the reasons articulated by the member for Keira, that is, it allocates the cost basis of smart meters to electricity customers on the basis that any increased additional cost to those engaged in supplying renewable energy to their household is, in fact, a deterrent. Governments through not only the Solar Bonus Scheme but through every other area of renewable energy have encouraged the energy industry to move towards renewable energy. The cost of some renewables is one of the chief arguments of those opposed to the use of wind, for example, as an area in which renewable energy should not be pursued.

It was a very fortuitous and far-reaching thoughtful energy Minister, the member for Blacktown, who first introduced the Solar Bonus Scheme. The policy that he announced was also embraced by the then Leader of the Opposition Barry O'Farrell. It was virtually a unanimous decision of this House. No-one in this House opposed the scheme at the time. The Solar Bonus Scheme had the instant effect of generating a plethora of solar installations and encouraged mammoth numbers of people to consider renewable energy to such an extent that the manufacturing price completely lowered and, all of a sudden, the Solar Bonus Scheme became affordable.

Those who want to complain that the energy Minister subsequent to the member for Blacktown did not rein it in were obviously looking at the popularity of the scheme and the plethora of rooftop solar installations. We all know that renewable energy would not be available without some form of public subsidy. In fact, it is the private sector and the jobs that that industry generates that will be a substantial part of the future of the Australian and New South Wales economies. The movement of retail, and transmission and distribution to the private sector will result in pressure and legislation upon whoever is the government of the day to provide some mechanism to charge the consumer of electricity.

Mr Gareth Ward: It is called the market.

Mr RON HOENIG: That is not fair. There is no point in the member for Kiama interjecting and saying it is the market, because when a market genuinely works consumers get the benefit of that competition. Perhaps the member for Kiama will tell me where there exists a genuine market that does not require anti-trust legislation or trade practices legislation to regulate it. I confess that the generation of electricity has been substantially under control because of the National Electricity Market, which was established by the Keating Government. The advent and the subsidy of renewable energies, particularly rooftop solar, has reduced the demand for the manufacture of electricity, and those market prices have been relatively stable for a lengthy period.

State Treasuries, particularly in New South Wales, have been gouging \$2 billion a year from ordinary householders of electricity and calling them "tax equivalent payments", "dividends" or "loan facilities fees", but effectively they have been an electricity tax on the people of New South Wales. The Government has sold off its transmission and distribution network to the private sector, which effectively was a taxing organisation to generate revenue for Treasury. On top of that the private sector will pass on to those who are engaged in the feed-in tariff a further responsibility of paying for a smart meter that they do not need.

In the next five to 10 years, if not earlier than that, there will be a huge transition to rooftop solar. Businesses engaged in transmission and distribution networks are already asserting that those who are moving to renewable energy are "free-riders". They are trying to gouge increased electricity prices out of them from the transmission and distribution networks because a major technology gain is to come, which will relate to energy storage or battery storage. As soon as it becomes economically viable to install it, the technology will allow solar energy to be stored in households or in particular regions, and there will be a complete transition to this type of energy.

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During debate on the sale of the transmission and distribution networks the Government had one argument in its favour but never referred to it, which indicates a lack of competence. That is, it could have argued it was an ideal time to sell. When battery storage facilities for rooftop solar become available the value of the transmission and distribution network will fall markedly. There will be a huge transition over the next five years because of advances in energy storage. To facilitate that I would imagine governments will have a responsibility to add a subsidy to make that change. I flag this with the House now: The minute the technology becomes within reach at an affordable price people like me who favour renewable energy will begin demanding that government provide assistance to effect the transition, and the transmission and distribution networks and retailers will be screaming to try to stop any subsidy.

It is not in the economic interests of the transmission and distribution networks or retailers for renewable energy to be freely available and stored by average householders because it will directly impact upon their future revenue streams. We should be aware of that. This bill contains a provision that the cost of smart meters be borne by electricity customers. That is an example of the sort of pressure that will be placed upon any government of the day in respect of this industry. Mark my words: Over the next five years there will be a huge transition in the energy supply sector. State governments and the Commonwealth must be informed and able to ensure that consumers and householders of this State are never again gouged by revenue-hungry owners as they were gouged by revenue-hungry Treasury in the past.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) [11.42 a.m.]: It is a privilege to speak in debate on the Electricity Supply Amendment (Advanced Meters) Bill 2016. This bill brings important changes for consumers, giving them access to exciting new energy products through advanced meters. The process for having an advanced meter installed is an easy one. When a customer makes the choice to install an advanced meter—and I emphasise that it will be a voluntary decision—all they need do is contact their chosen energy retailer to find out about their plans for the rollout of advanced meters, or smart meters as some people have referred to them. Many retailers will be supplying advanced meters and many will likely have different products for customers to choose from.

These might include tariffs that vary by time of day, giving customers access to cheaper electricity at off-peak times, or they might include exciting new mobile phone applications so that customers can access near real-time information. That fits well with the many technological advances giving people the ability to control appliances and access information through their phone in the palm of their hand no matter where they are or what time of day it is. Retailers will be able to help customers choose the products that suit their needs and consumers should ask their retailers plenty of questions to ensure they understand the options available to them.

Once a customer has chosen the advanced meter product that is suitable for them it will be as simple as contacting their chosen retailer to take care of the rest of the process. Under the changes made by this bill retailers will arrange for an appropriately trained metering installer to visit the premises and install the meter. I emphasise that they will be appropriately trained, qualified, safe and certified. As the installation of a meter requires the electricity to be turned off at the premises, customers who need specialist equipment such as a life support system will be given at least four days notice of the date of installation. However, those customers can agree to a shorter notice period with their retailer if they

choose. The important point is that choice is emphasised throughout this bill.

A retailer may require a customer to sign a new contract for the supply of electricity, unless their existing contract already allows the meter to be changed, so customers should shop around to make sure they are satisfied with the offer. For customers who sign a new contract there are strong protections in place to ensure fair terms and conditions. In addition, there is a 10 business day cooling-off period that allows a customer to change their mind if they wish. It is important to note that customers will still be able to switch to a new retailer, or a new electricity tariff, even with an advanced meter. Consumers are encouraged to take the usual measures to ensure they receive a competitive offer from their retailer and understand the terms and conditions of their contract.

In addition to strict requirements around medical appliances and life support system requirements, this bill brings other strong customer protections for these new arrangements. A key protection ensures that customers who have a complaint about their advanced meters can contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW, who will be able to deal with their matter and assist them. This bill brings exciting changes to the New South Wales electricity market. The process for electricity customers to get involved is simple and this bill will give them the protection they need.

I recall many times during the election campaign voters who were interested in wider choice in products and services approaching me. Whilst the overwhelming majority of those people recognise that this Government has methodically gone about much reform, they have a rightful expectation that the Government can always do more to offer as much choice as possible. Through initiatives and reforms such as the one contained in this bill the Government is finding ways to meet that expectation of my local community. As I said in my inaugural speech, I will work every day in this place for the people of Seven Hills as well as the wider community of Western Sydney and New South Wales.

Dr Geoff Lee: And Parramatta.

Mr MARK TAYLOR: And the great town of Parramatta, as my friend indicates. The Government is about providing choice and that is squarely at the heart of this bill. I commend the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, Anthony Roberts, for his great work in bringing this bill forward. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.48 a.m.]: I am delighted to speak in debate on the Electricity Supply Amendment (Advanced Meters) Bill 2016. During the last term of Parliament I chaired the Public Accounts Committee.

Dr Geoff Lee: And a great committee too.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: The Parliamentary Secretary Lee and Mr Deputy-Speaker were very able members of that committee.

Dr Geoff Lee: You were a great chairman.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: Thank you. I acknowledge that interjection. We conducted an extensive inquiry into electricity generation in New South Wales, including the economics of energy generation. During the inquiry we explored baseload power, renewable energy, off-grid power generation, battery storage and worldwide trends to determine the future of electricity generation in this State. I acknowledge the contribution of the former shadow Treasurer, who sat on the committee and was a great contributor. Indeed, all members of the Public Accounts Committee made an excellent contribution over those four years. I must say, I miss the intellectual rigour, discipline and intelligence of the former shadow Treasurer, because those qualities were not displayed by the current shadow Treasurer in opposing this bill.

The shallow arguments of those opposite showed a misunderstanding of the fundamental element of choice, but in many respects that is typical of the Labor Party: It often rejects choice and makes blanket, assertive statements that are not based in reality. For example, it cannot be argued that there will be an unfair imposition of cost because there will be no cost if a consumer chooses not to go down this path. Such an argument is based on a basic and fundamental fallacy. The Public Accounts Committee looked at smart meters among a range of energy-related issues. We also looked at the introduction of compulsory smart meters in Victoria and the potential benefits for users in New South Wales.

The committee concluded that smart meters were effective tools for power generators to monitor electricity consumption and predict peak usage, and also added value for consumers, particularly if tied in with time-of-use-pricing. We now have time-of-use pricing, and smart meters will enable a better use of time-of-use pricing, more efficient use of electricity and more control for consumers. All good things, if we go down that path. In its 2012 report entitled "The Economics of Energy Generation", the Public Accounts Committee made a number of recommendations regarding smart meters, including accelerating the deployment of smart meter technology and introducing time-of-use pricing, with full disclosure of price tariff charges. The committee suggested educating consumers about the management of energy consumption and energy saving strategies.

I note that a recent Victorian Auditor-General's report stated that Victorians paid more than \$2 billion for smart meters, yet two-thirds did not fully understand their benefits and only 0.27 per cent of consumers subscribed to the smart meters flexible pricing offers. In Victoria there was a degree of compulsion; the New South Wales Government is not talking about that. We have learnt from the Victorian experience and have approached smart meters from a consumer-focused perspective. Smart meter technology is continuing to improve. It offers various benefits for consumers, including a range of products designed to save them money and reduce their electricity consumption. Smart meters, when introduced, will allow consumers to have greater control over their electricity consumption and costs. They should enable a wider range of tariffs to be offered by retailers and may include increased time-of-use pricing, which will be based on energy demand and generation costs for different times of the day.

Obviously, appropriate controls will be put in place for those who are vulnerable or did not have the ability to change the pattern of use. The technology also allows for the possibility of retailers charging higher prices during pre-identified key demand peaks, while offering lower prices outside these times. These amendments present electricity consumers with the choice of whether or not to have a smart meter. This will also allow installers and retailers to compete for market share; ultimately pushing down the cost of smart meters and further benefiting consumers. I will now comment on some of the new products and services before returning to comments made about the Solar Bonus Scheme and related matters. The bill demonstrates this Government's strong commitment to supporting customer choice and the competitive, market-led rollout of smart meters in New South Wales.

I emphasise that customers will always have the choice of whether or not to install smart meters in their premises, and the bill will make it easier for them should they so choose. Smart meters will transform the relationship customers currently have with their electricity usage by giving them greater understanding and control. Smart meters will give customers a stronger understanding of their energy usage. It will give them greater opportunities to actively assess and control their electricity consumption. In addition, innovative and exciting new services and opportunities are becoming available through smart meters, which are otherwise not feasible with basic meters. Smart meters have the potential to make onerous manual meter readings and imprecise estimated bills a thing of the past. Smart meters remotely provide accurate, timely, and continually updated data on electricity consumption to households and their electricity providers.

Customers can even access near real-time information on mobile phone applications. Technicians do not have to arrive at a customer's home or place of business to manually read smart meters. With this smart technology I could find out about the power usage in my home right now just by

looking at my phone. One can constantly track energy usage and billing becomes as accurate as possible. Furthermore, this up-to-date information will help customers better understand their energy use. Customers can achieve important cost savings by tracking their data to use electricity more efficiently. But if they choose, for whatever reason, not to use a smart meter, it will not cost them anything. Faults can be identified remotely through smart meters, avoiding the need to send a technician to the site to assess the outage manually. This remote capability enables a quicker response to outages from electricity providers, allowing them to restore power more quickly, with less disruption for customers.

A competitive electricity market in New South Wales is a key priority for this Government. The bill will further encourage competition and greater customer choice in the New South Wales electricity market. With smart meters, customers can more easily participate in the electricity market and have a more active role in choosing who supplies their electricity. Smart meters give customers the ability to remotely switch their electricity providers. With this remote capability switching becomes smoother and more accurate, with less hassle for customers, which is another benefit. Retailers will be able to help customers choose the smart meter products to suit their needs.

Consumers should ask their retailers plenty of questions to ensure they understand the options available to them. But if they are not comfortable, consumers do not have to change from what they have now. There is no compulsion and no cost unless they chose to go down that path. Once a customer enters into a contract for a new smart meter product they will still have a 10 business day cooling-off period to exit the contract without penalty, if they change their mind. Customers can contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW if they have any complaints about their retailer or their smart meter. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

Mr Anthony Roberts: The member for Davidson is a very smart member

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: I thank the Minister for his interjection and return the compliment by saying with this Minister in charge it is little wonder that smart meters are being introduced as an exciting new innovation. Under the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy and the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation a raft of innovative, exciting initiatives are being introduced to this State.

Mr Anthony Roberts: We are doing it together.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: Yes, we are doing it together. Importantly, customers can benefit from smart meters by gaining access to a range of products and services that can be leveraged from this new technology. Emerging digital technology can be combined with smart meters to give customers even greater control over their household electricity consumption. For example, customers can utilise their smart meters and their digital connections to remotely control their appliances, switching them on and off when they are away from home to take advantage of off-peak prices. Again, it gives them greater control over use and cost should they choose to go down that path. I now respond to comments made by the member for Heffron in relation to the Solar Bonus Scheme. That scheme cost \$1.7 billion, well over the \$355 million that was budgeted. Who ended up having to pay for that?

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Mr Anthony Roberts: Pensioners.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: Pensioners.

Dr Geoff Lee: People in low socio-economic circumstances.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: Low socio-economic people. All those who did not choose to use the Solar Bonus Scheme, a scheme that was honoured by this Government and which finishes at the end of this year. The member for Heffron should understand that the former Leader of the Opposition gouged that money from pensioners and people from low socio-economic backgrounds and that those people had

to subsidise the \$1.7 billion that was given to those who chose to use the Solar Bonus Scheme. I compare that with this initiative: there is no cross-subsidy and people choose to use it, for which they incur a cost but ultimately save money.

The great irony of the contribution of the member for Heffron is that in attempting to extol the virtues of the Solar Bonus Scheme he was actually condemning himself and his former Government. The Auditor-General of New South Wales slammed the Solar Bonus Scheme as totally irresponsible. And it was. It was ill-conceived in the way it was introduced and it was poorly managed. Encouraging solar is a positive thing. This Government does that, but not in the same way as the Labor Party did. Ultimately, consumers pay for Labor's mismanagement.

The Solar Bonus Scheme is finishing at the end of this year. The introduction of smart meters will enable those who were on that scheme to move to a net metering system, and ultimately they will benefit. The people who were on the Solar Bonus Scheme will be scaling down to between 5¢ and 8¢ instead of 20¢ to 60¢, but by moving to the new system they will be able to use their electricity themselves and only export to the grid the amount they do not use. That will be enabled by this smart metering technology and people coming off the Solar Bonus Scheme will benefit. A range of tariff options are available. I already have a smart meter but if I did not I would make that choice because I believe it is a positive initiative.

Smart meters have smart technology that allows customers to navigate the complex maze of tariff structures and maximise value from their solar power systems and, potentially, battery storage. The member for Heffron made some good comments in relation to battery storage. Commercially viable storage will be a game changer, but it is not available yet. However, smart meters enable people to manage solar and storage in a more effective way. I acknowledge the presence of the member for Lake Macquarie, who is going to speak to this debate. I note the good contribution he made as a member of the Public Accounts Committee. In summary, the benefits and opportunities, the new products and services that will be available to customers from smart meters are simply too good to pass up. Customers have a choice. This forward-looking bill encourages innovation. I commend the Minister and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [12.03 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to debate on the Electricity Supply Amendment (Advanced Meters) Bill 2016. At the outset, I reiterate the comments of many Opposition members. The Opposition does not oppose the rollout of smart meters or any of the technological advancements in this industry. Technological advancements in the industry are what make it exciting. Around 300,000 homes in New South Wales now have solar rooftop panels, and it is pleasing to think that this industry has been consumer led. Five or 10 years ago, no-one could have foreseen the take-up of solar rooftop panels. No doubt, part of the take-up was attributable to the schemes, both State and Federal, that were offered to encourage people to do so. But a great number of people did it for other reasons: some wanted to be environmentally responsible; others wanted to exact savings from their own households.

It is true—and I thank the member for Davidson for his kind comments—that the Public Accounts Committee held a very useful inquiry into the generation of electricity in this State. I say to those who are newcomers to the electricity industry and who may not know anything about the industry, there is no better document that will educate them from start to finish than the report handed down by the Public Accounts Committee in relation to electricity. It is highly educational and I commend it to everyone. One of the motivations for me to speak on this bill today is to use my personal circumstances to educate and to warn people about what might happen if they are not educated in respect of their own household. That is the crux of concerns with smart meters and the Opposition's concern in respect of this bill.

Electricity generation is a highly complex industry. Before I came to Parliament, I thought there is a generator, it burns coal, it generates electricity, it comes along a wire, it goes across the distribution and transmission networks through a step-up or step-down transformer, and then it comes along a pole into a house. That is pretty simple. It is not. It is a very complex industry and has a great deal of regulation

attached to it. One of the great advancements in the industry was the National Electricity Market conceived by the Keating Government; it has been a huge bonus for the industry.

But it is true to say that the regulatory class dropped the ball on both sides of politics—not the current Minister, but his predecessors—on looking after consumers. It is true to say that consumers in New South Wales were taken for a ride by the network, which was gold plated. There is no doubt about that and we all have to take responsibility for it. At the heart of the Opposition's concern in respect of this bill is watching out for the consumer. It is not sufficient to say with respect to smart meters and what is a very complex, multifaceted situation, even within a person's home, that people should educate themselves about what is in their best interests because it is not within the capability of most consumers to do that comprehensively.

I will give an example. About three or four years ago I installed solar rooftop panels on my home. Before the alarm bells go off on the other side of the House, I did not seek nor did I receive any State subsidies. It would have been a bit rich, having sat around the Cabinet table, for me to put my hand out for a subsidy. I could have but I did not. When I decided to install solar panels on my roof, I thought that my electricity provider would come out, install the solar panels and off we go. I thought that the 8¢ at which I was selling electricity back into the network would be reflected in my bill. I did not know how but I trusted the electricity provider.

The retailer came out, organised for the installation of the solar panels on the roof and then it switched hats. It said, "Now you need to get a smart meter. Your old meter is not good enough". It could have told me that beforehand but it did not. The company came out, installed a smart meter at my home and gave me a bill for \$400. It did not warn me or educate me about that when it sold me the solar panels. I rang to ask how this could occur. I was told, "You are talking to the solar sales division". Apparently they were different divisions of the same company. I did not think that was good enough.

Then the clincher was a letter they sent to me stating, "Thanks for becoming our new solar customer. We are now putting you on a new regime: time of day charging". My regulated tariff—which was, from memory, about 28¢ a kilowatt—became in off-peak about 22¢ and in the shoulder period about 28¢. Then I fell off my chair. In peak periods, that is, 2.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m., it was a whopping 53¢ a kilowatt. So my 28¢ had gone to 53¢. I had no warning, no education and no choice. I was completely ambushed by my electricity company. For people like me with four kids who use most of their electricity in the afternoon, particularly in winter, that could have got me very cranky. As it turned out, it worked out well because with the configuration of my house—and I will not bore everyone with the energy sources in my house—I was able to make real savings. However, that was by accident, not by design.

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My concern is that there is not inherent in the bill sufficient protections for consumers. I will not labour those points because my colleague in the other place, the Hon. Adam Searle, has enumerated them in some detail. I do note one concern he expressed and which has been discussed in this place today, that is, the ability of consumers to switch. I understand that the ability of consumers to switch retailers will be unimpeded, but at what cost? What will be the ability of the retailer, who will now own these very important pieces of infrastructure, to snag their customers? For example, with mobile phone providers, people might be able to switch from Telstra to Optus but then they have to pay a lump sum for the balance of the contract.

Many questions remain unanswered. I note that the Minister is present in the Chamber and will make a speech in reply. I am sure his staff will be all over the issues that the Hon. Adam Searle and other speakers have raised in this and the other place. The Minister should address the concerns one by one because they are important considerations. The scope for people to be caught out by retailers that might do the wrong thing has not been addressed at all in this bill. The member for Davidson talked about cross-subsidies. Electricity retail companies compete on such a small portion of the bill; they fight for about 3 per cent of the total bill, in effect, and their margins are made within that very small portion of the

bill. Competition will be ferocious.

No doubt, retailers will say, "Unlike retailer X, we will give you your smart meter for free", but the issue of cross-subsidy becomes a live one. Will people who receive smart meters in this way be subsidised by the electricity retailer as a class or will the retailer incorporate the cost of the smart meters into the purchaser's individual bill? One thing is for sure, smart meters are an expensive piece of infrastructure and retailers will not wear the cost from their own margin. Consumers will pay. The question is: Which class of consumers will pay? The Opposition supports the rollout of smart meters and we appreciate that this is a voluntary scheme. However, because the consumer protection elements that we sought in the other place were not addressed, we will not be supporting this bill today—unless the Minister pulls a rabbit out of his hat.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.14 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to debate on the Electricity Supply Amendment (Advanced Meters) Bill 2016. It sounds like a fairly dry topic but it is of great interest to anyone who is on the grid producing electricity through the solar photovoltaic [PV] systems as well as those who may be subsidising consumers who benefit from a feed-in tariff. I am pleased to support much of the bill but I have some concerns about it. I have listened to the debate and note that there is some argument and differentiation between the two sides of the House. The member for Maroubra, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, summed it up for me when he said there had been failings on both sides of politics in the regulation of the industry.

All members would agree that problems in the market, such as the costs involved in the electricity distribution industry during that period of gold plating of the network and its impact on the community, have resulted in the community feeling very confused about how the system works. The member for Davidson referred to the role of the Public Accounts Committee in reviewing these matters. I note that the member for Parramatta, who is at the table, was the deputy chair.

Dr Geoff Lee: A very capable one.

Mr GREG PIPER: A very capable one, I am sure. The committee spent some time examining this matter. It is a complex matter and I am not surprised that most people do not understand how it works. The member for Maroubra has been illuminated because he obviously has some understanding of the impacts of his solar PV system. His system was not part of the solar bonus scheme. I place on record that I, too, purchased a PV system and chose not to opt into the Solar Bonus Scheme. I have received somewhere between 6¢ and 8¢ for much of that period. I do have a net metering system. The Government has left it a little late to address this issue and there is now some urgency before the Solar Bonus Scheme finishes at the end of this year. Some 130,000 customers are on a gross feed-in system. If they joined early in the scheme—seven years ago—they have done very well out of it.

Perhaps it should have been pointed out to those customers early in the process that there would be a crunch and that they would be dealing with the complicated issue of being on a gross feed-in tariff—therefore, perhaps not receiving any benefit from their production yet having to pay full retail price for the power they use. Those customers will have bill shock. That will not occur for those already on a net metering system, such as the member for Maroubra and me. There has been some acrimony on both sides of the Chamber, which is par for the course.

The intentions of the then Labor Government were good. It was attempting to stimulate the market by trying to get more people into the scheme. In hindsight, the feed-in tariff was overdone; 60¢ a kilowatt hour seemed amazing. But nobody really spoke against it at the time. How was it going to be funded? We now know that it was set at an unsustainable level and that a lower level of 30¢ or 40¢ would have been more appropriate. However, as I said, the intention was good. This Government has inherited the problem that the feed-in tariff was oversubscribed and caused many problems. I am also sure that many customers on gross metering systems are ill-informed about what is looming. The Government must address that issue.

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The bill provides a practical solution to delivering new metering systems. That is necessary because there are not enough accredited suppliers or installers to accommodate the demand of 130,000 customers. One must ask whether there are 130,000 meters waiting to be supplied. Obviously somebody in the retail market had an idea that this was coming. It also raises the question of what will happen to the 130,000 gross feed-in tariff meters. Where will they go? I am hopeful that the industry will accommodate the recycling of those electrical components.

My concern is that the situation has taken too long to address. I am concerned that people could experience bill shock because they are unaware of the change. We must move quickly to advise the community of their options. It is also important to educate people. The member for Maroubra spoke about having to learn how to use a net feed-in meter system. One does the washing and drying while the sun is shining. Whatever has a significant draw down on the electricity network is done while the sun is shining. That is the great benefit that people on a net system have been able to receive but people on a gross system have not.

I caution that we must move quickly on this. The Government should do whatever it can to reduce the possible impact on unsuspecting participants of the Solar Bonus Scheme who have gross feed-in meters and who could experience bill shock or the shock of having to pay for a new meter. Not everybody is equal in this situation. A cost of \$400 to \$600 will have a big impact. I ask the Government to pursue providers to ensure that they do what they can to reduce that impact. People who have a solar photovoltaic system need to understand the best way to make use of it and to understand, if they move to the net metering system, how to receive the maximum benefit from it. I support the bill but I am cautious about the outcomes.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [12.54 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their contribution to the debate. In particular, I acknowledge the member for Keira, the member for Ku-ring-gai, the member for Seven Hills, the member for Davidson, the member for Heffron, the member for Maroubra and the member for Lake Macquarie. The Electricity Supply Amendment (Advanced Meters) Bill 2016 achieves a number of important metering reforms in New South Wales. This bill carefully balances the need to open competition in metering while ensuring that safety and training standards continue to be met. The bill amends the requirements for people authorised to install a meter in New South Wales and consolidates the safety and compliance regime governing meter installation into a single scheme under NSW Fair Trading.

By making these amendments, the Government is ensuring that the right policy settings are in place to enable industry and market participants to adapt to broader changes that are happening in the electricity market. The Government has made it clear that it supports the voluntary, market-led rollout of smart meters across the great State of New South Wales. Unfortunately, the Opposition continues to peddle mistruths about this important reform. It continues to claim that Solar Bonus Scheme customers will have to pay for an expensive meter replacement following the passage of this legislation. What the Opposition fails to understand is that this legislation will enhance consumer choice and boost competition across the market. By way of background, for those who fail to understand the basic principles of economics, more competition means better outcomes for customers.

The Opposition has yet to abandon its socialist objective as it continues to advocate for a centralised marketplace. Opposition members continue to show their ignorance of how markets work. The idea of having a market-led rollout of smart meters is that the market will respond to the needs and requirements of customers. Retailers will develop and offer products and services in order to retain existing customers and to attract new customers. I am advised that Origin Energy, which is the retailer to over 50 per cent of Solar Bonus Scheme customers, will offer smart meters to all those customers free of charge following the passage of this legislation.

That is the situation, despite the scaremongering from Opposition members. There will be no exit fees and no lock-in contracts. The market is working exactly as the Government intended. It is a clear example of a retailer making a decision in order to further develop its relationship with its customers. I expect other retailers will follow a similar path, but they may also come up with other solutions and offers for their existing and potential customers. That is why the Government should not choose a solution and force it on the community; the market should be in a position to respond to customer needs.

The Opposition has a terrible record on supporting reform to lower electricity prices for the households and businesses of New South Wales. In 2014 it opposed the deregulation of the retail electricity market—a reform that has seen electricity prices fall for households and businesses across the State. That reform has seen new retailers enter the market, giving consumers more choice of energy provider. Let us not forget that it is because of the Opposition that this Government is having to develop solutions. The former Labor Government legislated for the Solar Bonus Scheme to end on 31 December 2016, giving no thought to what would happen to customers taking part in the scheme. The hypocrisy and crocodile tears of Opposition members, who pretend to be on the side of the consumer when in fact they are the ones responsible, are galling.

What solutions has the Opposition offered? It has offered solutions that would lead to higher electricity prices for consumers. We know the Opposition has form on this. Let us not forget that the former Labor Government gold plated the electricity network and forced up network prices. This Government has spent the past five years successfully implementing reforms to put downward pressure on prices and to undo the mistakes made by the Opposition in government. The Opposition fails to understand how consumers can maximise the benefits of solar panels. The solution is not to be paid for sending power to the grid; the solution is for a household to use the power generated from its rooftop panels to meet its own energy needs and therefore reduce its electricity bills. It is to facilitate and support this outcome for existing Solar Bonus Scheme customers that the Government is implementing these reforms. The Opposition wants to condemn customers to missing out on the benefits of their panels; the Government wants to make sure that those benefits are realised.

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Those opposite are also engaging in a deliberate campaign of misinformation in relation to safety. Let me make it very clear—no change is being made to the level or standard of safety or training required to install a smart meter. The safety standards are set out in the Electricity (Consumer Safety) Regulation 2015, which applies the following safety and technical requirements: the Australia-New Zealand wiring rules (AS NZS 3000:2007) and the Service and Installation Rules of New South Wales. These are the current safety standards, and they are not being changed. These safety standards will continue to apply to all types of residential meter installations.

Our reforms are simply expanding the pool of qualified electricians able to install smart meters, while still complying with the existing and continuing safety standards and requirements. Both retailers and metering providers rolling out advanced meters will be required to have a safety management system in place. These arrangements are similar to those applied in other jurisdictions. The bill ensures that accredited service providers can continue to install meters. Furthermore, the bill continues to ensure that only accredited service providers can undertake network services and live electrical work.

I understand that a number of retailers and metering providers already contract accredited service providers to support their metering businesses. Retailers and metering providers are well aware that they need to ensure they have contractors who are fully qualified to undertake live work. For any business wanting to deliver services to customers in a timely manner it makes sense to continue to have strong relationships with accredited service providers. If, for any reason, it becomes necessary to do live work, access to an accredited service provider will be critical to minimise costs and support timely delivery of customer services. This bill is about supporting consumer choice—a consumer can choose to opt-in to have a smart meter installed at their premises. These arrangements are a departure from the approaches taken by other jurisdictions, in particular, Victoria, which deployed smart meters on a compulsory basis.

I am pleased to inform the House that New South Wales is the first jurisdiction nationally to start a competitive metering rollout. We are ahead of the national arrangements, which will not come into effect for almost another two years. Consumers in New South Wales can enjoy the benefits of a competitive rollout of smart meters ahead of any other jurisdiction in the Commonwealth of Australia. The amendments set out in this bill have been carefully designed to ensure that safety standards continue to be a priority for any business or person engaged in the activity of installing a meter. At the same time, it enables the market to move in the direction of greater competition. Most importantly, this bill supports consumers in exercising choice in the electricity market. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put

The House divided.

[In division]

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind all those in the public gallery that they are not permitted to take photos. I ask those in the public gallery to refrain from doing so.

Ayes, 44

Mr Anderson	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Roberts
Mr Aplin	Mr Hazzard	Mr Sidoti
Mr Ayres	Mr Henskens	Mrs Skinner
Mr Barilaro	Mr Humphries	Mr Speakman
Ms Berejikian	Mr Kean	Mr Stokes
Mr Conolly	Dr Lee	Mr Taylor
Mr Constance	Mr Maguire	Mr Toole
Mr Coure	Mr Marshall	Mr Tudehope
Mr Crouch	Mr Notley-Smith	Ms Upton
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mr Ward
Mr Elliott	Mrs Pavey	Mr Williams
Mr Fraser	Mr Perrottet	Mrs Williams
Mr Gee	Ms Petinos	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Gibbons	Mr Piper	Mr Bromhead
Ms Goward	Mr Provest	Mr Patterson

Noes, 32

Ms Aitchison	Ms Harrison	Mr Minns
Mr Atalla	Ms Hay	Mr Park
Mr Barr	Ms Haylen	Mr Robertson
Ms Burney	Mr Hoenig	Ms K. Smith
Ms Car	Ms Hornery	Ms T. F. Smith
Ms Catley	Mr Kamper	Ms Washington
Mr Chanthivong	Ms Leong	Ms Watson
Mr Daley	Mr Lynch	Mr Zangari
Mr Dib	Dr McDermott	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Doyle	Ms McKay	Mr Lalich
Mr Harris	Mr Mehan	Mr Warren

Pairs

Mr Baird
Mrs Davies
Mr Evans
Mr Rowell

Mr Crakanthorp
Ms Finn
Mr Foley
Ms Mihailuk

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Anthony Roberts agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

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BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2015-16

Debate resumed from 17 March 2016.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) [12.41 p.m.]: On behalf of the electorate of Ku-ring-gai I will continue my contribution to the debate on Budget Estimates and Related Papers. I want to identify the benefits to the people of Ku-ring-gai from the New South Wales budget. This budget delivers a record \$21 billion for health in 2015-16, which will mean extra surgeries, more admissions and more staff caring for patients. The 2015-16 budget has boosted front-line health staff by an extra 980 positions which includes nurses, doctors and allied health professionals and is part of the Government's commitment to an additional 3,500 front-line hospital staff over the next four years. The 2015-16 budget has provided a record \$1.4 billion to be invested in health infrastructure. The Minister for Health has announced the stage 2 upgrade to Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital and the member for Hornsby and I were very happy to interact with the community at the time of that announcement. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Part of the expanded spending in health involves the innovative extension to in-home care services which the Government introduced. I have seen that firsthand with my elderly parents. Community nurses and other health professionals come into the homes of the elderly in my electorate, which enables them to live an independent life in retirement. The Ku-ring-gai electorate has a statistical overabundance of elderly people and so those measures are of particular utility to the people of Ku-ring-gai. The budget also includes a record \$1.7 billion investment in mental health expenditure, which is a 6.7 per cent growth on the previous year.

In relation to education, the budget announced spending on schools and early childhood education to the tune of \$12.8 billion in 2015-16. Education is an ultimate enabler and is a great vehicle for social justice and social mobility. The announcements with regard to education are particularly timely

and welcome for the community. An additional \$167 million over four years will enable 500 additional teachers to be employed compared to last year. An additional \$20 million will provide up to 45,000 new before and after school care places. Two weeks ago I was delighted to accompany the Minister for Early Childhood Education to the Acre Woods preschool in the Ku-ring-gai electorate when she announced extra expenditure for extended day care. It is refreshing to see the tangible benefits that these numbers in the budget provide for our community.

As the Government has signed up for Gonski funding, other important funds have been made available in the Ku-ring-gai electorate. As part of the record \$130 million in additional funding announced by the New South Wales Government the local public schools in the electorate of Ku-ring-gai received almost \$4.5 million, which includes: Waitara Public School, \$634,513, an increase of \$165,171 on 2015 funding; Warrawee Public School, \$268,976, an increase of \$88,799 on 2015; Turramurra High School, an outstanding high school, \$751,278, an increase of \$126,735 on 2015; and Wahroonga Public School, the bush school, another great public school, \$283,747, an increase of \$140,645 on 2015. Our eyes could glaze over at those amounts in the budget but they represent tangible benefits to our communities which this Government is delivering.

Service NSW is one of the great front-line achievements of this Government. We all remember in the bad old days we would have to take a cut lunch and a coffee to the Roads and Traffic Authority and wait in a queue for hours. Now it is almost like checking into the Ritz hotel at Service NSW where we are met by a concierge who seamlessly delivers us to the appropriate person, which takes no time at all. It is an incredibly accessible, efficient and beneficial experience that delivers so many government services to the people of New South Wales. Given the success of that program, it is unsurprising that we provided \$362 million in the budget for Service NSW to improve its digital transaction services and roll out another 27 one-stop shops. I was delighted when a Service NSW shop recently opened in Hornsby. Having that facility in addition to the Service NSW shop at Chatswood, which has been in place for some time, has enhanced and augmented the government services provided on the North Shore.

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Mr Kevin Anderson: Easy to do business.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: It is very easy to do business, as the member for Tamworth points out. In the budget we have invested a record \$6.5 billion for transport services and infrastructure. The Government is undertaking the biggest investment in the history of our public transport network, spending \$9 billion on public transport infrastructure services in this year alone. There will be some very exciting developments in Ku-ring-gai in that regard. Of course, we have enjoyed the great benefits that the Opal card has brought. There are no more long lines on Monday morning to buy a weekly ticket, never quite knowing how long the line will be and whether you will make your train.

The Opal card has taken public transport in our State into the twenty-first century. We have also had some local wins on transport through the extra funding being delivered. Some of my constituents had a major issue with rail noise on the northern line, which was first brought to my attention during the election campaign. I am happy to say that constituents have gone out of their way to tell me that through my advocacy to Transport for NSW that noise, which was quite debilitating for some people, has been reduced and the track behind Barker College has now been greatly improved to the benefit of local residents.

The metro line will be constructed from Chatswood to Epping. When the line is up and running upper North Shore services will be increased because the metro will stop at Chatswood. Trains will no longer be diverted to the Chatswood to Epping line, which will lead to more services from Chatswood to Hornsby and be of great benefit to the Ku-ring-gai electorate. Pymble and Waitara stations will share in the \$43 million allocated for station upgrades. The work at those stations includes refreshing of toilets, gardening and landscaping work, pigeon proofing—because pigeons can cause damage and make a mess—restoration works and improvements to heritage buildings. We still have some room for

improvement and I will advocate strongly for lifts to be installed in Wahroonga and Pymble railway stations in particular; however, the budget is certainly delivering tangible outcomes for the people of Ku-ring-gai. I regret to say that according to Infrastructure Australia my electorate has two of the five worst roads in Australia.

Thankfully, the problems on Pennant Hills Road, which has been identified as the worst road in Australia, are being solved by the NorthConnex project. NorthConnex, which will be opened in 2019, cannot come quickly enough. Along Ryde Road, which is the fourth worst road in Australia, clearways are being introduced to improve traffic flow. Of course, the Government will need to develop some longer term solutions. The final matter I will raise concerns the way in which this Government is accelerating the construction of infrastructure. Now that the first tranche of the poles and wires lease has been completed the prospect of a new metro line from Chatswood into the city and on to the western suburbs is becoming a reality. That will only further augment public transport services for the people of Ku-ring-gai. The Government has delivered fiscally for the people of Ku-ring-gai and New South Wales. I am delighted with the fine work the Treasurer has done for our State.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) [12.55 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the 2015-16 budget and its impact on the people of the Bathurst electorate. I have to say this Government has been delivering for regional and rural New South Wales. Many projects in my electorate were ignored for decades. They were spoken about far too often but received no funding. This Government has made tough decisions, introduced reforms and taken action to ensure that we are in a strong financial position to deliver for the communities of the Bathurst electorate. It does not matter whether people live in Bathurst, Lithgow, Oberon, Blayney, Kandos, Rylstone or the towns and villages in between, we are making a record investment in health, education, community facilities and infrastructure that will have far-reaching benefits.

Significant projects in 2015-16 include the opening of Service NSW centres in Lithgow and Bathurst. Service NSW continues to be a game changer in customer service. The residents of Lithgow and Bathurst tell me that it has made a huge difference. At the centres they are met at the door by a concierge and they no longer have to spend time in long queues. At Service NSW centres more than 800 types of government transactions can take place under the one roof. It offers motor registry transactions, licence renewals, birth certificate applications and home building licence applications. People can pay a fine and even apply for a beekeepers licence. In the past, people had to wait up to 10 days for a NSW Seniors Card. Now, thanks to Service NSW, that process takes less than eight minutes.

The Government has made a significant investment in the Great Western Highway. Just outside Kelso, 2.4 kilometres of the highway is being upgraded to two lanes each way thanks to the Government's \$85 million investment. That will improve traffic flow when major events take place. It is also important for residents of the wider Central West area. A lot of work is being done with wires being put underground, asphalt being laid, and roundabouts and traffic lights being installed. As I said, this was spoken about for two decades. As the mayor of Bathurst Regional Council I can remember speaking to Ministers in the Labor Government on many occasions about the need for such a project, but no money came over the mountains.

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This Government recognises the importance of funding the 30 per cent of people who are living in regional and rural New South Wales. This project will take several years and I take this opportunity to congratulate Roads and Maritime Services and other companies that are ensuring the delivery of such a significant project with as little interruption as possible to business whilst the work is being undertaken. Between Hartley and Lithgow the Government is making a \$250 million investment in the upgrade of the Great Western Highway which will make it safer and reduce travel times for motorists who use this section of road. The Bells Line of Road is not far from there.

The Government is investing more than \$48 million on the Bells Line of Road for additional

overtaking lanes—two additional overtaking lanes have already been built and another five are to be rolled out. The Government has also set aside \$5 million for further investigation of the Bells Line of Road to ensure additional safety improvements such as bridge upgrades. O'Connell Road is a significant road between Bathurst and Oberon. The Government is investing \$5.4 million to widen that road, improve road bends and drainage, and improve safety for all road users. The small village of Millthorpe holds its annual market at the back of Millthorpe Public School—

Mr Kevin Conolly: And the potato festival.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: There is no potato factory there.

Mr Kevin Conolly: Years ago they had a potato festival.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: A potato festival as well. Millthorpe has a significant history and the area continues to grow due to the Cadia mine. Over the years the local school has doubled in size and its oval, which has a significant slope, is used for markets and other activities throughout the year. The Government has committed half a million dollars in ClubGRANTS NSW funding to upgrade the oval. This will ensure that the activities currently held on the oval, including soccer and cricket matches, will be first-class events. I congratulate the Millthorpe Public School and the teachers who applied for this funding through ClubGRANTS NSW. The Lithgow blast furnace, which has also been allocated \$300,000 through ClubGRANTS NSW funding, is a reminder of the important role the steelworks played in the development of the Lithgow district and these significant upgrades will increase tourism to the area. When I turn to cultural events I do not have to go past an area like Kandos, which is well-known for its artistic and theatrical pursuits.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: And cement.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The cement works, which closed down a number of years ago, was a large employer in the area but Kandos is now reinventing itself with other activities to promote tourism. Arts NSW is providing \$100,000 in funding to Kandos for residences, workshops, internships, forums and special projects throughout 2016. Organisations such as Lifeline have far-reaching impacts on the community. Lifeline Central West provides an important and much-needed service to our regional community. The hardworking and committed councillors who work for Lifeline Central West provide support on a daily basis for those people whose lives are tough and who are contemplating suicide. Over the next four years this Government will provide more than \$100,000 per annum to support the service that Lifeline provides not only in the Bathurst area but also in the Central West region.

Bathurst St Patricks Junior Rugby League is also receiving significant funding. The players want a new facility where they can have a home ground on which to play football and a new clubhouse down the track. This Government is giving them a kickstart with \$75,000 in funding through the NSW Footy Facilities Fund. They have been without a home ground for some time now—they finished up playing at the old Jack Arrow Oval in 2012—and have been looking at ways of attracting significant funding to build a new facility. As part of an election commitment this Government has now installed flashing lights at all public schools across New South Wales. Indeed, the installation of flashing lights at every public school in the Bathurst electorate is now complete.

The safety of young children around schools is paramount. As a former school teacher I can assure the House that when young children are starting school for the first time they are excited and want to get across the road to school as quickly as they can. Flashing lights are all about alerting motorists to do the right thing and watch their speeds when travelling near schools. The installation of flashing lights around schools has made a significant difference in the Bathurst electorate. Eglinton, another small village, was allocated funding of more than \$120,000 for a new basketball court. For 18 years the community had asked for a facility to give its young people something to do.

Residents were saying that the children were bored and had nowhere to go after school—unfortunately, some were getting into the school grounds after hours to use the basketball court. Through the Deputy Premier I was pleased to announce that we have been able to obtain \$120,000 to deliver this facility which is being well utilised. Local school students are using the basketball court during school hours and it is also being used by the local community after school hours, on weekends and during school holidays. The additional facilities that have also been provided such as the barbeque and the picnic area make it a friendly gathering place in the Eglinton sporting precinct, which has tennis courts and cricket and soccer ovals as well.

Last year Bathurst celebrated its bicentenary and it was the best birthday party one could ever imagine to celebrate 200 years. Many families, including mine, enjoyed being involved in a number of the activities that took place throughout the year. As Bathurst is the oldest inland settlement it is important for the Government to acknowledge that milestone. The New South Wales Government provided funding of \$100,000 for a new impressive flagstaff facility on the banks of the Macquarie River to ensure that we acknowledge that Governor Macquarie came across the mountains and declared Bathurst a city on the banks of the Macquarie River on 7 May 1815.

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Another significant investment made by the Government in the area is funding for a facility known as Daffodil Cottage. Daffodil Cottage has provided considerable care, support and comfort to thousands of patients during its 20 years of operation. Unfortunately, as patient numbers have increased so has the requirement for additional space at that facility. Last year the New South Wales Government helped with the expansion plans of Daffodil Cottage by announcing that \$150,000 will go towards this critical service. The facility has now expanded from five rooms to 10 rooms, which is making a big difference to the community and to those families that utilise this service. I thank the volunteers who give of their time and I thank the community for its support and donations to ensure that the \$600,000 needed for the project was reached.

Under the New South Wales Government's Fixing Country Roads program a number of roads within the Bathurst electorate have received significant funding. The New South Wales Government, in partnership with Blayney Shire Council, has invested \$2 million in upgrades to the Errowanbang Road, an important freight access road for people travelling to the mine and for people going through to the saleyards every day. Also under that program, \$400,000 has been provided for the Carrs Creek Bridge, another important road that is helping the communities in those areas move food from the paddock to the port in a much more timely manner. I am pleased that the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight was onsite for the official opening of both of those important roads that provide a significant and important link for many people in the community, including many of our farmers.

Our Resources for Regions project is delivering significant funding to and supporting those areas that are impacted by mining activities, particularly the Lithgow community because we know that mining impacts upon regions. This is the first time a New South Wales government has delivered a program that ensures that money goes back into mining communities. We know that heavy machinery impacts on roads and we know that bridges need to be upgraded. The New South Wales Government has invested \$4 million in replacing the Black Bridge at Wallerawang to provide safer access for visitors and members of the community. Just under \$10 million has gone towards the upgrade of the Portland sewerage works—an important project because it involves a small community that is continuing to grow. Without adequate sewerage facilities growth in that area will be hampered.

Farmers Creek has received significant funding of \$4 million from the New South Wales Government for improvements to the creek to protect the 230-odd properties that were subjected to flooding from time to time. It was devastating for those individuals and families to experience flooding in the past. The Community Building Partnership program, a significant program, has been delivering many facilities across our communities. In the Bathurst electorate in the past 12 months another 30 projects were delivered. This supports the hardworking volunteers in my electorate in delivering the projects that

are needed. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

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

FAIR TRADING AMENDMENT (FUEL PRICE TRANSPARENCY) BILL 2016

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

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

TAREE MISS SHOWGIRL LAURA POLSON

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.16 p.m.]: I congratulate Laura Polson on being made Taree Miss Showgirl. She partnered with the Manning River Agricultural and Horticultural Society to obtain a grant for her project Linger Longer Seats and Shade at Taree Showground. She is local journalist and had a vision to create a more welcoming and comfortable place for people to linger at the local Taree Show and other events hosted at the showground. Laura's project will engage Indigenous sculpture artist Russell Saunders to carve new seating from local timber, which she hopes will form part of a sculptural wall leading to the showground. The project will also include some much-needed shade and will engage local volunteer groups such as the Taree Men's Shed.

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY SWIM CLUB NSW COUNTRY SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS AWARD RECIPIENTS

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [1.16 p.m.]: Newcastle University's Swim Club had a record number of entries in the recent NSW Country Swimming Championships held at Sydney Olympic Park Aquatic Centre. Newcastle University's Swim Club finished sixth in the team point score, with a number of notable performances. I would like to acknowledge Maddison Elliot, who received two gold and one silver medal; Lucy Tabrett, who received one gold, three silvers and one bronze medal; Cameron Davy, who received one gold, one silver and three bronze medals; Jamie Parker, who received one gold, one silver and two bronze medals; Sam Biddle who received one gold and one silver medal; and Emma McDonald, who received one gold and one bronze medal. A number of local swimmers are heading for Olympic trials and I believe that Maddi Elliot is said to be a shoo-in for the Paralympic team. Well done to all involved in this wonderful local sporting achievement.

HASTINGS MELANOMA MARCH

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [1.17 p.m.]: I recognise and congratulate Paula Jackson on her involvement organising the Hastings Melanoma March. Last Sunday 20 March 2016, a group of 450 people gathered to show their support for the cause at Rainbow Beach, Bonny Hills. In its second year, the Melanoma March raised in excess of \$16,000 towards the Melanoma Institute Australia, in the hope of finding a cure. Sometimes referred to as Australia's national cancer, melanoma affects more young people aged 15 to 39 than any other cancer and is the third most common form of cancer in Australian men and women overall.

Unsurprisingly, our nation has the highest incidence rate of this disease in the world. Ms Jackson lost her sister, Sue Lavender, to the disease in November and is facing an ongoing personal battle with the relentless illness. Paula Jackson said the turnout did not disappoint. "There were more feet on the sand this year", she said, "and that was the goal." The march also gave the community a chance to walk

in remembrance of precious lives lost and in support of those battling on. The Rainbow Beach march was one of a series of coordinated melanoma marches around Australia.

WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [1.18 p.m.]: Today I congratulate the local business owners and residents, who, alongside their team, organised an outstanding World's Greatest Shave on Sunday 13 March, 2016. Daniel Di Ioro, along with his cousin and co-owner of Diior10, Melissa Barbera, have been local champions for the recently dubbed "Bossley's Greatest Shave". The event was coordinated with local businesses in the surrounding area, combining their efforts and working towards making this event bigger and better than ever. Since 2014, the fundraising team has raised more than \$53,000 for the Leukaemia Foundation, which goes directly towards research and support for the families who are battling leukaemia, lymphoma and myeloma. A special thank you goes out to Laura Giansante, Michelle Brusino, Rene Londos, Enzo Di Federico and Carlo Di Federico for their invaluable efforts and assistance on the day. I congratulate Daniel and Melissa—their contributions to this community are what make the wider Fairfield community a better place in which to live.

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PENRITH CRICKET CLUB

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport) [1.19 p.m.]: I congratulate Penrith Cricket Club on winning the Sydney Smith Cup as the 2015-16 Sydney Grade Club Champions. Penrith won this season's club championship with 1,303 points. The club finished second in first grade, second grade and fourth grade, sixth in the First Grade Limited Overs competition, eighth in fifth grade, sixth in the Poidevin-Gray Shield and ninth in the AW Green Shield. Penrith Cricket Club was 28 points clear of second placed Sydney, with Sutherland coming in third. This is the third time that Penrith has won the club championship, with other titles coming in the 1982-83 and 2008-09 seasons. The first grade side continued its great season on the weekend, winning its quarter final against Campbelltown-Camden by two runs after recovering from a precarious 8 for 60. I congratulate Steve Small, the entire committee, coaching staff and players on winning the club championship this year.

SYDNEY WET'N'WILD NIPPERS CLUB

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) [1.20 p.m.]: The Sydney Wet'n'Wild Nippers Club in Western Sydney finished its third season last Sunday with a fun-filled carnival. I thank Sydney Wet'n'Wild Nippers Club, the age managers and nippers who made this season so successful. The club, which was the first of its kind in Australia, was set up to give kids in Western Sydney a genuine nippers experience, teaching them vital surf safety skills and education in a fun, supervised environment. The program is open to children aged between five years and 12 years. The nippers program is about having fun while learning to stay safe at the beach. Children participate in a wide range of games, sports and educational activities that are designed to slowly build confidence in and around the water.

The education component of the program includes beach safety, sun safety and the role of lifesavers, while physical activities include wading, board paddling and beach games. Older nippers are also introduced to some basic principles of surf safety such as general rescue techniques and first aid—vital skills they can use throughout their lives. This is an important program for Western Sydney. A significant number of drownings on the coast involve people from Western Sydney so it is important to have nippers in Prospect. Whether our children go in the surf or in swimming pools around the western suburbs, it is important that they are able to swim well and that they are also able to help other children if they get into difficulty. I thank Surf Life Saving New South Wales and Wet'n'Wild for supporting our community.

SING AUSTRALIA SUTHERLAND INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENTS

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) [1.21 p.m.]: I recognise Sing Australia Sutherland, which marked International Women's Day by celebrating the amazing achievements of remarkable women who live and work in our local area. Established over 13 years ago, Sing Australia Sutherland has 100 members who share a love of singing. They make happy connections with people from all walks of life and demographics within groups and through performances, often impromptu. Sing Australia Sutherland also contributes to our local community. I applaud the group for collecting donations of gifts and money for Sutherland Shire Family Services on International Women's Day. This will support women who have gone through hard times, women who have often fled with nothing from dangerous family situations. I thank the event organiser Alison Duff, conductor Maree Shepherd, accompanist John Pickworth and group leaders Barbara Archer and Sue Stevens. I acknowledge Nannette Neeson and Janette Rhodes who, along with Alison Duff, have been a part of the group since its inception.

WARNERS BAY ROTARY CLUB LOOP THE LAKE CANCER FUNDRAISING EVENT

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [1.22 p.m.]: I congratulate Warners Bay Rotary Club on the enormous effort it put into organising the 2016 Loop the Lake charity bike ride which was held on Sunday 13 March 2016. There was a fantastic turnout, with more than 1,500 enthusiastic two-wheeling visitors of all ages from across the State descending on Lake Macquarie for the annual ride. I was lucky enough to be at the starting point for this ride. Loop the Lake is now in its nineteenth year and continues to be a popular event thanks to the professionalism of the organisers and the spectacular scenery around Lake Macquarie. Loop the Lake raises money for various local charities and this year included the Cancer Council, raising almost \$10,000. The Cancer Council is the largest non-government organisation to fund cancer research and has just announced \$4.4 million worth of funding for research at the University of Newcastle. I commend all the riders who got on their bikes to raise funds for this very worthy cause.

TRIBUTE TO NOEL SANDERS

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.25 p.m.]: I acknowledge a true hero—a man who served his country in WWII and continues to serve his community now. Noel Sanders was recently the guest of honour at the Rowland Village RSL Remembrance Day service and, together with his son, Trevor Sanders, captivated guests with stories of his extraordinary life. Born on the Macleay River on the North Coast of New South Wales, Noel grew up to be one of the finest pilots to serve the Royal Australian Air Force. In an interview about his time in the war, Noel made an effort to find what little happiness he could in a time of global despair. He recalled how, although war was harrowing, flying was one of the most exhilarating experiences.

Noel has taught me that in the blackest of times, we need to see the light of hope. I think this is a lesson that we can all learn—that through perseverance, mateship and courage, we can make it through anything. I recall another interview that Noel did, where he spoke about his passion for Tiger Moth planes in particular. I have never flown a plane, but the excitement and passion so evident in Noel's description of the Tiger Moth makes me wish that I could have flown with him, soaring through the skies. Truly a gem of our community, Noel was accompanied at the Remembrance Day Service by his son, Trevor Sanders, and fellow veteran Norman Swift. With such an amazing support network, I am sure Noel is in great hands and I wish him all the happiness and good fortune in the world. If anyone deserves it, it is Flight Lieutenant Noel Sanders.

SPRINGWOOD HOSPITAL FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) [1.24 p.m.]: Earlier this month I had the pleasure of attending Springwood Hospital's fortieth anniversary. I was joined by staff, past and present, and members of the Blue Mountains community to mark this special occasion. Officially opened on 1 March in 1976, Springwood Hospital originally operated as an extension to Nepean Hospital, offering general medical and surgical care. These days it specialises in geriatric, rehabilitation and palliative inpatient care and day surgery. This is a true community hospital with ongoing fundraising efforts from the fantastic

auxiliary providing much-needed resources.

I congratulate Assistant Director of Nursing, Steven Jackson; Acting Manager, Diane Moran; General Manager, Andrea Williams; Enrolled Nurse for nearly 30 years, Noeleen Murphy; Springwood Hospital auxiliary foundation member, Margaret Mulvaney; and all the fantastic auxiliary members, staff and volunteers on their combined efforts to make the day a wonderful celebration. Particular note must also be made of the indomitable Richard Jackson-Hope, President of the Friends of Springwood Hospital. Congratulations to everyone involved.

DOBSON'S DISTILLERY

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [1.25 p.m.]: I recognise a master distiller in my electorate Stephen Dobson, Lyn Dobson and their hard-working team at Dobson's Distillery, located at Kentucky, near Uralla. The distillery has recently celebrated further international recognition and success, this time at the 2016 San Francisco Spirits World Cup—the premiere spirits distilling event. Dobson's Sumac Gin won a silver medal and the popular New England Dry Gin, which I have at home, collected a bronze at the World Cup. Dobson's has a passion for making iconic spirits, especially gin, beers and wines, but also has a desire to promote the New England high country as the best place to do business and live and enjoy life. I congratulate Stephen and Lyn and express pride as a local member of Parliament to have in our region the home of what are officially some of the finest gins in the world. I invite all members to visit the Dobson's at any time to try out their products in person—I know they will not be disappointed.

CENTRAL COAST COUNTRY WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) [1.26 p.m.]: Central Coast Community Women's Health Centre this year celebrates 40 years of continuous operations. The centre was established in 1976 through the hard work of volunteers passionate about women's rights to provide a holistic health centre that aims to empower women on the Central Coast. The centre offers many vital services to our community, from legal and medical advice to counselling, as well as providing a safe place for women and their children. A fortieth anniversary dinner was held at the Crowne Plaza, Terrigal. It was a wonderful night with great company and we paid tribute to many inspiring women. A number of awards were made. I particularly acknowledge the award given to Councillor Vicki Scott, a councillor of 12 years service on Gosford City Council. She was one of the night's most deserving award winners. Vicki has been a tireless advocate for our community and is widely respected for her work. I thank Xylia Ingham, the tireless manager of the health centre, and all the staff for the service they provide to the Central Coast.

NETBALLER MATISSE LETHERBARROW

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) [1.27 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to recognise netballer Matisse Letherbarrow, an Old Toongabbie resident. Matisse is an impressive young lady who attends Catherine McCauley Catholic High School at Westmead. Matisse has played netball at all levels, including the New South Wales State Age Championships last year. Recently Matisse very proudly received a scholarship to the Western Sydney Academy of Sport, an independent not-for-profit community-based organisation and one of the regional academies of sport located throughout New South Wales. It has development programs for talented young athletes but, in particular, it supports them in becoming outstanding sports citizens and achieving excellence in sports. I commend the chief executive officer, Martin Bullock. I wish Matisse the very best in her netball career. She quotes the Swiss as being her favourite team, and one cannot blame her for that. She also wishes to play for the Diamonds one day.

M5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) [1.28 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the 12,866

individuals and non-government organisations that have made submissions to the new M5 environmental impact statement [EIS] raising their concerns around the WestConnex and the new M5. I congratulate members of the local community campaign groups who worked so hard to inform the people of New South Wales and those directly affected by WestConnex about the significant and alarming impact this toll road will have on their lives and the lives of all their children and families. These groups include the WestConnex Action Group, NoWestConnex: Public Transport and the Save Newtown group. I note that the list of all the submissions made to the new M5 EIS is over 180 pages long. This extremely large number of submissions highlights serious community concerns about this WestConnex toll road. I urge the Government to listen to them and their strong communities.

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GRAFTON TRUCK DRIVERS MEMORIAL SERVICE

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.29 p.m.]: It was with a feeling of sombreness that I attended the Grafton Truck Drivers Memorial Service held by the Grafton Truck Drivers Social Club in memory of those truck drivers who have lost their lives on the job in the service of our community. The trucking family is a tight-knit group, but it is very much part of our broader community. It is part of our history. Truck drivers' kids go to our schools, they are members of our sporting teams and they are community volunteers. So when one of their members is lost and they grieve, we share their loss and grieve with them. I extend the sympathy of this House to the families who lost members during the past 12 months. I acknowledge the loss of John Wagner, Col Cash, David Wall and Barry Wightman. On behalf of the New South Wales Parliament I thank Gai Bailey, President Tim Wright and all the other members of the Grafton Truck Drivers Social Club for their hard work in ensuring the dedication service to the truckers takes place every year.

STRIVE SCHOLARSHIP

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.30 p.m.]: On Thursday 3 March 2016 I had the pleasure of attending the Strive Scholarship program celebration at Bonnyrigg High School. The program was established by St George Community Housing in 2005 and aims to give those less fortunate an opportunity to create a better future through education. Every year St George Community Housing awards \$220,000 in scholarships to assist tenants through all stages of education. This year 185 tenants were awarded scholarships and I am glad to say that 46 tenants were from the Newleaf estate at Bonnyrigg. This set a record for the number of scholarship recipients in one area. Everyone knows that education is the key to success and that it is important to learn the necessary skills to receive the best opportunities in life. I again congratulate all participants in the scholarship and wish them all the best for the future.

SOPHIE HANSEN, 2016 NSW-ACT RIRDC RURAL WOMEN'S AWARD WINNER

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.31 p.m.]: I congratulate Sophie Hansen who was recently announced winner of the 2016 NSW-ACT Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation [RIRDC] Rural Women's Award at a dinner in Parliament House. Sophie, who is based at Mandagery Creek near Orange, is well known for her online community, Local is Lovely, which promotes produce from in and around the Central West. Sophie and her husband, Tim, are also deer farmers, selling their venison at farmers markets and butcher shops. Their venison pies are world famous. Members should note how well Tim scrubbed up in a black tie at the recent Parliament House awards dinner. Sophie's project, "My Open Kitchen" will inspire other producers to embrace social media to gain new opportunities and reap long-term benefits for their farming businesses in rural communities. Sophie will compete for the National RIRDC Rural Women's Award on 12 October at Parliament House in Canberra. Well done Sophie, the communities of the Central West are proud of you. I also pass on to Sophie the congratulations and best wishes of this House.

MR THOMAS AND MRS DORIS CAMPBELL, SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) [1.32 p.m.]: I acknowledge Mr and Mrs Thomas and Doris Campbell on the occasion of their sixtieth wedding anniversary, which they celebrated earlier this year. A wedding anniversary is a celebration of love, partnership, trust and tolerance and 60 years of partnership cannot pass unacknowledged. I wish Thomas and Doris good health, good luck and success in their sixtieth year of marriage. Congratulations.

ST EDWARD'S COLLEGE, EAST GOSFORD, SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING CHALLENGE

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) [1.32 p.m.]: I had the pleasure of visiting St Edward's College, East Gosford, for the Science and Engineering Challenge, which it hosted again this year. The challenge involved a number of high schools from across the Central Coast. The Science and Engineering Challenge is organised by the Newcastle University. It is sponsored by Gosford Rotary Club and supported by a number of Rotary clubs across the Central Coast. More than 400 students attended from 16 high schools from across the area, with teams working together to construct and build projects from a set of criteria. The competition was obviously challenging and encouraged the students to work in a team. Congratulations to the winners, year 10 students from Kincumber High School. Congratulations to all the students on their excellent teamwork. I look forward to attending the challenge next year.

CAMPBELLTOWN JOGGERS CLUB FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) [1.33 p.m.]: On the weekend I had the pleasure and privilege of attending the fortieth anniversary celebrations of the Campbelltown Joggers Club. On 6 December 1975 the Campbelltown Joggers Club was established at a meeting at the Campbelltown Civic Centre. The meeting was organised by Ross Field following the success of the inaugural Fisher's Ghost Fun Run in November 1975. Ross was elected as the first club president, and the first club run was held on Sunday morning 11 January 1976, starting from Bradbury Oval. The club still calls Bradbury Oval home and has continued to meet every weekend since that day. The Campbelltown Joggers Club is heavily involved in the Campbelltown community. Each year it is involved in the organisation of the Campbelltown City Challenge Walk and the Fisher's Ghost Fun Run. I ask the House to join me in congratulating the Campbelltown Joggers Club on its important milestone, as well as Secretary Tom Limbrey and its first female President, Peta Shanahan.

GUNILLA HAYDON

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [1.34 p.m.]: I congratulate Gunilla Haydon. This Port Macquarie resident has taken a long journey from camel lady to university lecturer. After selling the family camel-riding business, Gunilla asked a North Coast TAFE counsellor for career advice. She eventually enrolled in an entry-level Workplace Communications and Aged Care qualification to see where it would take her. The following semester she was excelling in Certificate III in Aged Care, collecting the 2007 Faculty Award for Outstanding Achievement at Port Macquarie TAFE. She was a finalist in the 2008 Student Achievement Award in Community Services and became the 2008 Vocational Student of the Year at the NSW Training Awards.

Becoming an Assistant in Nursing was just the beginning of Gunilla's journey. She then completed a Bachelor of Nursing, undertook study tours to Thailand, represented the University of Newcastle at several conferences and authored two papers on Humour in Nursing. Gunilla has an amazing attitude to aged care, seeing the elderly not as a collective of old people but as individuals and treasured members of our community. Congratulations to Gunilla Haydon. As both a teacher and nurse she is an inspiration and no doubt empowers other women to follow in her footsteps.

REVEREND STEPHEN MILLER

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.35 p.m.]: Last Sunday I had the pleasure of attending St John Mark's Anglican church at Chester Hill to celebrate 40 years of Reverend Stephen Miller's service to the ministry. Reverend Stephen Miller has served at Chester Hill Anglican Church since 2003. Prior to that time he had a distinguished career serving at Bexley North, Dapto, Cabramatta, and Lord Howe Island. Reverend Miller has worked tirelessly in supporting our local parishioners and has also conducted Bible studies at Chester Hill Public School, helped to commemorate many Anzac Day services at the Chester Hill RSL and Bowling Club and has been a long-term member of the Bankstown City Choir. His beautiful voice, efforts, wonderful wit, wise counsel, enthusiasm and commitment towards our community will be sorely missed. Also attending the celebrations were Bishop Peter Lin, Reverend Geoff Huard and Reverend Gary Bennett together with many local parishioners. I take this opportunity on behalf of the Parliament to wish Reverend Stephen Miller and his wife, Janine, a wonderful and happy retirement.

[*Temporary Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.36 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.*]

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VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome all guests to the gallery this afternoon. I extend a very warm welcome to Cameron Arnold, Chair of the North Coast Destination Network, and Pat Grier, President of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail Association Incorporated, guests of the member for Ballina. I welcome the masters of social policy students and their teacher from the Australian Catholic University. I also acknowledge 20 students and their teachers from Temasek Polytechnic School of Business in Singapore.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

General Business Notices of Motions (Business with Precedence) given.

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QUESTION TIME

[*Question time commenced at 2.23 p.m.*]

MEMBER FOR EAST HILLS

Mr LUKE FOLEY: My question is to the Treasurer. The member for East Hills is promoting a business breakfast to be held next month, with a special guest: the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer be attending this function?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN: I think I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question, and I congratulate him for having advice on what I am apparently doing. We saw today the shadow Minister raise an issue about the economy. I am still waiting for the Leader of the Opposition to ask me a single question about the New South Wales economy. Those opposite say that they care about jobs. But has the Leader of the Opposition bothered to ask me a single question about jobs? No. Has the Leader of the Opposition bothered to ask me a single question about economic growth? No. Has the Leader of the Opposition bothered to ask me a single question about how this State is going relative to other States? No. Instead the Leader of the Opposition asks me a question about a prospective event. A number of members were asked questions yesterday about the matter before the courts, and I reiterate the statements made yesterday.

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

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. We do not want to hear court related weasel words. Is the Treasurer going to the breakfast or not?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In light of the appropriate actions taken by member for East Hills—

Mr Michael Daley: Are you going to the breakfast or not?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If you just shut your mouth for one second then you might get an answer. Do you want to get an answer or not?

The SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear that. I am struggling to hear what the Treasurer is saying. Members will find themselves removed from the Chamber if they continue to interject.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Madam Speaker, do those opposite want to hear the answer or not?

The SPEAKER: Order! Clearly they do not. The Treasurer will resume her seat. I cannot hear over the level of interjections. I warn members that they will find themselves removed from the Chamber until tomorrow if they continue to interject.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: I ask that the Treasurer direct all her comments through the chair and not across the table to the member for Maroubra. She was pointing her finger at him.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the Treasurer because of the level of interjections. The member for Hornsby will come to order as well.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The irony here is that time is of the essence. If those opposite want to hear my answer then they should listen. Given the actions taken by the member for East Hills yesterday I am advised that that function has been cancelled.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn Opposition members that the level of interjection is unacceptable, and that applies equally to members on the Government benches. I will wait for the member for Hornsby and the member for Kiama to cease their conversation.

REBUILDING NSW

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in the 12 months since the election how has the Government been rebuilding New South Wales?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Davidson for his question. He is someone who is pivotal and who understands the economic policy that has taken this State forward. Once we have that economic policy—

The SPEAKER: Order! The members for Shellharbour, Canterbury and Granville will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: He knows what we can do.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As part of our approach we have often listened to all kinds of people in relation to driving the economy and building the economy. What we have done as part of listening to those stakeholder groups is to listen to the Opposition during the year. I can tell the House exactly what the economic policy and the infrastructure policy of those opposite is: absolutely nothing. They have nothing. They have no policy, and that is why they have turned to none other than the member for Keira—that economic powerhouse. He has come in and taken up the Treasury portfolio. He is going to change everything. I have not heard a question from him yet but he is going to change everything in relation to Treasury. The poor old member for Maroubra was trying to do a good job but he was taken out by his own leader. Why on earth would he do that? He promoted him one day and then he said, "See you later, son," the next.

Mr Jihad Dib: Point of order: my point of order goes to Standing Order 129. The question was about what the Government has been doing over the last 12 months.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question. There is no point of order. The member for Lakemba will resume his seat.

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Mr MIKE BAIRD: I do not know how I will squeeze in all I have to talk about. We know what we have done in relation to infrastructure. We remember the promises in 1998 about the North West Rail Link but nothing happened. It is being built by this Government and in the past 12 months it is great that the tunnelling has been done. The light rail project was announced and construction has kicked off. In the past 12 months the third route of the Parramatta light rail has been announced and work is underway everywhere we go. The M4, M5, F3 and the M2 were all projects spoken about by the Opposition but are now underway by this Government. They will make a difference to the people across the State.

We know that the former Government spoke about a convention and exhibition centre but this Government is building it. The roof has gone up and it looks spectacular, and members of the Opposition love it. They cannot get enough of it and are almost clapping for it. They cannot wait. In relation to hospitals, Jillian the builder has been at work and the jackhammer has been out all over the State. Everywhere we turn, Jillian has a hat on and the jackhammer out. Hospitals are being built everywhere we turn whether it be in Wagga Wagga—we have a great member for Wagga Wagga where the hospital is finally being delivered by this Minister for Health and that member—Tamworth, Campbelltown, Hornsby, Dubbo, Parkes, Forbes or Peak Hill. In the past 12 months hospitals were being opened—even the Opposition loves that.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Under this Treasurer and the Minister for Planning housing approvals are up over 66,000, which is a record for the State. For some reason those opposite are not happy about it, but we are. The budget is back with strong surpluses. No doubt there will be pressures in the long term but we continue to deliver.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Cessnock loves it. Our net debt is on the way down and yes, we intend to spend that on infrastructure. We have debt down, surpluses going up and it is the sort of government that one can only hope for if a responsible group of people get together like in this

Government.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We cannot forget the services that have gone forward. In the past 12 months the House would be pleased to know 615 more nurses are on the frontline, 1,104 more teachers are in our schools providing opportunities for our kids and 194 more police officers have gone on to the streets. In relation to public transport, a further 3,081 weekly transport services since March last year means 14,300 additional weekly public transport services since we came to government five years ago. This Government is very proud to be delivering that great news to the people of New South Wales. I do not understand those opposite so I reflected on what they stood for in the past 12 months and it was disappointing.

Pursuant standing order additional information provided.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I do not think in the history of this State I have seen a group of people who are more against public transport than this lot over there. They hate public transport—cannot stand it.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: Point of order: Standing Order 73. We are not the ones who cut the rail line.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It does not matter. They never funded Sydney Metro, and Parramatta light rail was not in their plan. They were for the CBD light rail; now they are against it. The member for Strathfield, who used to support Newcastle light rail, is now absolutely against it and cannot stand it. You used to love it; why are you against it so much? As the shadow Minister you have an opportunity to turn them around and bring them back to support public transport. I note that the aspiring leader, the member for Kogarah, who is on his way to the top, the shadow Minister for leaks, needs to understand that when stories are published we first look to see who is coming out well.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129. This is about rebuilding New South Wales; it is not about comments about people on this side of the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has been relevant to that question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The people of New South Wales continue to be incredibly disappointed with the Opposition but the good news is that whether it is the growing economy, jobs, infrastructure or services, this Government continues to deliver for the people of New South Wales.

MEMBER FOR EAST HILLS

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: My question is directed to the Premier. Rather than reaching out to their member of Parliament, will the Premier reach out to the people of East Hills and apologise to them, as he apologised to the people of the Hunter for the actions of his members of Parliament in that region?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am not sure of the portfolio of this shadow Minister but this is not a portfolio question.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I answered this question yesterday. It is very clear that the member for East Hills has done the right thing and stood aside. The matter is now before the court. Let the court run its course.

NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. In the 12 months since the election how is the Government ensuring the community benefits from the best-equipped NSW Police Force?

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the 100 per cent member for Tweed, who is a wonderful advocate for his community, particularly for police officers and emergency services workers who serve the Tweed in a professional way. The member for Tweed is aware of the significant investment made by this Government, and will continue to make, to ensure that our police have the best equipment, whether it is what they use on the road, out on duties or in the police stations in which they work. The member for Tweed is acutely aware of how long it has taken to get the new \$25 million police station for the Tweed-Byron Bay Local Area Command which began in December. I thank the member for his advocacy, and despite the site requiring some additional remediation work it is still on schedule and expected to be completed in 2017. It will be a welcome addition to his beautiful part of the State.

In the past 12 months in particular, but right throughout its term, the Liberal-Nationals Government has a very strong record ensuring that our police have the best equipment and are best equipped to handle the challenging issues that they face. Policing in the community is getting extraordinarily difficult. Whether on a global or local stage, crime is changing day by day. As the Premier alluded to earlier, this Government has already delivered 194 additional police since last April into communities to serve the people of New South Wales. This growth will continue to occur to meet the Government's election commitment of additional police, which is an astonishing investment. The community might not understand that as police do their job, the technology made available to them to solve crime, and to track down criminals who have impacted on the public, has been significantly enhanced by this Government.

This Government is putting \$100 million into an innovation fund for new amazing mobile technology that will allow police to get out from behind their desks and patrol to try to prevent crime. At the same time when they come across offenders who have done the wrong thing or are suspected of an offence, they will have the technology available to bring them to justice to ensure our protection. In addition to the Tweed police station, we are making a significant investment of \$66 million in better police stations. Many of them are in regional New South Wales, which members opposite neglected for so long. I had the privilege of joining the Governor of New South Wales to open the Walgett police station in the wonderful electorate of Barwon. The member for Barwon will acknowledge that station was well past its use-by date. I used to work out of that station. It would be a pleasure to work there now. It is magnificent.

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The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will come to order.

Mr TROY GRANT: On Thursday I will have the great honour of going to Belmont. Where does the member for Swansea sit now? I look forward to joining her on Thursday for the opening of the new Belmont police station, which has been upgraded through our magnificent investment. I also worked out of that station when I was working with Belmont detectives in 1996. We understand that another thing underpins our investment in infrastructure, equipment and technology to help our police to help the community—and that is legislation. We must remove the barriers to allow police to better protect themselves and others inside our court system. We have outlined plans for a new single oversight body. The old body was out of touch and nobody had confidence in it, but the new Law Enforcement Conduct Commission [LECC] is on its way. I look forward to introducing legislation very soon so that we can reduce confusion and provide officers with certainty.

Through the wonderful work of the Attorney General we have increased the maximum penalty for

sexual assault of a child under 10 years to life in prison. There is a no more appropriate sentence. In addition, we have increased the standard non-parole periods for child sexual assault offenders. Today I can announce that I will introduce two bills to give police new laws to clamp down on serious crime and criminal gang activity. Serious and organised crime is a national security threat that is costing everyone who pays taxes and rates a total of \$15 billion a year across the country. That is the impact of organised crime.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr TROY GRANT: This legislation to take away that \$15 billion impact is seriously focused on crippling the organised crime economy in this State. We are sending a very clear message to outlaw motorcycle groups and the like that we will get tough on them. The tools we are giving to the Police Force, the Commissioner of the New South Wales Crime Commission and the Director of Public Prosecutions will allow us to impose serious crime prevention orders of up to five years to restrict criminal behaviour. If people have committed a serious crime or are going to commit a serious crime we need powers to protect the community and disrupt that criminal enterprise. I hope members opposite will support us in that endeavour. I am sure they will. Members of organised crime gangs will receive penalties of up to five years if they breach the prohibition orders.

In addition, when we receive intelligence that a serious incident is about to occur involving organised crime gangs—and there are many examples throughout the years that we could cite—senior police at the rank of inspector or above will be able to issue public safety orders for a 72-hour period to ban individuals from attending specific events where their only intent is to cause chaos and harm. Proceeds of crime are dealt with in the cognate bills, as are substitution orders that will mean that criminals can no longer use other people's property to commit crime without being held to account. That is just some of the work we are doing. I acknowledge the work of former Minister Stuart Ayres and former Attorney General Brad Hazzard in the development of this legislation. It is outstanding legislation that I hope members opposite will embrace. I hope they will choose to be on the right side of tackling organised crime rather than making the decision to have coffee and cake with organised criminals.

MEMBER FOR EAST HILLS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The member for Maroubra will be heard in silence.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Corrections. In light of his answer in question time yesterday, in which he informed the House that he could not remember whether he had said he was proud of the member for East Hills, I refer him to *Hansard* of 6 May last year where he said, "I am proud of the hardworking member for East Hills." Now that I have jogged the Minister's memory, is he still proud of the member for East Hills?

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I am wondering why the member for Maroubra is doing all the dirty work. I am sorry the member for Newcastle is not here to ask these questions. I am proud of the hard work of members. Unfortunately, all hardworking members are on the Government side of the Chamber, not on the other side. I can guarantee the member for Maroubra that no-one will ever accused him of being hard working. This matter was answered by the Premier yesterday and we stand by those answers.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT SERVICES

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: My question—

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

for Epping will wait until members come to order. The Minister for Corrections and the member for Kogarah will cease having a conversation across the Chamber.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. In the 12 months since the election how has the Government boosted infrastructure and delivered more transport services for the people of New South Wales?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for his sensible question. All we are seeing from members opposite is a race to the bottom. This question is so important because in the past 12 months we have delivered in spades on construction and services for every community across this State—including those represented by members opposite, who are nothing more than public transport Neanderthals. Let us pause to reflect on what has gone on in the 12 months since the election. On the Inner West Light Rail—this will appease my friends from The Greens—some 90 additional services are allowing an extra 3,700 people to commute on light rail every day.

There are 830 additional bus services across the north-west and Western Sydney. For people on the Central Coast and in Newcastle we have delivered an extra 3,000 public transport seats by doubling the number of train carriages, particularly during peak hour. All members are happy about that. I see the good member for Terrigal nodding his head and saying thank you. As outlined by the Premier, look at the Sydney Metro. I am pleased to be able to inform the House that 100 kilometres of rail track has been delivered and is now starting to be laid. It arrived in Newcastle and will make its way to the magical 30 kilometres of tunnels that were completed in January.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Those tunnels will be fitted out for the magnificent driverless trains that will be on the tracks in the first half of 2019.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mount Druitt and the member for Rockdale will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It will be nice not to have to deal with the unions to move those trains. The project is a game changer and it is being delivered. Not only are we getting on with completing the terrific work that the previous Minister commenced, we are also making sure that the planning and the industry engagement is right to deliver the Sydney Metro City and Southwest alignment. Through that project we will deliver a train network that can move some 45,000 passengers per hour. It will be a turn-up-and-go service; there is no need for a timetable. It will be a complete revolution in train travel across this city.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: In the past 12 months we have also been capitalising on the great work of the Treasurer in delivering the Opal card system. It is pleasing to see that 950,000 seniors utilise the Gold Opal card, which continues to provide the \$2.50 fare that seniors benefit from across the State. The Opal card continues to be an enormous success, and the 2,100 Opal outlets are meeting the needs of our community. Some 6.5 million cards have been issued around the State. I was disappointed to see that the new shadow Minister for Transport had these choice words to say about Opal on the television last night—

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Ms Jodi McKay: I am on television most nights.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: But she is on television for all the wrong reasons.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: This is what our beloved shadow Minister for Transport said last night in relation to Opal, "This is a bungled system. Commuters are suffering."

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: At a time when customer satisfaction has risen by 10 per cent—

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Some members are talking about the T-card and this is what Labor delivered in 16 years.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maitland will cease shouting.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: In 16 years they delivered one post with no T-card reader on it and it cost the taxpayers \$100 million dollars. That is what we had from Labor in relation to smart cards and now they are saying it is bungled. My question to those opposite is: What are you going to do with the Opal contract? Will the shadow Minister rip it up?

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will cease shouting. Members will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The question is: What does the shadow Minister intend to do with the Opal contract? If it is a bungled system, what will she do with it? Will she rip it up? Will she do it the Labor way, as they do in Victoria, and just rip up contracts?

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is on three calls to order. This is my last warning. The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting or she will be removed from the Chamber for the remainder of the day.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The shadow Minister says it is a bungled system, yet it is delivering for the people of this State.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Drummoyne and the member for Castle Hill will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: If it was a bungled system five million people in New South Wales would not have an Opal card. It is a bit rich for the shadow Minister to be delivering some sort of quasi lecture on the television last night about Opal when it is clearly working for people right across this State.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The other great project that those opposite are against is the CBD and South East Light Rail. I note that the Leader of the Opposition has described it as the Berlin Wall, but at the same time the member for Maroubra wants it extended to Maroubra. He is busily working around the corridors in the Labor ranks saying to people, "Let's do some value capture to try to pay for it."

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: He is saying, "I am happy to support it in private, but publically I am not willing to back it in" because the Leader of the Opposition is against the CBD and South East Light Rail. I cannot work out Labor's public transport strategy, but I do know that they oppose, oppose, oppose.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: And for the member for Maroubra to say 12 months ago that the Sydney Metro is uneconomic defies logic. So the shadow Minister for Transport is against Opal, the Leader of the Opposition is against the CBD and South East Light Rail, the member for Maroubra is against the Sydney Metro and they are all against every other public transport system in this State whilst we are getting on with the job.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Port Stephens will come to order. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the third time. This is my last warning to the member for Port Stephens. She will cease interjecting or she will be removed from the Chamber for the remainder of the day.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I wish Labor Party members a happy Easter, but given their behaviour in this place they really should take a long, hard look in the mirror and have a cold shower.

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

Ms JODIE HARRISON: I address my question to the Minister for Local Government.

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

Ms JODIE HARRISON: Will the local government elections that are scheduled to be held in September take place then or not?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lakemba will come to order. The member for Baulkham Hills will come to order. I call the member for Baulkham Hills to order for the first time.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We will wait.

The SPEAKER: Order! We will wait for as long as it takes for members to come to order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I thank the member for Charlestown for her question. This is an important question because in New South Wales the Government is undertaking important reform that is putting communities first. As part of that reform the Government is ensuring that we are creating stronger councils across the State. With stronger councils we will have stronger communities.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: This question in relation to council elections is an important one. We have made it very clear in relation to proposing council elections that if a council is a merger proposal then those council elections are scheduled for March of next year; and we have told other councils that it is business as usual and to prepare for an election in September this year.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: For those on this side of the House local government reform is important because in making these decisions we are putting people's lives first.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Five years of research, consultation, reports and review show that change is needed in the local government sector.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Summer Hill will cease shouting.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: This Government is going to take the tough reforms needed to tackle the longstanding issues in this State.

Mr John Robertson: When?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I hear those opposite calling out, but they turned their backs on local government in this State.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: When they were in government they sat back and watched infrastructure crumble to a level of \$7.4 billion. They did nothing. They saw councils crippling to provide services for their communities and they did nothing.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: They sat back and watched councils increase their rates.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Will the Minister answer the question he was asked?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has answered the question.

Ms Jodi McKay: He did not because it was a little bit unclear. Will the Minister state once more about the elections in September?

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We can clearly see why local government was ignored by that lot when they were last in office. They clearly did not listen to the community. They sat back and watched councils become dysfunctional in this State. We are tackling these longstanding issues. They put it into the too hard basket and did nothing to support councils in New South Wales. This is important because in New South Wales we have 152 councils, which look after budgets of \$11 billion per year. Councils in this State range in size from six square kilometres through to 63,000 square kilometres and have populations of 1,200 people through to 300,000. These reforms are long overdue.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We will not take the easy way out.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Summer Hill will cease shouting at the Minister.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I make the point that it is very important that when elections are held communities have an opportunity to vote for the councillors who will represent them and put those constituents first. Importantly, it is about ensuring that communities have elected representatives who consider it an honour and a privilege to be able to serve them—

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: —and an honour and a privilege to do what is right in putting communities first and not their own self-interests.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment. In the 12 months since the election how is the Government working to protect the environment for future generations?

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for his question. He, like the entire Government, is working hard to protect the environment and to deliver clean investment in jobs and growth. Through our renewable energy action plan we are supporting the national Renewable Energy Target, which can deliver \$18 billion of investment nationally each year, which we want in New South Wales. Through our renewable energy action plan we are creating a pipeline of renewable projects, creating jobs and putting downward pressure on prices. In the Northern Tablelands we are supporting the Zero Net Energy Town [ZNET] project, with Uralla set to become Australia's first renewable energy self-sufficient town. We have made New South Wales the nation's leader in large solar power. Last year, my colleague the rather bashful Minister for Industry, Energy and Resources and I laid the final solar panels at the Broken Hill and Nyngan solar plants. Backed by the New South Wales Government, they are now powering 50,000 homes in western New South Wales. Together with Moree, they are the three largest solar plants in Australia.

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

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: We have made New South Wales the nation's leader in energy efficiency through our Energy Efficiency Action Plan, including the Energy Savings Scheme. We are raising the scheme's target by 70 per cent, and we have included gas savings. We will be saving, through the scheme, \$12 billion on energy bills by 2040. We are saving, through the scheme, 1.9 million tonnes of emissions. We have made the scheme a win-win by investing in clean technology and jobs. We are also looking out for our iconic natural assets. We are creating 118 square kilometres of new flora reserves on the Far South Coast, protecting the last-known 30 to 60 koalas on the entire Far South Coast from logging and development.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order and cease interjecting.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Unlike Labor's koala national park thought bubble, we are taking real, practical action to protect koalas. We are securing wood supply through a \$2.5 million Environmental Trust grant, which ensures no job losses, safeguards the economy and safeguards the iconic koala. It is win, win, win. In the last year we have secured further key land for the national parks estate, and we have secured more land for the Wianamatta Regional Park in Western Sydney. We have secured the South-Eastern Malabar Headland, quadrupling the size of the Malabar Headland National Park. We have secured The Drip on the Goulburn River—a natural wonder that Labor disgracefully sold for \$2,000 in a 2010 lease conversion sale that cost a coal company less than \$3.00 a hectare.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I am interested in the Minister's answer; those who are not are free to leave.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: All these areas will be protected for future generations. With threatened species we are putting our money where our mouth is. We are rolling out our record \$100 million Saving Our Species program, and we are staring down an issue that afflicts our generation: plastics, and the harm they do to marine life. One of the Premier's 12 priorities is to reduce the volume of litter by 40 per cent by 2020. Beverage containers are by far the biggest source of plastic pollution by volume.

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

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: After decades of Labor inaction we will deliver a cost-effective container deposit scheme. We have led national discussions on banning microbeads. In 2014 we were the first jurisdiction to call for a national ban.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Summer Hill that if she is called to order three times she will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Last year we led the national resolution for a voluntary phase-out by 2018, and we are supporting the Federal decision for a mandatory ban in 2017. On top of all this, through Waste Less Recycle More, guess what? We are wasting less and recycling more through a record \$465 million investment in litter and waste avoidance. We led the national process in 2015 for tougher standards on particle pollution. The new national standards for fine particle pollution are the toughest in the world. We saw Australia go from no annual coarse particle standard at all to a standard tougher than the standard adopted by the European Union, Canada and the vast majority of the United States of America. We are delivering on clean air.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Summer Hill to order for the third time.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: We have responded to community concerns about emissions from cruise ships at the White Bay cruise terminal, we have already drastically reduced the allowable sulphur content in fuel used by cruise ships that berth in Sydney Harbour and we are rolling out more restrictions on sulphur content from 1 July. We are delivering for the environment. We are driving jobs and investment in clean development.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms JENNY LEONG: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning. Given the need to ensure key workers and others who are not super rich can continue to live in our city, what is the Government doing to ensure affordable housing is prioritised in the redevelopment and sell-off of government land, particularly for the Central to Eveleigh and Parramatta Road urban renewal projects?

Mr ROB STOKES: I thank the member for Newtown for her question and for her advocacy on behalf of her constituency. Housing affordability has been vexing cities right across the world, and Sydney is no exception. Housing affordability is a relative term, but the notion of affordable housing involves several discrete categories: social housing, low-cost market housing and key workers housing, or city-shaping housing as it is called. Each of those different categories will require different instruments to activate investment in them as well as to provide a mix of diverse housing types and tenures to meet the needs of a diverse and growing community. One of the great challenges that has been generated in New South Wales is the huge levels of investment this Government is making in infrastructure, which is creating large levels of economic growth and creating challenges in housing affordability.

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

Mr ROB STOKES: Obviously the first thing we must do, which is necessary but not sufficient, is to increase general housing supply, and we are getting on with that job. As I mentioned in this place yesterday, in the past 12 months there have been more than 67,000 approvals, which is the highest level in recorded history, demonstrated currently with about 62,000 housing starts over the past 12 months. As I said, that is necessary but, by itself, not sufficient. That is why as part of our legislation to establish the Greater Sydney Commission, section 9 (d) addresses a key objective of the legislation to increase the supply of affordable housing, and that will be reflected in the district plans as they are rolled out during the course of this year and beyond.

That is also why section 5 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act refers to affordable housing being a key objective of that legislation, which has been demonstrated through the use of State Environmental Planning Policy [SEPP] 70 and also the affordable rental housing SEPP, which has seen thousands of new affordable dwellings provided in Sydney and right across New South Wales. But in relation specifically to the sites mentioned in the member's question, which are key city-shaping sites within the development control of urban growth, I am reminded of a quotation by eminent British architect Richard Rogers, who remarked:

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the challenges facing our cities or to the housing crisis, but the two issues need to be considered together.

From an urban design and planning point of view, the well-connected open city is a powerful paradigm and an engine for integration and inclusivity.

In relation to Central to Eveleigh particularly, as members may be aware, this project involves the transformation of approximately 100 hectares or so of government-owned land around the three-kilometre stretch of rail corridor from Central to McDonalddtown and Erskineville stations. One of our goals is to create a cluster of new innovative and creative jobs that will benefit from links with existing and enhanced education and medical facilities, easy connections to the central business district [CBD] and dynamic new workspaces. After more than two years of consultation studies and assessments we, as a government, have an ambition for this area to connect Sydney's diverse and vibrant communities, to protect existing communities in that vicinity, to strengthen the global city, and to make it an even better place for existing and new residents to live in areas close to where there are jobs. In order to make sure we achieve sustainable and inclusive growth, the uplift in population will be supported by integrated transport planning and also a foundational focus on the need to provide for affordable and social housing as part of this new community.

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What one can expect in the plan is choice and diversity in new homes and a range of new tenures for new homes to allow for a whole range of diverse communities and families to live in this area—new transport and community facilities, dynamic and popular places to work, as well as new parks, green streets, railway crossings to bridge the gaps between communities on either side of the railway lines, heritage improvements and sustainable infrastructure. Working with the community and experts, we know that we have to approach the Central to Eveleigh projects through the lens of design excellence as well. We know that higher densities will be required around train stations. To maintain amenity, that means a transition to surrounding neighbourhoods. It means that we need variegation in streetscape and a mix of uses; we need a diverse and unique skyline and new accessible public spaces that are activated and well used by the community.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ROB STOKES: In all of the precincts that UrbanGrowth is currently looking at, including Parramatta Road and Central to Eveleigh, housing diversity and housing affordability are going to be critical elements to the success of urban renewal. The objective of our housing diversity strategy for Central to Eveleigh, for example, is to offer diversity in the choice of homes and to provide active and

well-designed public spaces that support social and community connections. Key actions to support the objective include creating a mix of well-designed new and traditional apartment types and sizes that encourage a range of social housing and affordable rental housing.

That will also be the case in relation to the Parramatta Road transformation where a range of housing types and tenures will be necessary to support the diversity of families who currently live in that corridor and will be attracted to that corridor in the future. Further, the key actions include establishing a long-term target whereby a significant percentage of new homes are considered more affordable than standard market product for rental or for purchase, including traditional affordable housing rental products managed by community housing providers; and collaborating in capital partnerships that leverage debt and equity innovation with community housing providers, the City of Sydney, not-for-profits, social impact investors and the private sector.

The Minister for the Environment talked about collaborating with the bashful Minister for Energy. I would have to say, in that vein, that I am collaborating closely with the demure member for Wakehurst, the Minister for Social Housing, because that partnership will be crucial to ensure that as we provide more homes in better designed communities we provide more homes that are available to a broader range of families.

JOB SKILLS AND TRAINING

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: My question is addressed to the electrifying Minister for Skills. In the 12 months since the election, how is the Government helping the people of New South Wales to train, reskill and upskill for the jobs of the future?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will wait until members have come to order. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the second time. I warn Opposition members who do not want to listen to the answer that they will be called to order and may be removed from the Chamber. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the second time. The member for Rockdale will be laughing when he is out of the Chamber. I remind the member for Rockdale of my previous ruling. Government members will come to order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I thank the member for Myall Lakes for his question. It is a good question on the skilling of young people and opportunities for young people in this State. This week marks an important anniversary for the people of New South Wales and is a reminder to those opposite that the people of New South Wales demand more. They want actions, not words. They want delivery, not empty promises and they want greater opportunity.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Government members have turned those words into action by delivering for the people of New South Wales.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This Government has delivered on its election commitments to provide better mobile phone coverage to communities of regional New South Wales, securing \$92 million in investment, and it has expanded its Resources for Regions program to make sure those communities affected by mining gain benefits and a return of investment to their communities. With the regional New South Wales economy now surging ahead—just like the Bulldogs did over the Sea Eagles in round one of the National Rugby League [NRL]—the Government has created 59,000 new jobs in regional New South Wales over the past 12 months.

As today marks 100 days before the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] in

New South Wales, I confirm the Government's investment of \$10 million and 2,000 extra training places in courses including disability, community services, Auslan and aged care to help students and the most vulnerable in our community to have the carers they will need as the rollout of the NDIS progresses later this year. In the electorate of Myall Lakes, the Government is creating some fantastic investment in TAFE. We are creating a nursing and allied health training facility that mirrors the best hospital and health facilities across Australia, complete with a clinical laboratory, training bathroom, preparation area and nursing station, along with increasing the number of beds for students to undertake their training.

The Government is giving nursing and allied health students more opportunities in new and higher level qualifications. We want a vocational education system that is accessible to people across New South Wales. We made an election commitment to deliver \$48 million in fee-free scholarships to 200,000 disadvantaged students across New South Wales to give them the best opportunity to gain the skills and training to get a job. I can update the House that so far in the first rollout of this program 19,000 students have taken up the scholarships, with 1,900 of them coming from social housing. We are investing up to \$100 million to increase training options for employers and to support more than 47,000 training places for apprentices and trainees.

We are giving employers more flexibility to choose the training providers who can better deliver government subsidised apprenticeships and traineeships across New South Wales. Of course, the Government has capped apprenticeship fees to a maximum of \$2,000 for the whole of the apprenticeship. That is offset by the Treasurer's small business employment incentive, which supports small business to employ by way of a \$2,000 grant. I can update the House that today apprenticeship approvals are up by 18 per cent in January 2016 compared to the same time last year. We have also capped traineeship fees to \$1,000 for the whole of the traineeship. Traineeship approvals are up more than 15 per cent in January 2016 compared to January 2015.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that this is not a debate. I call the member for Lakemba to order for the first time.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Most importantly, in relation to TAFE NSW enrolments, I can update the House that with over 260,000 students enrolled in TAFE in just the first 10 weeks of 2016 this represents a jump of 40 per cent compared to last year.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This Government is committed to making sure that TAFE continues to be efficient and flexible as the public provider of vocational education to students in this State. The Government is investing in TAFE.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Swansea to order for the second time. The member for Mount Druitt will come to order.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: The Government is addressing the legacy of Labor in government: the backroom inefficiencies, where 40¢ to 60¢ out of every dollar was being spent on overheads rather than on supporting our teachers and providing opportunities for students in New South Wales.

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: If we want TAFE NSW to be strong and sustainable for the future—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Swansea to order for the third time. The member will cease shouting.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: —we will continue to invest in the way we have to make TAFE the strongest public provider in the nation.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I call the member for Monaro to order for the first time. The member with whom he is conversing is on three calls to order.

Question time concluded at 3.19 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Motion Accorded Priority

Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to postpone the commencement of Government business until the conclusion of the motion accorded priority.

PETITIONS

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**.

South Coast Rail Services

Petition requesting an hourly service from Kiama to Bomaderry station connecting with trains to Sydney, received from **Mr Gareth Ward**.

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**.

Low-Cost Housing and Homelessness

Petition requesting increased funding for low-cost housing and homelessness services, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Same-Sex Marriage

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

Local Government Amalgamations

Petition opposing the proposed amalgamation of the Shellharbour local government area with Wollongong City Council, received from **Mr Gareth Ward**.

Local Government Amalgamations

Petition opposing the forced amalgamation of the Kiama local government area with any other local government area, received from **Mr Gareth Ward**.

Local Government Amalgamations

Petition requesting that there be no forced amalgamation of the Woollahra local government area with any other local government area and it remain independent, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

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

Duck Hunting

Petition requesting retention of the longstanding ban on duck hunting, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Container Deposit Levy

Petition requesting the Government introduce a container deposit levy to reduce litter and increase recycling rates of drink containers, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Plastic Bags Ban

Petition calling on the Government to introduce legislation to ban single-use lightweight plastic bags at retail points of sale in New South Wales to reduce waste and environmental degradation, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

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

Punchbowl Railway Station Lifts

Petition requesting the installation of lifts at Punchbowl railway station, received from **Mr Jihad Dib**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Reordering of General Business

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.23 p.m.]: I move:

That the General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) given by me this day have precedence on Wednesday 23 March 2016.

This motion is important for the 1,600 people who at any one time are waiting for a transplant. This motion is important to encourage people to register to become donors and to discuss with their families and loved ones their wish to donate organs and tissues. This motion recognises the record number of donors and their families in New South Wales in 2015.

I am inspired by the generosity of Deyaan Udani and his family. Earlier this year, Quakers Hill boy

Deyaan Udani died suddenly from multiple brain clots while visiting India. Despite emergency surgery on 27 January to release the pressure on his brain, Deyaan died three days later. His parents decided to donate his heart, kidneys and liver, helping four people. Deyaan and his nine-year-old sister learnt about the importance of organ donation at Quakers Hill Public School. As a result, Deyaan and his sister told their mother that they wanted to become donors.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that interjections are inappropriate.

Dr GEOFF LEE: At the age of seven, Deyaan is an inspiration to us all. He and his family are an example of our shared humanity. It is great news that Australian donation and transplantation activity reached its highest levels in 2015. The New South Wales Organ and Tissue Donation Service figures show that there were 127 deceased organ donors in 2015, surpassing the previous record of 102 in 2013. The 127 donors enabled 379 organs to be transplanted. There was also a boost in tissue donations in New South Wales in 2015, including 669 corneal transplants to restore sight, heart valve transplants to correct malformations, and bone and tendon donations for spinal infusions and treatments after cancer, trauma and sports injury. Many members will know that organ transplantation is a rare event and is possible in only 1 per cent of deaths. At any one time 1,600 people are on the waiting list. But there is good news, with more than two million New South Wales residents having registered as organ donors. This motion is important to recognise and thank the 127 families who enabled 379 organs to be transplanted in lifesaving operations. This motion is important to recognise and thank the dedicated medical professionals who make this possible.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Reordering of General Business

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [3.26 p.m.]: I move:

That the General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) given by me this day have precedence on Wednesday 23 March 2016.

This motion is important because it recognises the work of the Rural Fire Service in saving lives. It congratulates all volunteer firefighters in New South Wales on their wonderful work in the community. It is sad that a particular person has mocked these wonderful volunteers by likening them to dad's army.

The SPEAKER: Order! There will be no interjections and no points of order during a motion to reorder general business.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: There are 75,000 Rural Fire Service volunteers in the State. It is remarkable that they leave their families and jobs to go out and protect the community.

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

Mr GUY ZANGARI: They protect people in the community who are adversely affected by bushfire. We in this House should congratulate and thank them every day for their tireless work.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members of my previous ruling regarding interjections and points of order. If members continue to interject I will extend the member's speaking time. I call the member for Hornsby to order for the first time.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: There are 93 members in this House, and 92 will advocate for the Rural Fire Service and volunteer firefighters. It is disappointing that the Minister for Emergency Services likens those volunteers to dad's army.

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! By agreement, the House has decided that there will be no points of order during a motion to reorder general business.

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Mr GUY ZANGARI: Minister Rob Stokes and Minister Constance know about this issue because volunteer firefighters have contacted them asking them to speak to their boss, Premier Mike Baird, about the fact that the Minister for Emergency Services has likened these volunteers to dad's army. Shame on him. The Minister is sitting there very quietly.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have been reminded that members can take points of order during a motion to reorder general business. The Leader of the House may take his point of order.

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order: It pains me greatly to take this point of order but any attack—

Ms Anna Watson: What's the point of order?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Shellharbour should just listen for a change and stop interrupting the Minister.

Ms Anna Watson: The Minister has not said what the point of order is. I was listening.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the Minister.

Mr Anthony Roberts: The member has left the intent of the motion to reorder general business. He is now attacking a member and any personal attacks should be done by way of substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! The point of order is upheld. I caution the member for Fairfield against launching a personal attack against a member within the Chamber. I understand his motion relates substantially to the Rural Fire Service. I invite the member for Fairfield to continue, but I remind him that personal attacks will not be tolerated. The member's time has expired.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The motion of the member for Fairfield is a substantive motion. In moving it, the member is complying with Standing Order 73.

The SPEAKER: Order! Any personal attack on a member should be by way of substantive motion. The motion is about the Rural Fire Service.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I move:

That the member for Fairfield be further heard for a period of 60 seconds.

Question—That the motion of Mr Michael Daley be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 36

Ms Aitchison
Mr Atalla
Mr Barr
Ms Burney
Ms Car
Ms Catley
Mr Chanthivong
Mr Daley
Mr Dib
Ms Doyle
Ms Finn
Mr Greenwich
Mr Harris

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

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

Tellers,
Mr Lulich
Mr Warren

Noes, 48

Mr Anderson
Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Mr Baird
Mr Barilaro
Ms Berejikian
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Coure
Mr Crouch
Mr Dominello
Mr Elliott
Mr Fraser
Mr Gee
Mr George
Ms Gibbons
Ms Goward

Mr Grant
Mr Gulaptis
Mr Hazzard
Mr Henskens
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Humphries
Mr Kean
Dr Lee
Mr Maguire
Mr Marshall
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 Crakanthorp
Mr Foley

Mrs Davies
Mr Rowell

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

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Question—That the motion of Mr Guy Zangari be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 48

Mr Anderson
Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Mr Baird
Mr Barilaro
Ms Berejikian
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Coure
Mr Crouch
Mr Dominello
Mr Elliott
Mr Fraser
Mr Gee
Mr George
Ms Gibbons
Ms Goward

Mr Grant
Mr Gulaptis
Mr Hazzard
Mr Henskens
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Humphries
Mr Kean
Dr Lee
Mr Maguire
Mr Marshall
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

Noes, 36

Ms Aitchison
Mr Atalla
Mr Barr
Ms Burney
Ms Car
Ms Catley
Mr Chanthivong
Mr Daley
Mr Dib
Ms Doyle
Ms Finn
Mr Greenwich
Mr Harris

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

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

Tellers,
Mr Lulich
Mr Warren

Pairs

Mrs Davies
Mr Rowell

Mr Crakanthorp
Mr Foley

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

State Economy

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.43 p.m.]: My motion deserves priority because it is important after 12 months in government to reflect on where we have been, where we are going, the record prosperity that is enjoyed across New South Wales and the fact that when we came to government this State was number eight and today New South Wales is number one. That did not happen by accident, it happened as a result of the hard work of people like the Premier who embarked on an asset recycling program, such as our poles and wires and our ports, investing new capital in infrastructure across the State.

We can see that more clearly than ever before in our regions. The lack of roads funding in regional New South Wales, particularly in the Illawarra, was driving us mad but today we drive on the roads that members of the Opposition failed to build and we built. In relation to health funding, the people of the Illawarra were sick and tired of being sick and tired, but now we have investments in hospitals right across regional New South Wales. This side of the House has delivered investment infrastructure such as light rail and the other side of the House has delivered lightweights.

While we are talking about the shadow Cabinet reshuffle, I refer to the change in portfolios of the Leader of the Opposition. The burden of the Arts portfolio was a little bit much and so strenuous that in his own reshuffle he demoted himself. The Government supports the new shadow Minister for Planning, the member for Maroubra, who is best equipped for that portfolio because he is involved in some dual occupancies—the problem for the Leader of the Opposition is that dual occupancy does not involve him. The shadow Treasurer, the member for Keira, cannot count. The shadow Minister for Transport, the member for Strathfield, wants to cancel WestConnex.

I owe an apology to the member for Kogarah. Twelve months ago I said in this House that he was Simba of the Opposition but now with his recent promotion he is the Bobby Boucher of the Opposition: its water boy, the shadow Minister for water. I am sure he will embark on some epistemology in relation to water policy yet we wait; it may be just more leaks or it may be some serious policy. This side of the House is delivering. There are cranes on the skyline and jobs on the ground, which was ignored by the Opposition during its time in government, particularly in regional New South Wales. My motion will seek to prioritise the work that this Government is doing that can be seen in Parkes, Bathurst, Dubbo, Kiama, and Wollongong. East, west, north, south, people can see the work this Government is doing right across New South Wales.

We have hardworking Ministers and a reformist Government led by a Premier, the like of whom this State has not seen before, and will not see again. We will see continual investments from this Government during the next three years—things that members of the Opposition only ever dreamed about. We say bring back the member for Blacktown. The Leader of the Opposition could not fire up a 12 volt flashlight. At least the member for Blacktown can fire up the Labor backbench. We say this Government made New South Wales number one again and those on the other side failed the people of New South Wales.

Youth Unemployment

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) [3.46 p.m.]: My motion must take priority. It is about what is crucial to the future economic sustainability of our State: jobs for our young people. As we have all heard, next week will mark 12 months since the election. Never ones to miss an opportunity to self-congratulate, every Minister in the Government is getting the opportunity to talk about the past 12 months. I will run with that theme and talk about the facts in the past 12 months in TAFE: There has been the embarrassment of the rollout of the \$573 million computer system which the upper House inquiry recommended be abolished; millions of taxpayers' dollars are missing; a leaked Cabinet document showed secret plans to sell off \$63 million worth of TAFE campuses across the State; astronomical increases in fees, students facing up to \$4,000 for basic certificates; and enrolments down by more than a staggering 43,000—fewer people are being trained.

Why does this matter? What are the consequences of this complete destruction of our TAFE system? The plummeting of apprenticeship numbers is one. Despite what the Minister says, no amount of Baird Government spin will cover up the facts, and he knows it. In the 12 months ending September 2015, the number of apprentices and trainees starting a course was down 12.9 per cent in New South Wales, the biggest drop in any State. And this comes at a time when youth unemployment is at crisis levels in some parts of New South Wales—16.5 per cent on the Central Coast, 14 per cent in Blacktown and 21.8 per cent in the Hunter.

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It is clear to everyone except this Government that it needs to be making TAFE more accessible, not less by making it more affordable, not less. We need to be equipping our young people with the skills they need to respond to a changing economy; not locking generations out of them. The trades taught at TAFE have put generations of people onto the ladder of aspiration. Now the people we represent in this place want and need their children to get their feet onto the skills ladder, but they are being pulled down by the actions of this Government. Rebuilding TAFE is the only answer.

Question—That the motion of the member for Kiama be accorded priority—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 47

Mr Anderson	Ms Goward	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Mr Grant	Mr Roberts
Mr Ayres	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Mr Baird	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Barilaro	Mr Henskens	Mr Speakman
Ms Berejikian	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Stokes
Mr Conolly	Mr Humphries	Mr Taylor
Mr Constance	Mr Kean	Mr Toole
Mr Coure	Dr Lee	Mr Tudehope
Mr Crouch	Mr Maguire	Ms Upton
Mr Dominello	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Ward
Mr Elliott	Mr O'Dea	Mr Williams
Mr Fraser	Mrs Pavey	Mrs Williams
Mr Gee	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr George	Ms Petinos	Mr Bromhead
Ms Gibbons	Mr Piccoli	Mr Patterson

Noes, 36

Ms Aitchison	Ms Harrison	Mr Park
Mr Atalla	Ms Hay	Mr Piper
Mr Barr	Ms Haylen	Mr Robertson
Ms Burney	Mr Hoenig	Ms K. Smith
Ms Car	Ms Hornery	Ms T. F. Smith
Ms Catley	Mr Kamper	Ms Washington
Mr Chanthivong	Ms Leong	Ms Watson
Mr Daley	Mr Lynch	Mr Zangari
Mr Dib	Dr McDermott	
Ms Doyle	Ms McKay	

Ms Finn
Mr Greenwich
Mr Harris

Mr Mehan
Ms Mihailuk
Mr Minns

Tellers
Mr Lalich
Mr Warren

Pairs

Mrs Davies
Mr Rowell

Mr Crakanthorp
Mr Foley

Question resolved in the affirmative.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! I remind members that any calls to order made by the Speaker during question time will stand for the remainder of today's sitting.

STATE ECONOMY

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.56 p.m.]: I move:

That this House.

- (1) Notes that 12 months ago the Liberal-Nationals Government was given a mandate by the people of this great State to rebuild New South Wales.
- (2) Notes that since the election the Government has:
 - (a) completed tunnelling on Sydney Metro North West;
 - (b) delivered major hospital upgrades in Sydney, the Illawarra and regional New South Wales;
 - (c) delivered more than 100,000 new jobs across New South Wales; and
 - (d) maintained New South Wales position as the leading State economy and engine of economic growth.
- (3) Notes the Government continues to make a record investment in infrastructure and services across the State.
- (4) Calls on Labor to get behind the Government's plan to turbocharge New South Wales.

I thank members for according this motion priority because it gives us an opportunity to talk about things that are important. One thing that is important to families and communities is economic growth. Under this Government this State has climbed from the number eight spot to the number one spot. We have done that through some very tough decisions, such as the asset leasing of poles and wires and the ports. That has allowed us to invest record amounts in infrastructure, which generates jobs. Rather than let assets continue to fall in value on our balance sheet, we have shifted capital from one side of the balance sheet to the other and invested in new assets. That has come with support from the Commonwealth Government through its contribution of \$2 billion towards Rebuilding NSW.

Another project in the region that is generating jobs is the Albion Park Rail bypass, which was not offered by members opposite. In fact, in Labor's 10 year infrastructure plan for New South Wales the Illawarra was not mentioned once. I thought in an attempt to seek out Labor policy I would go to the Labor Party's website. I could find only one document on policy, which is entitled "Basic principles of the Australian Labor Party". It is very basic. It is a threadbare two pages of principles, most of which revolve around the socialist objective and the rights of members of the union movement. It does not say anything of substance about what Labor would do. We know at the last election Labor's way of paying for infrastructure was to increase taxes on small business in the regions and spend that money in Sydney.

Mr David Harris: Not true.

Mr GARETH WARD: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Wyong, who said that was not true. Labor's plan was for \$5.1 billion worth of increases in taxes on small businesses. Members opposite would have said to small business men and women, "You have to work harder. You have to stay longer. You have to spend more time in red tape and rigmarole rather than on running your businesses and driving the economy." We are committed to driving the economy. When I look around the Illawarra I see investments that simply would not have occurred if it were not for the change of government.

For example, I look at the \$106 million increase in investment in Wollongong Hospital, which has delivered an upgraded emergency department, 60 new elective surgical beds and seven new operating theatres, as well as funding of \$27 million to double car parking at the hospital. I see investment in roads such as the Berry bypass, a \$580 million project that will save lives, and the Gerringong upgrade, a \$340 million project that will save lives. This Government has been working in partnership—the Liberals and The Nationals, country and city—to deliver good government and investments that simply would not have occurred. I acknowledge that my friends in the city are also benefitting. We are seeing investments in things like NorthConnex, the South West Rail Link is being delivered and, as I mentioned in my motion, the completion of tunnelling on Sydney Metro Northwest.

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I note that the member for Parramatta is in the Chamber. The electorate of Parramatta has been an enormous beneficiary of his hard work. The Deputy Premier and member for Dubbo is also in the Chamber. The electorate of Dubbo has had record investments in Health. I am also very pleased that my friend the member for Clarence is also in the Chamber. I commend him for the work that he has done in securing record investments in his electorate. My motion deserves priority because we need to compare and contrast. Members will recall that when we came to Government we inherited a \$5.2 billion deficit, which has been turned into a budget surplus. We inherited a \$50 billion infrastructure backlog that we have turned around through our asset recycling program. We inherited billions of dollars in waste like the Metro project, T-card and botched dam projects that saw money wasted and not invested in the people of this State. I am proud to be a member of the Baird Government. We are making New South Wales number one again; we are streaking ahead in every way, shape, form and indicator.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [4.01 p.m.]: I do not know what budget papers the member for Kiama was reading from but if he can find a budget paper that tells him that the State was left with a \$5.2 billion deficient I will buy him lunch at the Machiavelli Ristorante. The Labor Party left this State with a surplus of \$1.7 billion and a triple-A credit rating, we created 200,000 jobs in our last two years in office, and in 15 out of 16 years there was a budget surplus. In relation to the business taxes to which the member for Kiama referred, they are in place as we speak. They are called intergovernmental agreement [IGA] taxes and they are going to be relinquished on 1 July this year. What a profligate waste of money when the Treasury has told the Treasurer's party room that they are approaching a \$2 billion budget shortfall in revenue. What is the Government doing? It is giving away another \$500 million a year.

Since this Government took office five years ago it has been terrific at doing two things they promised they would do—and they have done them better than any government that has come before them—sacking people and selling things. Some \$25 billion worth of public assets have been sold and

15,000 public sector jobs have been lost. I will go through some of the capital expenditure items mentioned in this motion. If members were to look at the budget papers for the 2008–09 financial year they would see that under Nathan Rees we spent \$19 billion on capital expenditure in the general government sector. In five years this Government has come nowhere near that. In fact, in the past five years they have underspent their budgeted capital expenditure by almost \$6 billion, with the attendant loss of tens of thousands of jobs that would have been saved with that capital expenditure. It is no wonder that since this Government was elected five years ago it has not got unemployment below 5.1 per cent, which is what we left them with. Unemployment has been above that figure since the day they were elected. That means about 35,000 fewer people are in employment in New South Wales now than there were when the Government took office five years ago.

The North West Rail Link has been referred to. That project had a benefit-cost ratio of 0.8 per cent, which means a loss of economic return. Nick Greiner and Infrastructure NSW recommended that it not be built. The only way it can be made into a project with a positive benefit-cost ratio is to spend another \$11 billion on it. The light rail project has blown out from \$1.7 billion to \$2.3 billion. It has taken those opposite five years to do anything with the M4 and M5. The M4 was paid off once but people using it will now have a toll reimposed on them. Currently the people of south-western Sydney travel through a tunnel with no toll but the M5 East will also have a toll. The other day the roof collapsed on the new International Convention Centre at Darling Harbour—terrific work by the Government's contractors. This Government has knocked down an international award-winning building, well within its economic life, and replaced a 12,500 seat entertainment centre with an 8,000 seat amphitheatre.

The Government should be absolutely proud of the Tibby Cotter Bridge, a bridge across Anzac Parade at Moore Park from nowhere to nowhere. The budget for this was \$15 million but it blew out by \$7 million. They are also putting a light rail through there but the light rail stops are nowhere near the Tibby Cotter Bridge. That is an absolute profligate waste of money. The portfolio areas of education and TAFE colleges have been characterised by budget cuts of \$1.7 billion. Since the introduction of Smart and Skilled enrolments at TAFE colleges are down by more than 43,000. The Government has demoralised the public sector and that is why this afternoon in this place we will not be debating government business. There will be a couple of take-note debates, as there were this morning. The public sector has been so diminished and demoralised that the bills are not coming through this place. My only regret is that there are not 40 minutes left in this debate instead of four seconds because there are volumes of failure to speak about.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.06 p.m.]: I speak in support of the priority motion of the member for Kiama. History is written by the victors. We are the victors and we are rewriting history in New South Wales. Why are we the victors? We are the victors because the public of New South Wales elected us. Not only did they elect us in 2011 but they re-elected us in 2015. When those opposite are lying in bed at night they should ask themselves why we were elected and they were kicked out. Those on this side of the House are getting on with the job of making New South Wales number one. We are doing exactly what the people of New South Wales want. What do they want? They want jobs, investment and prosperity, and this is exactly what we are delivering. As the member for Kiama said, we are delivering infrastructure from north to south and east to west. More than 100,000 jobs have been created and many tens of thousands of those jobs have been created in regional and rural New South Wales.

Long-awaited infrastructure is finally being built after 16 years of Labor Government inactivity. The lights have finally been turned on in New South Wales and the people like what they see. For example, the Pacific Highway upgrade, the biggest regional road project in Australia, is well underway with \$4.3 billion being spent in my electorate alone; as well as the second Grafton bridge—a \$200 million bridge—promised by Labor but never delivered. In 2007 Bob Carr gave an ironclad guarantee and it turned into nothing more than a rusty promise by the iconic Labor Premier of this State. In fact, Bob Carr is not welcome at Grafton because he lied to the people in 2007. The new 1,000 bed Grafton jail will create hundreds of jobs—

Mr Stephen Kamper: You shut it down and then reopened it, did you?

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: The jail is open and full to capacity. A new one is being built with 1,000 beds, which is going to create hundreds of jobs during construction. Those opposite might not be interested in jobs but in regional New South Wales we certainly are. Hospitals, schools and police stations are being built right across New South Wales. For Byron Central Hospital \$88 million was promised. The hospital was delivered on budget and ahead of schedule. A \$260 million upgrade to Lismore hospital is well underway as are upgrades to Macksville, Kempsey, Manning and Port Macquarie hospitals. The list goes on and on because for 16 years nothing was done. At the last election we saw Labor's Better Way plan. Labor was going to increase taxes for businesses. That is a great way to create prosperity. [*Time expired.*]

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Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) [4.09 p.m.]: What I love about Parliament is that what we say in this Chamber is recorded. I noted that the member for Kiama said that New South Wales is number one in economic growth. If only he had checked the facts and seen what the real statistic is. I will read verbatim what this great publication the CommSec State of the States report says:

NSW is still fourth-ranked on construction work done and fifth ranked on economic growth.

In economic growth New South Wales is not first, but fifth. If only the member for Kiama had checked his facts and had not been totally overawed by his own presence in this Chamber. All the member for Kiama had to do was to check the facts.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! I remind the member for Rockdale that he is on three calls to order.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: If only the member for Kiama had checked the facts. He talks about economic growth and right here in this report it says that New South Wales is fifth ranked on economic growth. I have highlighted and circled it. If only the member for Kiama had checked his facts instead of getting lost in his own spin and in his own convoluted statements. Not only do we have a fabrication of the facts, but how do we invest the money that we have? We reduce our investment in human capital. Let us go to one of the most important institutions for ensuring people have the best skills they can have for future jobs—TAFE. This is the 12-month report card: 2,100 TAFE teachers and support staff sacked; student enrolment figures down by 13 per cent; \$1.7 billion in cuts from education and training since this Government came to office; dramatic increases in TAFE fees from \$1,000 to \$4,000. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.12 p.m.]: I thank the member for Maroubra and the member for Clarence. I did not know who that last bloke was, but I am told by the member for Clarence that it was the member for Macquarie Fields. I have been admonished by the member for Macquarie Fields. Someone once referred to him as a low-altitude flyer, but I do not think this bloke would be accepted in the Qantas Club. I love looking at Labor policy when you can find it, and here is a corker: "Infrastructure priorities: Getting on with existing projects". This is a group of people that wanted to be in government acknowledging the existing projects that are already underway.

What those opposite would have done if they had been elected would have been to stop the long-term lease of poles and wires, which has turbocharged this State and is the subject of this motion. I note the observation of the member for Wyong who says that yes, they would have stopped the lease, which would have meant that we would have seen a stop to projects right across Sydney, investments that generate jobs and investments in regional New South Wales that are vitally needed, including the \$6 billion regional Restart Fund, which are very, very important.

The member for Clarence touched on the issues in regional New South Wales that are important to members of this House such as me and my friends in The Nationals. But all we have heard from Labor is an attempt to justify its appalling tenure in government. I make the observation that, having read the State of the States report that the member for Macquarie Fields referred to, he should look right through the analysis and see where New South Wales is ranked, and that is number one.

[Interruption]

I acknowledge the interjection from my friend the member for Wyong that there are things we cannot control. I remember when he was the shadow Treasurer and the member for Maroubra came into the Chamber and said we can thank the Reserve Bank for our success. I did not know that we had a different Reserve Bank in New South Wales from Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and other parts of the nation. The reality is that this has happened through hard work and commitment to reducing our spending and managing our finances like any household would do—ensuring that we do not spend more than we earn. It is about outgoings and incomings.

Labor talks about inputs. Opposition members love coming into this Chamber, slamming the lectern and saying, "We will, we will, we will!" When do we ever hear them talk about outputs? When do we hear them talk about how many more kids can read and write? When do we hear them talk about how many more operations are undertaken in our hospitals, how many more police are on the beat or how many more students are being taught in our schools? We should reflect on the fact that in our hospitals there are now more nurses than ever and in our police stations and across New South Wales there are more police than ever, and in our classrooms we have moved resources from the backroom to the classroom. This is a Government that has been doing what it says and saying what it will do. We have been very clear in our plan. I am proud to be on the side of the House that has rebuilt New South Wales.

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

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to resolution government business proceeded with.

PUBLIC LOTTERIES AMENDMENT (KENO LICENSING) BILL 2016

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Troy Grant, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) [4.17 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Public Lotteries Amendment (Keno Licensing) Bill 2016. This bill implements one of the final commitments under the 2010 memorandum of understanding [MOU] with ClubsNSW, which was to review and extend the existing keno licensing arrangements. The current keno licence, which is jointly held by Keno (NSW) Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Tabcorp, and Club Keno Holdings, a subsidiary of ClubsNSW, was granted in 2007 and does not expire until 2022. Following the commitment under the MOU, an independent review of the keno licence was conducted on behalf of the Government. This review found that there was significant scope to modernise the keno regulatory regime by bringing the licences into the modern regulatory regime as it applies to NSW Lotteries.

As a result, the Government entered into negotiations with the incumbent licensees to reach an agreement that would modernise the regulatory framework, remove the confusion that arose from having

keno regulation effectively frozen following the sale of NSW Lotteries in 2010 and grant a new keno operator and product licence to the incumbent licensees until 1 April 2050. These negotiations were conducted at arm's length from Government by a steering committee consisting of senior representatives from NSW Treasury, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Liquor and Gaming NSW. The steering committee was supported by expert advisers who provided expert legal, financial and commercial advice to the project. An independent probity adviser also oversaw the negotiation process.

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As a result of these negotiations the joint licensees have agreed to pay the State in excess of \$230 million for a 28-year extension of the keno licence. This payment is broken down into a \$25 million upfront fee, \$3 million per annum in licence duty from 2017 to 2021 and \$4.5 million per annum in licence duty from 2022 to 2050. Both of the licence duty figures are indexed at 2.5 per cent per annum. The extension of the keno licensing arrangements provides value to the licensees as it will enable these parties to have certainty of investment and generate long-term earnings from keno.

Venues will also continue to benefit from keno by way of commissions received for the conduct of the game on their premises. Additionally, the revenue that ClubKeno Holdings receives from keno will continue to provide benefits to the club industry and broader community in a range of ways, such as being returned to clubs as additional commissions so that they may be reinvested through promotional activities and equipment upgrades to charitable, sporting and other organisations across New South Wales, reinvested in keno game promotions and equipment, and helping the club industry fund development and support projects.

Registered clubs make a substantial economic and social contribution to this State and are providers of key facilities in regional and metropolitan communities across New South Wales. The most recent club census in 2011 reported that clubs provide more than 700 bowling greens, 350 golf courses, 100 tennis facilities and 90 sporting fields as well as scores of dining and conference facilities. Clubs are also one of the State's largest employers, providing jobs to 42,000 people including 20,000 regional jobs and contributing more than \$3.2 billion a year to the State's economy. The extension of the keno licence, which contributes to the economic sustainability of registered clubs, will allow clubs to continue to deliver these benefits to communities across New South Wales.

I now turn to the detail in the bill. The bill amends section 5 of the Act to introduce a definition of keno. This definition makes it clear what constitutes a game of keno for the purposes of the Act. The inclusion of this definition is critical to the ongoing function of the Act and aligns the Act with the definition of keno that is contained in a contractual agreement entered into by the former Government and the operator of NSW Lotteries during the sale process in 2010. By including the definition of keno in the Act rather than a contractual agreement this Government is addressing a significant risk that should a game of keno be approved outside this narrow definition, it may lead to significant compensation being payable.

The bill before the House will also enable the Minister and Treasurer to accept the offer made by the joint keno licensees and for the Minister to enter into the deed entitled "Implementation Deed" which is set out in annexure 1 to the deed poll that I have tabled. This amendment is necessary to give effect to the negotiated outcomes agreed with the keno licensees and to allow for the revocation of the existing licence and the grant of the new operator and product licences as provided by the implementation deed. By granting new licences to the joint licensees rather than extending the existing licence the Government is able to apply the modern regulatory approach as it currently applies to NSW Lotteries to keno.

This modern regulatory framework applies a principles-based approach rather than the more prescriptive and interventionist regulation that currently applies. It also allows for greater regulatory oversight into areas that may be perceived as high risk. As an example, the modern licences provide for an ongoing review of the licensee's suitability. This review allows the Minister to consider whether the licensee and its close associates remain suitable to hold the licence. This suitability review measures the licensee against a number of criteria such as the licensee's or close associate's character, honesty and

integrity, ownership and governance structures, and whether the licensee retains appropriate commercial and technical experience.

In regard to suitability, it should be noted that while new section 21N (2) allows the Minister to grant the licences without undertaking the suitability requirements as required by sections 11 and 12 of the Act this is on the basis that, as the incumbents, the licensees' have already demonstrated this suitability on an ongoing basis. However, I am advised that Liquor and Gaming NSW has recently undertaken a suitability review and that this review found each of the licensees and their close associates suitable to hold or be involved with the keno licence. The bill also introduces provisions to make it clear that all existing approvals under the current licence, such as the rules of the game, agency agreements, existing prize funds and any other matter related to the operation of the game continue to apply under the new licences.

These savings provisions are important as they allow the game to run uninterrupted while also ensuring that where prizes are due to players, including unclaimed prizes, they are able to be paid by the licensee. In summary, this bill represents a sensible and modernised regulatory approach to the keno licensing arrangements and rectifies issues that the former Government introduced through the privatisation of NSW Lotteries. The bill also reduces regulatory red tape and provides value to the State commensurate with the grant of a long-term concession while also providing the opportunity to deliver benefits to industry, particularly registered clubs through long-term certainty. I commend the bill to the House.

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

CRIMES (SERIOUS CRIME PREVENTION ORDERS) BILL 2016

CRIMINAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ORGANISED CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY) BILL 2016

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Troy Grant, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing) [4.27 p.m.]: I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Crimes (Serious Crime Prevention Orders) Bill 2016 and the Criminal Legislation Amendment (Organised Crime and Public Safety) Bill 2016. The purpose of these bills is to deliver on the Government's election commitment to introduce tough new powers to give police the upper hand in the fight against serious crime. These powers include United Kingdom-style serious crime prevention orders to disrupt the activities of serious criminals. Public safety orders will also prevent people from going to certain places where they are likely to present a serious risk to public safety.

Serious and organised crime affects our community, economy and way of life. The effects of these crimes can be felt across the community, whether through investment scams, cyber attacks, clandestine drug labs in suburban areas or acts of violence between criminal groups on our streets. Serious and organised crime also has a broader impact on the Australian economy. The Australian Crime Commission [ACC] conservatively estimates that serious and organised crime costs Australia in excess of \$15 billion every year. However, the actual figure is likely to be much higher. Operationally, the NSW Police Force is working effectively with Commonwealth bodies via the National Anti-Gang Taskforce and other joint operations.

Within New South Wales strike forces Talon and Raptor have been effective in curbing gun and organised crime, arresting more than 4,400 persons and seizing more than 1,000 firearms. This Government has already responded to the growing concern of organised crime by creating a modernised consorting offence that has been upheld by the High Court. It has created new offences that target the activities of criminal groups, including an offence of participating in the activities of a criminal group, punishable by five years imprisonment and introduced offences targeting those that direct the activities of criminal groups, punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment.

The New South Wales Government has also created a new aggravated offence for shooting at a dwelling in the context of organised criminal activity, punishable by up to 16 years imprisonment. Other effective measures include amendments to enhance firearm prohibition orders as well as amendments to the Restricted Premises Act 1943 to increase police capacity to disrupt, prevent and detect organised crime through increased penalties, and search and seizure provisions. The new powers in these bills build on these reforms to ensure that law enforcement agencies continue to respond quickly and forcefully to the organised crime threat.

Under this new package of reforms the bills will introduce serious crime prevention orders to restrict the activities of persons or businesses that are involved in serious crime; allow senior police to issue temporary public safety orders to prevent people from attending places or events where they are expected to engage in violence or present a serious threat to public safety or security; improve our ability to confiscate the assets of serious criminals; and enhance money-laundering offences of dealing with the proceeds of crime.

I now turn to the detail of the Crimes (Serious Crime Prevention Orders) Bill 2016. This bill allows the Supreme and District courts to make serious crime prevention orders against persons or corporations when sought by eligible applicants to prevent, restrict or disrupt involvement by certain persons in serious crime-related activities and terrorism offences. These reforms have adopted some aspects of the United Kingdom's serious crime prevention order provisions in the Serious Crime Act 2007—United Kingdom—adapted to suit the New South Wales legislative framework.

The reforms will allow the court to make an order against a person on the application of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Crime Commission or the Commissioner of Police, which may place certain requirements or restrictions on that person if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the order would protect the public by preventing, restricting or disrupting the person's involvement in serious crime. Clauses 3 and 4 of the bill define specific words and expressions that are used in the proposed Act. The bill defines an eligible applicant to clarify that only the New South Wales Crime Commission, the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Commissioner of Police can apply to the appropriate court for a serious crime prevention order.

The definition of appropriate court clarifies that an order made post-conviction can only be made by the District or Supreme court and an order made pre-conviction can only be made by the Supreme Court. The term "serious criminal offence" has the same meaning as in the Criminal Assets Recovery Act 1990, which includes offences such as prescribed drug trafficking offences under the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 or an offence that is punishable by imprisonment for five years or more and involves theft, fraud, obtaining financial benefit from the crime of another, money laundering, extortion, violence, bribery, corruption, harbouring criminals, blackmail, or obtaining or offering a secret commission, as examples. The term "serious crime related activity" is defined to mean anything done by a person that was at the time a serious criminal offence whether or not the person has been charged with the offence or, if charged, whether or not the person has been tried, acquitted or convicted.

Clause 4 goes on to define when a person is "involved in serious crime related activity". This includes where the person has engaged in serious crime-related activity; or where the person has engaged in conduct that has facilitated or is likely to facilitate their own engagement in serious crime-related activity, or that of another person. Clause 5 enables the appropriate court, on the

application of an eligible applicant, to make a serious crime prevention order against a person aged 18 years or older, or against a corporation, if the court is satisfied that either the person has been convicted of a serious criminal offence, or the person has been involved in serious crime-related activity. The court, in making the order, must be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the making of the order would protect the public by preventing, restricting or disrupting involvement by the person in serious crime-related activities. Safeguards and procedural fairness have been preserved in these provisions.

The applicant must serve the order by means of personal service at least 14 days before the hearing date for the application. The person against whom a serious crime prevention order is sought, and any other person whose interests may be affected by the making of the order, can appear at the hearing of the application and make submissions to the court in relation to that application. Importantly, clause 5 (5) provides that the court may admit and take into account hearsay evidence if the court is satisfied that the evidence is from a reliable source and is of probative value.

However, the evidence must be served on the person against whom the order is sought prior to its admission in the hearing. Clause 6 outlines the requirements of a serious crime prevention order. An order can contain such prohibitions, restrictions, requirements and other provisions as the court considers appropriate for the purpose of protecting the public by preventing, restricting or disrupting the person's involvement in serious crime-related activities. This could include restrictions in relation to an individual's financial, property or business dealings or holdings, working arrangements, communication means, premises to which an individual has access, an individual's use of an item or an individual's travel.

The new Act provides for further safeguards for the person the subject of the order. Consistent with the United Kingdom scheme, clause 6 (2) specifies the kinds of provisions that a serious crime prevention order cannot contain, such as those requiring the person to answer questions or provide information orally or where the order requires the person to answer questions in writing or provide documents or other information that are subject to legal professional privilege. Clause 7 states that a serious crime prevention order commences when it is served on the person or on a later date specified in the order. For example, this allows an order to be served on a person when they are in custody but allows for greater flexibility in allowing the order to commence at a later date when a person is released. A serious crime prevention order cannot last for a period of more than five years.

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Nil turn.

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Clause 8 contains the offence provision. It is an offence to contravene the terms of the serious crime prevention order. The maximum penalty for the offence is 1,500 penalty units for a corporation, and 300 penalty units or five years imprisonment, or both, for a person. Clause 9 specifies that where a corporation is convicted of breaching an order, an application will be permitted to the Supreme Court to wind up the company. The Supreme Court may make an order to wind up a corporation where the court is satisfied that the corporation has been convicted of breaching the order, that there are no further avenues of appeal available to the corporation, and it is in the public interest and just and equitable for the corporation to be wound up. As required under the Corporations Agreement 2002, the New South Wales Government has obtained the relevant approvals to introduce this provision to displace the relevant provisions of the Corporations Act 2001.

Similarly, clause 10 enables an eligible applicant to apply to the Supreme Court for a compulsory dissolution order requiring the dissolution of a partnership where that partnership has been convicted of breaching a serious crime prevention order and it is in the public interest and just and equitable for the partnership to be dissolved. Clause 11 provides for a right of appeal against a decision of the relevant court in the making of a serious crime prevention order. Appeals can be made by the person the subject of the order and the applicant. The Act clarifies that an appeal lies as of right on a question of law and with leave on a question of fact.

Clause 12 enables the court that made a serious crime prevention order to vary or revoke the order at any time, either on the application of the applicant or the person the subject of the order. Part 3, clause 13 clarifies that proceedings for serious crime prevention orders are civil, meaning that the court must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities in determining whether to make an order. Finally, the New South Wales Government wants to ensure that these reforms operate effectively and for their intended purpose. Accordingly, the Act requires the Minister to review the Act after three years of its operation to determine whether the policy objectives of the Act remain valid. The findings will be tabled in Parliament.

I now turn to the detail of the Criminal Legislation Amendment (Organised Crime and Public Safety) Bill. Schedule 1 makes amendments to the Confiscation of Proceeds of Crime Act 1989 to enable the Supreme Court to make a forfeiture order in respect of property of a person convicted of a serious criminal offence in substitution for other property that the person used in or in connection with the offence if that property is not available for forfeiture. For example, this could occur where the convicted person used a car to commit an offence, however the car was owned by an innocent third party.

Schedule 2 amends the Crimes Act 1900 to recast the offence of dealing with property suspected of being proceeds of crime so as to adopt certain provisions of the corresponding offence in the Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995. The amendments create two levels of the offence of dealing with property suspected of being the proceeds of crime, with a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment if the property is valued under \$100,000 and five years imprisonment if valued at \$100,000 or more. The increased penalties will provide a strong deterrent to moving criminal proceeds, which is a significant enabler of organised crime.

Drawing on the provisions in the Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995, the amendments also provide for a non-exhaustive list of conduct and circumstances that can constitute reasonable grounds to suspect that property is the proceeds of crime. For example, this could include dealings that are structures to avoid certain reporting requirements, or dealings that involve using one or more accounts held in false names. Clause 2 of schedule 2 allows the section 193C offence to be the subject of an alternative verdict in the trial for an offence of money laundering in section 193B of the Crimes Act 1900. Schedule 2, clause 3 allows several contraventions of money laundering offences under Part 4AC of the Crimes Act 1900 to be combined in a single charge.

Schedule 3 amends the Criminal Assets Recovery Act 1990 to enhance the Crime Commission's assets confiscation powers and provide a stronger deterrent to committing serious crime. Organised criminals who use intermediaries to distance themselves from their crimes would be key targets of this legislation. Clauses 1 to 3 of schedule 3 insert new definitions into the Criminal Assets Recovery Act that are consequential to the amendments. For example, "serious crime use property" is taken to mean property that was used in or in connection with a serious crime-related activity. Schedule 3 clause 8 enables the Supreme Court to make a substituted serious crime use property declaration in respect of property of a person who engaged in serious crime-related activity if the property is unavailable for forfeiture. This means that where a criminal uses property owned by another person in the commission of a serious offence the bill will allow the court to make a "substitution order".

A substitution declaration can be made over property that is worth the same or less than the property used to commit the crime and, if practicable, property of the same kind as the property used to commit the crime. The bill clarifies that half of the value of goods confiscated from criminals as crime-used property under the Criminal Assets Recovery Act will be paid into the Victims Support Fund. Schedule 4 makes consequential amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to enable the new section 193C (1) and (2) offences of dealing with property suspected of being proceeds of crime in the Crimes Act 1900 to be dealt with summarily in certain cases.

Schedule 5 amends the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to enable a

senior police officer to make a public safety order to prohibit a person from being present at a public event or at premises or another area if the person's presence poses a serious risk to public safety or security. These provisions have been largely modelled on similar provisions in place in South Australia. The new proposed section 87R enables a senior police officer to issue a public safety order on a person or class of persons if they are satisfied that their presence at a public event or premises or other area poses a serious risk to public safety or security and the order is reasonably necessary in the circumstances to mitigate this risk.

In determining whether making a public safety order is reasonably necessary, the senior police officer may take into account certain matters, such as whether the place, which is the subject of the order, is a place of work at which the person is regularly employed, an education institution at which the person is enrolled, or a place of worship that the person regularly attends, for example. To limit the application of the powers, the police officer will also be required to take into account the nature of the person or group and any history of behaviour that previously gave rise to a serious risk to public safety.

Further safeguards have been incorporated into the bill to clarify that a public safety order must not be issued to prevent non-violent advocacy, protest or dissent, or industrial action. A public safety order also cannot be issued to prevent a person from entering their principal place of residence. Proposed section 87R (5) defines "serious risk to public safety or security" to mean that there is a serious risk that the presence of the person or persons might result in the death of or serious physical harm to a person, or serious damage to property. This is a high threshold test to ensure that the use of public safety orders will be appropriate in the circumstances.

Section 87R (6) defines "damage" as it relates to property to include destruction of property, alteration of property that depreciates its value, rendering the property useless or inoperative, and, in relation to an animal, injuring, wounding or killing the animal. New section 87S prescribes the requirements for the content and duration of a public safety order. The order must specify the public event or premises or other area to which it applies, and the person or class of persons to which it applies. A public safety order can last for no longer than 72 hours; however, where the order relates to an event that occurs over a period longer than 72 hours, the order would last for the duration of an event.

Safeguards have been included in proposed section 87R (4) to ensure that successive orders cannot be issued to circumvent the 72-hour limit; however, a public safety order may be issued for consecutive evenings, such as multiple Friday nights covering the same event. Section 87T prescribes the service and notification requirements for making or varying a public safety order. A senior police officer must personally serve a copy of the order made or varied on each person named in the order.

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The public safety order must be in writing and must also contain the reasons for making or varying the public safety order. However, this does not require the senior police officer to disclose any information that is considered to be criminal intelligence or other criminal information. If the person the subject of a public safety order is a child under the age of 18 years or has impaired intellectual functioning, proposed section 87T (2) requires the senior police officer to also serve a copy of the order on the person's parent or guardian, if it is reasonably practicable to do so. However, a failure to do so does not invalidate the order.

The bill also provides for a regulation-making power to provide for further safeguards for vulnerable persons who may be subject to a public safety order. The bill adopts the same definition of "vulnerable person" as the existing definition in the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002. However, proposed section 87T (6) also provides a mechanism for urgent public safety orders to be made. The provisions allow a senior police officer to make or vary a public safety order if satisfied that the order should become binding on the person as a matter of urgency. In this case, the senior police officer may verbally communicate the contents of the order to the person; however, a copy of the order and the required notification must be made available for collection by the person within 12 hours at a

police station reasonably accessible by the person.

Proposed section 87U provides for the variation and revocation of a public safety order. Provision is made for any senior police officer to vary or revoke a public safety order. However, an order that is originally made or varied by the Commissioner of Police can only be varied or revoked by the Commissioner. Proposed section 87U also requires the Commissioner of Police to revoke a public safety order if the commissioner becomes aware that the order was made in error, or if the grounds for making the order no longer exist. The relevant safeguards are still retained, whereby any variations to the order must be personally served.

Proposed division 3 outlines the appeals process for public safety orders. An appeal may only be made if the public safety order lasts for longer than 72 hours. Proposed section 87W clarifies that a person can appeal the making of, or a variation of, an order that lasts for more than 72 hours; however, the appeal must be made before the order ceases to be in force. The provisions also clarify that the appeal does not affect the operation of the order. Proposed section 87X provides for a mechanism for the Commissioner of Police to make an application to the Supreme Court to protect the disclosure of information that is considered to be criminal intelligence or other criminal information that has been used in connection with making or varying the public safety order. The Supreme Court may protect the disclosure of criminal intelligence information from the public and the person the subject of the order if the court considers that it is in the interests of justice to do so.

In making this decision, the court may take into account certain factors regarding the effect of the disclosure of such information, including whether it would have a prejudicial effect on the prevention, investigation or prosecution of an offence; whether it may reveal the existence or identity of a confidential source of information for law enforcement purposes; or whether the disclosure might endanger a person's life or safety. Proposed section 87Y clarifies that an appeal to the Supreme Court will consist of a merits review, which means that the court may take into account all relevant factual material and any applicable legislation or common law. Proposed section 87ZA prescribes the offence of contravening a public safety order, which carries a maximum penalty of five years. However, this offence may also be dealt with summarily in certain cases.

Proposed section 87ZB enables police officers to search premises or vehicle without a warrant if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the person to whom the public safety order applies is within those premises or vehicle. The police officer may detain a vehicle for as long as is reasonably necessary to conduct a search under this section. These reforms will commence on proclamation. Time for implementation of these changes is needed to ensure that all required systems are updated and relevant training and resources are in place for the police, judiciary and legal profession. These reforms are a priority and the Government will ensure they commence as soon as possible.

The reforms contained in these bills build on the New South Wales Government's existing reforms to target serious and organised crime, such as reforms to the consorting offence and firearms reforms, which have proved successful and are having a significant effect on numerous criminal groups. The measures contained in these bills provide law enforcement agencies with a more effective means of reducing serious and organised crime by targeting their business dealings and restricting their behaviour. The bills deliver on the New South Wales Government's election commitment to introduce tough new powers to give police the upper hand in the fight against organised crime. I commend the bills to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Guy Zangari and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Dominic Perrottet, read a first time and printed.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Hawkesbury—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) [3.56 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The bill amends the provisions of several Acts covering the functions of the Office of State Revenue relating to revenue and grants. The Government is committed to ensuring State taxes and grants apply fairly and equitably. The main purpose of the revenue reforms is to keep the tax legislation effective and up to date, as part of the routine administration of State taxation. This will improve equity by ensuring clients in similar circumstances have similar outcomes; combat actual and potential avoidance practices by ensuring clients are not able to avoid the policy intent of the legislation; and reduce red tape by removing uncertainty, increasing harmonisation with other States and Territories where possible, and improving administrative simplicity.

There are two Duties Act amendments in this category. Presently, multiple transfers are required to achieve a corporate reconstruction exemption where a custodian of a trustee of a managed fund is involved. This can be a breach of the Corporations Act. An amendment to the Duties Act will allow the exemption to apply where a custodian of a trustee of a managed fund is a party to the corporate reconstruction transaction. Also, the exemption relating to corporate consolidations, currently restricted to transfers, will be extended to apply to agreements to transfer as there are occasions when an agreement is required.

The bill amends the Land Tax Management Act 1956 to remove a restriction which prevents the exemption for land intended to be the owner's principal place of residence from applying until building work commences. Under the current provisions in clause 6 of schedule 1A of the Act, if the owner of an existing residence which is leased decides to use the house as his or her principal place of residence but needs to refurbish or rebuild the residence, the exemption for an intended principal place of residence applies from the date building or other works commence. In a small number of cases, a tenant may have vacated the property before the commencement of a new tax year but building work by the owner does not commence until the new tax year. In other cases, there can be significant delays in obtaining local council approvals. Consequently, the owner may not be eligible for the exemption for the first tax year after the tenant vacates the property.

The bill provides for the exemption to apply as soon as the tenant vacates the property. However, the owner will still be required to commence building work before the end of the first tax year, or take action necessary to permit such building work to commence, such as lodging a development application with the local council. There is no change to the requirement that the owner must commence use and occupation of the residence by the end of the fourth tax year and maintain such use and occupation for at least six months. If this requirement is not met, the exemption is retrospectively rescinded. The Payroll Tax Act 2007 currently provides an exemption for a wholly owned subsidiary established by a council to conduct council activities, provided the council requires the subsidiary to pay to the council an amount equivalent to the payroll tax that would otherwise be payable if no exemption applied.

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The bill extends this exemption to companies that have shares that are wholly owned by two or more councils. The bill amends the Taxation Administration Act 1996 to extend the circumstances in which interest is paid as a result of a successful objection or review. The amendment will authorise payment of interest at the market rate specified in part 5 of the Act to a member of a payroll tax group where a refund is made as a result of a successful objection by another member of the same group. The market rate is based on the 90-day bank bill rate published by the Reserve Bank and has varied between 2 per cent and 8 per cent per annum in recent years.

The bill contains amendments to the Unclaimed Money Act 1995 to improve the rights of owners

of unclaimed money to obtain refunds of their money and to reduce red tape. The reforms will treat small amounts paid by businesses to the Office of State Revenue [OSR] as unclaimed money. Companies often include amounts under \$100 in their returns to OSR, and 25,000 small payments were received in 2014-15. There is currently a six-year time limit within which owners of unclaimed money must lodge applications for return of the money to them. Currently, the OSR makes acts of grace payments where a late application is lodged. In the past three years there have been 422 acts of grace payments totalling \$2.4 million for claims lodged after the six-year time limit has expired.

The bill will remove the six-year time limit on applications for refunds. These amendments will reduce costs to businesses because they will not need to maintain records for these small amounts of unclaimed money once they have been paid to the Chief Commissioner. The amendment to the First Home Owner Grant (New Homes) Act 2000 ensures that applicants will be eligible for the grant on all "new" homes without the requirement that the sale is subject to GST. The bill includes a statute law amendment that is consequent upon the enactment of the Government Sector Employment Act 2013, which replaced the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Clayton Barr and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS STATEMENTS

ALBERT COLLINS 100TH BIRTHDAY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.02 p.m.]: Last week I had the honour of joining my good friend Albert Collins to celebrate his 100th birthday at Bankstown RSL Club. I take this opportunity to congratulate Bert—as he is known by almost everyone in the local community—on achieving this wonderful milestone and I will share his extraordinary life story with the Parliament. Bert was born on 11 March 1916. When you ask Bert what he attributes his longevity to he will respond in a friendly and quick-witted manner that his secret is his respectful outlook towards the people he comes across on a daily basis. Bert is a remarkable individual whom I have had the pleasure of knowing for the past 20 years. He is a fiercely proud and independent man, even at the grand age of 100.

For almost his entire life Bert has focused on advocating on behalf of others and fighting for a fair go, particularly with respect to disadvantaged employees in the workplace and most especially females employed within the retail sector. Bert is a life member of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association [SDA], having joined the union movement as a 15-year-old in 1931 when he began working at a Farmers department store, now better known as Myer. Bert is the longest-serving member of the SDA, having been a member for 85 consecutive years. That is quite extraordinary. For more than 50 of those years Bert was an SDA delegate. There is absolutely no doubt that Bert has been able to stand up and fight for the rights of a countless number of retail workers during his active involvement as a union delegate.

I remember Bert proudly attending many Labour Council meetings over the years at Trades Hall. Bert is also a proud veteran, having enlisted in the Australian Army on 5 August 1940. Bert served in the 37/52nd Australian Infantry Battalion in Papua New Guinea as a sergeant, where he led his regiment valiantly. Bert was also posted to the 76th Mobile Search Light Battery and served his country with distinction and honour during the Second World War before being discharged from duty on 1 December 1945. His association with the Armed Forces continues to this day, with Bert joining his local Bankstown RSL Sub-Branch on 17 November 1961.

Following his return from active service, Bert resumed working at the Farmers department store until his retirement 35 years ago. But retirement has not been able to stop Bert in his tracks. Bert is a master hobbyist at heart, with his steady hand and an artistic outlook. For many years he would masterfully construct doll's houses that he would donate to local charities and the children's hospital. I recall during my time as mayor of Bankstown Bert donated to a charity auction a wonderful doll's house, which went straight to our local hospital. Bert was recognised for his contributions to charity and the trade union movement in 2001 when he received the Centenary Medal, which commemorates individuals who have made a significant contribution to Australian society. That medal epitomises Bert's active involvement in the community, particularly towards assisting those who may need a helping hand. That is something Bert has never shied away from, even to this day.

For instance, Bert is still a very active member and treasurer of the Condell Park branch of the Australian Labor Party, which continues to be a great passion of his. Just last month Bert was a vocal opponent to the proposed forced merger between Bankstown and Canterbury councils at a public inquiry at Bankstown Sports Club. Age is merely a number that has been unable to slow Bert down. I am told Bert was quite the dancer during his more youthful days and he had a passion for the quickstep, foxtrot, Viennese waltz and Argentinian tango. In fact, Bert's passion for dancing led him to participate in the New South Wales ballroom dancing championships during the late 1940s. Bert eventually married his former ballroom dancing partner from that period, Patricia Harmon, in the late 1980s. Patricia was Bert's second wife and sadly passed away just seven years into their marriage.

Bert is warmly regarded and respected by his extended family, especially his second cousins, great nieces and great nephews. I sincerely thank Bert and his family for their warm invitation to attend his 100th birthday celebration, in particular his second cousin Lorraine. Many distinguished guests were able to attend Bert's birthday celebrations along with his extended friends and family, including from the Bankstown RSL Sub-Branch President Jack Bedford, OAM, and Secretary John Woodley, as well as Federal member for Blaxland the Hon. Jason Clare and Assistant Secretary of the SDA, Robert Tonkli. Mr Tonkli presented Bert with a plaque in recognition of his contribution to the union movement. Bert Collins continues to be a much-valued member of the Bankstown community. I wish him the very best for his centenary celebrations and thank him for his continued warm friendship.

RADIO 2AD ARMIDALE

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [5.07 p.m.]: This evening I share with the House the story of radio broadcasting in Armidale. Radio 2AD recently celebrated 80 years of broadcasting—a remarkable feat in this age of media downsizing and consolidation, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. Known as 2AD 1134, the radio station is unique in being the first radio station owned by a newspaper company. The managing director of the Northern Newspapers Limited and the Armidale Newspaper, Mr Ernest Sommerlad—better known in newspaper circles as E. C. Sommerlad, which is a name that remains linked to the Northern New South Wales newspaper business today—applied for a B class broadcasting licence for Armidale and Inverell in 1935. A licence for Armidale, to be known as station 2AD, and for Inverell, to be known as station 2LV, was granted.

Radio 2AD came into being just four years after ABC Radio's first broadcast. Radio 2AD is believed to be the fifth-oldest radio station in the State. The Armidale station was first welcomed into Armidale and district homes, cars and workplaces on Wednesday 5 February 1936 at 7.00 p.m. sharp. The first program was a selection of light orchestral music as a warm-up to the main event: the official opening by my predecessor the Hon. David Drummond, then member for Armidale and Minister for Education.

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The formalities were followed by a program of entertainment for the whole family. Band selections of Empire music, an exclusive program of uninterrupted tunes, a humorous interlude featuring Ronald Frankau, John Tilley, Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge, it was then *On with the Dance*, followed by

the more sombre reflections of a war-time pilot with John Creighton and the vocal gems of Donald Novis, then stepping back into old time memories. John Creighton then climbed out of the cockpit for 15 minutes of tranquillity tales, before the night drew to close with the obligatory *God Save the King*—I am sure the member for Liverpool will be very glad to hear that. What a night to remember! I am sure the people of Armidale would have been glued to their wirelesses that evening.

Over the past 80 years there has been a long list of managers at 2AD: John Creighton was the first in 1936; Peter Speight followed in 1937; Roy Leslie Blake in 1938; Ernest Stephen Tibbett took over for 12 months in 1952; Roy Vincent Brislan in 1953; Edward Charles (Ted) Wilkinson took over in 1971; George Stewart Arklay followed in 1978; Donald James (Don) Thomas followed in 1988; James Hepplewhite took over for a very short period in 2012; and the present incumbent, Steve McMillan, took over in 2012. In the success of Radio 2AD I would be remiss not to acknowledge Don Thomas and his 24 years as the face of that radio station. As well as working to keep the station on the air for more than a quarter of its life, Don ensured the past was recorded for history and compiled a wonderful catalogue of the history of broadcasting in Armidale. That has now been committed to cyber space, and I admit to incorporating a lot of the information from his treasure trove into this speech.

In the country radio held sway for many years, with live plays and shows from old masters such as the *Amateur Hour* keeping families enthralled long before *The X Factor*, *The Voice* and all that rubbish on reality television was invented. Radio serial plays were the *Neighbours* or the *Home and Away* of their time and Radio 2AD was full of them. In conclusion, I congratulate the staff of old and commend the staff of today—the manager, Steve McMillan; the sales team, Melissa Barton and Debbie Myhill; receptionist Tegan Taylor; office manager Gail Rogers; the journalist at the station, Tara Alford; and the announcers, Peter "Disco" Raymond, Michael Abbott and Karen Knight. Congratulations 2AD on 80 years of quality broadcasting and all the best for the next 80 years.

SYDNEY METRO NORTHWEST STATIONS

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [5.12 p.m.]: Recently the Department of Planning and Environment exhibited planning proposals for the precincts surrounding the stations to be constructed at Kellyville and Bella Vista as part of the Sydney Metro Northwest. Whilst these stations will be located just outside the boundary of my electorate of Riverstone, the planning precincts include parts of the suburbs of Stanhope Gardens and Glenwood within it. Like many of my constituents, I took the opportunity to make a submission to the department in relation to those proposals. The arrival of the Sydney Metro Northwest will be a great boon for the people of the region in improving access for work, education and recreation. But it is important that the planning of development associated with this major project be undertaken in a way that will protect the lifestyle and amenity of those who call the region home.

Whilst I understand the rationale for permitting greater density of development around railway stations, which is a sound principle in planning terms, my submission did not support or oppose the proposed rezoning of part of Stanhope Gardens. Rather, I focused on the conditions that would need to be met to make such an increase in density workable and acceptable to the existing and future community of the area. Stanhope Gardens is an attractive, well settled neighbourhood that currently provides a high level of amenity for its residents. This cannot be sacrificed in the process of allowing greater density of development in close proximity to the station. I also note that the area proposed for possible future rezoning is held in community title by 241 separate owners. The reality is that obtaining consent from these owners for redevelopment of land within the area under community title may be extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible. Their rights in this are a matter of both fact and law. Even so, it may be prudent to consider what conditions would be required to make an increase of density in the area acceptable to current and future residents should the necessary consent be obtained at some point in the future.

Prominent among these conditions are issues of traffic and access. The local streets in the proposed high density section of Stanhope Gardens are quite narrow. They will need to be widened and

land will need to be reclaimed from the areas being redeveloped to allow that to occur. In particular, Newbury Avenue will need to be widened to collector road standard and the intersection with Old Windsor Road enhanced to increase the flow of traffic both onto Old Windsor Road and across it towards the station. A pedestrian bridge over Old Windsor Road is an essential element in providing access to the new station. I note that such a bridge appeared on the exhibited traffic/access display poster but I could not locate it within the infrastructure schedule. It must be included.

Another major issue is that the properties of the people in the Newbury Estate section of Stanhope Gardens are held under community title, to which I alluded earlier. This issue will need to be resolved to the satisfaction of those landowners and no disadvantage borne by remaining residents if the redevelopment is to proceed. It will also be important to ensure that there is sufficient public open space provided for the increased residential population in the area. The Department of Planning and Environment needs to do a thorough assessment of the cumulative effects of increasing the number of dwellings along the rail corridor after the provision of various government services, which has been calculated on a given projection of population that now needs to be revised, is recalculated to meet that increased projection. For instance, I am acutely aware of the demand for school places in my electorate. Indeed, existing schools sites are under great pressure to accommodate the number of students already living in their catchment areas and whilst some schools have space for additional classrooms to be provided in future, several do not.

At Stanhope Gardens the nearest primary schools are Kellyville Ridge Public and Parklea Public schools. Both currently have enrolments that well and truly exceed their permanent design capacity. Such challenges need to be directly addressed if the proposed increases in density at various locations are to be approved. Some of the comments I have made in relation to Kellyville station precinct also relate to the Bella Vista station precinct. In particular, my comments about the cumulative effects of the increased populations along the rail corridor are equally applicable in this instance. A specific concern relating to the Glenwood area within the Bella Vista station precinct is that of the parking and the "kiss and drop" impacts that are likely to occur in areas close to the planned pedestrian bridge.

The pedestrian bridge is certainly warranted; it will mean that hundreds of local residents will not need to drive to the station. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to anticipate that there will be demand for parking nearby, as well as a desire for Glenwood residents to drop off family members near the bridge. It would be prudent to assume that these impacts will occur and to make provision for them in order to protect the amenity of the area for existing residents. The Metro Northwest project will bring many benefits to the region and I look forward to working with the Department of Planning and Environment to maximise these benefits for the constituents in my electorate of Riverstone.

FAIRFIELD HOSPITAL AND BRAESIDE HOSPITAL

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.17 p.m.]: Earlier this month I was delighted to attend a fundraising event to support the purchase of medical equipment for Fairfield and Braeside hospitals. These hospitals serve residents of the Fairfield local government area, which has approximately 195,000 residents, and also cater to surrounding areas. Each year at Fairfield Hospital some 34,000 patients go through the emergency department and more than 6,000 major operations are performed. I congratulate the hardworking doctors, nurses and staff who work incredibly long hours to look after those most in need.

I also thank the Vietnamese and Chinese communities in my local area for their efforts to assist Fairfield and Braeside hospitals and raise much-needed funds. The Chinese and Vietnamese communities want to give back. They are thankful for the opportunities that have been provided to them since their arrival in Australia in the mid 1970s and 1980s and wanted to show their appreciation by holding a charity night. At last count the local Vietnamese community had raised approximately \$70,000 and the Western Sydney Chinese community had raised more than \$75,000 at the charity night. What a phenomenal effort by both communities. I am blessed to live in and represent a community that is so

generous.

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I make special mention of Mr Henry Ngai and his wife Jenny Ngai, from ABC Tissue, for their generosity in personally donating more than \$50,000 to Fairfield Hospital. This is not the first time that Henry has made a generous contribution to the community and to Fairfield Hospital. Henry and Jenny visit Cambodia and mainland China annually to assist people with vision and hearing problems. Between 2011 and 2015 more than 40,000 sets of hearing aids have been donated by Henry and Jenny.

Mr Ngai's generous contribution will allow Fairfield Hospital to purchase four cardiotocography [CTG] monitors for antenatal monitoring and for women in labour. This will ensure that the baby's health is monitored during its mother's pregnancy. I am advised that the equipment will be used in the birthing unit, the antenatal clinic and the postnatal ward. The maternity ward at Fairfield Hospital is one of the busiest in New South Wales. Last year the hospital delivered 1,800 babies. Once again, congratulations to the Chinese and Vietnamese communities on their efforts in raising funds for Fairfield Hospital and Braeside Hospital.

MACLEAY VALLEY BUSINESS WOMEN'S NETWORK

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) [5.20 p.m.]: I acknowledge the Macleay Valley Business Women's Network. I was privileged to be part of an official ceremony last Friday evening in Kempsey to launch the 2016 calendar of events for the network but, more importantly, to celebrate the life members and the long-serving members of this wonderful organisation. At the outset I acknowledge the work of the president, Liz McPherson, and the secretary, Marilyn Breen, who have worked very hard to continue the good work and the good networking of this organisation.

Being part of the evening last Friday I sensed the collaboration of those women and the support that they give each other and I was privileged to be there. I also acknowledge that two Kempsey Shire councillors were in attendance, Councillor Sue McGinn and Councillor Betty Green, and they were also very supportive of the process. During the evening, life service awards were presented and I will quote some of what the recipients said. Tracy Brenton from Brenton Accounting said:

Being part of the network has meant a lot to me over the years. It's helped me feel connected and supported and I know there is always someone I can turn to for advice. The best part is the friendships I've made and being able to meet new people.

Liz Drinkwater from Australian Architectural Hardwoods—a fantastic company in Kempsey—said:

Joining the MRBWN was one of the best decisions I made during my time in the Macleay Valley. I wanted to meet people. I was working for Australian Architectural Hardwoods with 2 blokes in a concrete room attached to a sawmill. You can imagine my thrill at being in a room full of business women. Common ground instantly, and always something interesting to hear about. Over time friendships developed which have become strong and precious, that's been such a bonus. Thanks ladies. I'm retired now, living in Port Macquarie but will never lose my ties with women in the Macleay Valley.

Liz McPherson from Northern Nursery Supplies said:

I love doing business in Kempsey because of the relaxed pace of life. I have owned and operated Northern Nursery Supplies with my husband for the past 23 years. Originally from Melbourne, I find most people relaxed and down-to-earth and I'm passionate about attracting more people to the area. I enjoy working together with others who share that vision and that has been a great bonus of being part of the women's network.

Tania Powick from Australian Unity, who is also vice president of the Macleay Valley Business Women's Network, said:

The Business Women's network has provided me with a great opportunity over the years to meet a diverse range of business and professional women in the Macleay. As well as the networking aspect, I've especially enjoyed the chance to share information and updates on what is happening around the valley. There are so many people doing amazing things and it's great to hear their stories.

Leeanne Stewart from Midcoast Removals and Enterprise Training Company said:

As a working single mother of 2 children when I joined the network I needed to know that I was not the only person trying to juggle a career, family, sports commitments and remain sane. I remember I raced into a meeting, flustered and feeling my life was out of control, I would look around the room and think "I can do this", I'm not the only one trying to make it all work. As my children are all grown up and I am now a grandmother and businesswoman I still race into a meeting, flustered and feeling my life is out of control, but I look around the room and know "I can do this".

The women I have met have inspired me over the years. Their strength, their commitment to their business and their love of the Macleay Valley still has me in awe after all these years.

Trudi Wright from Creative Design Cabinet Making said:

Having previously been a nurse and midwife I arrived in Kempsey 12 years ago with a pre-schooler and a baby and found myself assisting my husband more and more within the business we were establishing here. When looking for advice it was suggested I join the Women's Network. At the time I was surprised as I did not see myself as a business woman. I felt like a fraud when I first attended but soon realised that I did belong in this network and that this was a safe, friendly and encouraging environment that accepted and nurtured me as I learnt to juggle the demands of family and business. I have been supported, mentored and I have connected with like-minded women.

I applaud her testimony as someone who did not think she was a business woman but she is absolutely essential to the Creative Design Cabinet Making business. Geraldine Yabsley from Dunns Cranes—a longstanding Kempsey business which has been incredibly busy with the construction of the Pacific Highway duplication work—said:

The Business Women's group offered me the opportunity to make lifelong friends and to learn from other business women's experiences.

It was a fantastic night and I applaud all those involved. I also want to highlight the work of some surf lifesavers this afternoon. My son was at training, getting ready for the Australian titles and he and two of his team mates participated in trying to save two people at the beach this afternoon. This is just a reminder of what a great movement Surf Life Saving is in giving people great experience and training to help people at times of crisis.

AHMADIYYA MUSLIM ASSOCIATION

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) [5.25 p.m.]: In recognition of Harmony Day yesterday I pay tribute this evening to my very good friends in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association. Members may be aware that the electorate of Londonderry is the very proud home of the Baitul Huda Mosque in Marsden Park, which is run by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association. Last year I was privileged to attend, along with many members of our community, the annual Ramadan dinner at the mosque, where leaders from many

religious groups addressed an enormous crowd on the topic of fasting in their religion.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim community pride themselves on promoting peace and harmony in the wider community. Opening up the mosque to community members, religious leaders and other groups to engage in meaningful discussion is a fantastic way to better promote tolerance, understanding and diversity. That is what Harmony Day is all about. It is about recognising that our differences are not so great that we cannot recognise there is strength in diversity.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim community can be found throughout Australia and its members live by the motto: "Love for all, hatred for none". The community promotes in its own words the values of residence, peace, tolerance, virtue and service to humanity. To this end, members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community actively engage in serving our community through holding regular interfaith meetings and peace symposiums, as well as volunteering in community events including blood donations, Clean Up Australia Day and the Red Shield Appeal. It is not surprising that the community also has a large presence in Western Sydney; Western Sydney is one of the most multicultural areas of New South Wales and that is something that we should celebrate.

I truly believe that multiculturalism is fundamental to the Australian identity and is very much a success story for many members of our community. Successful migrants who have come to our shores do so not to change the Australian way of life but because of it. Our proud multicultural communities are just one example of what our nation has to offer. I was very proud to sit in this place and see the first Muslim member of the Legislative Assembly give his inaugural speech last year. It is a sign that we must continue to push for more diversity, even in this place.

Tomorrow evening the member for Blacktown and I will be hosting a delegation of 50 members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association for a bipartisan discussion and a meal here in the Parliament. I want to particularly acknowledge the work that has gone into organising tomorrow evening's event, including the work done by Mizra Sharif and Mubasher Ahmed and the leadership of Imam Kauser. They have all contributed to ensuring the success of the evening. I pay particular tribute to Imam Kauser, who was congratulated in an article recently in the *Daily Telegraph* for his work in fighting radicalisation through community engagement, promoting Australian values and working with young people. I very much look forward to tomorrow's event and I congratulate the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association for all the work they do in our community.

Private members' statements concluded.

Pursuant to sessional order matter of public importance proceeded with.

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NATIONAL PLAYGROUP WEEK

Matter of Public Importance

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) [5.29 p.m.]: I am pleased to introduce to the House a matter of public importance on National Playgroup Week. I am pleased to do so not only in my capacity as shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education but as a parent of children who have experienced and enjoyed the benefits of playgroups. I think all parents and carers have had that moment when they think, "Okay, we have got our beautiful baby but what do we do now?" The first months of a baby's life can be an absolutely amazing time, but it can also be very isolating. Often the friendship groups and social interactions that were once part of one's life are no longer there, especially when it is the first child.

One of the activities that many parents and carers engage with once the initial fog of parenting lifts—which for people like me may be a couple of years—is the local playgroup. When I first moved to Port Stephens I was heavily pregnant, just two weeks away from having my third daughter, with a

three-year-old and a five-year-old in tow, living in a completely new community. My only friend who lived in the town sent me a message, and it was a message that made an enormous difference in my life. She told me about a playgroup that I just had to join. So I did, after I had had my beautiful third daughter.

It was a wonderful playgroup, informal yet gently structured; friendly but not bossy—children with enormous smiles and parents with big hearts. Dawn and David were the generous, kind and understanding facilitators. Whilst my kids created and played, I made great friends. Friends my children and I made at that playgroup are still our very dear friends today. This is what is happening in playgroups across New South Wales on a daily basis. Playgroups provide children with safe and creative learning spaces. They offer environments where children can develop social skills and resilience. They are strengthening communities and reducing disadvantage. They can be a source of information and referrals and the beginning of longstanding friendships for children and parents alike.

Importantly, playgroups also provide a pathway. When we talk about pathways in education it is often about the pathway into primary school or the transition from primary to high school, or from high school to employment or further education. But there is a pathway that is not often considered—the pathway into early childhood education. Playgroups play an important role in the years before school, offering an accessible, less confronting, first step or pathway into structured learning in a setting outside the home. As the shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education I will continue to talk about the importance of 15 hours a week of preschool education in the year before school. Currently, New South Wales is lagging behind all other States and Territories in children engaged in a preschool program for 15 hours or more in the year before school.

To improve children's preschool attendance rates, we must be looking at the barriers families face when making decisions about early childhood education. Cost is clearly a very big barrier in New South Wales, with New South Wales preschool fees being higher than in any other State or Territory in Australia. Until the New South Wales Government invests more money into the sector, I fear that these figures will not improve. In the meantime, playgroups offer an affordable and accessible option for many families, reducing the barriers to early education—an option that may or may not see children move into a preschool program, but an option that nevertheless provides children with a form of structured learning prior to school and experience in navigating the tricky social waters of childhood.

However, New South Wales also has the lowest level of playgroup attendance in the country, with attendances declining over the past decade. Statistics reveal that wealthier families are more likely to take their children to playgroup, as are parents of girls. Indigenous children and children from non-English speaking backgrounds are less likely to attend playgroups. With recent reports suggesting that children who do not attend playgroup are developmentally behind the children who do when they start school, with declining rates of attendances at playgroups in New South Wales and not enough children attending formal preschool educational programs in New South Wales, it is more important than ever to discuss the role of playgroups in making stronger communities.

National Playgroup Week is a time to recognise the importance of playgroups. It is being celebrated across the State this week, with parents gathering at Luna Park tomorrow to participate in the World's Biggest Playgroup Day, a fantastic event coordinated by Playgroup NSW. Other events to celebrate National Playgroup Week will also be held this week in Ballina, Batemans Bay, Wagga Wagga and Clarence Valley. I recognise the important work undertaken by Playgroup NSW, an organisation that has spent the last 40 years coordinating and supporting communities to host playgroups. Playgroup NSW is now responsible for the operation of more than 750 playgroups across New South Wales.

These playgroups include over 50 groups that are dedicated to families with particular needs. This includes the MyTime program for families where a child has a disability or developmental delay and PlayConnect for families where a child has autism spectrum disorder. To this day I remain very grateful to my good friend for encouraging me to attend our local playgroup. Our involvement in the playgroup had a significant positive impact on my family and me. National Playgroup Week is a time to recognise the many

positive impacts playgroups have had, and continue to have, on so many families across New South Wales.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.34 p.m.]: I speak to the matter of public importance on National Playgroup Week. Playgroups play an important role not only for the younger members of the community but also for those parents who use it as an opportunity to make new friends and to become more involved in their local communities. It is particularly important in rural New South Wales. The area that I represent, the electorate of Cootamundra, consists of many towns and small villages that are quite remote; the electorate comprises about 35,000 square kilometres and does not include any major cities.

It is often the case that a farmer or person living in town will meet someone from outside the district, often from a metropolitan area, and they fall in love. That person will then move to the country but may then feel quite isolated. This is a common story in my part of the world. The person gets married, has children but desperately needs social interaction and communication. This is where playgroups play an important role. The member for Port Stephens referred to preschools and other facilities that have playgroups attached. One that springs to mind is my old primary school, Berinba Public School at Yass, which has an amazing playgroup. A diverse number of parents and children from all walks of life attend that playgroup. It has a great Indigenous program, as do many other preschools across southern New South Wales.

Last Monday, 14 March 2016, I was pleased that Minister Leslie Williams visited my electorate and we toured three towns in the area. We visited Young preschool and met the great preschool coordinator, Angie Milne, who does a brilliant job. We had a great chat and also presented her with a cheque. We then travelled on to Morongla, a very small village that has a mobile preschool. The preschool operates only one day a week but it serves almost like a playgroup on some days as parents come in, meet each other, leave the children for a few hours and then come back later to pick them up. We then travelled to Cowra and saw Carinya Early Childhood Centre, another beautiful early childhood centre run capably by Susan Callahan.

It was an honour and a privilege to have the Minister in my electorate and I thank her for it and for the energy that she puts into early childhood education in New South Wales. There are great opportunities for children in New South Wales who are going through our preschool and early childhood systems. Obviously parents have a variety of different needs. For some playgroup is enough, for others, it will be the preschool system while for others it will be long day care, particularly for those who work in another town. In my area parents often have to drive 30 minutes to an hour to get to work and if someone starts at eight o'clock in the morning and finishes at five o'clock at night, long day care centres come into their own.

I speak from experience when I say that. Playgroups also provide an environment where it is safe for parents and children to meet and interact with other parents and children. Children develop and increase their social skills and they learn sharing and cooperation. They learn more about their world. The World's Biggest Playgroup Day is an opportunity for parents, children and carers to interact and enjoy a wonderful community-based program. I thank the member for Port Stephens for proposing this matter of importance about playgroups in New South Wales. I reinforce how important playgroups are in country communities.

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Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) [5.39 p.m.]: I thank the member for Port Stephens and the member for Cootamundra for their contributions to this matter of public importance. Last week I spoke in this House about Playgroup NSW, and the importance of its work in early intervention and prevention. Established 40 years ago, Playgroup NSW is the peak body for playgroups in our State. Why is National Playgroup Week so important? It is when we recognise that playgroups provide informal support to parents and children. These support networks will often last many years, helping families to get through

the various transition points and challenges of early childhood.

There are 60 special purpose playgroups operating under the umbrella of Playgroup NSW. These groups target the needs of children with disabilities, Aboriginal families, kinship carers and other groups. Playgroup is often the first experience children have of interacting with their peers. Playgroup is often the first learning environment children experience outside the home. Playgroups provide the ideal bridge between the home environment and more formal learning environments such as preschool and kindergarten. They are affordable, costing families a few dollars a week, and are accessible to most families. We know that the best time for children to learn is when they are under the age of five years, when they are undergoing rapid brain growth. Playgroup not only helps children and their parents to make friends; it also provides a wonderful opportunity for positive learning experiences.

In my electorate of Blue Mountains there are playgroups in many of the villages, including Mount Riverview, Lawson, Katoomba and Faulconbridge. I congratulate parents on supporting these groups in their voluntary roles as coordinators, teachers, organisers, cooks and cleaners. Parents provide many necessary hours and resources; they are the glue that ensures these groups are well-run, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities. Connect Child and Family Services was established in the Blue Mountains more than 30 years ago. Connect plays an important role in supporting a variety of playgroups for children with disabilities and their families. The Blue Mountains Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre [ACRC] in Katoomba runs a weekly playgroup for Aboriginal families, facilitated by ACRC's family support worker, Raylee Wall. The Blue Mountains Family Support Service runs playgroups in Blackheath and Mount Victoria, an initiative of manager Angelique Sasagi.

The coordinator of the Mountains Outreach Community Service playgroup, Jane Marshall, runs two generalist supported playgroups in Hazelbrook. Facilitator Sophie Corbett coordinates the Parenting Young Program, which provides an early intervention playgroup for young parents and their children. Parenting Young is a collaboration of health, educational and support services working together to meet the particular needs of young parents. Gateway Family Services operates the Lower Mountains Community Hub, where parents can have fun with their children, learn more about childhood development and find out about local services in an informal setting. I congratulate Playgroup NSW and all parents, volunteers, workers and organisations that ensure the success of playgroups in this State. Playgroups play a vital role in children's growth and development, and in the wellbeing of our communities.

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) [5.42 p.m.]: I thank the member for Cootamundra and the member for Blue Mountains for contributing to discussion on this matter of public importance, National Playgroup Week. I pass on my best wishes to the parents and guardians attending the World's Biggest Playgroup Day at Luna Park tomorrow. I am disappointed that I cannot be there with them to join in the fun. My best wishes go to parents attending any of the other celebrations of National Playgroup Week, even if it is just a piece of cake at their local playgroup. Those parents should be celebrating, because they are doing perhaps the most important thing that they can do for their children, and that is beginning their early childhood education.

I will end this discussion by revisiting the benefits of playgroups and other forms of early childhood education. There are many reasons why Government should value early childhood education in its varied forms. There are clear educational benefits, health benefits, social benefits and economic benefits. The education benefits are well known. Playgroups provide important social development and early learning skills that stay with children for life. The health benefits of early childhood education may not be so widely known, but they are no less important. Long-term studies have shown that children who attend quality early childhood education facilities are at significantly lower risk for serious cardiovascular and metabolic diseases such as stroke and diabetes. With health funding taking up an enormous amount of the State Government's budget, it is no wonder that the Government bottom line improves in areas that invest in the early years of a child's life.

The other economic benefits of these programs are often discussed in terms of getting the parents back to work and increasing workforce participation, but the children will learn more for having attended early childhood programs. Studies have shown that people from low-income families who received intervention through playgroups, preschools and other intervention models in their early childhood earn up to 25 per cent more in wages later in life than those who did not. For whichever of these reasons people choose, investment in early childhood programs is one of the best choices a government can make. After all, it is the little people who attend playgroups now who will become the caring, sharing and thoughtful contributors to our communities in the future.

Discussion concluded.

**THE HOUSE ADJOURNED, PURSUANT TO STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS, AT 5.45 P.M.
UNTIL
WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH 2016 AT 10.00 A.M.**
