

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday 3 April 2009

## ABSENCE OF THE SPEAKER AND THE DEPUTY-SPEAKER

**The Clerk** announced the absence of the Speaker and the Deputy-Speaker.

**The Assistant-Speaker (Ms Alison Megarrity)** took the Chair at 10.22 a.m.

**The Assistant-Speaker (Ms Alison Megarrity)** read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

## GARLING INQUIRY (CLINICIAN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL) BILL 2009

**Bill introduced on motion by Mrs Jillian Skinner.**

### Agreement in Principle

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.22 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The object of the bill is to establish a high-level independent clinician and community council to monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of recommendations of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in New South Wales Public Hospitals. The council will comprise qualified persons whom the Minister considers to have expertise in matters raised during the Garling inquiry and will include a medical practitioner, a nurse, other health professionals and community members. It will be important for the Minister to appoint persons who are respected by their peers and trusted by the community.

The council will not be subject to any ministerial control or direction. To be truly independent the council will report to the Parliament, not the Minister. It will report every six months for the next two years. That is the only way the public can be confident that the Government really is implementing the recommendations made following the inquiry conducted by Peter Garling. Let us face it: the New South Wales Labor Government is so addicted to half-truths, fudged figures and spin over substance that there is total distrust in its willingness, let alone its ability, to honestly report on implementation of the Garling reforms.

In considering this bill it is important to understand the background of the Garling reforms. The Special Commission of Inquiry into New South Wales Public Hospitals came about after months of pressure from me, other Coalition members of Parliament, doctors, patients and their families, and the media. The final straw was a call for an inquiry by the Deputy Coroner who found that the death of a 16-year-old Vanessa Anderson was a tragic and avoidable death. In delivering his findings, Magistrate Carl Milovanovich said:

It is almost impossible to avoid comment on the unfortunate repetition of the same systemic problems that continue to surface.

He called for a full and open inquiry into the delivery of health services in New South Wales. Mr Peter Garling spent 10 months gathering evidence through public hearings, submissions and private discussions. At the end of 2008, the Garling report was released. It warned that New South Wales Health was on the brink. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition agrees with the many experts who have welcomed key reforms recommended by Commissioner Garling, including his four pillars involving the establishment of agencies to undertake innovative clinical reform, to provide information independent of the bureaucracy, to increase safety and the quality of patient care, and to take charge of training over the next generation of clinicians. We agree that attention needs to be paid to getting doctors and nurses to wash their hands, to removing the indignity of forcing men and women to share wards, to insisting that doctors and nurses do ward rounds to discuss important information about individual patient care, and to issues like ensuring that patients better treated outside the hospital can be properly cared for in their homes.

With one or two exceptions, which we will respond to in coming months, the Coalition generally supports the 139 recommendations Mr Garling made, although as we outlined in our policy entitled

"Management of the New South Wales Health System—Making It Work", which was released last week, we believe that structural reform also is essential to provide local communities and clinicians with much greater control of their health services. We believe that to make it work we need to reform the management structure of the New South Wales public health system in a way that respects and involves doctors, nurses and other practitioners and gives them the best opportunity to excel for their patients.

We must empower local communities by giving them better information and genuine data and letting them have a real say in the public health system that is there to serve them. We need greater accountability for promised outcomes. It is about being honest. We must establish a truly independent information bureau to provide a real picture of what is happening in our hospitals. It is about putting patients first by removing huge, inefficient area health services as well as the 33 clusters below them, and creating a flatter administrative structure, based on approximately 20 districts that cover hospitals and other health services in a particular region. We will appoint boards to oversee the health districts comprising appropriately qualified local people so that local communities can have a say in health decisions made in the region.

We must rebuild the links between medical professionals and health management as well as the links between the various health specialists, including doctors, nurses, and other allied health professions. We will move administrators out of ivory towers and closer to the front-line health workforce. Our reforms will develop new networks linking medical experts across the system to assist in providing fairer access to health care, no matter where patients live. This will develop best practice in patient care across the State. We will reorganise management to deliver honesty, local clinical and community involvement, new cooperation, and quality care for patients in New South Wales.

Our Making it Work policy focuses on restoring the role of the clinician in the health system, giving doctors, nurses and allied health professionals a real say in how services are run. It specifically endorses the Garling proposal to extend existing networks of clinicians to coordinate and drive constant innovation across the whole system, and aims to engage the dedication of clinicians in designing new models of care and evidence-based best practice that can be monitored to track degree of success. Making it Work also adopts the Garling proposals to establish an independent information agency to report on budgets and how they are spent on patient care, including medical errors and infections—and how budgets are held up when bills are not paid on time. The policy also adopts the Garling proposal to appoint executive clinical directors to, among other things, improve the links between management and clinicians. Making it Work was developed in consultation with many clinicians across New South Wales, and the feedback has been extremely positive.

The Labor Government's formal response to Garling's recommendations, released on 30 March, claimed to have endorsed 134 of the 139 recommendations. However, the reality is that at least 55 of the 134 supposedly supported recommendations had strings attached. In some cases the Government's response says "supported" but then goes on, in the small print, to indicate that the Government will investigate further action, undertake further reviews, and often substantially delay implementation. In some cases the Government claims it is supporting a recommendation and then it changes the recommendation! An example is the response to Garling's recommendation 14, which suggests that the personal contribution and administration charge for all Isolated Patient Transport and Accommodation Assistance Scheme claims should be abolished. The Government responds, "Supported", but then in the small print it goes on to qualify that support by indicating that the abolition of the fee will apply only to pension and concession card holders. Yet, the Government has given itself a big tick for supposedly supporting this recommendation.

I urge all who are interested in these issues to go through the recommendations line by line and check exactly what the Government says it supports. The flaws in the Government response to the Garling report were picked up by *Sydney Morning Herald* medical editor Julie Robotham, who on 31 March 2009, wrote:

When the Government says it is supporting a recommendation, what it means is a little different from the way most people would understand the word.

According to the Premier, Nathan Rees, the Government has accepted 134 of 139 recommendations made by Peter Garling, SC, after his commission to reinvigorate the ailing health system. For example, the Government has "supported" the recommendation to create a clinical innovation and enhancement agency.

But that support does not mean the agency will come into being. It just means the idea will go through a further loop of review. "Consultation indicates that further consideration be given to this recommendation in relation to functions," the fine print of the Government's response notes.

This is critical, because Garling regards this agency as the first of his "four pillars of reform"—organisations that would re-empower clinicians, whose role in setting the health agenda has been sidelined.

Garling, after nearly a year embedded in the minutiae and the big picture of New South Wales Health, offered a blueprint to take it through to its next phase.

He gave detailed prescriptions for improvement, including timelines for their implementation.

Many of those have been ducked in favour of generalities and further reviews which may be conducted without the openness and unparalleled access to witnesses and documents that Garling was granted.

The editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of the same date expresses the view:

The State Government has done its very best to appear contrite in its response to the Garling inquiry into the New South Wales health system. Its carefully media-managed response, under the unctuous title *Caring Together*, relentlessly accentuates the positive; it almost succeeds in eliminating, or at least concealing, the negatives.

The Government also avoided structural reform necessary to address the concerns of senior health professionals who noted:

Commissioner Garling recommends that change should be driven by clinicians "from the bottom up", but does not adequately describe how this should happen.

As previously indicated, clinicians' distrust of the willingness of the Government and its bureaucracy to deliver is revealed in an *Australian Medical Journal* article of 18 January 2009, which reads:

Significantly, oversight of the reform process will be independent of the New South Wales Department of Health.

A wide range of experienced and well-respected health professionals has been pushing for this independent body to report directly to Parliament. Contrary to this, the Government has announced the appointment of an "advisory" council that will report to the Minister and the department, not the Parliament. The Government also announced that:

... an independent panel will be appointed by the Minister for Health to monitor the implementation process. Panel membership will include clinicians as well as people with expertise in culture change, systems information, trend analysis, and governance and administration.

This is the relevant part:

The independent panel will report to the Minister on the progress of implementation each six months for a period of three years.

The Government has announced that:

To provide a system-wide perspective, the Minister for Health will establish an independent Community and Clinicians Advisory Council to provide advice directly to the Minister for Health and the Director-General on the initiative underway and the work of the implementation teams.

The public response to this is as follows. An advisory council that reports to the Minister and the Department of Health will suffer the same fate as existing area health service advisory committees. Many committee members complain of being starved of accurate data, being kept in the dark about critical issues, used as a rubber stamp for Government decisions and, worst of all, silenced by being forced to sign confidentiality agreements. Is this the intention of the Government: to silence people who have been critical and outspoken by signing them up to confidentiality agreements because they have been put on this advisory committee? A longstanding member of one of these committees wrote to me:

... my frustration deepens by the day as the result of not being able to achieve any positive outcomes for the improvement of our decaying health system.

... we are "lame duck committees" put in place as a token gesture to justify the Government's claim to involve consumers in the system.

Then there are calls from clinicians. In a media release issued on 30 March 2009—just this week—the Hospital Reform Group wrote:

The key problem is the breakdown of working relations between health managers and clinicians, by which we mean all people who provide patient care in our public hospitals, including nurses, doctors, allied health professionals and clinical support staff.

The Hospital Reform Group welcomes creation of a new Clinician and Community Council to oversee implementation of Commissioner Garling's recommendations. The group proposes that the council would be chaired by an independent prominent citizen.

Membership would comprise nursing, medical and allied health professional representatives, and, most importantly, would include patient and community representatives.

This is the part that is particularly relevant to this debate:

The council would report directly to Parliament about implementation of reforms, patient safety and clinician engagement in public hospitals.

Following the issue of that press release I have been approached by a number of members of the Hospital Reform Group asking that I support their call for the council. Professor Kerry Goulston telephoned me, and after several conversations I drafted the proposal for this legislation. The intention to do so was confirmed when I read the article entitled "Doctors sceptical on hospitals shake-up" in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 1 April 2009, which reads:

The head of one of the State's busiest trauma centres warns that senior doctors have lost faith in the Government and remain highly cynical of its ability to overhaul the health system.

Valerie Malka, head of trauma at Westmead Hospital, said yesterday it was "no longer possible to trust the Government" after it had neglected the system for 10 years despite constant pleas from clinicians and nurses.

We were so grateful for the Garling report but when John Della Bosca says he is going to implement 134 of the 139 recommendations it is really hard to believe what the Government says, Ms Malka said.

The Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, promised to establish an independent advisory council that would report on the activities of expert teams charged with improving standards of health-care and raising flagging staff morale.

But the council would be answerable only to the minister and the director-general of health, Debora Picone, with no obligation to make its findings public.

As well, an independent panel would monitor overall progress. But it would report only to the minister. A spokesman for Mr Della Bosca said direct reporting would allow him to "respond to any arising issues rapidly". The Government had "yet to finalise the composition of the panel and the council".

Dr Clare Skinner—

she is no relation but she is a fine young doctor—

a member of the Hospital Reform Group of doctors working in the public system, said it was "vitally important this [monitoring] process is as transparent as possible". Direct reporting to Parliament would be positive.

That article ended by reporting that I proposed to introduce this private member's bill to create an alternative committee of clinicians and community representatives that reports to Parliament on reforms ranging from anti-bullying programs to schemes to reduce hospital infections. I have been contacted by many people, including clinicians and community members, thanking me for doing so. Typical is the email I received yesterday from Dr Simon Leslie, the subject of appendix 8 in the Garling report, which is the section that deals with the revelation that Shellharbour Hospital had set up virtual beds and then punished the doctor who dared to tell Commissioner Garling about them. Dr Leslie said:

Thank you for supporting the principle of a representative clinical and community council reporting directly to parliament on health reform. After all we are just trying to improve health care. My best wishes for a bipartisan approach on this.

Thank you, Dr Leslie. I sincerely hope that, for all those who yearn for real reforms to the New South Wales health system that restore clinician and community involvement and put patients first, this important legislation receives the bipartisan support it deserves.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mrs Karen Paluzzano and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Diane Beamer):** There being no Government Business Orders of the Day, the House will now proceed to Orders of the Day (Committee Reports).

#### **COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION**

**Report: Report on an Inquiry into Early Intervention Systems in the NSW Police Force**

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

**Mr KERRY HICKEY** (Cessnock) [10.42 a.m.]: I am pleased to report to the House on the inquiry of the Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission into early intervention

systems in the New South Wales Police Force. Early intervention systems are risk management tools that work on the principle that prevention is better than cure. They identify any signs of behavioural problems in individual police officers and intervene before those problems become misconduct. Early intervention systems are not disciplinary in nature and use counselling, peer support and further training to address problem behaviours. Members will recall the 2002 report by the previous committee on trends in police corruption, which recommended the establishment of an early intervention system to identify and assist police officers at risk.

Since then, despite a commitment to the identification and management of risk by the Police Force, there have been a number of false starts in developing an early intervention system. This report—the committee's second and more formal report—which looks at an early intervention system for the New South Wales Police Force, has been a positive experience, finding significant progress towards implementation. The committee's inquiry revealed the significant benefits of an early intervention system [EIS] for all levels of the force. Supervisors will benefit by having access to data on the performance of their officers that will enable them to identify problem behaviour before it can escalate into misconduct. They will benefit also from the support of an organisational framework that promotes early intervention through remedial action rather than disciplinary measures. Individual officers will benefit by reducing the likelihood of career-threatening risks through a supportive, objective and transparent process for addressing problematic behaviour.

The New South Wales Police Force will benefit as an organisation because an effective early intervention system can strengthen accountability processes and further build integrity within the force. The police oversight of agencies will benefit because of the provision of enhanced data on policing activity and a reduction in problem behaviour or misconduct, and the taxpayer will benefit because an early intervention system will mean a reduction in costs through fewer complaints and increased corruption resistance; retention of staff and increased productivity, leading to better service delivery; and improvement in public confidence in the Police Force. Accordingly, the committee's recommendations are the swift adoption of an early intervention system for the New South Wales Police Force; and the continued use of a multiagency approach to its development, implementation and future evaluation, especially by the Police Integrity Commission and the Ombudsman in their police oversight roles.

The committee has also recommended a periodic review of the early intervention system, including the indicators, by the New South Wales Police Force to test its effectiveness; that the development of an early intervention system for the New South Wales Police Force be given budgetary priority; and that the early intervention system is compliant with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 and all other relevant legislation. In conclusion, I thank my colleagues on the committee—the member for Coogee, the member for Tamworth, the member for Cronulla, Lynda Voltz, Charlie Lynn and Sylvia Hale—for their participation and their contribution to the reporting process. The committee's report is a consensus document that represents the bipartisan and constructive approach adopted by members of the committee throughout the inquiry. I commend the committee's "Report on an Inquiry into Early Intervention Systems in the NSW Police Force" to the House.

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

**Report noted.**

#### **COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION**

##### **Report: Report on the Ninth General Meeting with the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission**

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

**Mr KERRY HICKEY** (Cessnock) [10.46 a.m.]: The report of the Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission on the ninth general meeting with the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission discusses a number of important issues that have arisen in part from the inspector's annual report for 2007-08 but also as a result of correspondence the committee has exchanged with the inspector over the past 12 months. This correspondence concerned the scope of the inspector's legislative power under the Police Integrity Commission Act to publish certain of his complaint reports. This issue is central to oversight of the commission. The inspector believes that as the legislation now stands he is not able to publish his complaint reports. The previous Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission [PIC], the Hon. James Wood, was of the same opinion, and advice from the Crown Solicitor also supports the view of Inspector Moss.

After careful consideration the committee has therefore recommended legislative amendment to put the inspector's capacity to report on complaints beyond doubt. The committee agrees with the inspector that his reports that uphold substantial complaints against the Police Integrity Commission should be in the public domain so that the commission is seen to be publicly accountable. Equally as important, the inspector should be able to publish a complaint report where he has found in favour of the Police Integrity Commission in relation to a serious complaint. The committee sees the inspector's work as vital to ensuring the proper functioning of the Police Integrity Commission, and as playing an important complementary role to that of the committee. The general meetings with the inspector are an opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concern on a regular basis and they greatly assist the committee in its oversight of the commission. I thank the members of the committee for their participation in the general meeting and their contribution to the reporting process. I commend the report to the House.

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

**Report noted.**

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

##### **Report: Review of the 2007-2008 Annual Report of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption**

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

**Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI** (Maitland) [10.50 a.m.]: I speak to the "Review of the 2007-2008 Annual Report of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption". In particular, I will make some observations on the comments made by Mr Graham Kelly, the former Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, on the definition of "corrupt conduct". His Honour Harvey Cooper, AM, has now replaced Mr Kelly as Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Mr Kelly used the opportunity to relay to the committee certain observations and comments about his time as inspector and the things he considered needed changing, one of which is the definition of "corrupt conduct". Section 8 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 lists the types of conduct that fall within the definition of "corrupt conduct". Section 9 of the Act limits the nature of corrupt conduct to matters that would constitute a criminal offence, a disciplinary offence or, in the case of members of Parliament, a substantial breach of the code of conduct.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption receives approximately 2,300 complaints each year. Approximately one-third of those complaints relate to local government matters and, in accordance with the definition of "corrupt conduct", the Independent Commission Against Corruption pursues around 3 per cent of those complaints. The balancing act is between the resources available to the commission and its duty to pursue allegations of corrupt conduct. Mr Kelly considers that the definition should be narrowed so that only serious and systemic matters are pursued, and that trivial matters should not longer be pursued. Mr Kelly rightly drew attention to lack of evidence and non-compliance with section 12A of the Act, the benchmark of which is serious and systemic corrupt conduct, which the commission investigates. In narrowing the definition he suggested it should not apply to matters that would wholly constitute a disciplinary offence. He suggested a two-tiered system: one benchmark assessment for public servants who made allegations of corrupt conduct and another benchmark assessment for members of the public. Mr Kelly further suggested such reforms would do away with trivial complaints being reported to the commission.

The powers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption are substantial. The commission serves a very important function: to root out corruption in the public service. It is the view of the committee—and very appropriately—that the definition of "corrupt conduct" should not be narrowed. People with complaints do not necessarily read section 8 or section 9 of the Act and say, "My problem does not fall into that legal definition so I will not report it." It does not work that way. There is a very good reason for the broad criteria in sections 8 and 9 of the Act: all people who suspect any kind of wrongdoing in the public service, be they people who contract with the public service or members of the public who make observations of the public service, should be able to put in a report in accordance with section 10 of the Act; and people who work in the public service—public authorities or heads of public authorities—also should be able to put in a report in accordance with section 11 for the commission to consider.

Section 12A of the Act specifically directs the Independent Commission Against Corruption to look at systemic and/or serious conduct. That filtering process is within the Independent Commission Against

Corruption. The commission uses the filtering process to direct resources to the matters it considers should be investigated. It is the view of the committee that the present system is appropriate, although there may be some room for simplifying the definition without taking away any of that discretion. Members would be aware that Bruce McClintock, SC, carried out a comprehensive review of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act in 2005. Mr McClintock, who received quite a few submissions and comprehensively considered the definition of "corrupt conduct", came to the view that it should be left as it is. Members should take note of that because Mr McClintock, an esteemed senior counsel, looked closely at the definition but could not devise a way to change it for the better. In the committee's view if the definition is to be changed, the change would have to constitute an improvement.

With all due respect to Mr Kelly, who has done a fine job as the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the committee is not of the view that the narrowing of the definition of "corrupt conduct" would in any way reduce the number of allegations the commission receives. It is not a matter for the public to determine what constitutes corrupt conduct. It is the duty of the public or public servants to report what they think are matters of wrongdoing. It is not for members of the public or public servants to work out whether something meets a definition, or whether it is a disciplinary or criminal matter or any other kind of matter. It is a matter for the commission to apply the filtering process, to apply the definition and its resources to determine whether it will pursue an allegation of corrupt conduct, similar to the way in which the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions operates when it receives a brief from the police. The Director of Public Prosecutions has to follow guidelines when deciding whether to pursue a prosecution. One criterion of those guidelines is a reasonable prospect of conviction. If the prosecution does not consider that there is a reasonable prospect of conviction then the matter is not pursued. Those guidelines are freely and publicly available, as are the guidelines of the commission.

I place on record the thanks of the committee to Mr Kelly for his tireless work as the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption over the past three years, for setting up the office and for attending to all the administrative matters. The committee also values Mr Kelly's comments, but changing the definition of "corrupt conduct" is not a new issue; it has been ongoing. I believe, however, as the chair of the committee—and I am supported by at least most committee members—that the definition of "corrupt conduct" should not remove the requirement of a disciplinary offence, it should not be placed into tiers, and it should not be narrowed in the hope that it will reduce the number of complaints. Later in the year the committee intends to conduct a 20-year review of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. No doubt at that time it will look at the definition of "corrupt conduct" and receive the views of various stakeholders. As it stands, the committee does not agree with the suggestions put forward by Mr Kelly about any reforms on that front. Other than that, the remainder of the final report of Mr Kelly is there for members to see. I commend the report to the House.

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

**Report noted.**

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

##### **Report: Review of Special Reports Tabled in 2008 by the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption**

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

**Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI** (Maitland) [10.57 a.m.]: I speak to the review of special reports tabled in 2008 to the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, a report I tabled earlier in the year. It relates to a complaint referred to Mr Kelly, the former Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, by the committee. The complaint concerned a former member of the upper House, the Hon. Peter Breen. The Independent Commission Against Corruption executed a search warrant on the parliamentary office of the Hon. Peter Breen. The commission did not find any corruption on the part of the Hon. Peter Breen as a result of the execution of that warrant. The complaint was in connection with an investigation of allegations of improper use of parliamentary allowances. Inspector Kelly duly prepared the Breen report.

I refer to one particular area of the report that is now common to both the Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission and the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption—namely, the reporting provisions contained in sections 77A and 77B of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. Section 77A allows the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against

Corruption to report to the Parliament under the heading of "special report", which is made up of two parts: first, special reports relating to any matters affecting the commission, including its operational effectiveness or needs; and, second, any administrative or general policy matter relating to the functions of the inspector.

Inspector Kelly published the report, which was tabled in Parliament under that section. An issue of concern both to the Police Integrity Commission inspector as well as the former Independent Commission Against Corruption inspector is their power to publish complaint reports—that is, whether an inspector has the power or authority to publish reports following complaints received from either committees or members of the public about the Independent Commission Against Corruption or the Police Integrity Commission. That issue must be resolved because according to the opinion of both inspectors—section 77A is identical in the Police Integrity Commission Act and the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, or any other part of the respective Acts—there is now power to publish reports.

In my view it is arguable whether this provision really intended that the inspectors publish complaint reports. It is arguable that this section relates to reports that the inspectors can have published in Parliament, but underlying systemic issues relating to the operational effectiveness of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Ombudsman or the Police Integrity Commission do not enable the inspectors to publish those reports. I understand that inspectors of both agencies have asked and requested the power to be able simply to publish those reports or complaints without having to go through Parliament. The committee believes it is appropriate that any report issued by the inspectors should be tabled in Parliament with all the immunities and privileges, and then released.

It is a matter for Parliament whether the inspectors' reports of complaints are published. The inspector receives many reports from people about the effectiveness of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Inspectors pursue matters of complaint against the commission, and are the watchers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. They deal with the people who make the report and with the commission to try to resolve the complaint. For example, if someone complains about the overuse of powers or a search warrant by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the inspector has the authority to investigate the commission and report to the complainant. The issue is whether Parliament ever intended for the inspector to publish those reports. It could be argued that Parliament never intended for that to happen under that section. If inspectors want to report on specific complaints—for example, if it is in the public interest to do so such as in the Breen matter, which produced a substantial report covering parliamentary privilege and the execution of search warrants on the offices of members—my view as chair, and the committee's view, is that it should be made clear in the legislation.

It would remove any uncertainty as to whether inspectors are able to publish complaint reports or just deal with the complainant and the individual agency and publish only their reports if systemic matters arise—for example, whether Parliament should be told of a systemic problem within the Independent Commission Against Corruption and its operational effectiveness. I am not sure whether it was ever intended that Parliament know about every single matter that was pursued by an inspector. Those matters are common to the Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and Police Integrity Commission, of which the member for Cessnock is the chair, and the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

I understand that the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission recently published a report under section 77A. I do not know whether that will resolve the matter. Section 77A should be looked at. The committee intends to look at the reporting provisions in its upcoming review to see whether that section should be changed to create more certainty as to whether inspectors of both agencies can publish reports of complaints—sizable complaints as in the Breen matter. I reaffirm my opposition to allowing inspectors to publish reports without going through the parliamentary process. My view as chair is that bypassing Parliament will not be in the public interest. Parliament should know what the inspector is doing and what reports are coming out of his office. No doubt those matters will be looked at in due course.

In relation to the definition of "maladministration" in section 57B of the Act, the inspector did not find that the Independent Commission Against Corruption was caught by maladministration; he found there was a rush of blood to the heads of the officers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. They went ahead and procured this search warrant without considering parliamentary privilege and without properly assessing the facts contained in the application for that warrant. The inspector fell short of determining that it was an intentional error and did not find maladministration. As I recall his evidence, the inspector said that the definition of "maladministration" in the Act was very technical. He specifically said in the report that due to the nature of the definition of "maladministration" in the Act he could not find that the Independent Commission Against Corruption was guilty of maladministration.



The committee will look at that definition and consider whether the definition in the Ombudsman's Act is more appropriate to apply to these matters than the present definition in the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. The view of the committee is that if maladministration is likely to have occurred the inspector should not be constrained in making that finding because of the section being too technical, for example. The committee will look at those two matters that arose as a result of the Breen report to see how the legislation might be improved. I thank all members of the committee for their assistance in the preparation of the two reports. It goes without saying that I thank all the staff and the secretariat of the Independent Commission Against Corruption committee, which is dealing with a number of matters simultaneously these days. I thank them for their tireless effort, which makes the job very easy.

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

**Report noted.**

## **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 4 of 2009**

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

**Mr ALLAN SHEARAN** (Londonderry) [11.07 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak to the Legislation Review Digest Report No. 4, dated 31 March 2009. This digest examined six bills in total. The bills considered in this report included the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2009, the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Bill 2009, the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, the Industrial Relations Amendment (Jurisdiction of Industrial Relations Commission) Bill 2009, the Real Property and Conveyancing Legislation Amendment Bill 2009, and the Surveillance Devices Amendment (Validation) Bill 2009. One of the concerns raised in this digest was compensation in the context of the Real Property and Conveyancing Legislation Amendment Bill 2009.

The committee acknowledges that while the agreement in principle speech stated that "the amendments this bill proposes are intended to encourage due diligence in mortgagees' loan approval practices", the committee is concerned with the broad scope of proposed section 129 (2) (n) of schedule 1 [14] to amend the Real Property Act 1900, where it is proposed that the loss or damage arising from the improper exercise of a power of sale will be added to the list of circumstances for which compensation will not be payable from the Torrens Assurance Fund.

The committee is concerned that a mortgagor's interests may be trespassed upon if the right to compensation may not be adequately protected under proposed section 129 (2) (n), such as in instances where a mortgagee has breached the duty owed to the mortgagor and has improperly exercised a power of sale that involves conduct that is more than mere negligence but less than actual fraud. The other major issue of concern related to retrospectivity arising from the Surveillance Devices Amendment (Validation) Bill 2009. This bill retrospectively approves warrants granted between 3 March 2008 and 7 March 2008 under the Listening Devices Act 1984 when the declaration had not been in force to declare a particular judge to be an eligible judge for the purposes of the Act to grant such listening device warrants. While it may be in the public interest to validate a judge's authority, the committee will always be concerned where the law is changed retrospectively in a manner that may adversely affect any person.

I was particularly pleased to see the introduction of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Bill 2009, and I made comments during debate on the bill. A most pleasing aspect of the bill is that it was the culmination of many years of lobbying by many people and organisations. In this regard, I was very pleased that those years of lobbying had finally come to some success. Again, the committee has made mention of the issue of commencement by proclamation. Whilst noting that there may be good reasons why such discretion is required—such as, allowing time for appropriate administrative arrangements to be made—the committee emphasises that the committee has concerns about commencement by proclamation and asks the Parliament to consider whether a bill commencing by proclamation rather than on assent is an inappropriate delegation of legislative power.

I now turn briefly to comments relating to the reported issue of the commencement by proclamation that were made by the member for Davidson, Mr Jonathon O'Dea, and the member for Wagga Wagga, Mr Daryl Maguire, during last Friday's take-note debate in this Chamber. The member for Davidson, the member for Wagga Wagga and other members would be interested to learn that late last year the committee resolved to

write to the Premier on the potential for the adoption of practice in respect of explanatory materials and explanatory memoranda accompanying bills. On behalf of the committee I wrote to the Premier about adopting a practice to encourage the inclusion of helpful information and explanation in the explanatory note for provisions or in the explanatory memoranda that accompanies the introduction of future bills. This would apply particularly when dealing with issues such as commencement by proclamation, as well as other recurring matters of concern that have been reported in the committee's digest reports, such as strict liability and retrospectivity. My inquiries with the Department of Premier and Cabinet indicate that the matter is currently under active consideration.

I have spoken on many occasions about the functions of the committee in accordance with our terms of reference, as outlined in sections 8A and 9 of the Legislation Review Act 1987. Importantly, I have made mention of the digests as a source of information for members and, in some ways, a tool of education about issues that should be borne in mind when members deliberate upon bills and regulations. At this opportune moment I am delighted to point out to the member for Davidson and the member for Wagga Wagga that the committee has acknowledged in this digest report that the Minister's agreement in principle speech to the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 has provided an explanation as to why schedule 1.5 of the proposed amendments to section 177 of the Medical Practice Act 1992 will commence on proclamation, rather than on assent.

The committee welcomes information and explanation as to why discretion is needed for a bill's commencement on proclamation accompanying the introduction of the bill. The committee accepts that a good reason has been offered why such discretion is required for the bill's commencement on proclamation. In this case, there is a need to develop a code of conduct on the use of legal practitioners in proceedings before the Professional Standards Committee. It would seem that the committee's comments on such matters are being acknowledged by Ministers. I am pleased to refer Legislation Review Digest No. 4 of 2009 to members to assist them in their contributions in debate on the bills presented and to inform them of any issues of concern relating to trespasses upon individual rights and liberties.

**Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD** (Hornsby) [11.14 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 4 of 2009", dated 31 March 2009. I acknowledge the contribution of the chair of the committee and thank the members and secretariat of this hardworking committee. I applaud the publication this week of the Legislation Review Committee's "Little Yellow Book". The publication was made in a timely fashion, as we did not meet until Tuesday of this week. It has been of assistance to be able to refer to this publication in 3-D and to have the software on our computers. The legislation reviewed by the committee was diverse and involved matters relating to finance, the environment, health, industrial relations and lands and matters associated with the Attorney General.

As the member for Londonderry noted, I too appreciated the ability to comment on the Hawkesbury-Nepean River Bill 2009. I listened intently to all the contributions and learnt a great deal about the history of the formation of the Office of the Hawkesbury-Nepean. This background information is of assistance to me in my responsibility for this area as the member for Hornsby. I welcome the explanation provided by the chair of the committee for a bill's commencement on proclamation. It demonstrates that the committee in a non-partisan fashion examines the legislation and holds open discussions about any concerns relating to any piece of legislation.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga) [11.17 a.m.]: I want to speak on the Legislation Review Committee's report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 4 of 2009" and comment on the contribution made by the chairperson of the committee. I have taken every opportunity to encourage the committee to provide in its report to Parliament greater transparency of legislation. Last week I raised a number of issues, to which the chairperson has responded. The members appreciate his response. That is the type of dialogue we seek when dealing with complex legislation that comes before the House. I note that the committee chairperson said he had written to the Premier seeking correspondence detailing the reasons for decisions.

I understand that correspondence was sent sometime last year. I am concerned that the Premier and the Government have not seen fit to respond. I believe the chairperson will take action to try to ensure that a response is given to his request. If the Government does not respond, I am prepared to move a motion in the House that calls on the Government to respond to the chairperson's request. The committee holds a very responsible position in this House. Members rely on the committee's discussions and digest reports to help us form an opinion on important legislation that affects the people of New South Wales.

The Premier and the Government should respond to the request in a reasonable fashion so that we have the relevant information to assist us in our decisions. On behalf of all members, I thank the chairperson for taking up the issue with the Premier and the Government. I would urge the Premier when he reads *Hansard* at a later hour to ensure that a response is delivered to the chairman and that it is printed in the digest in the form of attachments. If that does not happen, I am sure the members of the Legislation Review Committee and members of the House would be more than happy to debate a motion calling on the Government to respond to the chairman's request.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson) [11.20 a.m.]: I was listening to the debate upstairs. It is always nice to acknowledge when somebody makes a special effort, and I thank the chairman of the committee for making a special effort to respond to the member for Wagga Wagga and to me. I acknowledge that the matter I raised of the proclamation date has been recognised by the Government and I look forward to future Ministers and parliamentary secretaries adhering, in the same way as the member for Londonderry did in his speech on the health administration bill, to the rationale for bringing forward the date to proclamation rather than on assent. Again, I put on record my thanks to the chairman of the committee for his hard work.

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

**Report noted.**

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Diane Beamer):** Order! Consideration of Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) having concluded, the House will now proceed to private members' statements.

#### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Question—That private members' statements be noted—proposed.**

#### **TAREE AIRPORT**

**Mr JOHN TURNER** (Myall Lakes) [11.23 a.m.]: I wish to speak about the impending closure of Taree airport. Taree airport is owned by the Greater Taree City Council, which has advised me that it is preparing for the likely closure of the airport to commercial operations, including Rex airlines and air ambulance services. The airport is critical to Taree's economic wellbeing. The mid North Coast development strategy noted that Taree was one of the four major regional centres on the mid North Coast from the Clarence to the Great Lakes. The problem with the airport is that it is in disrepair; it is constantly being patched and has a chequerboard appearance. Following rainfall in recent days, \$50,000 has been spent on patching it. It is beyond economic feasibility to continue patching, and the estimated cost of fixing it, following a geotechnical survey in 2008, is about \$4.5 million. At present a person goes out to the strip every day to check it and do running repairs. It is time for the strip to be redone, and obviously it is beyond the capability of the council to do it.

I believe that this is a matter that should receive Federal Government funding. I will be asking the New South Wales Minister for Transport to see what can be done directly through his department or through support that he might be able to give to the council seeking Federal Government funding for the upgrade. The council has already lodged applications under the Federal Government's Regional Community Local Infrastructure Program and the Regional Partnerships Program under the former Government, but unfortunately was unsuccessful in those applications. If the airport closes, the 26,000 passengers who presently use the Rex airlines service will obviously be disadvantaged. I regret to say that we have always had a fight to keep an airline service in the Taree area—it is marginal at best—and I believe that if it closes that could be the end of it for all time, so it is vitally important that the airport is kept open. It is not only vital that it be kept open for commercial operations; the council is trying to set up an aviation business centre at the airport. I congratulate the council and Chris Ryan, its economic development manager, on that program, but if there is no airport there will no possibility to run that business.

Presently using the runway are Rex airlines and the regional passenger transport service—26,000 passengers—and the council has kept its landing fees artificially low to encourage Rex to come in, charging \$5 per passenger, so it has tried to do the right thing. There would be a loss of the air ambulance service, two to five flights per day; loss of three airfreight companies; and loss of jobs through businesses that rely on the airport, such as the medical and legal professions. I know when I am travelling I am always on a plane with a doctor servicing the hospital and the people in that area. There is a potential loss of investment from businesses wishing to establish themselves in the Manning Valley area; loss of firefighting services; loss of

emergency services training; a probable loss of jet fuel, which could affect the Westpac rescue helicopter services; and possible loss of AvGas fuel. The Royal Australian Air Force [RAAF] uses the runway for emergency landing and training.

There would be loss of income from Aeropelican, which uses the airport as a training airport; the probable loss of ability to proceed with the aviation-related business park I have mentioned; and the possible loss of a proposed residential skypark. But, more importantly, there would be the loss of jobs and a decline in tourist visitations to the area. It is vital that the funds become available. Clearly it is beyond the capability of the council to raise \$4.5 million. In any event, it is a matter that I think would fit neatly into one of the Federal Government's global financial crisis packages. It is a significant infrastructure job that would benefit not only the people of Taree but those who are looking for work and who could be employed on the rebuilding of the strip, not to mention the many other economic benefits that would be generated. I ask the Minister for Transport to do what he can through his officers to have his Federal colleagues look at funding for this airport.

### **HAWKESBURY LIVING NURSING HOME UPGRADE**

**Mr ALLAN SHEARAN** (Londonderry) [11.28 a.m.]: I wish to report to the House the opening of the Hawkesbury Living Nursing Home upgrade at Richmond just a few weeks ago. This is a rather unique development—a partnership between Hawkesbury Living and the Richmond Club. The Richmond Club is the largest registered club in the Hawkesbury area. It faces many challenges to ensure its continuing success, and indeed its continuing survival. Additionally, many local businesses are directly affected by decisions clubs make and this demonstrates the very significant contribution clubs make to the local economy. As members would be aware, clubs provide a variety of services to the community—entertainment, food and beverages, a pleasant meeting place—and they bring individuals and communities together by generally providing social opportunities. The club also supports many community organisations, especially in the traditional areas of sporting and recreational activities. In providing services, clubs face many challenges, such as the impact of economic pressures and, of course—dare I say—taxes.

Today the world is combating an economic downturn so clubs have to be innovative and disciplined in order to survive. Furthermore, along with such challenges, they have to meet responsibilities, including harm minimisation in respect of the service of alcohol and the provision of gaming facilities. The Richmond Club is an organisation that has taken those challenges head-on. It has embarked on a diversification that is rather unique in New South Wales. In this regard I speak of its partnership with Hawkesbury Living, a local aged-care facility, which has provided exceptional care and quality services to the New South Wales Hawkesbury Valley's aged community for the past 20 years. While it continues to provide all the facilities and services one can expect from most large clubs within the State, the Richmond Club has proudly embarked on a partnership relationship with Hawkesbury Living, recognising the increasing need for aged service facilities.

Earlier this year I had the pleasure of introducing the Hon. Kevin Greene, Minister for Gaming and Racing, to the senior executive of the Richmond Club and he participated in a visit to the construction of an extension and upgrade of the Hawkesbury Living facilities. I understand that the Richmond Club has already been recognised by Clubs New South Wales for its initiative in getting involved in the aged care industry—in particular its chief executive officer Kimberley Talbot—and I can say that the Minister was most impressed with the direction the club is taking. He pointed out that, as far as he was aware, the Richmond Club was the only club in this State that had gone down this path, adding that this uniqueness should be acknowledged and that the club deserved congratulations.

The opening of the extension and upgrade a couple of weeks ago was attended by Barry O'Farrell, the Leader of the Opposition; Louise Markus, the Federal member for Greenway; the Mayor of Hawkesbury, Bart Bassett; councillors Christine Paine and Paul Rasmussen; and a number of distinguished guests. The official opening was performed by the Leader of the Opposition, but I was delighted to be asked to speak, particularly when I thought that I was a little bit in the minority, with the Liberal Opposition leader, the Liberal Federal member and the Liberal mayor in attendance. Nevertheless, I had the opportunity to at least put in an appearance for the Government. In my speech I commented on the management of the club and, in particular, the chief executive officer Kimberley Talbot. Kimberley is one of those rare persons who has a passion and a determination that no-one can stop.

I commented that it was her subtle determination that led the club and its executive down the path to a partnership with Hawkesbury Living. I was trying to be nice, but the Leader of the Opposition interjected and said, "Subtle determination like a sledge hammer." I suppose in many respects Kimberley is very aggressive

with her determination, but I think the whole community and the club benefit from that determination. The new extension was named the Dave Butler Wing. Dave is a sixth-generation Hawkesbury resident, and as chair of the Richmond Club board of directors I think that it was very appropriate the extension was named after him. I congratulate Dave Butler and the club, and I wish the Hawkesbury Living partnership every success for the future.

## NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK

### HORNSBY ELECTORATE POLICING

**Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD** (Hornsby) [11.33 a.m.]: Today I will speak about policing in the electorate of Hornsby, but first I acknowledge that it is National Youth Week, and I congratulate everyone involved in all the activities associated with Youth Week. I welcome all the young people who are in the gallery today to watch the proceedings of the Parliament. I acknowledge also the work of Hornsby Shire Council, with special mention to Sharon Mizzi, the Youth Services Manager, who, with young people very much in focus, has organised many activities in the Hornsby area, from band playing to art exhibitions. I also commend Sharon for her work in the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Youth Network in relation to homeless youth—homelessness being an area of particular interest to me. This week a student from TAFE North West Business Education Network, Kristen Haywood, has attended my office for work experience, and I thank her for her participation.

In light of concerns about the impacts of crime on youth and the impacts of crime generally, I express my absolute horror at the sale of the Brooklyn police station and the potential sale of the Berowra police station. It is a total disgrace that last week in the public notices in the Hornsby *Advocate* there was a tiny advertisement with this notification:

After 14 days from publication of this notice the State Property Authority on behalf of the Minister for Police intends to sell, lease or exchange the land described as follows ...

And it describes 11 Bridge Street, Brooklyn, which is currently the site of the police station. This has caused a lot of angst in the local community. It is appalling that the public is informed by a tiny advertisement in the classifieds at the back of a newspaper, and I was not informed until suddenly the department felt guilty and I got a telephone call this week—after the advertisement appeared in the newspaper last week—to let me know about the proposed sale. I will read some correspondence from a couple of my constituents expressing concern. Anne Graham sent me an email on 18 March, which read:

Brooklyn is an isolated community, sitting between two national parks. The Dangar Island, Wobby Beach, Mooney Mooney, Cheero Point, Milson Island, Bar Point and various small river settlements along the river, all centre on Brooklyn. We are 25km from Hornsby and 30km from Gosford. In all, approximately 1200 to 1400 permanent residents. With tourists and the huge boating visitors on weekends and holidays, this figure swells to several thousand people.

On 20 March Mandy Turton wrote in an email:

I just want to register my opinion that this building should not be sold as it is a deterrent to violence and crime especially that it is in the main street and opposite the pub and close to the station.

On 17 March Steve Jones stated in an email:

It has come to my attention that the government is considering selling Brooklyn Police station. I find this a concern from a number of points of view. Firstly, it will obviously remove the visual impression of police presence on Brooklyn (and nearby communities) ...

On 20 March an email from a constituent named Mary stated:

We would wish to keep the Police Station in Brooklyn, no matter it is an empty house or not, it is a symbolism for safety to this town.

This Government is so skint and so needing to increase its coffers that it is selling off the family jewels—valuable and essential real estate. I have the latest population figures for the Berowra area, which includes Cowan, Berowra Waters and Berowra Heights: it is well over the 7,000 mark. It is an absolute disgrace to think that this Government has to sell a police station. It is appalling that currently two police officers are allocated to this huge area, one to Berowra and one to Brooklyn. They obviously work shifts so a lot of the time during the week there are no police allocated, because they can only work eight hours a day, or whatever is their prescribed shift per day. I will read out a number of letters from the local Berowra community. Rae Tomlin wrote:

I am a resident [of Berowra] ... a Senior Citizen who is very community minded and this community in Berowra are very distressed at the events of last week when a young woman was mentally ill took her own life and harmed two of her own children. Her husband called for help. The Emergency Services got there too late followed by the Police who come from Hornsby. Had the Police Station in Berowra been manned her life may have been saved ...

This suburb is subject to a great deal of petty crime and vandalism. We have 1500 Primary school students.

The Allen family wrote to me stating:

Policing in Berowra seems to have been largely reactive rather than proactive for some time. I do not know what the Area Command's protocols are concerning the Berowra area, but I do know that Police vehicles are not a common sight.

The Allen family were of the opinion that visible policing was far from adequate.

### **DAPTO AND OAK FLATS RURAL FIRE SERVICE BRIGADES**

**Ms LYLEA McMAHON** (Shellharbour—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.38 a.m.]: On Saturday 28 March I joined the Minister for Emergency Services at an event held at the Dapto Rural Fire Service station in Wongawilli, a suburb quietly nestled toward the escarpment and on the western fringe of Dapto, in my electorate. The Minister and I organised this visit to present more than \$5,000 worth of new ground radios for New South Wales Rural Fire Service volunteers in the Illawarra. The core reason that the Minister and I attended the Dapto Rural Fire Service station was to meet the volunteers and thank them for their long-time contribution to protecting the Illawarra community from fire, and for offering their services and resources to their comrades in Victoria.

It was only weeks ago that volunteers from the Illawarra Rural Fire Service joined the firefighting efforts in Victoria and again underlined their reputation as some of the most professional and dedicated firefighters in the world. There are almost 700 Rural Fire Service volunteers in the Illawarra district, who selflessly offer a high level of protection for the people of this region. With the incomprehensible reality of the Victorian bushfires at the forefront of our minds, the certainty of such disaster and tragedy really drives home the enormity and savagery that these men and women are up against in their everyday roles—a heroic role, by anyone's standards.

A lot of the individuals present at the function at Dapto Rural Fire Service station have, time after time, answered the call without hesitation, be it in the early hours of the morning, at work, at social events, during important family commitments, or just recuperating from the last blaze that they fought for the safety and protection of the community at large. It was therefore a humbling experience meeting these dedicated men and women and expressing to them our deepest gratitude on behalf of the Government and the local community for their ongoing service and unwavering commitment. We also used the forum to highlight the Government's commitment to providing the volunteers with the training, technology, equipment and support they need for their vital work. The new radio packs are just one example of this.

I take this opportunity to put on record some of the names of the volunteers and cadets from the Oak Flats rural fire brigade and the Dapto rural fire brigade, who take on these roles and rise to these challenges without so much as a second thought. These include Chief Superintendent Bruce McDonald, who was representing Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons; Chief Superintendent Steve Yorke, Regional Manager East; Superintendent Richard Cotterill, Illawarra Zone Manager; Captain Harvey Bailey, Dapto Brigade, and members of his team, including Fred Priestly, Joe McDiarmid, Steve Roberts, Jason Gallagher, Bruce O'Dea, Mark Collins, Steve Martin, David Hampton, Robert Kennedy, Marcus Bartel and Kerrie O'Dea. Kerrie O'Dea also deserves particular mention for organising a wonderful afternoon tea for the assembled guests.

Captain Chris Nolan from the Oak Flats Brigade attended, as did a number of his crew. They included Chris Huer, a deputy, Sandra Huer, a deputy, Colin Crawford and Gary McDougal. Oak Flats is one of the few stations in the region that has a cadet brigade, which is participating in the Australasian championships. The cadets present on the day were Lisa Rainey, the team captain, Laura Wilson, Jennifer Butler, Suzannah Butler, Chris Brown and Ben Nolan. Whilst many people put their hands up to assist in Victoria, I would like to acknowledge those members from the Oak Flats brigade of the Rural Fire Service who went to provide support and assistance: Steven Barlow, Chris Huer, Sandra Huer, John Bridge, Tim Ball, Brett Sheridan and Steven Skinner. There were also a number of brigade captains from the surrounding area present on the day.

Day in, day out Rural Fire Service members in the Illawarra provide a vital service, whether fighting bush, grass or structure fires, providing support at motor vehicle accidents or search operations or helping people with fire safety and prevention. We owe our Rural Fire Service volunteers a great debt of gratitude for their professionalism and commitment and the time they generously give up to assist their community. The Illawarra area has experienced bushfires on a number of occasions, which have been documented since 1939. Significant fires occur each year, with potential to cause major loss and damage. Hazard reduction takes place in many areas of the Illawarra and a significant amount of effort by the Rural Fire Service goes into engaging with the community. The Rural Fire Service in the Illawarra has established the service's first Community Safety

Brigade, which brings together the existing brigades and specialist personnel to engage with the community. In conclusion I recognise the great work of these volunteers. We must also acknowledge and thank their families and employers, whose support and encouragement are vital to the continued success of the Rural Fire Service.

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.43 a.m.]: I thank the member for Shellharbour for bringing to the attention of the House the wonderful work, commitment and dedication of the members of the Rural Fire Service at Dapto and Oak Flats. They are volunteers who are willing to put their lives on the line and, as the member said, are willing to go anywhere to protect lives and property. She also mentioned the members of the service who were willing to go to assist our brothers and sisters in Victoria to fight the horrific fires that occurred there. Often the media uses the word "heroes" in a very loose sense, but these people are willing to put their lives on the line to save other lives and property. They are true heroes in every sense of the word. As the member said, all of us owe the brigades so much, as we do every other member of the Rural Fire Service and all the volunteers and emergency services throughout the State. I thank the member for bringing to the attention of the House the wonderful work of the Rural Fire Service volunteers from Dapto and Oak Flats.

### **GARRAWARRA CENTRE FOR AGED CARE**

**Mr MALCOLM KERR** (Cronulla) [11.45 a.m.]: I wish to raise a very serious matter. Constituents have rung my office extremely upset after receiving letters that Garrawarra aged care centre is to be transferred—that is, sold—to the non-government sector. The letter states that the decision to call for expressions of interest was foreshadowed as part of the New South Wales Government's November 2008 mini-budget. Garrawarra Centre for Aged Care is accredited as a residential aged care facility and has a capacity of 120 beds. Garrawarra provides holistic and high-level care for people with a primary diagnosis of dementia who exhibit challenging behaviours and require a safe and secure environment. Garrawarra is located at Waterfall and serves the people of Sutherland Shire and the Illawarra area. It has cared specifically for the aged for the last 28 years and has a rich and proud tradition of providing highly skilled dementia care. The Minister for Health in his press release has included Garrawarra in the transfer of 11 New South Wales government-owned nursing homes to the non-government sector. As we know from the speech of the member for Hornsby, even police stations are not safe under this Government.

Garrawarra is not just any nursing home, as the member for Shellharbour would know. It began its life in 1909 as Waterfall Sanatorium for the treatment of patients with tuberculosis. The site, at 1000 feet above sea level and 26 miles south of Sydney, was chosen for its rarefied atmosphere away from the grime and pollution of the city. In 1958 it was converted to care for patients with chronic diseases of the aged. The centre sits on Crown land with a beautiful geographic environment and space to wander and reflect. Wollongong council has recognised the site with a conservation plan. Successive governments have poured scores of millions of dollars into Garrawarra and the Government stands to inherit a fortune from the sale of this valuable site and its facilities. Garrawarra is 100 years old this year and the timing of this announcement typifies the arrogance of this Government.

This is not the first time that Garrawarra has been threatened by this Government. In 1997 community concern was expressed at the proposed downgrading and reduction of respite care. The member for Heathcote, in whose electorate Garrawarra is located, has spoken highly of the patient care provided at Garrawarra, as has the member for Miranda, whose constituents would have had associations with Garrawarra in the past or at present. The members for Heathcote and Miranda are urged to speak up, and the member for Miranda will get the opportunity. I remind him that it is no bad thing to whinge on behalf of your constituents. It is quite another thing to whinge about your constituents. The member for Miranda won the world championship for whingeing when the voters of Miranda nearly blew the whistle on him and he said, "I think I have a very fickle electorate." Now is the time to demonstrate his commitment to the people of his electorate by supporting Garrawarra, which is the principal provider of specialist dementia services for the people of our shire.

### **BANDA ACEH ORPHANAGE**

**Mr TONY STEWART** (Bankstown) [11.50 a.m.]: As the member for Bankstown I was proud and pleased to be involved, with Father Chris Riley, Chief Executive Officer of Youth Off the Streets, in the recent successful opening on Sunday 15 March 2009 of a new orphanage and childcare centre in Aceh, Indonesia. The new orphanage and childcare centre in tsunami-stricken Aceh is the culmination of four years of hard work undertaken by Father Chris Riley and me. The Boxing Day tsunami of 2004 killed more than 200,000 people in Aceh, leaving more than 60,000 children orphaned as a result. Only days after the tsunami Father Chris Riley

and I arrived in Aceh. We initially set up a tent orphanage and later arranged for a temporary orphanage that was equipped by the United Nations. That orphanage remained in operation until the new orphanage opened two weeks ago.

The opening of the orphanage is the culmination of the work of many Australians who donated money to the scheme. Clubs NSW donated more than \$1 million towards the project. Many generous Australians who donated money would like to know to what use that money was put in Banda Aceh. The orphanage, a real bricks and mortar project, demonstrates the generosity of thousands of Australians and Clubs NSW. The new childcare centre, which has a family focus and provides individual care, comprises 10 cottages, each of which will house eight children, a mess or food hall, and a mosque. The centre is designed to house a maximum of 80 orphans and has great modern facilities, including study areas for the children and a volleyball and netball court, along with sports playing fields. We are also incorporating a small farm and an aquaculture area in the hope that the centre will be self-sufficient with its food needs in the future.

I had the great honour of working on this project from its commencement until its conclusion—something that would not have been possible without the support and inspiration of Father Chris Riley. The official opening involved a number of key people from Australia who were instrumental in the success of this unique project. Present at the event was Mr Peter Newell, Chairman of Clubs NSW; Mr David Costello, Chief Executive Officer of Clubs NSW; and Mr David Koch from the Channel 7 *Sunrise* program. I thank David and Channel 7 for being so supportive of what we were doing. He took the time to come over to Banda Aceh to experience what it was like for the children in the orphanage. Board members from the Youth Off the Streets Overseas Relief Fund included Bernie Moore, Sue Kluss and Libby Koch. Youth Off the Streets staff involved in the project included Ms Emily Gray, volunteer organiser, and Ms Ingrid Moller, executive assistant to Father Chris Riley and personal assistant, international projects.

I thank Ingrid for the amazing amount of work she has done over the past four years to make this project happen. Youth Off the Streets staff also included Ms Suzie Messner, former personal assistant to Father Chris Riley. In the early days of the program, Suzie Messner worked with the bureaucracy in Australia to implement the orphanage project. Ms Christine Bullivant, Youth Off the Streets group manager of corporate services and development, also played a key role in the early days of the project. Mr Rick McCarthy spent the first five months in Banda Aceh setting up the project. We would not have achieved what we did without Rick's involvement. Jim Barber organised our shipping supplies and Pat Sergi represented the Italian community, which donated a lot of money towards this project. The project has been handed over to Muhhamadiyah, a local group based in Aceh. That group will continue the management of the project and the Youth off the Streets Overseas Relief Fund will continue to fund it for some time. It is great to hear of an Australian success story that is the result of the generosity of Australians. I commend the project to the House.

**Ms LYLEA McMAHON** (Shellharbour—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.55 a.m.]: I commend the member for Bankstown for bringing this issue to the attention of the House and for his efforts in ensuring the successful completion of the project. The member is passionate about, and committed to, this project. That commitment and passion was demonstrated only four days after the tsunami, when he visited Banda Aceh. His work with Father Riley is exemplary. The member for Bankstown has demonstrated his commitment to this project, which will now be handed over to local people to manage. The project demonstrates the generosity of Australians and the generosity of the member for Bankstown. I thank him for bringing this matter to the attention of the House.

### KIDS IN COMMUNITY

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE** (Lismore) [11.56 a.m.]: It is great to hear stories such as the one we have just heard. Today I pay tribute to Kids in Community—an organisation in my electorate that is actively making a difference—which had its media launch this week during Youth Week. I recognise the wonderful contribution that this organisation makes to our community. Each year Kids in Community has an awards night. Rachel Ward is the patron of Kids in Community. Earlier this week I spoke to the Minister for Youth and told him that Rachel Ward, the President and I would like to see him to explore what support could be afforded to this group.

Kids in Community recognises and rewards young people for their positive efforts in addressing issues that affect them and others. It highlights the important role of youth in building strong communities within our region. It also provides an opportunity for individuals, parents, carers, extended family members, community groups, organisations and businesses to participate in an event that expresses appreciation for the positive actions of our youth. The whole community benefits through encouraging young people, and raising awareness



of how positive actions and attitudes benefit young people and the community. Kids in Community raises public awareness and calls attention to local issues affecting youth, creating an opportunity for community involvement.

I acknowledge the role played by the major sponsors, which include the Catholic Diocese of Lismore. Other sponsors include Bennett Constructions, the Centre for Children and Young People, Lismore Workers Club, L. J. Hooker, Prime, 900 2LM, ZZZ FM, Richard Marlin's SMA Black Belt Academy, Southern Cross University, the *Koori Mail*, the *Echo*, the *Northern Star*, TMG Computing, the Southern Cross Credit Union, Thomas Noble Russell, and Trenches McKenzie Cox Solicitors. These organisations are major supporters of Kids in Community, which has been operating for nine years. As I said earlier, Kids in Community had its media launch this week and its awards night will be held in July. I hope that the Minister will accept the invitation to attend that presentation. On the night, 500 or 600 people will get together to recognise the contribution of our young people to the northern rivers area and to the region surrounding Lismore.

I thank Des Kelly, president, for his leadership; his hardworking wife, Maria Kelly, secretary; and Margaret Orr, who has worked with the organisation since its inception. They, together with committee members, have been the driving force of Kids in Community. I am proud to say that my wife, Deborah, joined the committee this year. Kids in Community does a fantastic job making representations to youth organisations, schools and the community and asking them to recognise the contribution of youth in their organisations and their schools. As I said, Rachel Ward is the patron—and a very proud patron. Over the years she has hosted a week in Sydney to give kids an insight into activities in the city. She has offered tremendous support to the organisation and her efforts are greatly appreciated. Other guests over the years have included local girl Sally Hunt. She was the winner in category two in 2006. Anh Do was guest speaker at the awards in 2007, and he said:

The Kids in Community event is one of most inspiring, uplifting and heart-warming experiences I have witnessed in my entire lifetime.

People who visit the organisation and see what is being done in a practical sense appreciate the benefits of the program. I pay tribute to Kids in Community for actively making a difference within the community for our kids.

**Ms LYLEA McMAHON** (Shellharbour—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.01 p.m.]: I thank the member for Lismore for bringing the Kids in Community program to the attention of the House during Youth Week. He highlighted the work that the organisation does in ensuring that young people are recognised and rewarded. Clearly, it is a very popular event and is welcomed by his community, given that more than 500 people attended the event. None of these events are possible without sponsors. I also thank the sponsors who support young people in his community. Young people are the future of communities and it is important to give them skills, encouragement and recognition so that they will take up their role. I again thank the member for Lismore for raising this issue during Youth Week.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I thank the Parliamentary Secretary. I agree wholeheartedly.

#### **PORT MORESBY GENERAL HOSPITAL LIGHTING AID PROJECT**

**Mr GRANT McBRIDE** (The Entrance) [12.02 p.m.]: At 7.00 a.m. on Wednesday a group of eight Electrical Trades Union [ETU] members departed Sydney airport for Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea to participate in an international aid mission. The aim of the mission is to replace lighting in the children's ward of Port Moresby General Hospital. The mission was organised by a resident from my electorate, Paul Lister. Paul works for the Electrical Trades Union as a research and policy officer and has been active in the Central Coast community for many years. Last December while sitting in a staff meeting one of Paul's colleagues mentioned the appalling conditions endured by staff and patients in the children's ward of the Port Moresby General Hospital. The children's ward has only one operational light and these poor conditions make it difficult for staff to provide quality care for the young children.

Paul was galvanised by this situation and set about to see what he could organise in the form of air travel, accommodation, ground transport and electrical supplies. Within 48 hours Virgin Blue had responded to Paul's and the union's request and offered to fly a group of eight electricians to Port Moresby to carry out the work. The Intercontinental Hotel Group came on board soon after that by offering accommodation at the Crown Plaza in Port Moresby, and a local Sydney lighting company, Crompton Lighting, has provided 100 florescent lights to replace the broken fittings that are currently in the hospital. It is very hard for people who live in a

country as rich as ours to appreciate the difference in health standards endured by people living in the Pacific Islands. I have visited a few of the islands, so the situation in Port Moresby General Hospital does not surprise me. I assure members that what these people are doing is of enormous value to the community.

Other supporters of the mission have included the Royal Australian Air Force and the Minister for Defence, who supported the transport of a pallet of supplies from Richmond to Papua New Guinea; RT Health, which has supplied the group with travel insurance; and Downer EDI, which donated more than \$3,000 worth of electrical supplies to assist with the upgrading of the electric lighting in the entire hospital. Without the support of these organisations this mission would never have happened. It would have been too hard to organise on a volunteer basis. These contributions often go unrecognised, and I congratulate the private sector and Commonwealth Government on their support of this worthwhile mission.

Electrical Trades Union employee Paul Lister will lead the delegation, while other volunteers include, Adam Wardrop, from the Central Coast; Allan Dale from Ulladulla, an organiser with the union and an Integral Energy worker; Greg Walker from Penrith, an electrician at Nepean Hospital; Hunter Valley resident and Energy Australia electrician Damian Buttenshaw; Pat Brown of Canberra; Peter Henne of Bondi; and Darren Colquhoun of Como. All of them work for private electrical contractors. It is inspiring to see community-minded individuals and organisations such as the Electrical Trades Union taking a practical approach to helping others who are less fortunate than us. While some may think this is a small contribution, this work will make a real difference to the working conditions of the hospital staff and the comfort levels of children in the Port Moresby hospital. It is no small feat to organise an international aid mission; in fact, it is a very complicated task. For these reasons Paul Lister and the Electrical Trades Union must be congratulated on their hard work and effort to make this international aid mission a reality—and all in the space of a few months.

This project is just one example of the many valuable community contributions made by unions across Australia. However, members on the Opposition benches will never admit it, and would rather have the public think that unions are bad for business, bad for the community and bad for workers. Such stereotypical attitudes are wrong, wrong and wrong. Unions provide assistance in many ways on overseas projects, and through endless projects and fundraising to benefit communities and individuals across Australia. I turn again to the contributions by the New South Wales branch of the Electrical Trades Union to the community. More than a year ago the Electrical Trades Union assisted the Delizio family with the rewiring of the family home on the northern beaches. The Delizio family has suffered through difficult times, and the trade union stepped in to help in a practical way that really made a difference.

Another instance I draw to the attention of the House is the recent Victorian bushfires, which left thousands homeless and many injured or dead. Some of the first assistance to flow through to the affected areas came from trade unions. The Australian Council of Trade Unions [ACTU] established an assistance fund, while individual unions moved swiftly to assist both the public and their members. The New South Wales Branch of the Electrical Trades Union again stepped up to the mark and made a significant donation of \$50,000. I congratulate Paul Lister in particular for bringing this great project together. I also congratulate the Electrical Trades Union New South Wales branch for its support and assistance. I extend a huge thank you to all who have provided assistance: the companies and the team of workers who will carry out the work on site that is needed to upgrade the children's ward at Port Moresby General Hospital.

**Ms LYLEA McMAHON** (Shellharbour—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.07 p.m.]: I thank the hardworking member for The Entrance for bringing to the attention of the House the work that his constituent Paul Lister and the Electrical Trades Union [ETU] have been doing. He mentioned the work that the union movement does, not only representing members but also ensuring that people in the broader global community get the care and support they need. The Electrical Trades Union members who went to Port Moresby have made a significant contribution to the children of that region.

#### **WILLOUGHBY ELECTORATE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN** (Willoughby) [12.08 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the redevelopment of the Royal North Shore Hospital site. I attended a meeting with local residents organised by Willoughby council a few weeks ago to discuss community concerns about the proposed redevelopment. The main issue raised at the meeting was concern about the future of community-based mental health services in Hercules Street, Chatswood. Since 2004 the Willoughby community has been urging the State Government to retain community-based mental health services in Chatswood. We are concerned that the State Government is not listening to this request and is determined to concentrate services at Royal North Shore Hospital.

There is, and should be, a huge distinction between acute mental health services and community-based health services. They are two totally different ways of treating people who have mental health issues and concerns. The State Government has failed to assure the community that those services will be retained at the Hercules Street site. Understandably, this is causing much angst for many people in our community, including me, who feel very strongly about retaining community-based mental health services.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Professor Alan Rosen, who, I was sad to learn, is retiring on 7 April after providing nearly 30 years of service to mental health patients in the North Shore community. His work has helped patients around Australia and overseas. He has been a pioneer and an advocate for the importance of treating people with mental health concerns in the community. He has been a pioneer in showing how psychosocial assistance and community-based support can provide people with an acceptable quality of life. We are all sad to hear he is retiring, but we know he will continue to make a substantial contribution to the community in this area. I place on the record his efforts in attempting to retain community-based mental health services in Chatswood.

A concern was raised at the meeting about the loss of the hydrotherapy pool. It is difficult to understand how the State Government can contribute hundreds of millions of dollars towards the redevelopment of the hospital site yet take away a service. As I have mentioned in this place previously, the hydrotherapy pool provided an important service to both inpatients and outpatients who rely on hydrotherapy as part of their treatment. Those patients have been told that they will have to travel elsewhere to access those services. The concerning aspect of the closure of the hydrotherapy pool at the Royal North Shore Hospital, which was built decades ago, is that it was built with community money. The community came together to provide the community with the pool, which has serviced tens of thousands of patients for close on five decades, yet the State Government will not include a hydrotherapy pool in its plans for the redevelopment of the site. This is totally unacceptable. Again, I urge the State Government to reconsider this issue.

The redevelopment of the Vanderfield Building, which is a heritage building, was another concern raised at the meeting. Many people in the community, understandably, feel strongly about retaining the heritage of that building, and the State Government must make its position clear on its future. Parking facilities and the impact on traffic also were raised at the meeting. Willoughby council will put all these concerns in its submission to the Government. However, the two main issues that came out of the meeting were that community-based mental health services should be reinstated and retained at the Hercules Street site in Chatswood, and that the hydrotherapy pool must be included as part of the new hospital.

It seems totally unacceptable to have a new hospital but to remove a service. That is what my constituents are shaking their heads about. They have signed petitions and they have written letters. I know this affects also the constituents of my neighbouring members of Parliament, the members for North Shore and Lane Cove, who are suffering a lot of angst because of the loss of that service. Again, I pay tribute to Professor Alan Rosen, whom I mentioned at the outset. He retires on Tuesday. He has put decades into providing mental health support for patients in our State, around the country and overseas. We wish him well. We hope his fight to retain the Chatswood mental health services will be won in the short term.

### COMMUNITY SERVICES GRANTS PROGRAM

**Mr PHIL KOPERBERG** (Blue Mountains—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.13 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House matters not dissimilar to those raised by the member for Willoughby, in particular the nature of the work done by neighbourhood centres throughout New South Wales and their reliance on the Community Services Grants Program. For example, the Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre derives some \$180,000 annually from the program to carry on its vital work supporting vulnerable people, including children, people with a mental illness, those with disabilities, the frail and the aged. The Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre operates a plethora of important, indeed vital, programs, including before and after school care, vacation care, the Vale Street Social and Recreational Centre for people with mental illness, and the Blue Fringe Literature and Arts Festival, just to name a few. The centre maintains the Clairvaux Community Centre, out of which runs child protection services, Aboriginal Cultural and Resource, and disability services.

The centre assists people on low incomes with tax help, and works with other organisations to provide legal and financial advice and support, not to mention a host of social activities for the underprivileged, disenfranchised and vulnerable members of the community. Core funding from the Community Services Grants Program enables these critical community services to be delivered. The capacity of the various organisations to attract external funding from a range of government programs is largely dependent on the maintenance of core

funding. This now goes to the heart of the concerns expressed by many non-government organisations and not-for-profit organisations. The current global economic downturn is going to put increasing pressure on these organisations and we will see more and more vulnerable members of our community turning to them for support.

Every community organisation I speak to expresses concern that without increased access to and yield from the Community Services Grants Program their ability to deliver services will continue to diminish. The Department of Community Services commissioned Ernst and Young to prepare a report on sustainable funding for the Community Services Grants Program, and I understand that Treasury is considering this report and its recommendations in the budget context. As the member for Blue Mountains—an electorate with more than its fair share of disadvantaged people, high and increasing levels of homelessness, children at risk, unemployment and people with disabilities—I urge the Government to respond positively to the stated need for increased funding for the Community Services Grants Program.

In conclusion, I acknowledge the invaluable work done by neighbourhood and community centres and all affiliated with them. Whilst it is impossible to name everyone, I place on record the Blue Mountains community's particular appreciation for Dianne Jacobus from the Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre, Can Yasmut from Mountains Community Resource Network, Jean Marshall from Gunedoo Child Protection Service and Suzie van Opdorp from the Blue Mountains Women's Health Centre. I commend the efforts of neighbourhood centres and like organisations working hard in local communities. They are dependent very much on sometimes meagre amounts of money, depending on volunteers to deliver vital services. As I said earlier, with the economic downturn and its consequences, one thing we can be sure of is that more and more reliance will be placed on these organisations, and people from all walks of life will turn to them in time of need. It is critical that we continue to fund them to an appropriate level.

### **BELROSE WASTE DISPOSAL FACILITY**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson) [12.17 p.m.]: So much of life is about interfaces. Interfaces cause wars, interfaces are present at the G20 summit in London this week, interfaces are caused where the city meets the bush and where suburbia meets industry. In Belrose we have a continuing interface where suburbia meets WSN Environmental Solutions, which brings the various effects of a garbage tip into suburbia. I have previously spoken in this House about the struggle of the citizens of Belrose, whose suburban lifestyles are being disrupted by the activities of a garbage disposal area run as a business by the Government-owned WSN Environmental Solutions. This Government talked about forward planning for garbage disposal years ago, suggesting that this landfill would close by this year. Due to a lack of forward planning by this Government apparently there is nowhere for all the garbage to go.

The Government is trying to squeeze a bit more life out of an old tip right next to citizens of Belrose in my electorate of Davidson. I know that the Belrose tip was in the area before most of the residents, but I also know that governments have permitted suburbia to get closer and closer to the tip site. With this came statements over the years and from this Government that the tip was near the end of its feasible life span and other facilities would be built for the disposal of garbage. In Pyrmont and Glebe the garbage incinerators were closed many years ago. In 2001 the Government created Waste Services NSW, which later changed its name to WSN Environmental Solutions with the aim of commercialising the waste business. It makes a profit at the expense of the long-suffering residents of Belrose. On 5 December 2003 former Opposition leader John Brogden addressed this House about another waste site and said:

The solution to the problems at Woodlawn and with Sydney's ongoing waste could have been provided years ago. Waste Services New South Wales is so desperate to maintain its monopoly on waste control in this State that it has delayed the project for two years.

One appreciates that the name has changed, but the leopard has not changed its spots. WSN cooperated in forming a community advisory committee that has met regularly over the years at Belrose, but therein lies one of the problems. The committee continues to have concerns, but agreed outcomes too often are disregarded. A facilitation consultant, ID Planning, joins the community meetings to help keep the wheels spinning, but progress on resolving the interface of garbage and residents remains slow and often vague. The wind continues to spread odours, dust and noise over parts of the suburb of Belrose.

In 2004 WSN signed a title deed restriction on its Belrose site stipulating the maximum height and landfill of the tip site. A clause provided that if for some reason a change was needed to this title endorsement then a development consent would be needed from council. In January this year the same chief executive officer

signed an order to release restriction on the title and announced that WSN would do as it pleased without a development application to council. I was stunned by this decision of WSN: it was a cynical decision made by a state-owned corporation, which is going to be sold to help maximise its value. I am pleased that some greater degree of fairness has now prevailed. Earlier this week WSN advised residents that it would submit a development application to Warringah Council for the proposed extension of the landfill operation.

In 2007 the then Minister advised that the Belrose landfill operation would close by the end of 2009. When I asked again in the middle of last year about the closure of the site the date was revised to mid 2010. Some years ago consultants prepared contour plans of the final shape of the landfill to be capped with clay and revegetated. WSN, and in turn its governments owners, have repeatedly reneged on years of planning and assurances to Belrose citizens, and have advised of plans to extend the tip life for another three years to at least 2013. Development applications for garbage landfill are not an everyday occurrence for councils. This particular application warrants close consideration to protect the local residents. Full community consultation and input will be crucial in the development application assessment process, as will expert views to satisfy engineering, environmental and safety concerns.

This has been an ongoing concern to me for the past two years. Since being elected I have asked Ministers various questions and received varying responses. On 13 March this year I asked six further detailed questions regarding WSN, mainly of the environment Minister. The questions related to such matters as future land use for recreational purposes and relevant government controls. I hope the answers will be provided with care and openness. This past week we celebrated Neighbour Day, which must not be just about neighbours over the back fence, but also about all neighbours—citizens, private business and government. I ask the Government, particularly the environment Minister, to look at this matter carefully.

### **SENIORS WEEK 2009 CELEBRATIONS**

**Ms MARIE ANDREWS** (Gosford) [12.22 p.m.]: This year marks the fifty-first anniversary of New South Wales Seniors Week, which was celebrated between 15 and 22 March 2009. This year's theme was Live Life! People across New South Wales celebrated Seniors Week at events including the Premier's Seniors Week gala concerts, which always are popular events, movie screenings, luncheons, photographic displays, fitness classes, and Technoseniors at various community technology centres. Many events for seniors were held in my electorate of Gosford, including a train trip to Newcastle, supported by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care; a seniors bike ride from Gosford to Woy Woy; a cruise on the Hawkesbury River, courtesy of the Department of the Arts, Sport and Recreation; and, of course, seniors concerts for local residents, which I was delighted to host.

It was an honour to host the fourteenth annual Marie Andrews Seniors Week concerts held at the Ettalong Beach War Memorial Club on 19 March 2009. The club again provided the venue free of charge and staff members were very cooperative in assisting with organising and running the event. I place on record my appreciation to Mr Chris King, a well-known Central Coast entertainer, who compered the concerts and organised the entertainment. Without Chris's hard work these concerts would not be the success they always are. The excellent entertainers who voluntarily gave of their services, with some performing at both concerts, were the Chorus Girls, King Kids, mime artist Heather Wooten, The Gals, and vocalists Merle Wade and Bart Barwick. Without exception they entertained the audiences very well, and I extend my gratitude to all of them.

Guest speaker at both concerts was Helen Kale from Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service, who gave some very good advice on how to prevent falls. Members of the Woy Woy United Hospital Auxiliary were kept busy throughout the day selling tickets in guessing competitions, the proceeds of which, together with the gold coin donation boxes, amounted to more than \$700, all of which has gone to the auxiliary to assist in purchasing various items for the hospital. Management and staff of St George Bank Woy Woy Branch once again volunteered their time to assist. Students from the Woy Woy campus of Brisbane Water Secondary College served food and drinks to the audience. As ever, their good manners and pleasant dispositions were a credit to the school.

I thank McDonald's Woy Woy for donating beverages for the day. I thank also the many volunteers who readily gave of their time on the day to assist with the smooth running of this event, namely, Rose Kinney, Dulcie McKeown, Bill and Ann McGilchrist, Frank Jenner, Judith and Laurie Bennett, John Gifford and Phil Gleeson. Rose, Dulcie and Frank have been assisting with this event for the past 14 years, with Rose and Frank having also helped my predecessor, the former member for Peats, Tony Doyle, who started the tradition of a Seniors Week celebration. These concerts would not have been as successful if it had not been for the

tremendous thought and effort put into them by my senior electorate officer, Suzanne King, who was ably assisted by my electorate officers Lisa McBride and Catherine Wall. To those three ladies I extend a big thank you. Special mention must also go to the St John Ambulance Brigade volunteers Terry and Marty, who were in attendance ready to go to the aid of anyone who needed help.

The New South Wales Government is committed to seniors: one way we show our recognition is through the Government Community Service Awards. This year I was pleased to present two awards at the morning concert to two outstanding seniors from my electorate, Mrs Norma Turner and Mr Geoff Turner. Geoff Turner was awarded the Community Service Award in recognition of his contribution to swimming clubs on the Central Coast. Mr Turner has had a 40-year involvement with Central Coast Swimming and the Woy Woy Swimming Club, of which he is a foundation member. This is an amazing achievement and displays Geoff's total dedication to the promotion of swimming amongst the locals, both young and not so young. Geoff also is involved in the Brisbane Water Branch of the National Malay and Borneo Veterans Association Australia, and is actively involved in the Granfriends program at Umina Public School. Geoff also has played a big role in the local Neighbourhood Watch.

Granfriends is a program at a number of schools within my electorate, including Umina Public School, in which seniors are encouraged to come to the school and assist in classes each week. This successful program is aimed at bridging the generation gap and provides an opportunity for seniors to connect with the children and thus have a positive influence on their lives. I commend Geoff for becoming involved in this fine program. Mrs Norma Turner, Geoff's wife, was the other recipient of the Community Service Award. Mrs Turner also has been heavily involved in the Woy Woy Swimming Club, of which she too is a foundation member. She also has been a member of Central Coast Swimming for 40 years. Mrs Turner has strongly supported her husband, Geoff, in his many community roles. Both Mr and Mrs Turner are very worthy recipients of the New South Wales Government Community Service Award. It was my great pleasure to present them with their awards at my Seniors Week concert. I look forward to again hosting Seniors Week concerts during Seniors Week 2010.

### **WAGGA WAGGA RENAL DIALYSIS SERVICE**

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga) [12.27 p.m.]: On many occasions in this place I have raised the need to improve dialysis services for Wagga Wagga and its surrounding areas. Again I bring to the attention of the House the desperate need for new accommodation for the Wagga Wagga renal dialysis service. Through community campaigning we have managed to double the number of dialysis beds to deal with the ever-increasing scourge of kidney failure. However, the situation has become intolerable. The antiquated building that houses the dialysis unit is in desperate need of expansion. On occasions we have written to the Minister for Health and he has responded through the Parliamentary Secretary. I appreciate those replies, but nothing has happened. In the latest correspondence I have received, dated 15 January 2009, Chief Executive, Ms Heather Gray, advised:

Greater Southern Area Health Service ... has requested the Wagga Wagga Integrated Service Manager give consideration to utilising an adjacent building to determine whether it is possible to provide some extra space for staff officers in the short term.

To this day nothing has happened. I have raised previously in the House the problems experienced by the Wagga Wagga dialysis unit, but they are worth repeating. The unit is too small. World standards require nine square metres per patient but the Wagga Wagga unit has less than half the world standard requirement per patient. The unit has no curtains to draw to give patients privacy and no sheets to place on chairs to help with infection control. Nurses have no privacy and are required to sit in the middle of the centre with patients as they eat their lunch. Patients have no area on which to place meals or drinks except on the arm of the chair, and they cannot move around freely as patients do in other centres.

There is not a single dialysis machine capable of haemodiafiltration whereas there should be at least two that target the larger particles in the blood stream, such as Beta<sub>2</sub> microglobulin. When patients are brought in to the centre on a stretcher it is difficult for them to be moved around in the centre. I am reliably informed that Wagga Wagga Base Hospital has other areas to accommodate the renal dialysis centre. Indeed, the old physiotherapists centre has ample room, which would allow the public to sit inside and wait for the family member receiving dialysis rather than outside in the elements.

The present situation is intolerable and, apart from correspondence, nothing has happened. Patients have no privacy at present and this causes problems with infection control. Mr Roger Southwood has continually campaigned on behalf of his good wife and all patients who access the facility. I accept that resources are tight and even though we have the promise that a new hospital will be delivered one day, that

could be some years off and patients cannot wait. The renal dialysis services must be relocated to a transportable building on the site or transferred to a decent facility that will accommodate the growing need for renal dialysis. Mr Southwood has identified some property but if the Minister ordered the department to resolve the accommodation crisis, budget funds could be allocated in the upcoming budget. I ask that the member for Macquarie Fields make a commitment to come back, either to me through the Parliament or through correspondence, and address the concerns I have raised because the situation is intolerable.

### **TRIBUTE TO MONSIGNOR JOHN GRANNAL, MBE**

**Mr GERARD MARTIN** (Bathurst) [12.32 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to the late Monsignor John Grannal, MBE, who died last December. Monsignor Grannal was born in Canowindra to a very strict Catholic family. He entered the priesthood as a young man and spent his whole life working as a Catholic priest in the Bathurst diocese. I knew him many years ago when he was the assistant priest at Lithgow when I was a member of the Catholic youth organisation there at St Patrick's parish. John, or Grassy Grannal, as he was more commonly known in rugby league circles, was a great rugby league player. He played for Orange Cymys. The member for Blacktown might welcome this analogy. He was a dead ringer for Brian Clay—Poppa Clay—who played for St George and Australia back in the late 1950s and 1960s. His nickname Grassy came from his tremendous tackling ability where anyone he lined up ended up being grassed and the name stuck with him all his life.

John Doyle, who was a friend of mine, another Lithgow boy and more commonly known as the Roy Slaven of Roy and HG, used Grassy Grannal as one of his heroes in his highly rated satire show on 2JJJ *This Sporting Life*. I remember some years back when the De La Salle brothers were leaving Lithgow John came back as the guest speaker. He spoke about his career and how he based a lot of his comedy sketches on Grassy Grannal, whom he had never met in his life. It just so happened that Monsignor Grannal was in the audience. John came down off the stage, Monsignor Grannal moved from the back of the club where 600 or 700 people were in attendance, and they met in the centre of the club to massive applause from all present. It was a very poignant moment.

A highlight of Monsignor Grannal's service as a priest was when he served in the Royal Australian Air Force as a chaplain. He was posted to Vietnam, where he became friend to the brother of a former member of this House and my predecessor, Mick Clough. During his work in Vietnam, typical of his selflessness and service to others, he was involved in setting up an orphanage over there. He was awarded the MBE and honoured by the Vietnam Government with one of its highest honours. Monsignor Grannal never spoke about his good deeds; he was a very modest man. His sister, Lola Proctor, told me recently that he was a loving brother to his family, proud of his heritage, and a very humble man. Humility could have been his middle name. He never said a bad word about anyone. He was all embracing to everyone. Indeed, he lived his life as a true disciple of Jesus Christ, with humility and compassion. He loved his role as a parish priest and never aspired to higher office. I think he was embarrassed by the title "Monsignor".

His last years were dogged by serious illness but he never complained. Last year on the day of Mick Clough's memorial service in Lithgow Monsignor Grannal discharged himself from Nepean Hospital early in the morning, and our good friend John Kearns drove him back to Lithgow, where he celebrated the mass at the memorial service, so high did he hold Mick in his esteem. His last parish was in Portland, from which he retired a couple of years ago, but while working there he became very involved with the RSL and became president of the sub-branch. He did considerable work behind the scenes with the St Vincent de Paul Society and helping those in need. A few weeks ago I had the great honour of opening a youth centre in Portland named after Monsignor Grannal.

John Grannal is one of life's unforgettable characters. He lived his life for the service of his church, his faith and the betterment of his fellow man. It has been an honour and a privilege to be associated with him. John was loved by all who knew him. I think of his good friends John Kearns, Stomper Staines, whom Roy and HG also used as one of their characters, Charlie and Christine O'Mahoney, who cared for him when he was very ill, and all the members of the Social Justice Committee. One of his strengths was his belief in social justice and he was very active in keeping the Social Justice Committee working. Vale to Monsignor John Grannal, a true disciple of Jesus and a man loved by all.

### **BRIDGES NETWORK**

**Mr PAUL GIBSON** (Blacktown) [12.37 p.m.]: Last week two of my constituents came to see me. One was a lovely lady by the name of Tirrania Suhood, the manager of Bridges, an organisation in Blacktown that

connects families and communities together. Mark Wigley, the project manager from Grow Sydney, accompanied her. They brought with them a press release, which stated that they had visited me back in 2003 at which time Tirrania handed me a petition with 5,000 signatures asking the State Government for a funding grant. The press release stated:

Mr Gibson said he would speak to the ministers for health and community services about the requests.

The Government came to the party and granted the organisations that funding. They visited me not only to ask for more funding but also to update me on progress with their organisations. Bridges has operated in Blacktown for more than 30 years and its motto is "There's more to drug use than just drugs". The organisation works to connect and strengthen individuals, families and communities, with a particular focus on the complex issues of alcohol and other drug use. They use the innovative, collaborative Bridges network approach to develop strengths and share resources. Beyond addressing drug problems the Bridges network approach builds communities, assists individuals and helps families dealing with financial, social and emotional stress.

Bridges offers counselling for individuals, couples and families, telephone counselling, information, educational groups, therapeutic groups, outreach counselling groups, community development activities, and networking of communities and organisations to share resources and information. The Bridges network's success is evident from the experience of people who have accessed its services and in the partnerships it has developed with community organisations, government departments and other stakeholders. Bridges understands that working together with a focus on strengths and opportunities is the best way forward, both for dealing with drug and alcohol problems and for addressing a broad range of issues facing communities and families.

The Bridges network consulted me and said that resources are being effectively and efficiently channelled to projects, activities and programs that will have the most impact on as many people as is possible in the community. The Bridges network approach works for families who are facing complex and difficult problems. It is a scalable and flexible solution to social issues, including drug use, and the time has come to expand the scope of its programs. For example, over the past two years, Bridges has helped more than 1,200 individuals, provided training for more than 300 teachers and community workers to implement the Bridges network approach, and has reached more than 7,000 visitors on its website alone.

I cite a couple of examples of people who have been connected with Bridges. For the sake of confidentiality, I will refer to the persons involved as Tom and David respectively. Tom came in for help with his drug use problem. The Bridges counsellor recognised that Tom's relationship with his partner and children had run into problems. By working directly on strengthening these relationships, Tom was able to refocus his life. He stopped using and said, "Life is so much better without drugs and my relationship with my wife is much better and more important now." Another example is David, a father of two, who had been using cannabis. Rather than going to school, his children wanted to stay at home to look after him. They were falling behind in their schoolwork and were struggling to learn. Using a strengths-based approach and direct parenting support combined with a collaborative approach with the school, a counsellor helped David to learn more about how to model healthy choices for his children. The children are doing much better at school now, and David is receiving ongoing assistance to develop his parenting skills.

Bridges engages in very worthwhile community projects—things that governments should support. The Government should provide support from the perspective not just of financial assistance but also out of a realisation that every dollar contributed to supporting an organisation such as Bridges leads to an outcome whose benefits are very difficult to measure because they are so great. While I realise that Bridges receives Federal Government funding, the State Government should be supporting organisations such as Bridges as much as is possible because they give untold support to communities that all members of Parliament represent.

### **DUBBO COMMUNITY GARDEN**

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL** (Dubbo) [12.42 p.m.]: Today I draw the attention of the House to a proposal for a Dubbo community garden on Education New South Wales land at Fitzroy Street, North Dubbo. Earlier this week I met the Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth, to seek her support and sign-off on this wonderful proposal. The idea of a community garden is not new to Dubbo. Similar proposals have been made a few times over the past 10 years. The most recent proposal emanates from a committed group of people consisting of Libby McIntyre, Phil Priest and their friends. They want to see their dream of a community garden come true. They want to bring the project to fruition and make the project part of building a stronger community in Dubbo.



In the 1990s there was a surge of interest in community gardens in Sydney and in other cities. Community gardens served populations throughout the Depression and have survived times of affluence. Now it seems that community gardens and city farms are finding renewed vigour nationally. The benefits of community gardening include good health. Community gardening is an active pursuit yielding fresh food. People learn how to grow their own food and they and their families have access to fresh, nutritious food and save money. Gardening also involves healthy physical activity. Another benefit is learning. Growing plants is mentally stimulating and adds to an individual's knowledge and expertise. Community gardens are used by TAFE, schools and universities as learning venues. Community gardens are used also for community education in matters such as waste minimisation, the recycling of waste through composting and mulching, and promoting a more sustainable lifestyle.

Another benefit is the social benefit of giving a helping hand to communities in need, and community gardens increase community ownership of public spaces. The gardens provide a social activity involving shared decision making, problem solving and negotiation, thereby increasing those skills among gardeners. They are places where people come together with a common purpose. Community gardens are places where people can get together and meet others. They also can be used to build a sense of community and belonging. Another benefit is urban improvement. Community gardens re-green vacant lots and bring diversity to public open space in other areas.

Groups in Dubbo that potentially benefit or help out include mental health support groups, self-help support groups, aged services, disability support groups, social housing tenants, community organisations, education facilities and institutions, employment services, youth services, men's and women's groups, Police and Community Youth Clubs, early intervention groups, child care facilities, young parents groups, and government as well as non-government agencies. All those organisations have been approached by the group that has come together for the purpose of establishing a community garden in Dubbo.

With the help of the Dubbo City Council, the Dubbo Community Garden Group has inspected a number of potential sites where a community garden could be set up. The ideal site seems to be the old agricultural plot in Fitzroy Street, North Dubbo. The Dubbo High School was the first public high school in Dubbo. It has been closed for a few years now and has been converted to Dubbo junior and senior campuses. But where the agriculture took place was over in Fitzroy Street, alongside the Dubbo North Public School in North Dubbo, which has welcomed the group's wish to use the small former agricultural plot for a community garden that will include involvement of the Men's Shed and the indigenous community—all of whose members have come on board to work with the community garden group.

When I met the Minister last week I informed her that the irrigation, infrastructure and basic requirements had already been met, and that all it would take to make the community garden become a reality was for the Minister to sign off on the project. The site has many important features. It is central to North Dubbo as well as to the whole of Dubbo; it is fully fenced with a two-metre fence with one double gate, making the site very secure; it has high visibility; water is available on the site and an established irrigation system exists; there is a small amenities block; there is a second structure or shed; electricity power is connected to the site; there is easy access, adequate parking and a few houses close by, with industrial land on the eastern fence; and it is close to the Dubbo North Public School.

The site is a great facility. The establishment of a community garden will bring many benefits to the site. The proposal has the support of many people in the community. People involved in the education department support the project, but they do not have the authority to sign off on use of the land for this project. Jacob Chatfield is the new community development worker who also works with the Botanic Garden Trust in Sydney. He has given the group ideas and has offered to meet the group to assist it to establish the facility. Laurinne Campbell is the manager of Community Regeneration—Western for Housing New South Wales, and she thinks the community garden is a fantastic idea. She has said that Housing New South Wales will support the group's works and the work of the management committee. She stated:

I will continue to make available Building Stronger community staff to assist in any way and I am keen to look at other opportunities to support financially the community garden once it is up and running or at the least once a plot-site has been approved.

The Minister for Water, Mr Phillip Costa, also has been approached for his assistance in making the project become a reality. I encourage the Minister for Education and Training to sign off on the project. I have spoken to her and she is chasing up the matter for me as I speak. It is hoped that a satisfactory response will be forthcoming from the Government. The group is offering a peppercorn rent. I believe that the block of land would be of more benefit to the city of Dubbo than it would be to the New South Wales Treasury.

### TRAIL BIKE RIDING IN HORNINGSEA PARK

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.47 p.m.], by leave: I draw to the attention of the House concerns expressed to me by residents of Horningsea Park regarding antisocial behaviour associated with trail bike riding that occurs in the Horningsea Park area. For some time many of the residents in McCredie Drive have been complaining about the frequent use of unregistered trail bikes along the pedestrian paths and bike tracks. The most vigorous of those has been Mr Peter Rosemond, whose persistence in pursuing this matter has been the reason we now have resolution of the issue. Trail bikes cross from Prestons to Cabramatta Creek despite repeated efforts by the Liverpool City Council to block access with rocks. Trail bike riding can occur at any time, day or night, and the vehicles usually are unregistered. The riders cross vacant land and go into the Carnes Hill Marketplace.

I have been in contact with the Green Valley Local Area Command and I asked the police to do what they can. However, the problem persisted until the Liverpool council appeared to have blocked all access across Cabramatta Creek. The police tell me that it is difficult to stop the riders unless they are caught in the act. I sent a mail-out to many residents of Horningsea Park asking for their support in stopping these antisocial acts. Many trail bike riders use sites with impunity in the knowledge that, if they are caught riding an unregistered light vehicle, they do not lose points from their licence, despite the fact that, at least by my estimate, at least half of the drivers are old enough to be licensed. I acknowledge that the fines are considerable; however, I believe that more still can be done. I urge the Minister for Transport to look at adding demerit point penalties to fines for riding unregistered trail bikes.

Currently, the only way to lose demerit points is by driving an unregistered heavy vehicle. I suggest that the law be changed to allow for demerit points for driving an unregistered vehicle of any size and, if people are unlicensed, to restrict their ability to apply for licences to deter the illegal use of these vehicles. The trail bike issue also causes more than just the obvious problems. For example, the fact that a bridge across Cabramatta Creek—a bridge that would have helped students from John Edmondson High School walk to school more safely—would have become a thoroughfare for these bikes is one of the reasons that the bridge was never built. Finally we can see a light at the end of the tunnel. I will read from Mr Rosemond's last email. He wrote:

The remainder of large rocks have now been laid along the upper bank of Cabramatta Creek crossing at McCredie Drive with an immediate impact to Trail Bikes.

I am extremely happy & pleased to note that since the rock wall was complete about 3-4 weeks ago not 1 trail bike has attempted to cross this creek line. We have noticed a 100% decline in trail bikes attempting to [cross] this creek line from either Horningsea Park or Prestons.

It is amazing how much peace & quiet we have all had recently in which all weekend not 1 trail bike has been spotted. Prior to this rock wall being completed we would encounter at least 6-10 trail bikes each weekend—at all hours. This has been the most peaceful month in over 7 years of living here in which it is tremendous how effective this rock wall has been.

Andrew, on behalf of the residents of McCredie Drive & Taubman Drive Horningsea Park, I wish to thank you & Liverpool City Council's support in assisting us with this nuisance problem around this area. Everyone that I have spoken to cannot believe how peaceful it has been from no trail bikes.

Cannot thank you all enough.

I sincerely hope that the problem has been resolved for the people of Horningsea Park. We now have a window of opportunity to change the laws—while the people of Horningsea Park get some sleep. I have approached, and will again approach, the Minister for Roads on the issue of demerit points for riding unregistered trail bikes. Support from all members on this issue would be most welcome.

### MONA VALE HOSPITAL

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater) [12.52 p.m.], by leave: I speak in support of Mona Vale Hospital. Recently a decision was made by Pittwater Council—on the motion by Councillor Harvey Rose, a longstanding advocate of Mona Vale Hospital and member of the Save Mona Vale Hospital Committee—to write to local parliamentarians seeking their support for Mona Vale Hospital. I am delighted to confirm my support for our local community hospital, Mona Vale, in this place. The House should be aware of Pittwater council's continuing commitment to supporting our local community hospital at Mona Vale. The Pittwater community has been strong and consistent in its support for Mona Vale Hospital ever since it began serving the healthcare needs of the northern beaches in 1964.

I am also committed to supporting Mona Vale Hospital as a vital component of our local health system. The population of Pittwater and surrounding districts is growing and ageing, so the demand on hospital services is likely to increase significantly over coming decades. The unique site of Mona Vale Hospital makes it an ideal location for many health services, including rehabilitation and palliative care. Good public transport and easy access means that Mona Vale Hospital is convenient for visitors and ideal for emergency access by ambulances, private vehicles and helicopters.

Plans for a new hospital at Frenchs Forest will provide a much-needed replacement for Manly Hospital, and may provide a range of new services for residents of Pittwater, reducing their need to travel to Royal North Shore Hospital for certain procedures. However, plans for the new hospital at Frenchs Forest are still at an early stage of development, with completion many years away. The local community is justified in questioning the Government's commitment to building the new northern beaches hospital at Frenchs Forest. In the meantime, the Government needs to remain committed to the retention of all existing services at Mona Vale, and all necessary improvements and upgrades regardless of how long it takes to build a new hospital. Even when a new hospital is built, there will continue to be a real need for our local hospital at Mona Vale to provide a range of acute and allied health services. The Department of Health should begin planning for the future now.

With a burgeoning population of almost a quarter of a million people, the northern beaches needs two hospitals, and one of them needs to be at Mona Vale. I will continue to work hard to support the amazing staff at Mona Vale Hospital, and I totally agree with the view shared by Pittwater council and our local community that we need to ensure a sustainable future for our local hospital. I call on the New South Wales Government to ensure that the real needs of Mona Vale Hospital and its hardworking staff—things like medical equipment and also physical improvements, such as asbestos removal and air conditioning—are acknowledged and met.

#### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE FAMILY SERVICES INC.**

**Mr PAUL McLEAY** (Heathcote) [12.55 p.m.], by leave: Recently I had the privilege of attending, together with the member for Menai, the annual general meeting of Sutherland Shire Family Services Inc. I understand that the member for Menai spoke about some aspects of that annual general meeting earlier this week. Sutherland Shire Family Services, formerly Sutherland Shire Family Support Service, is a shire-wide service that commenced operation in October 1987, when Joy Goodsell was employed as coordinator. Joy retired at the end of February 2007.

After some moving forward, Genevieve Rankin, who was the Mayor of Sutherland Shire at the time, organised the construction of a multi-function centre at Jannali, which housed the first purpose-built family support service in New South Wales. The service moved into the centre in August 1995, with Djanaba Occasional Care Service opening in January 1996 after more childcare workers were employed. "Djanaba" means "laughter" in the local Tharawal indigenous language. Since August 1996 the service has auspiced the Southern Sydney Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, which provides an extremely valuable service to women and children seeking protection from domestic violence through the justice system.

The service, of which I am the patron, takes a multifaceted approach to caring for families in the Sutherland and St George areas. I draw the House's attention to two of the highlights of the annual general meeting. First, we heard a presentation on the St George-Sutherland Aboriginal Family Worker Project. The family workers who run the program—Lynda Williams, Wendy Bunn and Danielle De Costa—gave us a fantastic insight into the project, explaining the services they provide. As part of the program the Aboriginal family workers work in partnership with health services and other government agencies to improve the outcomes for, and wellbeing of, Aboriginal families and carers who live in the Sutherland and St George areas. We also heard a presentation by Diane Manns, whom many people from the service know very well. Diane runs the Domestic Violence Pro-Active Support Service [DVPASS] project, which aims to provide support for families impacted by domestic violence. Through preventative early intervention strategies, along with improving access to services for victims of domestic violence, the project has been a lifeline for many families impacted by domestic violence.

Another highlight of the annual general meeting was a presentation to Bev Lazarou. Bev is a wonderful human being; an amazing woman who has dedicated her life to supporting women. Although it is a loss to the Sutherland Shire Family Support Service, Bev Lazarou has resigned from the service to take up a mentoring-support position within the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program unit of Legal Aid. So it is a great win for all women across New South Wales, with Bev providing a mentoring and support role there.

Obviously the service has come a long way since the wonderful Joy Goodsell, former Sutherland Shire Citizen of the Year and true patriot, was running it. Now the service is under the careful and watchful eye of Kathy Jones, a remarkable woman who does an amazing job. For the past six years Kathy has been assisted by the service's wonderful president, Helena Menadue, who has now stepped down from that role. I thank Helena for the wonderful stewardship she has provided to the management committee over the past six years. In the Sutherland Shire Family Services' twenty-second year—it celebrated its twenty-first birthday last October—the service is going from strength to strength because of the wonderful commitment of all the women and the one man who work there, together with the support of friends of the service. They play an important role in the shire.

**Question—That private members' statements be noted—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Private members' statements noted.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to sessional orders, at 1.00 p.m. until  
Tuesday 5 May 2009 at 1.00 p.m.**

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