

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 4 June 2009

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**The Speaker (The Hon. George Richard Torbay)** took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

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

## COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### Membership

**CHAIR:** I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

That Ms Cusack be discharged from the Committee on Children and Young People, and that Mr Ajaka be appointed as a member of the committee.

Legislative Council  
3 June 2009

PETER PRIMROSE  
President

## HERITAGE AMENDMENT BILL 2009

**Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with an amendment.**

**Consideration of Legislative Council's amendment set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of Motions

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

## RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (MORTGAGEE REPOSSESSIONS) BILL 2009

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Virginia Judge.**

### Agreement in Principle

**Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE** (Strathfield—Minister for Fair Trading, Minister for Citizenship, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts) [10.10 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to introduce the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Mortgagee Repossessions) Bill 2009. The bill will for the first time give all tenants in New South Wales important protection when a mortgagee seeks to recover possession of rented premises. Presently, the amount of notice given to tenants to vacate in these particular situations is entirely up to the mortgage lender involved. Some unfortunate tenants return home to find that the locks have been changed by the bank and a note pinned to the door advising them on how to go about retrieving their possessions. Other tenants may be given only a few days or a week or so to move out, if they are lucky. Clearly, this is an unacceptable situation to all fair-minded people, and tenants deserve to be better protected.

The Government has conducted a comprehensive review of existing tenancy laws. During the consultation period urgent legislative reform regarding the plight of innocent tenants caught up in the crossfire

between banks and landlords received almost unanimous support. New South Wales has one of the highest proportions of people living in rental homes in Australia, with about one-third of the community renting their homes. This Government intends to introduce a wide range of reforms to the tenancy laws arising from the recently completed review. I expect to be in a position to release an exposure draft bill for public comment before the end of the year. However, given the impact of the global recession, the Rees Government believes it is critical that these amendments, which will protect tenants from having to pack up their bags at the whim of a mortgagee, be separated from the overall reform package and introduced without delay.

The current economic downturn has created unprecedented challenges exposing more mum and dad investors to the risk of defaulting on mortgages. Currently, there are more than 644,000 residential leases in the private rental market in New South Wales, which is mostly dominated by small investors who rarely own more than one or two properties. Among the leading reasons borrowers default on their loans are temporary unemployment, illness or relationship breakdowns. We are all acutely aware that unemployment is set to increase as a result of the current global recession. While there has been a slight downturn in repossession writs executed in New South Wales, the Rees Government is being upfront with the people of New South Wales about the future. In the first three months of this year 395 writs were executed compared to 423 writs executed in the first three months of 2008. While this figure includes owner-occupiers, many innocent tenants through no fault of their own face losing their homes with little or no warning as a result of the financial problems of their landlords.

Being evicted in such a manner has a significant impact on the lives of affected tenants. That is why the Government believes it is absolutely critical that these amendments be given priority. Specifically, the bill has three main objects: firstly, to require mortgagees to give tenants at least 30 days' notice if they wish to recover vacant possession of the rental property; secondly, in cases where a tenant is told to leave by a mortgagee, to specify that no rent is payable during the period of the notice given; and, thirdly, to put in place a simple system to allow a mortgagee to authorise release of the tenant's rental bond. The first objective is the most important as it will put an end to the practice of tenants being asked to leave with little notice. The 30-day notice period was one of more than 100 reform proposals contained in the report entitled "Residential Tenancy Law Reform—A New Direction", which was released by the Government for consultation purposes.

This particular set of proposals regarding mortgagee repossessions drew a wide cross-section of support from those lodging submissions; most people acknowledged the obvious inequity experienced by tenants under the present system. The Government believes that 30 days represents a fair balance between the interests of tenants and mortgagees. Of course, it will give those tenants affected a reasonable opportunity to find another rental property while not unduly delaying the sale processes for the mortgagee. Thirty days is consistent with the current notice period that can be given when a landlord ordinarily sells rented premises and the new owner requires vacant possession. The period is consistent also with the current approach taken in Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania, which all require tenants to be given at least 28 days' notice by a mortgagee. Having said this, the bill will now allow mortgagees to give tenants more than 30 days' notice to vacate or to extend the notice period given already if the tenant is experiencing difficulty finding alternate accommodation.

In this connection, I appeal to mortgagee lenders in these difficult economic times to consider compassionately all such requests for more time from tenants on a case-by-case basis. Where New South Wales differs from other States will be in the provision of a rent-free period for those tenants who find themselves caught up in this difficult situation. The bill provides that when a tenant is given notice to vacate by a mortgagee, they will not be required to pay any rent, fee or any charge during the 30-day notice period, and they can recover any rent that they may have paid in advance. The purpose of this amendment is to provide a level of immediate compensation for tenants to help cover their relocation expenses. This includes removalists' costs and paying for electricity and other utilities to be connected at their new home. Unfortunately, on occasions tenants are evicted by a mortgagee just days or weeks into a new tenancy agreement, resulting in the money the tenant spent on moving in essentially being wasted.

The rent holiday provided by the bill is the first time such a measure has been introduced in Australia and it will provide a quicker, simpler and more effective way of ensuring that some funds are on hand to meet the immediate expenses of tenants placed in this situation through no fault of their own. Tenants can and will continue to be able to seek additional compensation from their former landlord for the loss of the tenancy, but this takes time and effort on the part of the tenant. Where the landlord has financial difficulties or has been declared bankrupt, pursuing them for compensation often is a fruitless exercise. A tenant that already has paid rent in advance, which covers part of the rent-free period, will be entitled to a refund from whoever has the money—either the landlord, the landlord's agent or the mortgagee.

If the refund is not made, the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal [CTTT] will have the power to make appropriate orders. This could include ordering the mortgagee to pay the money from the sale proceeds in the event that the landlord is bankrupt or the amount is otherwise irrecoverable. The New Directions report had initially proposed that the rent holiday apply only for a fortnight. However, many submissions to the review argued that this amount was inadequate. The Government has listened to the views of the public on this matter and has decided to extend the rent holiday to equal the notice period.

The third important amendment contained in the bill will enable the Rental Bond Board to refund the tenant's rental bond early after receiving written authorisation from the mortgagee. Presently the Rental Bonds Act does not recognise mortgagees in any capacity. This can cause delays in obtaining a bond refund for tenants if they cannot get the former landlord or agent to sign the claim form. Allowing mortgagees who issue eviction notices to also authorise bond refunds should help more tenants get their bond back before they need to pay the next one. This reform received general support when it was first outlined in the New Directions report. This amendment will not interfere with the right of the former landlord to lodge a claim against the bond if, for instance, they believe the tenant owes them rent from before a mortgagee agreement commencing. If such a claim is received before the bond is released in accordance with a mortgagee authorisation, the Rental Bond Board will retain the bond until the dispute is settled between the parties or by the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal.

The bill contains a number of other amendments that are largely ancillary to the three main objectives. The bill clarifies the right of the mortgagee, or more specifically the real estate agent they appoint to handle the sale, to gain access to show the property to prospective purchasers. This access will be limited to a reasonable number of occasions and will be subject to agreement being reached with the tenant on the actual dates and times of each inspection. The bill makes it clear that all existing tenants will benefit from these changes. The only exception will be in those cases where the Supreme Court proceedings have been finalised and the mortgagee is already in the process of recovering possession.

The bill clarifies that these amendments apply despite the terms of mortgage contracts or the wording of Supreme Court orders. The terms of the bill also make it clear that mortgagees will face the same penalties as landlords if they recover possession of a rented property without giving the required notice to vacate or before the specified date in the notice has expired. These amendments provide certainty for financial institutions and those investors who have already lost their property to the bank and they introduce fairness for tenants caught in the system. Given that mortgagees already deal with similar notice requirements in most other States there should not be any difficulty in complying with these new provisions.

The Tenants Union is on the public record as calling for these changes to be made to the tenancy laws as a matter of urgency. Other groups such as the Real Estate Institute and the Australian Banking Association also support these reforms. The Property Owners Association does not oppose giving better protection to tenants in this fashion. These measures deserve bipartisan support. The Hon. Catherine Cusack, when she was Opposition spokesperson for Fair Trading, is on the record committing the Opposition to supporting a bill of this nature. I look forward to the new Opposition spokesperson, the member for Albury, reaffirming this commitment.

Some have suggested that when a landlord has defaulted, the mortgagee should be required to step into the shoes of the landlord so that the tenancy can continue at least until the property is sold. While the Government considered this approach we do not agree that this is the way to proceed. This would impose costs on mortgagees to take over the tenancy management role. Such costs would be a particular burden on smaller mortgagees. Some tenants may not wish to go through the inconvenience of having a steady stream of potential buyers traipsing through their home only to be asked to leave at the end of the day. They may prefer a clean break.

There will also be those who will suggest that these laws should have been introduced earlier. The Government does not accept that it should have rushed through hasty, ill-prepared legislation just for the sake of being seen to do something. We have taken the time necessary to examine all of the complex issues and potential ramifications to ensure that no unintended consequences result from these amendments. These changes are important not only for tenants but for landlords and mortgagees as well. They deserve proper consideration.

These amendments should make mortgagees stop and think about whether they really need to evict tenants in order to sell the property. The bill specifically recognises the option for mortgagees to offer the tenant a new lease if they want the rent to keep coming in until the premises are sold. If mortgagees continue to desire

vacant possession, the bill will ensure that tenants are given a reasonable period of time to find another home and immediate compensation to help with the costs involved. In doing so the bill will not unduly interfere with mortgagee sales or discourage investment in the rental property market.

I am proud to say that this bill is the result of a genuine consultation process. I wish to acknowledge the contributions of all the organisations and individuals who assisted in the development of this bill. In particular I make special mention of the role played by Alison Routley from the Office of Fair Trading's Policy Division. Alison was responsible for reading and summarising the more than 1,500 submissions received during the course of the review. Sadly, Alison recently lost her courageous battle with cancer. This bill is a fitting tribute to her dedication and hard work. This bill is tangible evidence of the Rees Government's commitment to helping working families and achieving social justice for vulnerable members of the community. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REGULATORY REFORM)  
BILL 2009**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Jodi McKay, on behalf of Mr Joseph Tripodi.**

**Agreement in Principle**

**Ms JODI McKAY** (Newcastle—Minister for Tourism, Minister for the Hunter, Minister for Science and Medical Research, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)) [10.28 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

It is my privilege to introduce the Occupational Licensing Legislation Amendment (Regulatory Reform) Bill 2009. This bill will remove the requirement for certain tradespeople to be licensed in New South Wales. These changes will save costs for New South Wales businesses by removing unnecessary regulation without compromising the quality of protection for consumers. In the home building sector the bill will remove licensing for floor finishers and coverers, kit home suppliers, property inspectors and lift mechanics. The bill will clarify that kit home suppliers must continue to meet contract and information disclosure requirements under the Home Building Act 2004, and disputes about kit home suppliers may continue to be heard by the Home Building Division of the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal.

The bill also will remove licensing for optical dispensers and clarify that optical dispensers will continue to be subject to the Health Care Complaints Act 1993. The removal of these licences will save businesses in these industries \$900,000 every year in administrative costs. This includes fees, as well as time taken to apply for and renew licences, and the costs of complying with unnecessary education and insurance requirements. The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that regulation is required, reasonable and responsive. We are continuously seeking ways to reduce regulatory burden and red tape.

In May 2008, the Productivity Commission released its report on its review of Australia's consumer policy framework. The Productivity Commission recommended that the Council of Australian Governments Business Regulation and Competition Working Group should oversee a reform program for industry-specific consumer regulation, including identifying and repealing unnecessary regulation, initially focusing on requirements that apply in only one or two jurisdictions. In response to this program of work, the New South Wales Government reviewed licensing of eleven occupations identified as being licensed only in New South Wales, or in New South Wales and one or two other States, to determine whether the requirement is justified, and to remove any unnecessary regulation.

The New South Wales Better Regulation Office review, which was completed in April, looked at the costs and benefits of licensing these occupations for consumers, licensees and Government. It assessed whether licensing is the best way to protect consumers, or whether there are other less costly ways to do so. The review included a full public consultation process. The review is just one element of the Rees Government's comprehensive program of red tape reduction, and will contribute to our goal to cut red tape for business by \$500 million by June 2011.

I turn now to consider the bill in detail. The bill will amend several Acts. The bill amends the Home Building Act 2004 to remove the flooring contractor licence, and therefore the requirement for floor finishers

and coverers to be licensed. The range of flooring covered by the flooring contractor licence essentially relates to decorative aspects and the appearance of flooring, and is not considered structural work. The licence provides information to consumers about the educational qualifications of a contractor, requires the contractor to be insured, and provides the consumer with a right of redress in the event of substandard work. However, in practice the benefits to consumers of the licensing scheme are low.

Data provided by the Office of Fair Trading indicates that there are few serious complaints about floor finishers and coverers. The relatively low value of consumer flooring contracts means that insurance requirements are rarely activated, and disputes can be heard in the general division of the Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal. Protections already provided under the Consumer Claims Act 1998 and information provided on the Office of Fair Trading website are sufficient to address the risks associated with non-structural flooring work. A contractor licence will continue to be required for structural flooring work and could be fulfilled by licences such as general building work and carpentry.

The bill amends the Home Building Act 2004 to remove the requirement for kit home suppliers to be licensed. Licensing of kit home suppliers was introduced in response to an event in 1990 in which a major kit home supplier collapsed and consumers lost \$2.7 million in deposits. The Home Building Act imposes probity, insurance, contractual and information disclosure requirements on suppliers. It also provides for consumers a right of redress in the event of poor quality dealings. However, the review found licensing does not provide any particular protection for consumers over and above other provisions in the Act. The compulsory contract and information disclosure provisions and dispute resolution mechanisms will be retained, and are sufficient to address the financial risks that consumers face when purchasing a kit home.

Given the high value of most kit home purchases, the bill amends the Home Building Act to ensure that consumer rights will continue to be protected through the home building division of the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal. The bill also amends the Home Building Act to remove the requirement for lift mechanics to be licensed through elimination of the mechanical services contractor licence. The usefulness of the mechanical services licence is limited in practice. All activities carried out under this licence that pose a significant threat to the health and safety of consumers are adequately covered by other regulatory frameworks.

Occupational health and safety laws apply to many of the activities covered by the mechanical services contractor licence, and these requirements are more comprehensive than are conditions under the licence. Also, many activities relating to mechanical services are considered specialist work which may only be performed by an appropriately licensed or certified tradesperson such as an electrician. By removing the mechanical services contractor licence, the bill will reduce duplicative and unnecessary regulation and reduce costs for business.

The bill amends the Home Building Act 2004 to remove the requirement for pre-purchase property inspectors to be licensed, through elimination of the building consultancy licence. Pre-purchase inspections are visual only, and do not necessarily confirm the degree of any structural problems or the cost of rectification. A pre-purchase inspection does not include termite and other pest inspections. The review found that with guidance on what skills and experience to look for, consumers should be able to engage a suitably qualified person to undertake a house inspection. In relation to the abolition of these four home building licences, the bill will provide that any person who holds a current licence that is no longer required will be able to apply to the Office of Fair Trading for a pro rata refund of the fees paid for that licence.

The bill will repeal the Optical Dispensers Act 1963 and the Optical Dispensers Regulation 2007 to remove the requirement for optical dispensers to be licensed. The licensing scheme provides a mechanism for lodging and handling complaints about licence holders. However, few issues have arisen which could not be resolved between a consumer and an optical dispenser. Other jurisdictions do not require licensing to manage health and safety risks, and there is no evidence that consumers in any of those jurisdictions have been harmed by the absence of licensing. For these reasons, the Government has agreed that licensing should be removed.

On repeal of the Act, optical dispensers will be subject to the Code of Conduct for Unregistered Health Professionals in schedule 3 of the Public Health (General) Regulation 2002. The bill will make minor amendments to the Health Care Complaints Act 1993 to ensure that complaints about breaches of the code by optical dispensers can continue to be heard by the Health Care Complaints Commission. As a result of the removal of the licence, the Optical Dispensers Licensing Board will be wound up at the end of June 2010. The Government recognises the work of the board in raising professional standards in this industry and in driving developments in education programs for optical dispensers. High professional standards will be assured in the absence of licensing with optical dispensers subject to the Code of Conduct for Unregistered Health Professionals, oversight by the Health Care Complaints Commission and general fair trading laws.

Reserve funds held by the board—funds contributed by the industry through licence fees—should be used to support the maintenance of high professional standards in optical dispensing. The Government will be having discussions with the board about the best use of these funds. Health risks do exist if contact lenses are incorrectly used, and it is important that consumers are fully informed about those risks. The sale of sight-corrective contact lenses is currently controlled through requirements for an optometrist's prescription. The sale of cosmetic contact lenses also will be controlled through an optometrist's prescription from 1 July 2010, as part of the national registration scheme for health professionals.

The review recommended that the Code of Conduct for Unregistered Health Professionals should be amended to ensure that consumers are informed of the health risks. However, this is now not necessary due to the decision to regulate supply of cosmetic lenses at the national level. The repeal of the Act is timed to coincide with the introduction of the national registration scheme. Licensing of motor vehicle repairers, under the Motor Vehicle Repairs Act 1980, was also reviewed by the Better Regulation Office. The review found the scheme achieves consumer protection, vehicle fleet safety and law enforcement outcomes. The Better Regulation Office's review re-affirmed the need for licensing motor vehicle repairers.

Motor vehicle accessories, such as audio systems and wheel trims, are produced for retail sale and for fitting by the purchaser. In many cases, they do not alter the performance or safety characteristics of a vehicle and therefore do not present a risk to the safety of consumers or vehicle roadworthiness. However, there is some uncertainty within industry as to whether or not accessory fitting is captured by the Act. The review recommended that the Motor Vehicle Repairs Act be amended to clarify that licensing does not apply to the fitting of accessories which do not affect the performance, safety, or security of a vehicle. However, rather than amending the Act, the recommendation will be pursued through amending the Motor Vehicle Repairs Regulation following more detailed consideration of the best way to improve certainty for industry.

I make it clear that nothing in this bill will unduly reduce consumer protections in New South Wales, or expose the public to undue risk, or in any way affect the health or safety of consumers or the public. This bill does not take away the protections afforded to all consumers under fair trading and contract laws. The bill is concerned only with removing regulation that does not add value, and clarifying some provisions so that legislation is effectively protecting consumers. The reforms contained in this bill again demonstrate the Government's firm and ongoing commitment to reducing red tape. They follow a public consultation process and implement recommendations made by the Better Regulation Office.

The reforms will mean that more skilled people from interstate and overseas will be able to take on projects or set up businesses in New South Wales, without the unnecessary costs and effort of obtaining a licence. This will improve the free flow of skills around the country and benefit the New South Wales economy. The reforms demonstrate once again that New South Wales is a place where tradespeople can just get on with the business of building our economy to see us into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

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

## **ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AMENDMENT (ENERGY SAVINGS) BILL 2009**

### **Agreement in Principle**

#### **Debate resumed from 13 May 2009.**

**Ms PRU GOWARD** (Goulburn) [10.42 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Savings) Bill 2009. The Opposition does not oppose this bill, but it does have a number of concerns. This bill aims to amend the Electricity Supply Act 1995, the principal Act, to establish an energy saving scheme. The principal objective is to create a financial incentive to reduce the consumption of electricity by encouraging energy saving activities. The bill will establish new targets for energy saving and continue the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme [GGAS] regime for creating certificates that represent energy savings. It will run until 2020, but we understand that it can be extended, and it begins with a 1 per cent target from July this year. Energy efficiency in its broadest sense is generally supported by the community and the people of New South Wales.

Of course, in an era of growing resource shortage we should use natural resources such as coal more wisely. To the extent that this bill encourages energy saving activities—that is, it produces the same output but

with reduced energy inputs—the Opposition supports the bill. The Opposition also recognises that the introduction of greenhouse gas emission targets alone, as is contemplated by the Federal Government, may not encourage greater energy efficiency. Instead, it may rely entirely on outcomes such as reductions in the output of energy intensive goods like aluminium and cement. Economic theory tells us that the consequences of pricing coal-fired electricity must include the more efficient use of that electricity. However, the design of the national emissions trading scheme—known in Ruddspeak as the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme—if and when it begins operating, may well distort outcomes and not of itself encourage energy efficiency. If that is the case, the Federal Government will stand condemned, and rightly so.

Obviously, a national scheme intended to reduce carbon emissions by 25 per cent, or even by a much more modest 5 per cent, that does not also have in its design the capacity to encourage energy efficiency, is a scheme that can achieve its target only by reducing Australian living standards or by the promotion of less cost-effective technologies. Eventually even those less cost-effective technologies will result in the diminution of living standards and Australia's economic output. I have no doubt that the Federal Opposition will scrutinise the scheme's design very closely, as will the State Opposition.

The dreadful Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme has been finally and thankfully buried—it having utterly failed to reduce absolute levels of carbon-based gases over the years of its existence in this State thanks to its many design distortions and the lack of transparency in its operations. I am sure that Minister Macdonald and half the Cabinet are now relieved to have that particular monkey off their back. In the meantime, in the absence of a national scheme but in anticipation of one, a scheme that encourages energy efficiency must be a good thing. I note the exemptions from the scheme for energy-intensive and trade-exposed industries that will make it administratively less transparent than it would otherwise have been. However, the Government contends that this brings it into line with the proposed Federal scheme.

A number of arguments can be put in favour of an energy efficiency scheme. The scheme is intended to produce low-cost abatement, which is important given the significant opportunities to reduce emissions at little or no cost through energy efficiency. As I said, one would hope that that would also be incorporated in the design of a national scheme. The scheme must be monitored for two reasons: first, it will be an administrative burden on New South Wales businesses that will not be shared with businesses elsewhere in Australia; and, second, we can better promote best practice and the most effective ways of improving energy efficiency if we monitor and promote the results of that monitoring.

The scheme is also important in supporting so-called new green jobs in the energy performance contracting sector that would otherwise be lost with the removal of GGAS. Again, monitoring should ensure that we know whether green jobs have been retained and, if so, where and how we can enhance the development of an appropriately skilled workforce. If it works effectively, the scheme will also reduce the overall cost of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme by encouraging the uptake of low-cost options at the start, giving industry more time to adjust its operations. As I said, when the full national scheme is operating—if it is operating—it should promote energy efficiency. It will also reduce the need for new generation and greater electricity distribution capacity in New South Wales, reduce energy bills through lower costs, lower usage for households and business and, of course, lessen demand on our already stressed capital markets.

The Opposition has a number of concerns. It is concerned that, unlike the Victorian Government, this Government has not implemented any scheme to improve efficiency. The Government should implement a scheme for natural gas similar to that implemented in Victoria. If it does not, New South Wales will inevitably fall behind States such as Victoria in the creation of green jobs in the energy performance contracting sector for gas. New South Wales could reduce its emissions faster and at less cost if gas were included in the efficiency scheme, thus reducing the overall cost of decarbonising the economy.

The Opposition notes that problems have existed with GGAS and it has raised them on many occasions, particularly with regard to its administration. It has argued that certain activities were receiving certificates for normal business operations or for activities of lesser value. The Opposition is satisfied that those matters have been largely addressed by removing parts of GGAS in light of the oncoming Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and by improvements to the scheme's administration to provide for the continual review of certificate values. The Opposition will be watching this part of the new scheme very attentively.

The scheme also avoids the more serious structural issues in the energy sector—that energy companies can increase prices even if they do not take the least cost path for investment. The Opposition has concerns that energy efficiency could be achieved in ways that have a less regulatory impact. We also note the level of

ministerial discretion that exists in the scheme for nominating exempt parties, setting targets and approving the rules that govern certificates. We acknowledge—we trust that the Government will also acknowledge this—that a scheme with a high level of ministerial discretion requires constant scrutiny from the Parliament and the Opposition to keep it honest.

**Ms CHERIE BURTON** (Kogarah) [10.49 a.m.]: I support the Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Savings) Bill 2009. This bill is a demonstration of the ongoing commitment of the New South Wales Government to getting on with the job of reducing carbon pollution at least cost to the community. The New South Wales Government supports the Commonwealth's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, or CPRS, as the best national framework for cutting carbon pollution. This Government is strongly committed to doing what it takes to make the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme work well and to help prepare the New South Wales community for its proposed start in 2011. One of the most important ways to achieve these two objectives is to save energy.

This bill will create the new Energy Savings Scheme, which will provide financial incentives to reduce the consumption of electricity by encouraging energy savings activities. The scheme will help the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme work effectively and help prepare the New South Wales community for the scheme because it will unlock the very cheapest ways to cut carbon pollution. It will also help grow the new businesses and jobs we need to act on climate change. The scheme will do this by encouraging innovation in energy-consuming products and processes. It is well known that saving energy is one of the lowest cost carbon pollution reduction activities available. This is because installing energy saving equipment and appliances starts saving money immediately, and the savings soon pay for the new equipment and continue saving the consumer money into the future.

This scheme is needed because, while the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme will reduce the greenhouse emissions produced per unit of electricity used, it does not seek to directly reduce the total amount of electricity demand. In the absence of the Energy Savings Scheme, the cost of carbon pollution will be higher, making the vital goal of cutting emissions just that much harder. It is well known that consumers face real obstacles to making energy saving improvements. The Energy Savings Scheme will address these obstacles by stimulating the development of vibrant businesses that can innovate and deliver energy saving improvements to consumers at much lower cost and higher convenience, compared to individuals having to act on their own.

The bill encourages investment in this type of business because it provides certainty in four ways. First, it is long term. This legislation provides businesses specialising in energy savings with more than 11 years of certainty. That is the kind of long-term investment certainty that the Commonwealth Government's renewable energy target provides for businesses investing in renewable energy. Secondly, the scheme is performance based. It lets businesses get on with the job of finding the cheapest and most convenient ways to save energy, rather than governments deciding which energy saving activities to support. Thirdly, the scheme will have transparent rules that avoid unnecessary red tape, and will set out clearly which energy saving methods businesses can use under the scheme. Fourthly, the scheme is broad based, allowing businesses to set up one-stop shops for their customers' energy saving needs and to do it on a large scale.

The New South Wales Government would prefer a national energy efficiency scheme that is also long term, performance based, transparent and broad based. The New South Wales Government understands and agrees, however, that at this stage the Commonwealth must give its priority to establishing the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme in the face of strong opposition from climate sceptics. That is why the New South Wales Government is acting now to establish this scheme and to help New South Wales households and businesses make the transition to a low carbon future.

**Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON** (Castle Hill) [10.54 a.m.]: The Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Savings) Bill 2009 is flawed in two key ways: It will not stop greenhouse gas emissions from New South Wales power generators growing into the future, and it is based on the New South Wales Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme which independent experts have exposed as a sham. The bill is designed to fill a hole left by the Rudd Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme relating to demand management. Members on this side of the House think that demand side management is a good idea. Indeed, a key goal of our climate change policy at the last election was to make New South Wales one of the world's most energy efficient regions by 2030 by stabilising, then reducing, greenhouse gas emissions from energy use while providing a secure, reliable, competitive supply of energy for New South Wales.

Our aim was to cut average electricity usage in homes by 10 per cent within 10 years through a number of initiatives, including providing incentives for the installation of in-house smart meters, starting with areas that



currently have infrastructure constraints; working with the building and construction industries to improve standards for windows in new homes and commercial buildings; launching a continuing promotional campaign targeting household and office energy use and linking greenhouse gas emissions to electricity—many people do not understand that they are part of the problem as well as part of the solution—and launching a \$100 rebate for any household replacing a home refrigerator or air conditioner that is more than 10 years old with a new appliance of similar capacity.

Let us look at Labor's record over the past 14 years—it is not a particularly glorious one. Over the 10 years from 1995-96 to 2005-06 electricity demand in New South Wales grew by more than 30 per cent, from 53,698 gigawatt hours to 70,220 gigawatt hours. Demand will reach an expected 75,000 gigawatt hours in June 2008. One might wonder why I am not talking about June 2009; these are Electricity Supply Association of Australia figures and they are always 12 months behind. In 1995 New South Wales generators consumed 22,116,192 tonnes of black coal. In 2004 they burnt 27,786,376 tonnes of black coal—an increase of 5.6 million tonnes. However, we also buy enormous amounts of electricity from Queensland. Indeed, Peter Beattie built the Kogan Creek power station largely to satisfy New South Wales demand. One can go to the Queensland *Hansard* to find that that is the case.

Since the Queensland-New South Wales interconnector [QNI] started full operation in 2000 it is estimated that about two million tonnes of Queensland black coal a year have been burnt to despatch power to New South Wales. This represented a total increase of almost eight million tonnes of black coal a year burnt for New South Wales energy needs over Labor's first 10 years in office. Rather than address the New South Wales greenhouse gas emission issue from power generation, Labor had fudged the figures by exporting emissions across the State border. Burning a tonne of black coal generates about 3.7 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. So those eight million tonnes of extra coal burnt represent almost 30 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent a year that this Government is pumping into the atmosphere. Since 2005 emissions have risen a further eight million tonnes, and the likelihood is that they will rise another 10 million tonnes a year between now and 2017 or 48 million tonnes a year more than in 1995.

Let us put the Minister's Energy Savings Scheme into perspective. She wants to cut annual emissions by 3.2 million tonnes from 2014 to 2020. What she does not tell us is that the generators will be producing 10 million tonnes a year more carbon dioxide equivalent by then, making a net increase of 6.8 million tonnes a year when we are supposed to be cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent to 60 per cent to stabilise carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere at 450 parts per million and avoid catastrophic climate change. As Abraham Lincoln noted, "You can fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all of the time."

Based on everything this Minister has said and everything this Government has done over the past 14 years, there will not be any overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector in this State, which accounts for almost 40 per cent of our overall emissions. Under the legislation, New South Wales electricity retailers and other liable parties will be required to surrender a number of certificates proportional to the amount of electricity they sell: 1.2 per cent of megawatt hours sold in 2010, increasing to 4 per cent per annum for the period 2014 to 2020. The scheme takes effect from 1 July 2009. I do not have a problem with this legislation in principle. Obviously, it is important to reduce demand, which the Coalition has been pushing for many years. A reduction in demand or, I should say, an increase in energy efficiency will benefit this State and the world's environment.

We also need to expand the State's economy. The two things do not need to be mutually exclusive. That point must be made clear. However, the Rudd Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme will not start until 2011 at the very earliest—and that is always supposing it gets through the Senate. Malcolm Turnbull asks, quite reasonably in my view, why pass the bill—the enabling legislation—before the United Nations climate change conference in Copenhagen in December? The same question could be asked of this bill. The only reason I can think of is that the New South Wales Government, in common with governments around the world, is failing to reduce electricity consumption and greenhouse gas production.

For example, Denmark, where the United Nations conference will take place in December, has had huge investment in wind power. It is committed to reducing emissions by 21 per cent a year. Members might be interested to know that Denmark's emissions have increased by 2 per cent over the 1990 Kyoto base year, so it has failed demonstrably in its goal to reduce emissions. Spain was allowed to increase its emissions by 15 per cent because it is a newly industrialised nation. That fact was taken account of. In fact, its emissions are up by 50 per cent on the 1990 Kyoto base year. On the other hand, Britain will meet its targets because its

economy is likely to shrink by 4.5 per cent this year. That is a drastic step to take, and I certainly would not suggest that the economy of New South Wales should shrink by a similar amount so that we can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

The bill will impose mandatory energy savings targets on electricity retailers, generators supplying directly to business customers in New South Wales and other liable parties. They will have to obtain and surrender energy savings certificates. There will be a penalty of \$24.50 per megawatt hour for any shortfall. According to the Minister, the bill allows exemptions from the scheme for industrial activities that are trade exposed and emissions intensive. Trade-exposed and emissions-intensive activities will be given assistance under the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and will be given partial exemption from the Commonwealth renewable energy target. The rationale for the exemptions is that these activities face competition from industries in countries that are not faced with meeting similar environmental obligations.

It is hard to argue with this proposition in a globalised economy. Indeed, many people would say that the exemptions do not go far enough. I certainly think that would include the company Alcoa, which appeared before the Senate inquiry into the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme yesterday and prophesied that it would be closing plants and that 600 jobs would be lost, many of them in this State, as a consequence of the scheme. Essentially, in saying this, the Minister is admitting that Australia does not control its own environment—which was one of the great myths put about by former Premier Bob Carr. He said that Kakadu was going to be inundated, that we would have bleaching of coral on the Great Barrier Reef and that somehow we could control all these things locally by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. I repeat: Australia produces 1.5 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. If we were to stop producing tomorrow it would make no difference to the rate of climate change.

Obviously we need to set an example. We need to cooperate with other countries; we cannot let them do all the heavy lifting. But, equally, going it alone will not solve our problems, let alone those of the rest of the world. If we controlled our own environment those economic considerations would be overridden and our national interests would be best served by reducing our carbon emissions by as much and as fast as possible. Yet last week on ABC radio the Minister said that the best way to deal with extreme weather events was for the Liberal Party in Canberra to pass the emissions trading legislation. I do not go along with that at all. The best way for us to deal with those extreme weather events is to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions prospectively in other ways. I am not convinced that the Federal Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme is the best way.

The New South Wales Government plans to list exempt activities for companies in advance of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme commencing. High-level exemption would apply to aluminium, smelting, cement clinker production, wine production, silicon production and integrated iron and steel manufacturing, and a lower level of exemption would apply to alumina refining—hence Alcoa's problems—petroleum refining, liquid natural gas production, pulp and paper manufacturing, iron and steel, plastics and chemical manufacturing, non-ferrous metals and glass manufacturing. It is always possible—given the pressure that companies like Alcoa are exerting—that these exemptions might change, which is a good reason for exercising caution in introducing the scheme.

The new Energy Savings Scheme will be modelled on the greenhouse gas reduction scheme, which the Minister described as working well. I will tell members how well it has worked. The Government's demand-side management was based on giving away energy-saving light bulbs and water-saving showerheads. A couple of companies—Fieldforce Services Pty Ltd and Easy Being Green Pty Ltd—were set up primarily to do just that. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal administered the scheme, and it estimated initially that 80 per cent of the mini fluorescent globes that were given out would be inserted into light sockets and, as a consequence, there would be a significant reduction in household energy use. The real figure proved to be 40 per cent, and 60 per cent of the light bulbs were stored in cupboards. That meant that something like \$60 million of electricity consumers' money was spent on storing light bulbs in cupboards. When the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal realised it had made a mistake it changed the equation relating to the value of the New South Wales greenhouse gas abatement certificates relating to the bulb giveaways. It halved the number on the basis that most of the bulbs were being stored in cupboards. As a result the market for the abatement certificates scheme collapsed and the value decreased from about \$15 to \$3.50.

The other problem was that almost a third of the \$790 million worth of certificates written over the first five years of the scheme's operation were for projects outside New South Wales. So about \$240 million in New South Wales taxpayers' money was used to help others. The problem is that we are all in this together; we are all part of the problem and therefore all part of the solution. We cannot just export our emissions to other States. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

The University of New South Wales Centre for Energy and Environmental Markets reported that up to 70 per cent of the certificates created under the New South Wales Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme [GGAS] were for pre-existing projects. GGAS or NGAS—whatever you want to call it—is a fraud, and it is this fraud on which the new scheme is modelled. That is why I say it is flawed.

The Minister also talked about the New South Wales energy efficiency strategy announced by Morris Iemma on 18 June last year and reannounced by the Minister and the new Premier, Nathan Rees, on 16 May this year. The press release from 18 June last year spoke about a package including \$63 million for 220,000 low-income families to receive door-to-door home energy advice and free energy saving kits, which were supposed to help cut the average annual household bill by 10 per cent or \$95; \$15 million to begin an energy efficiency program with on-site advice to 6,000 small and medium businesses, which we support; and \$20 million to work with 800 medium to large businesses in leading-edge waste energy and water saving measures, cutting energy usage by at least 10 per cent. The \$63 million handout to 220,000 low-income families is the same trap the Government fell into with the freebie mini fluorescent globes and water-saving showerheads handed out at shopping centres. As I said before, the trouble was that most of those bulbs ended up being stored in cupboards.

Lest one thinks that is insignificant and a small amount of expenditure in relation to the total scheme, I point out that more than 26 per cent of abatement certificates written since the beginning of the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme were for compact fluorescent lights and showerhead giveaways. Before 2007 some 9.5 million abatement certificates worth more than \$118 million were written for light bulbs and showerheads. That is an extraordinary amount of money, so one wonders where the Government is going with this new legislation. I have serious reservations about what the Government is proposing. The Minister talked about the bill delivering new green jobs. When Easy Being Green Pty Ltd and Fieldforce Services Pty Ltd went broke after the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal halved the payment for the mini fluorescent giveaways, many jobs were lost. New South Wales households and businesses paid for those jobs, with little environmental benefit. I hope that the new scheme will be an improvement and that the jobs created will result in cost-effective reductions in electricity consumption. The Minister said:

We will be moving on from installing light bulbs into mass rollouts of activities such as lighting retrofits for office blocks, factories and shopping centres, higher efficiency industrial motors, and upgrades to heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems.

If the primary focus of the scheme is on improving efficiency in these areas rather than on make-work operations, it will have some chance of success. The \$150 million package re-announced by the Premier and the Minister on 16 May—and I stress that re-announcement because they certainly did not tell the media at the time that that is what it was—has to be put in the context of the amount of money currently being spent on upgrading our dilapidated electricity infrastructure, which I understand is around \$7 billion over the past five years, or \$1.4 billion a year.

Demand appears to be rising at an unsustainable rate. Of course, that is impacting on carbon emissions as well as on the reliability of the network. We recently debated a bill in this House to try to deal with problems relating to the reliability of the network. If the Government had invested in the network as well as demand management rather than stripping billions of dollars in dividends out of the system over the past 14 years, we would all be better off. Yet the Government now intends to spend a paltry \$150 million over an undisclosed number of years to reduce electricity demand. It is, at best, a poor package that will not go near cutting electricity usage by the amount needed to make deep and meaningful reductions in carbon dioxide emissions.

**Ms ALISON MEGARRITY** (Menai) [11.12 a.m.]: The Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Savings) Bill 2009 to establish the Energy Savings Scheme will keep New South Wales in line with best practice internationally. Broad-based energy efficiency schemes like the Energy Savings Scheme are used to deliver energy savings in the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Belgium, a number of states in the United States of America, including California, as well as—in a narrower way than proposed for New South Wales—in Victoria and South Australia. In the European Union countries I just mentioned, energy savings schemes work alongside the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme, as will happen in New South Wales once the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme [CPRS] starts. An evaluation of the energy savings scheme in the United Kingdom found that it was effective in delivering large-scale, cost-effective energy savings and in triggering market transformation and innovation. New South Wales already has plenty of its own experience of market-based schemes driving innovation.

The Energy Savings Scheme will build on the successes of the New South Wales Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme [GGAS], which, since 2003, has required New South Wales electricity retailers to meet a

greenhouse gas emissions benchmark or target. The energy efficiency component of the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme drove innovation and a transformation of the market for light globes in New South Wales. Under the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme, one in four households in New South Wales has had their inefficient incandescent light bulbs replaced by highly efficient compact fluorescent light globes. Supermarkets are filled with a diverse range of affordable compact fluorescent light globes, which now exceed sales of conventional light bulbs. As a result of this transformative success, incandescent bulbs are now to be phased out. The architects of the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme did not specifically envisage that the scheme would lead to this dramatic change in illumination. But that was just one of the innovative ideas that bright sparks—pardon the pun—in the business community came up with to take advantage of the financial incentives under the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme.

We need to keep this innovation and growth going and ensure that New South Wales retains an energy efficiency scheme once the scheme transitions into the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme in 2011. We anticipate many more innovative ideas will be implemented under the Energy Savings Scheme. This scheme provides a fertile ground for innovation and growth. The Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme also led to the creation of many new businesses, which started up to deliver the energy efficiency activities recognised by the scheme. Finally, I note that schemes like the Energy Savings Scheme have received endorsements from all sides of politics, despite some of the comments of the member for Castle Hill. In its report for the Federal Opposition, the Centre for International Economics found evidence that these types of schemes:

... are likely to be effective (including evidence obtained from the success of the energy efficiency arrangements in New South Wales Government's previous GGAS [the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme] and from overseas) and that they are likely to produce welfare enhancing outcomes, lowering expenditure on energy in the medium to longer term.

In summary, this bill will build on a proven model of accessing energy savings opportunities and help grow new businesses and jobs. We need to act on climate change and deliver real economic benefits for the State as a whole, and to individual households and businesses. In this way, the Energy Savings Scheme will help the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme get on with the job and deliver reductions in carbon pollution at least cost to the community. I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater) [11.16 a.m.]: The purpose of the Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Savings) Bill 2009 is to amend the Electricity Supply Act 1995 to establish the Energy Savings Scheme. The principal objective of the amendment is to create a financial incentive to reduce the consumption of electricity by encouraging energy-saving activities. The objective, therefore, is to provide assistance to New South Wales households and businesses to better manage the cost of electricity while, at the same time, positioning our economy for a lower carbon emitting future.

The scheme is designed to apply to all holders of New South Wales retail electricity licences, New South Wales electricity generators that supply directly to retail customers, and market customers who purchase electricity directly from the national electricity market, excluding emissions-intensive and trade-exposed industries. Each participant in the scheme will be given an individual energy savings target that they must meet by surrendering annually an energy savings certificate, which is created by activities that reduce electricity consumption. It is certainly appropriate that this amendment be brought before the House. Governments should be the driving force in facilitating a sustainable future.

I am pleased to note that the bill aims to create and encourage more sustainable and environmentally responsible practices amongst generators, retailers and recipients of electricity in New South Wales. For substantial environmental improvements to be made and to ensure a more sustainable future for our children, the New South Wales Government must continue the development of policies aimed at reducing the consumption of electricity produced from the burning of fossil fuels and encourage energy-saving practices. There is an important economic imperative too. We are in a period in history when we are moving away from the old-style industrial economy dependent on fossil fuels and gradually transforming it into a post-carbon economy. Therefore, it is very important that we seek to save electricity produced from coal-fired sources to provide an incentive for the production of electricity from sustainable sources.

This process involves creating opportunities for New South Wales businesses and households to improve their energy consumption and practices. It is important also to drive innovation in the New South Wales energy sector. In doing this, it is important that the Government, rather than mandating a particular way to achieve efficiency, leaves it to individual generators, retailers and consumers to figure out the best way to reach particular targets because different solutions will apply in different circumstances.

I am disturbed when I hear members opposite speak about the science being in on climate change. That is a specious thing to say. Science is never in. Science is constantly evolving; science is constantly telling us how little we know. The important point to note in relation to climate change and the contribution of anthropogenic global warming is that we really know very little. We know that the six gases involved in the Commonwealth scheme are not the only greenhouse gases introduced by human processes—in fact, there are some far worse gases. The point is that we know so little. But that does not absolve us from the need to act. Of course, the precautionary principle mandates that we have to act, despite a lack of full scientific certainty. I simply make the point that it is important to drive innovation from the grassroots level.

Often when governments become directly involved by mandating certain energy efficiency practices, it is a very clunky instrument. It is better to leave it to private consumers and generators to figure it out for themselves. Part of the process involves encouraging the adoption of new technologies and leading by example, and supporting industries in adjusting to necessary and beneficial changes that will lead to a more sustainable future. Therefore, whilst government may be the central player, electricity generators, individuals, households, businesses, industries and communities also play a role. That is why it is essential that legislation be introduced to progressively encourage energy-saving activities. As other speakers have alluded to, it does not matter whether these activities are simple, everyday household tasks or complex industrial processes; every contribution adds to the overall result.

I want to reflect on this idea in relation to my community of Pittwater. After speaking to many local residents, it seems to me that people are quite scared—as well they might, in one sense—about the implications of climate change. People can approach the issue in one of two ways. They can either be scared and think, "We're all going to hell in a handbasket", or do something about it. It is important that we have laws that seek to empower people and encourage them to take action, because we can take action—and every bit counts. At the household level, this can be as simple as installing energy-efficient light bulbs, as we have heard from the member for Menai; washing clothes in cold water; and using energy-efficient appliances.

If obligations are placed on electricity retailers to meet specific energy conservation targets, retailers will be required to help households reduce their energy usage and provide assistance to change energy-use behaviour. Hopefully, once the scheme is introduced, these simple yet effective practices will become more common in New South Wales households, leading to highly beneficial outcomes, including lower power bills for consumers and lower carbon emissions for New South Wales, at least from human sources. The real job for provincial governments like ours is to address the issue of demand. Demand management is the States' key responsibility in relation to the challenge that climate change poses for us. Certainly demand is known as the low-hanging fruit: it is easy to make savings in that area.

I will provide an example of how this is happening in my electorate of Pittwater. I cite this example because, while the bill addresses the obvious need to save energy, part of the way to do that is to drive consciousness from within the community and from the grassroots that we need to become aware of the energy we are using. We need to be aware that it is costing us money. We need to be aware that every bit of electricity that is generated for an unnecessary purpose in our households is simply wasted generation and wasted emissions—emissions that create a problem for our environment and do not serve any real purpose.

Pittwater High School, in my electorate, offers great examples of the energy-saving practices already being carried out in New South Wales, and which the bill seeks to encourage. The school has commenced the admirable task of installing hundreds of solar panels on its roofs in order to lower energy costs and reduce the school's carbon footprint. The project has been coupled with the installation of insulation, an audit of energy usage within the school, and the replacement of light bulbs. One of the little things that the energy usage audit exposed in the school was that the air-conditioners in the library were left on during the school holiday period and that a circuit had to be overridden that set the air-conditioners to run at all times. Simply switching off the air-conditioners when no-one was in the library made a massive difference to the school's energy consumption. That is just one simple thing that can be done.

Pittwater High School's goal is to become energy self-sufficient and effectively carbon neutral. It is important for students to be part of a sustainable community. This is what we need to encourage. Whilst Pittwater High School has taken it upon itself to reduce its energy usage, it sets a great example to the rest of our community. It is important that schools set an example to our communities and show how, with some incentives, many more institutions such as factories, hospitals, shopping centres and apartment blocks can be encouraged to reduce their energy consumption, and perhaps also aim to become energy self-sufficient. I encourage scheme participants to look for these sorts of opportunities to develop the certificates.

I am disappointed that gas services are omitted from the scheme. Given the potential benefits to both consumers and the environment that the scheme offers, it is disappointing that the scheme is not applicable to gas, which I note is included in similar schemes operating in other States, including Victoria. Gas is a popular option for many households and businesses, and its market share is rising. It therefore seems unusual that the Government would not include gas in the scheme. I am sure the Minister will address that aspect in her reply. I note, however, that the bill has the broad support of environmental groups and the green business sector. Although some I have spoken to are also perturbed about the omission of gas from the scheme. In conclusion, the bill creates a scheme designed to assist in encouraging environmentally responsible practices amongst electricity generators, suppliers and consumers. It is designed to reach the goal of ecologically sustainable development and an ecologically sustainable future. I earnestly hope that the bill will contribute further to some of the admirable efforts already being made across New South Wales. I refer again to the excellent work being done by Pittwater High School, in my local community.

**Ms CLOVER MOORE** (Sydney) [11.27 a.m.]: I welcome the Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Savings) Bill 2009, which sets mandatory annual energy savings targets for electricity retailers and for customers who purchase directly from the national electricity market. The bill provides for energy savings certificates to represent the tonnes saved in carbon dioxide to achieve targets through energy savings measures that do not result in a change to service. Energy efficiency is about reducing our energy consumption through efficiency improvements in energy use. It relies on smarter technology instead of lifestyle changes. Energy efficiency involves simple measures such as replacing refrigerators, washers, light globes and showerheads. It can make low-carbon alternatives more economically attractive.

While energy efficiency is currently being pursued to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it can also cut energy costs for consumers and reduce the need to invest in new and expanded energy infrastructure. I note that the Government says the scheme will save households \$45 to \$50 each year on electricity bills. Together with strong renewable energy targets, energy efficiency provides enormous potential for greenhouse gas emission cuts. The International Energy Agency states that energy efficiency in buildings, industrial processes and transport can cut global energy consumption by a third by 2050. The 2008 McKinsey report entitled "An Australian Cost Curve for Greenhouse Gas Reductions" suggests that Australia could reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent by 2020 using energy efficiency.

California has had energy efficiency measures in place since the mid 1970s, with energy consumption remaining virtually static since then. In contrast, Australia's electricity consumption has increased by a shocking 70 per cent since 1980. Introducing energy efficiency will also encourage a strong green employment sector. In the October 2008 report entitled "Green Gold Rush", by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Australian Council of Trade Unions, it is estimated that energy efficiency could create an additional 75,000 jobs in Australia. The report refers to data showing that an Australian energy-efficiency target can provide economic benefits between \$2.4 billion and \$6.6 billion.

Former President Bill Clinton spoke at the C40 Large Cities Climate Summit in Seoul, Korea, a fortnight ago and commented that whilst he was using figures from the United States of America they could be applied across other countries and cities. Former President Bill Clinton reported that for each \$US1 billion spent on building retrofits to increase sustainability in our buildings in cities, around 6,000 jobs are created, compared to just 870 jobs for similar funding for coal-fired power plants.

The Green Gold Rush report points out that an energy-efficiency target of 1.5 to 2 per cent per year could stop the rise in domestic electricity use by 2012, which could be followed by reductions in use. While targets will increase to the equivalent of 4 per cent by 2014, the Minister will be able to reduce targets to match other State and national schemes, or if participants are unable to meet the targets. This has the potential to limit the scheme by participants' willingness to invest in energy efficiency. I support the Total Environment Centre's call for legislation to guarantee that any changes to the target or scheme involve an open community consultation.

I share widespread disappointment that trade-exposed and emissions-intensive industries are exempt from this scheme. If we are serious about reducing the impacts of global warming we will need intense polluters to partake in all programs to reduce emissions. Excluding heavy polluters from the scheme precludes incentives for them to clean their industries and encourages them to maintain their business as usual approach. The Total Environment Centre points out that the penalty of \$24.50 per megawatt hour of energy saving not met is too low. I join its call that on top of this penalty parties should be required to "make good" the energy-efficiency targets.

The City of Sydney Council has set a strong target of 70 per cent greenhouse gas reductions from 2006 levels by 2030 for the local government area, which we hope to achieve through initiatives such as our bicycle network, green transformers, lighting technology improvements and renewable electricity. Our 2006 Energy Savings Action Plan aimed to achieve 20 per cent energy reduction by 2012, but this has been revised and council has endorsed a further 28 per cent energy saving by 2012 by a number of energy-efficiency measures, including lighting fixture upgrades, solar hot water units, replacement of inefficient air conditioning and co-generation and tri-generation for Town Hall House. We are continuing our review to investigate further savings.

The bill is especially important at this time when EnergyAustralia and other electricity providers are planning major network expansions that support coal-fired power growth and souring prices that could financially undermine decentralised approaches like co-generation and tri-generation and ignore demand management. Energy efficiency is an effective way to reduce our emissions, cut costs, delay new centralised electricity infrastructure and create new green jobs. I strongly support the bill.

**Mr PHIL KOPERBERG** (Blue Mountains—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.34 a.m.]: It gives me pleasure to make a brief contribution in support of the Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Savings) Bill 2009, having long been an advocate of the need and opportunity for significant savings to be made as a consequence of driving down demand. There are four beneficiaries from energy efficiency: it provides cost-savings on individual electricity bills, it reduces overall economic costs associated with building new electricity infrastructure, it has major environmental benefits through reduced emissions and water consumption, and it creates jobs in our growing energy-savings industries.

In fact, only yesterday the Premier advised the House of the first stage of the \$2.2 billion wind farm project at Silverton having been approved by the Government. This will result in the creation of 700 jobs, and some 846 megawatts of power will be produced when that plant is completed. That is a clear example of the interest of energy-efficient industries to enter the market. The Energy Savings Scheme will drive the New South Wales economy's access to all of these benefits. It will do this by creating a financial incentive for electricity retailers to either undertake their own energy-efficiency activities or pay others to do them, or both.

I refer to the objectives of the new Energy Savings Scheme. First, it will assist households and businesses to minimise electricity consumption and electricity costs by promoting the undertaking of energy-efficiency projects and programs in homes and businesses. We know that electricity price rises are coming because growing energy demand means we need new network investment. The Energy Savings Scheme will also help push back against rising electricity bills by reducing demand and therefore dampening wholesale electricity prices. It is expected that the scheme will reduce the average household electricity bill by about \$45 to \$50 each year between now and 2020, compared to its absence. This bill will deliver tangible benefits to every household and business in New South Wales. In addition, consumers who take up the opportunities offered by the Energy Savings Scheme stand to save even more through the installation of energy-efficient appliances and equipment.

Secondly, it will help reduce the need for costly new energy generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure. Members will be well aware that the first energy priority of every government is to maintain reliable electricity infrastructure while ensuring that energy costs remain affordable for all households. The need for additional infrastructure—power stations, distribution lines, poles and wires—is driven by rising demand for electricity, as well as the need to upgrade with new technologies. By reducing growth in demand, the whole economy will save as a result of avoiding the need to invest in costly new capital projects.

Thirdly, the scheme will complement the national Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme by making the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and other pollutants, achievable at a lower cost. It is well known that energy efficiency is one of the lowest cost greenhouse emission reduction activities available to the community. This is because it often saves money in the medium to long term to install energy-efficient equipment and appliances. Finally, the scheme will continue to stimulate the formation and growth of the innovative energy-efficiency services sector in New South Wales, thus creating jobs and building up a skill set that will be increasingly important as we move to a low carbon future. It gives me pleasure to commend the bill to the House.

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT** (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, and Minister for Commerce) [11.38 a.m.], in reply: The Electricity Supply Amendment (Energy Savings) Bill 2009 establishes the new Energy Savings Scheme as a demonstration of the ongoing commitment

of the New South Wales Government to reduce our energy consumption, make our economy more efficient and implement low-cost measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The scheme will overcome many of the barriers that currently prevent the implementation of cost-effective energy-efficient measures and it will expand on the existing approach in New South Wales through the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme [GGAS]. In building on the greenhouse gas reduction scheme we have retained as much of the scheme's architecture for the Energy Savings Scheme as possible to make the transition easier.

The Energy Savings Scheme will provide a financial incentive for the uptake of any of the energy-efficiency actions by requiring electricity retailers to surrender certificates equivalent to the annual target, and enabling those certificates to be created and sold to electricity retailers by third parties. The Government has consulted widely in developing the Energy Savings Scheme since it was first announced by the Premier in June last year. The Government also has been consulting on the draft scheme rule. Stakeholders told us that we needed to align the administrative arrangements of the scheme with those of Victoria and South Australia to reduce costs. New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria have committed to work together to achieve this goal. I thank the members of the House for their valuable contributions to the debate on this bill, and I recognise the support of the Opposition for the bill. I now turn to address some concerns raised by members.

The member for Goulburn commented on the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme. The greenhouse gas reduction scheme was the world's first mandatory carbon trading scheme for electricity retailers and is the second largest carbon market in the world. One of its key features is its recognition of energy efficiency or demand side measures, such as, the installation of low flow showerheads and efficient light globes in homes. The GGAS has been highly successful. The scheme has delivered substantial greenhouse gas abatement, with around 70 million certificates created in the first five years of its operation. Further, it is estimated that GGAS has resulted in about 20 per cent of New South Wales households being fitted with energy-efficient lights.

The member for Castle Hill talked at length about the Government's record on greenhouse gas emissions. Suffice to say, the Government has comprehensive policies in place not only to reduce our emissions but also to cope with the changes that we know are in the pipeline because of climate change. The primary purpose of the Energy Savings Scheme is more efficient use of electricity in this State. The New South Wales Government always has argued that the main driver of the emissions reductions in New South Wales would be a national emissions trading scheme. We have a national emissions trading scheme on the table in Canberra, which is called the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

I urge Coalition members of this House to get their colleagues in Canberra to support this scheme. The scheme is critical to addressing climate change and reducing our emissions. The member for Castle Hill also raised issues about jobs. I point out again that the Energy Savings Scheme will have a positive impact on jobs and will put downward pressure on energy costs for businesses and households. Independent modelling by Access Economics and McLennan Magasanik Associates, commissioned by a joint agency committee, has shown that the Energy Savings Scheme will create or protect more than 1,000 jobs.

Both the member for Goulburn and the member for Pittwater raised concerns that the Energy Savings Scheme at this stage does not include gas. The Government does plan to explore the expansion of the scheme to gas. In the interim, the Energy Savings Scheme has been established to address the immediate issue of inefficient electricity use in New South Wales, which is a far bigger issue for New South Wales than inefficient gas use and with much more significant greenhouse implications. The Energy Savings Scheme is being established to quickly provide a mechanism to maintain the market incentives for energy efficiency provided by the Greenhouse Gas Reductions Scheme. Establishing the Energy Savings Scheme under the Electricity Supply Act, which also establishes GGAS, provides a simple mechanism for doing this. The Government recognises that there is value in promoting more efficient use of gas and will consider the inclusion of gas in the Energy Savings Scheme. However, this would be a more complex legislative and administrative change, compared to the relatively simple change from the energy efficiency part of GGAS to the Energy Savings Scheme.

I thank all members for their contributions to the debate. More than ever in 2009 energy use and the performance of energy infrastructure are at the forefront of the community's attention, for good reason. The New South Wales Government will continue to demonstrate leadership and commitment to energy efficiency initiatives as part of our overall response to climate change and economic prosperity. The Energy Savings Scheme will provide an efficient and flexible way to ensure that everyone in New South Wales can use energy wisely. For these reasons, I commend the bill to the House.



**Question—That this bill be now agreed to in principle—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill agreed to in principle.**

### **Passing of the Bill**

**Bill declared passed and transmitted to the Legislative Council with a message seeking its concurrence in the bill.**

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! It being just before 11.45 p.m., the House will now proceed to General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices).

### **COOMA HOSPITAL DIALYSIS SERVICES**

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro—Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Small Business) [11.44 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the work being undertaken by the member for Monaro to achieve dialysis services at Cooma Hospital to add to the additional services in fields, such as cancer, already delivered at the facility;
- (2) notes the call by the Opposition for all dialysis patients in the Cooma region to be treated at Cooma Hospital;
- (3) notes that a number of Cooma region dialysis patients have complex and high risk health conditions requiring the backup provided by the region's major tertiary hospital in Canberra;
- (4) notes that the Opposition's proposal would put the health, and potentially the lives, of some patients at risk; and
- (5) condemns the Opposition for putting headlines ahead of health care.

I gave notice of this motion one year ago today, 4 June 2008. Although the motion is slightly out of date, I am pleased to say that the timing is excellent. Our new home-based dialysis facility in Cooma Hospital has been completed and is ready to be used. The facility is a great achievement for our region. Next Friday I will be at Cooma Hospital, together with the community committee and health workers, to mark the opening of this new facility. It will be a great day for our region, Cooma Hospital and dialysis patients in the area. It is of great credit to our community, the Greater Southern Area Health Service and the Government that this facility is going ahead. I particularly acknowledge the efforts of the community committee, the Cooma-Monaro Renal Dialysis Group chaired by Dugal Mitchell.

The committee has worked extremely hard to raise funds to assist with the development of this facility. It received an anonymous donation of \$30,000 and raised an additional \$5,000. So the community has raised \$35,000 for this important facility. This money has gone towards equipment and pleasant surroundings. The facility is located in Cooma Hospital in a room renovated specifically for this purpose. The renovations took a little longer than expected because the room contained asbestos. It was a sensible step to take the time to properly remove the asbestos. The Opposition did not agree, but it was important to properly remove the asbestos during renovations. That meant that the opening of the facility was delayed a few weeks. As I said, this is a well-timed motion because of the opening of the facility next week. I once again congratulate the community committee, Cooma Hospital and Greater Southern Area Health Service, which provided the funds for much of the equipment within the facility, and all the people who have been involved in the process.

Although it is called a home-based facility, it is located within Cooma Hospital. I believe this new model will be utilised more around the State. It is for people who are able to be trained to maintain their own dialysis needs. This facility will help people in the region who currently travel to Canberra for dialysis treatment. I have been told that all but one of those people will be able to use this facility. Over the coming weeks we will know how many people will use this facility, but it is anticipated that most will be able to use it. Currently about half a dozen patients travel to Canberra each week for dialysis treatment. This facility will be of great benefit to them. Critically, there is not one style of dialysis treatment for all patients. Some people have complex needs and require specialist support. On occasions some patients will have to go to Canberra to access specialist support that is not available at Cooma Hospital. In making political statements about this facility, the Opposition refused to acknowledge that at any stage. I have heard the interjections of the member for Bega.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** I have got two units; you have got none.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I am pleased that the member for Bega acknowledges that the Labor Government has provided two dialysis units on the South Coast of New South Wales, where there was high need. Undoubtedly, in his contribution to this motion he will thank the Labor Government, as he should. I first started working on a dialysis facility at Cooma and talking to health Ministers prior to 2006. It was a long process trying to determine the demand in Cooma. Some time later the community started to become involved with the community committee. It was really good to see that because it gave the issue a boost along. As part of this process, some time ago I was able to secure a bus to go from Cooma to Canberra to get people to Canberra for treatment. That was an important step along the way for people who otherwise had had to be driven or, in some cases, taken by ambulance. People with high-care needs will still need to be transported by ambulance.

We then moved to consider the development of a facility at Cooma. The stage we are at now is a room provided for the home dialysis facility, which I think will be tremendous and will service the majority of people who currently go to Canberra for services. It has been interesting to hear comments by the Liberals and The Nationals about health in our region. All along they have been interested only in headlines; they are never interested in facts. One person who has commented on this the most is Melinda Pavey, MLC. As I said in the House yesterday, she told a member of the emergency services that it is all about the headlines, not the facts—and we see that all the time from the Hon. Melinda Pavey. She says that 12 or so dialysis patients—

**Mr John Williams:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 76, relevance. Once again, the Minister is playing politics.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. There is no point of order.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** It is amazing that someone can wander into the Chamber without listening to anything or bothering to read the motion and take a point of order. I will continue to talk about this issue of deceit of the Liberals and The Nationals in relation to health in our region. We have the amazing example of them running advertisements before the last election saying that the Queanbeyan Hospital was not being built—once again, from campaign director Melinda Pavey—when everybody in Queanbeyan was saying, "It is a bit silly running this advertisement when we can go past and see construction underway", and it is now there. Then there was Matthew Mason-Cox in the other place who had the hide to go to a meeting recently and say that there would be no dialysis in the new Queanbeyan Hospital. That was dissembling a little bit. He was technically right in saying it will not be in the Queanbeyan Hospital building because it will be in another building.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: I refer Standing Order 76, relevance. This motion is about Cooma, not Queanbeyan.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! I urge the member for Bega to read the motion. The remarks of the member for Monaro are within the leave of the motion.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** The foolish member for Bega should take the time to read a motion before he takes that sort of point of order.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: I seek a withdrawal of that offensive remark from the member for Monaro.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! I remind members that debate in this Chamber is robust. At the request of the member for Bega, I ask the member for Monaro to withdraw the word "foolish".

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I withdraw "foolish", even though it obviously rings a bell with the member for Bega, who has come to me every time he needs help with the Bega hospital because he cannot deliver things for himself. I am very proud of the fact that since I have been the local member for Monaro I have delivered two new hospitals—unlike the member for Bega who has delivered none so far—and I have made 350 other specific achievements for the electorate of Monaro. All we hear from those opposite is whingeing and bleating, and that is why they do not get to represent electorates such as Monaro.

Let us go to the comments of the shadow Minister for Health on Cooma Hospital. She wandered up there recently and said, "This is terrible. Waiting lists have gone up at Cooma Hospital." What she failed to tell

people was that the amount of surgical procedures undertaken at Cooma Hospital had significantly increased over the same time and that is why—surprise, surprise—there are more people on the list, more is being done. It is very typical of an Opposition that is poor at numbers. I read the Opposition's health policy to see if it was offering any solutions to things such as nursing shortages and doctor shortages. There are no solutions, just an extra layer of bureaucracy. I predict that we will hear a whinge and a litany of complaints, but no solutions, from the member for Bega.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE** (Bega) [11.54 a.m.]: No-one should be surprised that the member for Monaro has moved a motion congratulating himself—nobody else is doing it. For that reason, I seek to amend his motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

- (1) notes the call by the Opposition and the community for dialysis patients in the Cooma region to be treated in Cooma Hospital;
- (2) expresses extreme gratitude and thanks to the committee, volunteers and community of Cooma who have worked tirelessly for the last two years to establish dialysis services at Cooma Hospital;
- (3) notes the success of existing satellite units in Bega, Forbes and Moruya; and
- (4) calls on the Government to fund additional renal satellite services in regional and rural New South Wales from the additional \$13 million announced during Kidney Health Week.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarritty)**: Order! Members will cease interjecting across the Chamber, including the member for Hawkesbury. The member for Bega has the call.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE**: No-one should be surprised that the member for Monaro, who happens to be the saddest apologist for the most dysfunctional and moribund health service in the State—the Greater Southern Health Service—has moved a motion about health. The reality is that Cooma Hospital is like every other hospital in rural and regional New South Wales—crisis, after crisis, after crisis. What we hear from the member for Monaro is apology after apology for what is without doubt one of the most disgraceful situations in the State. If in the time that I have been the Liberal member for Bega I can secure for the community a renal dialysis unit at Moruya and Bega hospitals, with professional staff there to assist all patients requiring renal dialysis, then why cannot the Labor member for Monaro secure a similar service? That is what the people of Cooma want. They do not want to see patients travelling down the highway in discomfort countless times a week in order to access dialysis in Canberra.

For the benefit of the member for Monaro I might add that we consistently transfer patients to Canberra, at great cost to the New South Wales taxpayer, because of the disgraceful arrangement between the Australian Capital Territory Government and the New South Wales Government in relation to cross-patient transfers. If the member for Monaro were smart enough and understood it he could reduce the cost of treating patients in Canberra and put those funds towards a fully staffed renal dialysis unit at Cooma Hospital. Instead, after much lobbying from the community, he announced a bus to travel from Cooma to Canberra. Lo and behold, it was not a bus; it was a car. Then the transport service bus denied elderly patients, some of whom might be in nursing homes, access to the transfer service. What sort of disgraceful act is that from the member for Monaro?

**Mr Steve Whan**: Point of order: The member for Bega, who clearly knows nothing about the area, is factually wrong. He is just rabbiting on without addressing the motion I have moved.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarritty)**: Order! That is not a point of order.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE**: Let me say this name to the member for Monaro: Noel Luton. He was in a federally funded nursing home bed and he was denied transport to Canberra in order to access renal dialysis.

**Mr Steve Whan**: Point of order: I take a point of order to help out the member for Bega. I ask the member to respect the late Noel Luton and to not fib about his case.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarritty)**: Order! The member for Monaro will resume his seat. The member for Bega has the call.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE**: The reality is that the member for Monaro denied transport for Mr Luton, who happened to be in a nursing home. That is the attitude of the member for Monaro towards

federally funded nursing home patients. The bottom line is that he has established a service that is substandard to the needs of renal patients in the region. He has now set up a home-style dialysis unit in the hospital that will not be staffed by nursing professionals. That means some patients will still have to travel to Canberra.

**Mr Steve Whan:** How many?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** That is a good question for the member to answer.

**Mr Steve Whan:** You don't know.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Because the Government will not tell the committee, Dougall Mitchell or anyone else in the Cooma community, and it will not tell the Opposition. Answer the question! How many patients will be disadvantaged as a result of this arrangement? If I can secure two services on the coast, you might want to start trying to secure some in Cooma.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bega will direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** The people of Cooma are awake to the way in which health services are being rolled out in the region. We have seen time and again over the past six months sloppy behaviour from the Labor Party. We have a health service which cannot meet its budgetary commitments, which is offering staff four-day working weeks and voluntary redundancies and which is attempting to cut 52 registered nurse positions, and 26 community health service positions are now on the line. This Government is not prepared to fund a fully operational renal dialysis unit in Cooma. That is shameful. Other hospitals in the region have proper renal dialysis units, courtesy of the efforts of hardworking community members who have circulated petitions and written letters to the Government.

The member for Monaro has recently been exposed by the Auditor-General as having received less in grants than I have in the electorate of Bega. He repeatedly demonstrates that he is only after the headline. It is all about the media and spin. He spends his entire day in his electorate trying to distance himself from the State Government. He pretends that he is not a member of the Labor Government. Some people have accepted that, but we will be reminding them every day until the next election that Steve Whan is an integral part of the most incompetent, corrupt government in the history of this State.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Point of order—

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** More spin!

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bega will resume his seat.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Time and again—

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bega will resume his seat.

**Mr Steve Whan:** The ludicrous ranting of this fellow opposite—

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! Under which standing order is the member for Monaro taking a point of order?

**Mr Steve Whan:** Madam Acting-Speaker, I ask you to stop the idiot opposite referring derogatorily to this Government and making claims of corruption that he is unable to substantiate. I ask you to ask him to withdraw all reflections on Government members.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! Is the member for Bega willing to withdraw reflections on members?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** If the member for Monaro has taken offence to the words "corruption" and "incompetent", I will withdraw. The bottom line remains that there is a stench about this Government. The spin that we consistently hear about these services knows no bounds. The member for Monaro has been very happy to get himself photographed beside the bus and he will no doubt be in Cooma next Friday being

photographed by staff from the *Cooma-Monaro Express* at the half-baked renal unit that has been made available to the local community. I want a guarantee from the member for Monaro that a fully operational renal dialysis service will be provided for the people of Cooma. That is not unreasonable. I have been able to secure that for the communities of Bega, Moruya and Eurobodalla, and the member for North Shore and the Hon. Duncan Gay were instrumental in securing a unit in Forbes.

The member for Monaro is one of the greatest apologists for the most moribund and inept health service in the State's history. He is ably joined by disgraced health service chairman Gratton Wilson, who was sacked. In recent weeks it has been uncovered that one of the member's personal staff is on the hospital's advisory committee. That should be a community-based committee. Instead, Lee Evans, who is busily writing letters to the editor saying, "I'm not a member of the Labor Party, but I work for the Labor member for Monaro, Steve Whan," is very happy to continue—

**Mr Steve Whan:** Point of order—

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** She is very happy to continue—

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bega will resume his seat.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** You are a disgrace!

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bega will resume his seat.

**Mr Steve Whan:** You will be out of here if you are not careful.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bega will sit down!

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** You are very upset about this.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! I call the member for Bega to order. He will resume his seat.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Madam Acting-Speaker, I ask you to ask this person opposite to withdraw the imputation against a member of my staff and the former editor of the *Cooma-Monaro Express* that he has just made.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bega has been asked to withdraw the reflection upon a citizen. Will he withdraw?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** To the point of order: The member for Monaro's staff member is busily writing letters to the editor attacking me. She should not be on the committee.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Monaro has asked for the adverse reflection upon a member of his staff to be withdrawn.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** To the point of order: I have not made any reflection on her character. I have made the point that a member of his staff should not be on the committee.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Further to the point of order: It is totally inappropriate for the member to argue a point of order in that way. He must either withdraw or not withdraw. Madam Assistant-Speaker, I ask you to call him to order or to sit him down.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! I call the next speaker.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN** (Bathurst) [12.04 p.m.]: I support my colleague the member for Monaro. He can certainly stand on his own two feet. We have seen another particularly grubby performance by the member for Bega. It has been his trademark since he arrived in this House. About half a dozen members opposite troll around as grubs. There is no question—

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: I seek a withdrawal—

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** I apologise to all grubs.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bathurst has withdrawn his remarks.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** Yes, I have more respect for grubs. I withdraw.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: That is not a withdrawal.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bathurst uttered an aside.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** That is not a withdrawal. I now seek a withdrawal—

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** It is! It is! It has been done!

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bathurst clearly withdrew his remarks.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** As I said, I support my colleague the member for Monaro. I know from talking to relatives and friends in Cooma how highly regarded he is. A good benchmark of that is the way he has performed recently in a very marginal seat given what members opposite have thrown at him. He achieved the biggest percentage increase in votes in regional New South Wales at the last election. He has one of the seats that members opposite think they should have but which they will never regain because he is a very effective local member on the ground. I get positive feedback about him all the time. My Country Labor colleagues and I will be visiting Cooma shortly and we know about his standing in the community. Members opposite send the Hon. Melinda Pavey to the area, which gives the Government another free kick. They send her in every time they want to lose an election.

**Ms Katrina Hodgkinson:** Point of order—

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bathurst will resume his seat. The member for Burrinjuck has a point of order.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** I will return to the motion before the Chair. I will return to the topic of renal dialysis and demonstrate what the Government has done.

**Ms Katrina Hodgkinson:** The Assistant-Speaker asked you to resume your seat.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** I don't take instructions from you!

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bathurst will resume his seat.

**Ms Katrina Hodgkinson:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 76, relevance.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** You have a silver spoon sticking out of your mouth. I can see it from here.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Take that back!

**Ms Katrina Hodgkinson:** The member for Bathurst is casting aspersions on a member of the other House. Madam Assistant-Speaker, I ask you to bring him back to the motion.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! There is no point of order. Members will confine their remarks to the motion and the amendment.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: I seek a withdrawal from the member for Bathurst. He made reference to a silver spoon in the mouth.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** I am happy to withdraw.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! I did not hear the remark.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** Only grubby heard it.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** We heard it.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** The Government has made great strides in Bathurst with renal dialysis. We have two shifts in the 12-patient unit at Bathurst, which caters for 16 patients a week. The unit is in the new Bathurst Base Hospital, which is fantastic. Over the past 10 or 12 years this Government has rebuilt every hospital in the State. It is spending hundreds of millions dollars in the seat of Orange. The member for Orange is about to announce that he is retiring. I invite any of the fools opposite to visit the Bathurst Base Hospital. If they did they would see a magnificent facility.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: Again I seek the member's withdrawal of the word "fools". One has to uphold parliamentary standards.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** What a precious little dude you are. You are missing your cups of coffee with Milton Orkopoulos, aren't you?

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! Will the member for Bathurst withdraw the reference to fools?

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** All I can say is we will invite them to have a look at the magnificent facility. It is typical of what this Government has done around the State. We saw what members of the Coalition did when they were last in government. They closed 30 hospitals around the State. They decimated country services, and they have the hide to criticise a hardworking member who is getting these ancillary health facilities into his electorate.

**Mr John Williams:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 76. What are we debating here? We are supposed to be debating renal dialysis at Cooma.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! There is no point of order. The member for Murray-Darling will resume his seat. Members will cease interjecting.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** This Government has a magnificent record in servicing country health in New South Wales, much to the chagrin of those opposite.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [12.09 p.m.]:** I speak in particular to the amendment to the motion, but I will speak about the motion for a moment. When I showed the motion to a couple of former members who could be called forefathers in this House they were appalled that this member has put up such a self-aggrandising motion—as would his electorate—and the vanity displayed by the wording of it. It is extraordinary. There is no doubt there is a genuine need to ensure that we have renal dialysis services throughout country New South Wales. There is nothing like the tyranny of distance to weigh heavily on those people who have to endure dialysis treatment, as well as their loved ones, their friends and family, who are often left to bear the burden of transporting these patients to the very few hospitals that have the specially designed chairs and the nurses who can administer the dialysis treatment. I have spoken with the manufacturer of these dialysis chairs—a German company—and they are quite readily available. The chairs are not phenomenally expensive; they are relatively affordable. The main problem lies in getting the nurses to conduct the dialysis treatment.

My electorate is made up of a series of relatively large towns, towns of a size not dissimilar to Cooma. Many have a population of between 5,000 and 10,000 people. Many of them are about 100 kilometres from the nearest major centre. Cowra has a population of around 10,000. The closest dialysis service to Cowra is in Orange. Those patients have to travel over a bumpy, windy road, several at a time. They leave early in the morning, have their treatment at Orange and travel back in the afternoon. They do that three times a week. Patients from Young, which also has a population of around 10,000 people, get on a bus at 4.45 a.m. three times a week, drive to Murrumbidgee to pick up another patient, and then travel all the way to Canberra to access dialysis treatment. I have constituents in Cootamundra who have to travel for dialysis treatment to Wagga Wagga. Many patients in Yass—many of them seniors—have to travel to Canberra three times a week using community transport, and heaven only knows there is precious little of that.

It is not just the patients who are impacted by this. It is the additional burden, three times a week, on those people who have to try to organise some sort of volunteer community transport or who have to provide their own private transport. It is an incredible burden on country people. I cannot tell the House how desperately we are in need of renal dialysis services in Young, in Cowra, in Cootamundra, in Yass and in Gundagai. I call on the Government to provide these services. As I said, the chairs are available. The problem is getting the nurses who have the appropriate training to work them. It is a serious matter; it should be way above politics and something about which every member of this House should be concerned. If these patients do not receive this essential lifesaving service, their lives are very much at risk. That is extremely distressing.

I cannot tell the House how many constituent interviews I have had with patients who have to travel these excessive distances—150 kilometres each way, in some cases—by private bus or community transport just to get this essential lifesaving service. It is difficult for them. They have to undertake this three times a week. Imagine the lifestyles of these people. An extension of this service is something we need desperately in country New South Wales. The budget is coming up soon. I call on the Government to provide the nursing staff and the chairs to enable this service to be more widely provided in country regions.

**Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI** (Maitland) [12.14 p.m.]: I support this very timely motion. I congratulate the member for Monaro on his tireless work in the community. He has brought to the seat of Monaro and the Cooma Hospital and Health Service an extremely crucial service. I know how crucial it is. Last week, Kidney Health Week, I was at the dialysis unit of my hospital.

*[Interruption]*

It would be beneficial if the Opposition were to listen to the debate. Members opposite like to listen to their own voices, but perhaps they could listen to this. Last week was Kidney Health Week. I visited my hospital, which has 10 dialysis machines serving people from all over the lower Hunter. Patients come from the Port Stephens electorate as well. They are treated on four-hourly cycles. The hardworking nurses and clinicians who take care of these people should be praised. They provide a great service. This is a timely motion and I congratulate all those hardworking nurses and clinicians, as I congratulate the hardworking member who has brought that crucial service to Cooma hospital.

One would think that after his bringing in this crucial service, members opposite would have something positive to say. But, in their search for more headlines, in their search for that five-minute political grab, they always have something to complain about. Is it any wonder that Opposition members are increasingly becoming irrelevant and the frustrations caused by Liberals-Nationals friction are increasingly showing up in this Chamber. The performance of the member for Bega shows the great friction between the Liberals and The Nationals. You have to give it the member for Bega: He is consistent. Every time he comes into this Chamber it is the same old rant—consistently bad, consistently unproductive. That is the kind of contribution we have to put up with. I do not know whether his constituents know what kind of contribution he makes here.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** Point of order: I remind the member of the terms of this debate and ask him to come back to the leave of the motion.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarritty):** Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Maitland will confine his remarks to the leave of the motion.

**Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI:** This is a crucial service and it is wanted in all the hospitals. People with special needs have to travel to other hospitals. That is not unknown; that is not uncommon. But again we get the same old whingeing, carping and whining. The member for Monaro is taking excellent care of his electorate. He is working very hard and has gained that service. Because some people have to get special care at another hospital, the Opposition is making that into a big headline. Everything has to be a headline. They are professional oppositionists and professional opportunists—and they have made it into an art form after 14 years in Opposition. They are smiling, giggling and carrying on. If I were in Opposition for 14 years, I would not be smiling.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: Madam Assistant-Speaker, again I encourage you to invite the member to return to the leave of the debate, which relates to the renal dialysis unit at Cooma and the fact that it will not have any staff, nursing and professional—



**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bega will resume his seat. I have heard enough on the point of order. In the time remaining, the member for Maitland will confine his remarks to the motion.

**Mr FRANK TERENCE:** The member for Bega is trying to change his tune and his tone. When the Opposition makes everything political, people see through it. This is a crucially important service and the Opposition should have something positive to say about it. There is not one person in the electorate of Monaro who would not appreciate this crucially important service. A person as young as 21 years of age in Maitland Hospital had to front up three times a week for dialysis services, yet this Opposition continually criticises, moans and carries on. We can see through the contribution of the member for Bega and it is a shame that in this House we have to tolerate the increasing friction between two parties.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: Madam Assistant-Speaker, again I ask you to encourage the member to return to the leave of the debate. Obviously he does not know what this unit is about.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. I uphold the point of order. However, the member for Maitland is responding to issues raised during the contribution of the member for Bega.

**Mr FRANK TERENCE:** That is exactly what I am doing. He can dish it out, but he has trouble taking it.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [12.19 p.m.]:** If there is one thing I have learned to detest in this place it is self-congratulatory motions. It is a very serious issue and the Minister has unfairly dealt with it. When I say that the Minister has unfairly dealt with it, I am referring to the people who have to travel hundreds of kilometres every two or three days to access renal dialysis services. This is a very important issue to me. One need look only at questions on notice in *Hansard* to see the trials and tribulations of people who are suffering renal failure. I have been to Cooma and met with the Renal Dialysis Committee. I place on record my sincere thanks and congratulations to them on their tireless efforts to achieve regional dialysis services in Cooma. Similar committees are working tirelessly to achieve satellite services.

I point out to the member for Maitland that there are two types of renal dialysis. One is haemodialysis and the other is peritoneal dialysis. Cooma unit will offer haemodialysis, which means one can home dialyse. At Cooma people will dialyse in a room, the difference being that that person has a buddy or a friend to help dialyse, whereas most centres have a trained nurse. In most regions nurses actually have to travel to a major centre. For instance, a nurse living in Gundagai has to travel to Wagga Wagga to carry out her nursing duties and to administer the Wagga Wagga regional dialysis service where people are haemodialysed. In Tumut people travel daily to Wagga Wagga for haemodialysis.

Tumut wants similar satellite services to those that operate in Bega, Forbes and other centres. This will relieve from people who are already ill the burden of travelling every second day. In fact, people have travelled from Wagga Wagga to Canberra for six months. A 74-year-old man drove his 72-year-old wife 250 kilometres each way every second day for six months until finally she was given a place. Just the other day a patient was flown from Calvary Hospital, Wagga Wagga to Sydney for dialysis because the 12 chairs available at the Wagga Wagga regional dialysis service were full and the patient was unable to be dialysed. One must ask: at what cost? People are travelling from Gundagai to Wagga Wagga to access this service when they could access a satellite service at Tumut. People are travelling from Tumut and from Gundagai to Canberra because there is no permanent nephrologist or endocrinologist in Wagga Wagga, the major centre.

There is a centre in Canberra, but the numbers of people travelling to this centre are clogging up the centre. The Cooma committee has identified the need for an improved service similar to the satellite service offered in Bega. The committee, along with the Tumut committee, is working hard to achieve that goal. A sum of \$13 million has been allocated. Issued a press release last week encouraging the Government to honour its commitment to improve the renal dialysis service and for it to take certain action. First, the Government must increase the number of hemodialysis chairs in Wagga Wagga and put on a third shift. Second, the Government must engage with the Charles Sturt University and Dr Anne Bonner, who manages the training of nurses for haemodialysis and peritoneal dialysis. The Government has not done so to date.

There are nurses who can administer regional dialysis services in Cooma and Tumut, but the Government has done nothing but procrastinate about providing services in other areas. The cost of doing so will not be great, especially when one considers the fees being paid to these people under the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme. Those sick people have to travel for many hours through the fog and rain to access these services. I cannot vote for the motion because it is self-congratulatory, but I will vote for the amendment because it acknowledges the work being done. Members are merely conduits for their communities and those committees that are working tirelessly to bring about the outcome they want are asking the Minister to help them to achieve their goal. For that reason I support the amendment to the motion.

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro—Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Small Business) [12.24 p.m.], in reply: The contributions from members opposite were interesting. Indeed, there are three parts to the amendment that I could possibly support, but the political bit at the beginning makes the amendment irrelevant. My motion notes the work done; it is not self-congratulatory, as claimed by members opposite.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** You don't thank the committee.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I cannot amend the motion, but I have placed on record my thanks to the community, and that is important. I need to respond to a few comments. First, the member for Bega claimed that this is a half-baked renal unit. This unit will serve the needs of nearly all the patients in Cooma. One, possibly two, may not be able to use the unit, but they also would not have been able to use a satellite service. The Great Southern Area Health Service knows who is using renal dialysis services. The health service has done an assessment of what is necessary for the area and has designed the service based on that assessment. If in future seven or eight people are unable to use the service and a higher level of service is necessary, we will consider whether the service should be boosted.

Apparently it is the Opposition's policy to reject any service like this in a regional hospital. The member for Bega implied that the Opposition would fund satellite services or full dialysis facilities in all regional hospitals. Its five-point health policy makes no commitment to funding further renal services or to addressing the lack of nurses and the difficulty in attracting them to regional areas, which the member for Burinjack quite rightly raised. It merely adds an extra layer of bureaucracy. The Opposition made disingenuous comments because it has no policy and offers no alternative or backup.

I did not refer to the case of Noel Luton, who, unfortunately, passed away recently. I pay my respects and offer my condolences to his family for their loss. It is a shame that some people seek to make political capital out of this matter. When I found that Noel Luton had a problem with transport to Canberra, I fixed it the next day. The member for Bega would run around putting out a press release attacking someone. I did not need to do that because I fixed the problem. That is the way local members should work.

I want to address other issues that have been raised in this debate. A renal dialysis facility is to be built in Queanbeyan. That will help to take the load off the Canberra renal dialysis facility. Unfortunately, once again the Opposition has been more interested in making headlines. One Opposition member put out a story that Queanbeyan hospital would not include a renal dialysis facility. The Opposition was very clever. It said that the new hospital would not include a renal dialysis facility. It is true that the renal dialysis facility will not be housed in the new hospital building. However, it will be housed in another building on the hospital site. Opposition members conveniently forget to say that when they are spreading rumours around the community and trying to cause concern. The new facility is part of the Government's expansion of renal facilities.

Only one useful point came out of the contribution of the member for Bega: his acknowledgement of the Government's program of expanding renal dialysis services around country New South Wales—areas that under Coalition governments completely missed out on those services. The member for Bega has now placed that acknowledgement on the record, and it is useful to have. I am interested also in achievements throughout our area. We have five hospitals in the Monaro electorate, all of which were built by Labor governments and two of which were built during my term as the local member. Residents of the Bega electorate are hoping to get a new hospital in Bega. I always welcome the fact that I receive letters from the residents of Bega thanking me for my assistance in bringing their issues to the Parliament's attention. They despair of their local member and his failure to get things done.

This important renal dialysis service at Cooma will open in a week or so and will start to take patients. It is a service that the community committee can be very proud of, as can the health service and the entire local

community. It is a great sign of this Government's commitment to health services in the area. The new home-based renal dialysis service complements the permanent oncology service in the hospital and an increase in hospital services. I am very proud of those achievements.

**Question—That the words stand—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 45**

Mr Amery	Mr Gibson	Mr Morris
Ms Andrews	Mr Greene	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Beamer	Mr Harris	Mr Pearce
Mr Borger	Ms Hay	Mrs Perry
Mr Brown	Mr Hickey	Mr Sartor
Ms Burney	Ms Hornery	Mr Shearan
Ms Burton	Ms Judge	Mr Stewart
Mr Collier	Ms Keneally	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Coombs	Mr Khoshaba	Mr Terenzini
Mr Corrigan	Mr Koperberg	Mr West
Mr Costa	Mr Lalich	Mr Whan
Mr Daley	Mr Lynch	
Ms D'Amore	Mr McBride	
Ms Firth	Dr McDonald	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Ms McKay	Mr Ashton
Ms Gadiel	Ms Megarrity	Mr Martin

**Noes, 39**

Mr Aplin	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baird	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Souris
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humphries	Mr Stokes
Mr Besseling	Mr Kerr	Mr Stoner
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Constance	Ms Moore	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Debnam	Mr O'Dea	Mr J. D. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Page	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Draper	Mr Piccoli	
Mrs Fardell	Mr Piper	
Mr Fraser	Mr Provest	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Goward	Mr Richardson	Mr George
Mrs Hancock	Mr Roberts	Mr Maguire

**Pair**

Mr Tripodi

Mr Hartcher

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment negatived.**

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

**Division called for and Standing Order 185 applied.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 46**

Mr Amery	Mr Gibson	Ms Moore
Ms Andrews	Mr Greene	Mr Morris
Ms Beamer	Mr Harris	Mrs Paluzzano
Mr Borger	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Mr Brown	Mr Hickey	Mrs Perry
Ms Burney	Ms Hornery	Mr Sartor
Ms Burton	Ms Judge	Mr Shearan
Mr Collier	Ms Keneally	Mr Stewart
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Mr Dominello	Mr Page	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Draper	Mr Piccoli	
Mrs Fardell	Mr Piper	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Fraser	Mr Provest	Mr George
Ms Goward	Mr Richardson	Mr Maguire
Mrs Hancock	Mr Roberts	

**Pair**

Mr Tripodi

Mr O'Farrell

**Question resolved in the affirmative.****Motion agreed to.****TOMAREE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL****Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens) [12.44 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the Tomaree Community Hospital is the only major health care facility covering the Port Stephens region;
- (2) acknowledges the excellent work of Tomaree Community Hospital doctors, nurses and staff in providing health care of a high standard to Tomaree residents under difficult operating conditions;
- (3) recognises that patient numbers at the Tomaree Community Hospital swell during tourist season, placing additional pressure on the facility;
- (4) condemns the Minister for Health for ignoring the Tomaree Community Hospital in the 2008-2009 budget; and
- (5) calls on the Government to fully audit the health care infrastructure of the Port Stephens region to identify key areas requiring investment in the future.

As the member for Port Stephens, I can say there is no bigger issue than the need to upgrade Tomaree Community Hospital at Nelson Bay. Everyone on the Tomaree Peninsula knows the problems with the hospital and almost everyone either has had an experience at the hospital or knows someone who has. I must say from the outset—to pre-empt any silly arguments that will no doubt be put forward by those opposite—that this motion is in no way an attack on the hardworking and dedicated staff at Tomaree Community Hospital. In fact, I am fighting for improvements to the hospital for them as much as for the community that uses the hospital. These staff are overworked and underresourced. There is just one locum doctor on duty at the hospital at any one time, which leaves nurses with a huge workload.

Whether during the downtime of winter, or the peak of summer, the hospital—as the motion highlights—is the only major healthcare facility in Port Stephens. For those unfamiliar with the area, the Tomaree Peninsula stretches from Salt Ash near Raymond Terrace north-east to the southern opening of beautiful Port Stephens, encompassing Nelson Bay, Soldiers Point, Shoal Bay, Fingal Bay and Anna Bay. A population of more than 25,000 people, many of them retirees and seniors, use the Tomaree Community Hospital. In summer that number trebles, with more than 75,000 people in the area. As you can imagine, the emergency department is chock-a-block. At this time especially, my office regularly receives calls, letters and emails from people who had to wait for hours on end—sometimes for eight hours or more—to see a doctor at the hospital. These complaints come from both local residents and tourists who feel the need to express their shock at the appalling state of health services in this seemingly relatively populated area—and they are right.

The population demand on Tomaree Community Hospital more than justifies upgrading services and increasing funding for the hospital. Daily patients who present to Tomaree Community Hospital have to be transferred to the John Hunter or Calvary Mater hospitals in Newcastle or to Maitland Hospital for treatment. These hospitals are all a good hour or more away by road—provided the Government's disastrous new but already obsolete two-lane Tourle Street Bridge is not clogged with traffic. In a remote country town perhaps that distance would be standard, or even acceptable, but in the thriving populated area of the Tomaree Peninsula it is not. As the member for Maitland said in speaking to the previous motion, local dialysis patients have to travel to Maitland, which is some 70 kilometres away, three times a week.

I recently attempted to establish, through questions to the Minister for Health, how many towns or regions with a population of 20,000 people are serviced by a community hospital with just one locum doctor. I wanted to find out how many other communities are as disadvantaged as Tomaree. I discovered that there are 113 public community hospitals in New South Wales. But as to how many of those hospitals service a community of 20,000 people or more or how many operate with one doctor, I was told:

The information requested is not readily available ... to provide the level of detail requested would be resource intensive and the diversion of public resources necessary to answer this question cannot be justified on this occasion.

How incompetent is this Government that it does not have information detailing how many doctors work in any one hospital? How inept is this Government that it does not have readily available information about demographics and populations feeding into a hospital? The mind boggles! The Premier claims his Government is open and transparent but that is absolutely farcical when his own Ministers are flouting the parliamentary system in this way. There are basic, short-term solutions to some of the problems at Tomaree Community Hospital. For instance, the Government could begin by negotiating with local general practitioners to establish a workable roster at the hospital to allow them to continue their own practices, maintain some quality of life and admit patients, instead of arrogantly dismissing these doctors as the Government has done.

Furthermore, the Government should look at investing in and providing more equipment for the hospital. So far, government investment in this important health service has been abysmal. The former health Minister could not even find \$5,000 to match the \$12,000 already raised by the local hospital auxiliary to buy a heart monitor. An additional patient transport vehicle is also needed desperately. If the Government's solution is to routinely transfer patients who present at Tomaree to Newcastle or Maitland, the least it can do is provide adequate transport. Currently, ambulances are being used to transport non-emergency patients to other hospitals, which at times leaves the Port Stephens electorate without any ambulance coverage.

Essentially, the Government must stop ignoring the healthcare needs of Port Stephens. Until now the Government has refused even to acknowledge any problems at Tomaree Community Hospital. The Minister for Health can blatantly ignore my invitations to come to Port Stephens, as he has done of late, but he must not ignore the health and wellbeing of the people of Port Stephens. The Minister for the Hunter stands condemned, as she has been utterly silent on this issue during her time as Minister. On most issues affecting the Port Stephens electorate she has turned her back and run the party line, rather than do her job and fight for

improved services for all the people of the Hunter. Given the comments about the farcical Tillegra Dam, the bungled Tourle Street Bridge upgrade and the devastation of the Myall River, the Minister clearly sees the Hunter only as those electorates held by Labor.

If the Minister for the Hunter or the Minister for Health, who are both based locally, ventured past the boundaries of the Newcastle and Maitland electorates and into Port Stephens they might get a better understanding of the desperate need for an upgrade of Tomaree Community Hospital. At a recent community forum about the hospital, some local residents were reduced to tears over the state of healthcare services in Port Stephens. Enough is enough. Today I call on the Government to carry out a full audit of healthcare infrastructure in the Port Stephens region to identify key areas requiring investment in the future.

**Ms JODI McKAY** (Newcastle—Minister for Tourism, Minister for the Hunter, Minister for Science and Medical Research, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)) [12.51 p.m.]: The Government does not support the motion. I assure all members that adequate services are being provided to the communities of the Tomaree Peninsula. The Government is acutely aware of the need to continue to work with the community on these issues. I am pleased that today when we are dealing with an issue in the Hunter some Opposition members have turned up. Last night when a matter of public importance on jobs and investment in the Hunter was before the House the Opposition members went home. Noone from the Opposition was present in the Chamber to debate a motion on jobs and investment in the Hunter region.

**Mrs Jillian Skinner:** It was not a motion.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** You weren't here either, Jillian. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has turned up for this motion, which relates to an area that she knows nothing about. She was not here last night, nor was the member for Port Stephens.

**Mrs Jillian Skinner:** I was listening to it upstairs.

**Ms JODI McKAY:** The Deputy Leader of the Opposition says that she was listening to the debate upstairs. Yet she made no attempt to get any Opposition member to come into the House and debate a matter of public importance on jobs and investment in the Hunter region. That goes to show the contempt and disregard she has for the Hunter region. It has been a long time since we saw the Opposition in this place walk away, shut the door and go home to watch the footy. Opposition members did not come into the House to support the Hunter region. It was an extraordinary situation. The member for Port Stephens said that I have turned my back on the Hunter region. He knows that is not true. Every time he has contacted me I have worked very well with him. I respect the attention that he gives his electorate, and I appreciate that he is bringing to the House his community's concerns.

I am advised that the Tomaree Community Hospital has 12 inpatient beds that accept general medical patients and two single ensuite rooms for palliative care patients and respite care patients. The Tomaree Community Hospital provides emergency services coverage 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In addition, the Nelson Bay Community Centre, which is located on the same campus as the Tomaree Community Hospital, provides a wide range of community services, including nursing, community dementia, foot care, palliative care, psychology, social work, aged care, drug and alcohol treatment, chronic disease rehabilitation, sexual assault counselling, speech pathology, continence clinics, mental health, physiotherapy, paediatric clinics, dental services and antenatal clinics. A whole range of community-based medicine is provided at the Nelson Bay Community Centre in this precinct.

During the busy holiday periods additional resources are provided at the hospital to meet the increased demand from visitors to the area. As the member for Port Stephens can attest, the area has significant visitor numbers, particularly during the summer months. The Government has recognised that by providing additional resources during those busy periods. Extra nurses and administrative staff are now employed on weekends, public holidays and school holidays to manage the additional demand from tourists. Patients are generally transferred out of Tomaree to referral hospitals on a clinical needs basis. This means that when a patient's condition warrants further assessment and/or greater interventional or diagnostic care than is available at Tomaree, within an hour the patient can be transferred to the John Hunter Hospital or the Calvary Mater Newcastle Hospital. At those two hospitals there are world-class doctors, trauma services and oncology services, as well as very sophisticated diagnostic equipment. I will speak later in more detail about the work the Government is doing at those hospitals to ensure that the Hunter region has a health system that meets the needs of the population.

Data from Hunter New England Health shows that Port Stephens residents are taking advantage of the close proximity of these services, with more than 70 per cent of Port Stephens residents requiring care in a public hospital being admitted to these two hospitals. I am advised that since 2006 the following services have been increased or enhanced at Tomaree Community Hospital: clinics for the elderly have increased from fortnightly to weekly clinics; antenatal clinics have increased from monthly to weekly clinics; allied health services are now referred to the Greater Newcastle Cluster Referral and Information Centre for allocation; and the Patient Transport Unit is now located on site at Tomaree Community Hospital to allow for a better inter-hospital transport system.

Nursing staff have been increased on morning and afternoon shifts, with further enhancement on weekends, public holidays and school holidays. Administrative staff hours have been increased on weekdays, weekends and public holidays. Two emergency department nurse practitioners have been employed to support the management of patients. From June 2009, staff at Tomaree Community Hospital will refer directly to the Community Acute Post Acute Care service for intervention and services. A high-quality clinical assistance video unit has been installed that allows Tomaree staff to communicate directly with a staff specialist in the intensive care unit at John Hunter Hospital to provide expert advice during emergencies. The staff specialist can see the patient and equipment. This provides far better support than the previous system of phone advice and has led to improved outcomes for patients with critical care issues. Recently a new sterilisation unit has been installed to maintain sterilisation of dental instruments at the Nelson Bay Community Dental Clinic in a timely and responsive manner, and digital X-ray imaging and workbench computerisation will be installed at the Nelson Bay Community Dental Clinic in the near future.

I am advised that currently no local general practitioners in the area are willing to undertake on-call responsibility for the emergency department at the Tomaree Community Hospital. There is no standard bulk-billing in the town and this has placed some strain on the hospital, with many people presenting to the emergency department seeking medical services. As the member for Port Stephens knows, I am willing to sit down with him and discuss the issue of general practitioners in the area being unwilling to take on-call responsibilities, and ways to attract doctors to the area. I am also happy to take a tour of the hospital with him. He knows that I am available to work with him at any time on any issue. I am quite happy to go to Tomaree and tour the hospital with him and meet with the staff, if he wants me to. But I ask him to take on board some of the initiatives I have mentioned today that have been introduced since 2006 to improve the health services of people in the Port Stephens area and on the Tomaree Peninsula.

To ensure that the community has 24-hour access to medical treatment, Hunter New England Health has employed locum doctors to provide after-hours cover. We are doing that because general practitioners are not willing to undertake on-call responsibilities in the emergency department. That comes at a significant cost to the health service, but it is what is required and the Hunter Area Health Service is quite willing to do it. The area health service would be happy to allow general practitioners to provide services to inpatients at the hospital, provided they are willing to go on the after hours on-call roster, which, at this stage, they are not willing to do.

The area health service is pleased with the recent announcement of the establishment of a general practitioner super clinic for the Port Stephens area. The expansion of general practitioner services will contribute to the overall provision of health services in the local area. Tomaree Community Hospital does not provide services to the total local government area of Port Stephens, which also incorporates Raymond Terrace and Medowie, as the member for Port Stephens is well aware. Many residents in these areas of Port Stephens access inpatient services at Maitland Hospital or the Calvary Mater Hospital. Currently the Calvary Mater Hospital is being redeveloped as part of a public-private partnership that is costing \$212 million. Cancer radiation therapy facilities are being expanded at a cost of \$18 million, and \$46 million is being spent on a 100-acute bed inpatient facility.

Hunter New England Health also operates a community health centre at Raymond Terrace and a HealthOne facility is in the planning stage. The area health service is committed to ensuring the community of the Tomaree Peninsula have access to appropriate health services. As I said, the Government opposes this motion. We do not support the motion because a significant amount of work has been done since 2006 and we believe that adequate services are being provided for the community on the Tomaree Peninsula. As I said, I am happy to work with the member for Port Stephens at any time and to take on board any issues he may have. I am happy to tour the hospital and to work with him to improve services even further if we can.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [1.01 p.m.]: I am quite astonished that the Government would not support a motion that acknowledges the excellent work of Tomaree Community Hospital's doctors, nurses and staff in providing Tomaree residents with health care of a high standard under difficult operating conditions.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** We are quite astonished that last night you were watching the matter of public importance and didn't bother to come down.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** The fact that the Government would not acknowledge the work of the hospital—

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Were you watching the football instead, Jillian?

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** That comment shows the incompetence of the member for Newcastle. It was a matter of public importance, it was not a debate. There was no motion, and it was not when being discussed when the football was on.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** And you were watching it and didn't come down.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** What are you talking about? This is about Tomaree. This matter is important to the community of Port Stephens even if it is not important to you. I ask the Minister how many times she has actually visited this facility.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** How many times have you visited it?

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I have visited the facility about 10 times. How many times have you visited it? You said you were advised about many things. Have you taken the trouble to actually visit the hospital once?

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Probably about five times.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** No, you have not; that is not true. Since you have been a Minister you have not visited the facilities—I have made inquiries. And how many times have you met with patients, staff and doctors?

**Mr Robert Coombs:** Point of order: Members should address their remarks through you, Mr Acting-Speaker.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris):** Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for North Shore will address her remarks through the Chair.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I would be delighted to, Mr Acting-Speaker. Perhaps you could force the Minister to come clean about how many times she has visited this hospital since she has been a Minister; how many times she has spoken to the community, who are so outraged about the fact that the facility has the title of "hospital" when, in fact, it is a polyclinic; and how many times she has spoken to the very hardworking nurses and others in that hospital who are tearing their hair out because patients turn up at the emergency department and cannot get treatment.

**Mr Robert Coombs:** Point of order: The leave of the debate is about Tomaree Community Hospital. This is an attempt by the Opposition to condemn the Government. The member for North Shore is a long, long way away from that at the present stage.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** To the point of order: The member for Swansea is wrong; I am talking about Tomaree Community Hospital.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris):** Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has made a number of remarks about the Minister for the Hunter. I have extended her a degree of latitude, but I now ask her to confine her remarks to the motion before the House.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I am saying that it is really difficult to understand how the Minister, on behalf of the Government, cannot support a motion that acknowledges the excellent work of the Tomaree Community Hospital staff—the doctors, nurses and others. That is what I am referring to. I have visited this hospital many times and I have spoken to the staff. In her response the Minister talked about general practitioners not providing services in the hospital. Perhaps she can tell us why. The answer is that the Government has stuffed them around so much that they are unable to provide that service anymore. The Government will not negotiate with them about providing an on-call service.



The Minister has mentioned that locum doctors provide services at that hospital. Since she is advised about so many things perhaps the Minister could tell the House exactly how much money is wasted on providing locum services when the general practitioners in town would be very happy to sit down and negotiate with the Minister and the Government about providing services that would enable patients on the Tomaree Peninsula to access treatment at that hospital instead of having to wait for ambulances to drive them to other hospitals in the area. How do I know all of this? Not because I am advised by anyone but because I have visited those general practitioners with the member for Port Stephens on many, many occasions. I have visited the hospital with the member for Vacluse, who is in the Chamber and who will make an excellent contribution to this debate.

The Coalition has visited this hospital on many occasions. We have made commitments as to how as a Coalition in government we will upgrade and provide much better services for the people of the Port Stephens electorate than they have now because that is what they deserve. I spend every Easter in that part of the world: I know what the hospital is like, I know what the demand is like and I know what the population is like. I have never met a stronger community group in support of the hospital than the Tomaree community. They are right; the Government is wrong. The Minister's contribution to this debate is full of hot air. She did not talk to the motion.

**Mr ROBERT COOMBS** (Swansea) [1.06 p.m.]: Just for the record, the Government does support the hardworking employees of the Tomaree Community Hospital. It should be noted, though, that there is nothing about that in the motion. I have not been to Tomaree Community Hospital, but I have no doubt that the people working in that fine facility in the Nelson Bay area are wonderful. The local government area of Port Stephens also incorporates the areas of Raymond Terrace, Tilligerry and Medowie. Many residents in these areas access services at Maitland Hospital or at the Calvary Mater Newcastle Hospital. The population spread and the geography of the Port Stephens area present a real challenge in providing the services that the community requests.

In 2006 the total population of the Port Stephens local government area was almost 64,000, with the population of the Tomaree Peninsula accounting for approximately 25,000. An increasing proportion of the population is aged 65 years and older. The major needs of an ageing population include access to services such as transport, assistance with meals, community health care, affordable housing and a range of residential care options—all services that are currently available in the Port Stephens area. The Hunter New England Area Healthcare Services Plan 2006-2010 has several strategies that relate to Tomaree Community Hospital and to community-based services in the Port Stephens, Raymond Terrace, Medowie and Tilligerry areas. The proposed strategies in the Area Healthcare Services Plan are designed to meet the needs of an ageing population. It is proposed to increase the role delineation of general medical from level one to level two at the Tomaree Community Hospital.

To support this increase in role delineation I have been advised that the Hunter New England Area Health Service needs to ensure that consultation with a general physician is available, that there is access to allied health professionals, that nursing staff with isolated certificates are able to perform emergency X-rays of chests and broken limbs, and that pharmacy services are available on site. In its Area Healthcare Services Plan released in 2006, Hunter New England Health identified the following proposals for future development of services at the Tomaree Community Hospital: increased bed numbers; investigation of the feasibility of expanding the services currently provided, for example, day procedures; and increasing role delineation of general medicine to level two. Page 94 of the plan states:

It should also be noted that there are no timeframes or priorities for increasing bed capacity. An assessment of the Area's bed capacity particularly in the Greater Newcastle and Lower Hunter Clusters will be undertaken to identify non-capital and non-asset opportunities for increasing capacity.

Of course, Port Stephens is included administratively within the greater Newcastle cluster of Hunter New England Health. In recognition of the ongoing need to prepare for future health needs in an area of rapidly growing population, and as indicated in the Area Healthcare Services Plan, a greater Newcastle planning exercise will commence later this year. This exercise will outline in greater detail intended service development directions for all hospital and community-based public health services across the greater Newcastle region. The Hunter New England Health Area Healthcare Services Plan also proposes an expansion of community health services for this region. The plan states:

Expand community services in areas expected to have significant population growth particularly in those aged 65 years and older ie, Maitland, Forster Tuncurry and Port Stephens

Expand community services in areas where access to health services is limited, the community is isolated and/or the population is socioeconomically disadvantaged ie, Raymond Terrace, Morisset/Wyee and Tilligerry/Medowie

I am advised that a number of enhancements to community health services have been made since 2006. Some of the wide range of community health services available to residents in the Port Stephens, Raymond Terrace, Tilligerry and Medowie areas include a number of things that I unfortunately do not have time to list today. *[Time expired.]*

**Mr PETER DEBNAM** (Vaucluse) [1.11 p.m.]: I am delighted to make a contribution to this debate. First, I congratulate the member for Port Stephens, not only on moving this motion but also on the work he has done since the election and on the work he did before the election—before he was a member of Parliament. That work demonstrated to me when I campaigned with him that he is a very valued community member. That is exactly what we are seeing here today. This is a worthwhile, straightforward motion about a concern to the community that has been moved in the genuine pursuit of progress for the community. The Government's response is typical. I have spoken to the member for Newcastle about the fact that she is a newsreader and that she comes into this House and reads whatever she is given. I really do not think she should do that.

The only smart thing she did today was to keep dropping the phrase "I am advised". That tells us that she knows nothing about this issue and that she is simply reading from a script. That is fine. However, it will not lead her anywhere. She will suffer swings against her similar to those suffered by the member for Swansea and the member for Camden. The member for Camden suffered a 5 per cent swing against him at the last election because he failed to serve his community. The member for Swansea came into Parliament on the back of a 6 per cent swing against him because it was known that he would not serve his community. The member for Port Stephens achieved a 7.3 per cent swing to him because he was known as a community worker. That is exactly what he is doing today—working for his community.

I visited the Tomaree Community Hospital on 12 March 2007 during the election campaign with the member for North Shore and spoke to the people concerned. They are still concerned today. In fact, the member for North Shore, as the shadow Minister for Health, has visited the area umpteen times. I remember her first visit to the area about six years ago. We have been drawing attention to the Government's failures for a long time. Members opposite can joke about it or do something about it. Whatever she does, the member for Newcastle should not be an apologist for this Labor administration. It has been clearly demonstrated that this is the worst administration this State has seen in the past 100 years.

**Mr Robert Coombs:** Point of order: This is not a political speech; it is a sermon. How long do we have to suffer this?

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris):** Order! I uphold the point of order and the sentiments of the member for Swansea. As I said earlier, while I extend a degree of latitude, members should confine their remarks to the motion before the House.

**Mr PETER DEBNAM:** Members opposite only have to put up with it for 21 months because that is all the time they have left in this place. As I said, if the member for Newcastle is simply an apologist for a Labor administration that is not delivering for the community she will lose her seat. The vote of the member for Swansea declined by 6 per cent at the last election. The swing will easily be 10.8 per cent at the next election. The member for Newcastle will be gone, as will the member for Camden on the Minister's left.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order—

**Mr PETER DEBNAM:** Yet another contribution from the newsreader.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Mr Acting-Speaker, I ask you to bring the member back to the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris):** Order! I remind the member for Vaucluse of my earlier ruling. He will confine his comments to the motion.

**Mr PETER DEBNAM:** Mr Acting-Speaker, you make excellent rulings. I have followed them over the years. For that reason, the community will probably look at you at the next election and say, "He has been serving the community." Their constituents will not say that about the three members opposite. On this issue they have absolutely failed the community. Time and again over the past few years they have refused to acknowledge there is a problem. That is effectively what the member for newsreading said. We do not fabricate these concerns. Unlike members of the Labor Party, members of the Coalition do not come into this place and create fictional concerns in the community. We will take the member for Newcastle to meet the people who

have raised these concerns. If she wishes, we will organise a public meeting outside the hospital. She will not have to go inside the building. We will introduce her to the locals who are very concerned about this and about her behaviour. This is about trust. Does the community trust the member for Newcastle to do something? No, it does not. It actually has contempt for the Government. That was demonstrated when the Minister—

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: This motion is incredibly important to the people. The Government has significantly enhanced health services in the area since 2006.

**Mrs Jillian Skinner:** Time!

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Damn! Time!

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens) [1.16 p.m.], in reply. This has been a very interesting debate. I know my staff are watching this with great interest on the Internet and I am sure they have already put out media releases, given what the Minister for the Hunter said. Unfortunately, none of it is true. The Minister mentioned that the hospital has 12 inpatient beds. That is true, but there is a 40 per cent occupancy rate. The beds cannot be filled because the hospital does not have enough staff to manage them.

Seven general practitioners were manning the Tomaree Community Hospital 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. They were doing that as well as working in their own practices. They were getting older and they could no longer handle the workload. When one of them resigned the others could not fill the gap. They asked the Government to help, but it interpreted that request as the resignation of the six remaining general practitioners. They are more than willing to admit patients and to work a roster, but they are not willing to man the hospital for 365 days a year. I look forward to sitting down with the member for Newcastle and the general practitioners. I am sure that my staff have already written to them to line up a meeting. They will be packing their bags to come to a meeting to negotiate.

**Mr Peter Debnam:** Will it be a public meeting?

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN:** It will be a public meeting, of course. I particularly thank the members for North Shore and Vaucluse for their contributions. They know the hospital as well as I do. They spent a lot of time there, particularly during the last campaign, and the member for North Shore has been there numerous times since. The member for Newcastle mentioned that the HealthOne facility at Raymond Terrace was in the planning stages. I do not know what stage that is. When I was mayor of Port Stephens, Port Stephens was ready to contribute money, the Federal Government was going to contribute money, but the New South Wales Government refused and the whole project was shelved, which is typical of the way this Government treats community projects.

I thank the member for Swansea for his contribution. He spoke in support of the motion, although I am sure he will vote against it. I congratulate the authors of both the documents that were read out. They did not quite get it right but it is good to have it on the record. I am sure the people of the Tomaree Peninsula will be pleased that the Government has done so much for their hospital; they will be looking for it.

**Mr Robert Coombs:** I was researching it all night.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN:** Yes, the research is wonderful.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** He was in here debating a motion, where you should have been.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN:** The member was not here either, I noticed. She was not shown in *Hansard*. I ask members to support the motion. This is about the people of the Tomaree Peninsula. The Minister mentioned Medowie, Raymond Terrace and Tilligerry. Most of the residents in those areas can access John Hunter Hospital or Maitland Hospital. This motion is about the 25,000 people who live on the Tomaree Peninsula. They are aged people by definition: most of them are retirees. They need health resources and they are in a state of panic. I ask members to support the motion.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 39**

Mr Aplin	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baird	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Souris
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humphries	Mr Stokes
Mr Besseling	Mr Kerr	Mr Stoner
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Constance	Ms Moore	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Debnam	Mr O'Dea	Mr J. D. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Farrell	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Draper	Mr Page	
Mrs Fardell	Mr Piccoli	
Mr Fraser	Mr Piper	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Goward	Mr Richardson	Mr George
Mrs Hancock	Mr Roberts	Mr Maguire

**Noes, 46**

Mr Amery	Mr Gibson	Ms Megarrity
Ms Andrews	Mr Greene	Mr Morris
Ms Beamer	Mr Harris	Mrs Paluzzano
Mr Borger	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Mr Brown	Mr Hickey	Mrs Perry
Ms Burney	Ms Hornery	Mr Sartor
Ms Burton	Ms Judge	Mr Shearan
Mr Collier	Ms Keneally	Mr Stewart
Mr Coombs	Mr Khoshaba	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Corrigan	Mr Koperberg	Mr Terenzini
Mr Costa	Mr Lalich	Mr West
Mr Daley	Mr Lynch	Mr Whan
Ms D'Amore	Mr McBride	
Ms Firth	Dr McDonald	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Ms McKay	Mr Ashton
Ms Gadiel	Ms McMahon	Mr Martin

**Pair**

Mr Hartcher

Mr Tripodi

**Question resolved in the negative.****Motion negatived.***[The Speaker left the chair at 1.29 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]***HEART FOUNDATION GO RED FOR WOMEN DAY**

**The SPEAKER:** Today the Parliament shows its support for the Heart Foundation's Go Red for Women Day, which is being held across Australia on 12 June. This day aims to raise awareness of cardiovascular disease risk amongst Australian women and identify steps for prevention. I am wearing one of its badges today, courtesy of the Minister for Women and the Minister for Science and Medical Research. I encourage members to support this worthy cause.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Notices of Motions****Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.**

## QUESTION TIME

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### STATE LOGO

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** My question is directed to the Premier. With all the problems confronting New South Wales—with people losing their jobs, small businesses struggling, the State in recession and Cabinet's failure to put together a State stimulus package—how can the Premier possibly justify Cabinet instead giving time and discussion to a new State logo?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. I will not tolerate the sort of behaviour members exhibited yesterday. If members behave in such a manner today they will be removed from the Chamber. The Premier has the call.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition needs to understand that the waratah is the floral emblem of New South Wales. There is no great surprise there. I believe that the taxpayers of New South Wales are entitled to know exactly where every dollar they spend in tax goes. That means that when there is a construction project in their electorate, I want to see that waratah there. I want the taxpayers of New South Wales to know exactly where their tax dollars are going. The Leader of the Opposition had the chance last night to take part in a debate on the importance of jobs in the Hunter.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Wakehurst to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The member for Charlestown, the local State member for the area, very concerned about supporting jobs in the community, last night raised a matter of public importance entitled "Jobs in the Hunter". But when he and the member for Swansea arrived to debate that very important issue, they were faced with an empty Chamber. Where was the member for Upper Hunter? Missing in action. Where was the member for Port Stephens? Missing in action.

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** It was a deliberate decision on the part of those members to not take part in that very important debate, on an issue of vital importance to families in the Hunter. Instead, they were watching football.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Leader of The Nationals to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The Leader of the Opposition was wrong on the economy yesterday, and he is wrong on this.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** As we go about dealing with the ramifications of the most serious global recession since the Great Depression, it is imperative not only that we underpin our future settings with a \$56 billion construction program, underpinning 150,000 jobs each year, but that we also deal with the confidence issue. The Leader of the Opposition is the only political leader in Australia who thinks it is appropriate for, and who wants, New South Wales or Australia to head into recession. On many occasions in politics, the best politics is no politics. But what we have seen from the Leader of the Opposition over recent months has been a continuous barrage of negativity about the State he purports to represent.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** We have heard crocodile tears from this putative leader of this State—the only person across Australia in a position of political leadership who wants Australia in recession. For months now, we have heard a barrage of negativity—

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** We have heard a barrage of negativity about New South Wales from the Leader of the Opposition. That logo emphasises the floral emblem of New South Wales. I make absolutely no apology for us reasserting its dominance in our communication with the taxpayers of New South Wales.

**FEDERAL STIMULUS PACKAGE AND HOUSING**

**Mr ALLAN SHEARAN:** My question is addressed to the Premier. What is the latest information on the Government's delivery of the Commonwealth's housing stimulus package?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I thank my colleague for his interest in this important issue and his longstanding concern for the residents in public housing in New South Wales. Housing the old, the frail, the sick and the needy is deeply important, at least to this side of the House. The Commonwealth Government's staggering \$6.4 billion investment in social housing—

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** —is the most momentous news in social housing since Ben Chifley and Bill McKell signed the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement in 1945. I cannot conceive of any government, other than a Labor government, making such a massive investment to help our nation's most disadvantaged. The House would be aware that more than \$1 billion was ripped from social housing in New South Wales over the past decade by the Howard Government. But, with John Howard gone, now it is time to reinvest, to make up for past neglect, and to sustain thousands of jobs in the process. Of the Commonwealth's \$6.4 spend, \$2 billion is coming to New South Wales, allowing us to deliver some 6,000 public housing residencies in New South Wales. On top of that, the New South Wales Government is investing \$1 billion from State funds to deliver an additional 3,000 homes.

All told, that means new homes for around 17,000 people. Because this is stimulus funding, it needs to be spent sooner rather than later, so we do not see layoffs in the building trades. That means that the time frame is extremely tight. Seventy-five per cent of homes will be completed by December 2010. Hundreds of projects are already underway, and thousands of jobs have already been secured. On 5 May this year the New South Wales Government advised that the social housing stimulus plan had so far secured around 2,100 jobs. On 14 May that figure had risen to 4,000 jobs. Today I can confirm that over 5,100 jobs have been secured. These figures are all verified by our contractors. Today's jobs figure of 5,100 shows that the Commonwealth's measures—delivered by New South Wales—are working.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Clarence to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** That rips the Leader of the Opposition's play book to pieces. The Leader of the Opposition opposed the stimulus plan. None of those jobs would have occurred had he ever been near the Treasury benches. The Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity to pass comment on a \$42 billion stimulus package from the Federal Government, which he opposed. The Leader of the Opposition is on the record as having opposed the package. It is recorded in *Hansard*, and the Leader of the Opposition knows it.

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The Leader of the Opposition wants longer job queues, he wants to talk New South Wales down, and he wants lower gross domestic product. We will pull out all stops to deny him those things, because jobs for working families actually matter. New South Wales is leading the pack on the stimulus rollout. The New South Wales Government put in place special legislation straightaway. We set up an expert task force, headed by Bob Leece—who was instrumental in the delivery of the Olympic Games infrastructure—and that task force went to work straightaway. Thanks to our good work, New South Wales delivered the first new home in Australia under the stimulus plan. Two weeks ago I was pleased to inspect with the Federal Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek, a new four-bedroom dwelling in western Sydney. It is now home to a family with three children, one of whom has a disability. This home went up in just 13 weeks and is an emphatic down payment on other homes to come. But what did business have to say? Mr Tony Costantino, Chief Executive Officer of Bovis Lend Lease, said:

These projects will provide a vital economic stimulus [and will] create local employment opportunities that will leave a legacy of upgraded skills and experience.

I will repeat that for the Leader of the Opposition:

These projects will provide a vital economic stimulus—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Murray-Darling to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** Mr Nigel Oliver, TSA Management Program Director, added that the stimulus package:

... will help increase the supply of social housing, improve opportunities for the homeless and stimulate the building and construction industry, thereby retaining existing jobs and creating new jobs.

That is a stimulus in anyone's language. Stage one of the stimulus plan is for an extra 850 homes. By the end of this week almost half of those properties—some 400 properties—will be underway, securing hundreds of jobs in places such as Armidale, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Booragul, Guildford, Queanbeyan and North Parramatta. In the rush of new building work let us remember that the stimulus plan also allocated significant funds for maintenance, with \$130 million coming to New South Wales. That money complements our own funding, including the record \$200 million that was brought forward in December of last year in public housing maintenance funding to create and sustain jobs in the building trades.

That money means new bathrooms and kitchens, new paintwork, new carpet, plumbing and rewiring. There are 58,000 projects in all, giving existing social housing tenants the decent surroundings they need and deserve. Because the Government undertakes rental property inspections, the various jobs are well documented and work began without delay. In fact, 12,500 of these jobs have already been completed and 75 per cent will be completed inside the next two years. The results are there for all to see: 400 homes underway, 5,100 jobs secured, 12,500 maintenance jobs done—all opposed by those opposite. On this side of the House we have builders; on the other side of the House we have wreckers.

#### STATE LOGO

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** My question is directed to the Premier. Why did the Premier tell Sydney media that Cabinet's new logo was prepared in-house when freedom of information documents reveal that it was prepared by external consultants at taxpayers' expense?

**Mr John Aquilina:** Point of order: The Leader of The Nationals appears to be basing his question on a media report of some sort. Will the Leader of The Nationals verify the accuracy of the report and inform the House exactly what report it is?

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** To the point of order: If that question is ruled out of order, I am afraid no question can possibly be asked in this House.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I will allow the question.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I advise the House that the Department of Commerce spent approximately \$4,600 on the design of the red waratah logo.

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

#### EPHING TO CHATSWOOD RAIL LINK

**Ms DIANE BEAMER:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. What is the latest information on community reaction to the Epping to Chatswood rail link?

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** I am delighted to update the House on the first 100 days of this incredible piece of infrastructure. The Premier opened the Epping to Chatswood rail link in February and, since then, thousands of commuters have been taking advantage of it every day. It is not hard to be impressed by this new \$2.3 billion rail link. However, it is not necessary to take only my word for it—a new survey of commuters has also given this piece of infrastructure the thumbs up. A poll of more than 1,000 commuters who have used the link has found that the overall customer satisfaction rating is 96 per cent. The customer satisfaction survey also found that 91 per cent of commuters praised the cleanliness of the new stations, 88 per cent praised the lighting at the new stations, and 85 per cent of customers were satisfied with the level of safety on the rail link. That feedback is fantastic, but what is also encouraging is that the survey has shown that rail is replacing bus and car travel as the preferred method of transport in this region.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Willoughby to order.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** For 85 per cent of the customers surveyed, CityRail is now their main method of transport to get to or from their home or workplace. I will repeat that for the member for Willoughby, because many of those customers will be her constituents. For 85 per cent of the customers surveyed, CityRail is now their main method of transport to get to or from their home or workplace.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will cease interjecting, including the member for Hawkesbury.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** Perhaps the survey could entice the member for Willoughby out of her black Honda and on to the rail network, just like many of her constituents. I wonder whether she has had those scratches fixed as yet.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** A quarter of people who were surveyed indicated that they were new customers who had never used a CityRail train before. Perhaps the member for Willoughby was one of those surveyed—although I doubt it! When the Premier opened the link it was expected that once it was fully integrated into the network later this year it would put around 12,000 extra people on the CityRail network every day. I am pleased to inform the House that 12,000 people are already using the Epping to Chatswood rail link every day. I can confirm that the 2009 timetable will integrate the Epping to Chatswood rail link on Sunday 11 October 2009.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** The member for Willoughby will back off now. The link presently operates as a shuttle every 15 minutes, and when it is integrated into the network this October it will have benefits for other commuters across Sydney. I know the member for Mulgoa will be pleased to know that as a result of this \$2.3 billion piece of infrastructure being integrated into the network extra services will be provided on the western, south, East Hills, northern and North Shore lines, and all as a result of investment in transport infrastructure by this Government. We are builders; those on the other side of the House are wreckers.

Passengers using the Epping to Chatswood rail link have also enjoyed around 19 per cent on-time running since services began. But it is not only on the Epping to Chatswood rail link that on-time running is going well. I refer members to the following statistics: so far this financial year on-time running across the network is at better than 95 per cent. That is in comparison to 92.7 per cent for the 2007-08 financial year and 88.6 per cent for the 2005-06 financial year, when the new timetable was introduced. This morning on-time running in the peak was 100 per cent, against an international benchmark of 92 per cent.

**Mr Alan Ashton:** Did you say 100 per cent?

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** Yes, 100 per cent on-time running this morning.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order, including the Minister for Emergency Services.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** I know how strongly the member for East Hills supports the rail network. Although he is an historian, he also knows that you cannot do much better than 100 per cent—100 per cent on-time running is 100 per cent! CityRail has received some excellent feedback on the new link, and I encourage the member for Willoughby to tune into some of this—she might find out that there is more to life than whingeing, whining and complaining about everything. A passenger contacted the Transport Infoline in March and said:

I have been using the new Epping to Chatswood rail line since it opened and would like to compliment CityRail on providing a world-class line, trains and stations with the new link.

Another passenger had this to say in April:

Thank you for the Epping to Chatswood line. I went on the train with my young children and it was fantastic. Clean, safe, modern and reliable. Congratulations.

A couple weeks ago another passenger said:

I love the new train from Epping to Chatswood—it is absolutely fantastic.



With these very positive comments, the people using the \$2.3 billion Epping to Chatswood rail link demonstrate their support for the investment made by this Government. I hope the member for Willoughby has taken a few notes. If she took a ride on the Epping to Chatswood rail link, she might have something positive to say. But I doubt it. Just this morning she was full throttle on radio making up lies about CityRail station staff. At a time when the global financial crisis is making people very nervous, the member for Willoughby has been telling CityRail staff that they will lose their jobs, which is a deadset, straight lie.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** The member for Willoughby and her whingeing and whining colleagues are peddling lies to RailCorp staff. They are perpetuating fear amongst families of CityRail staff. That is a disgrace. As part of the station staff review, the Government and RailCorp have always made it clear that no staff will lose their jobs. No staff will lose their employment as a result of this station staff review. The member for Willoughby and her colleagues regularly put the boot into front-line staff, whether it is CityRail staff, bus drivers, ferry masters or maintenance workers. They are out there putting the boot in day after day to front-line workers. Thankfully the Rees Government is getting on with delivering better transport services for the people of New South Wales. The Epping to Chatswood rail link is a fantastic addition to our transport services, one that the people of New South Wales can be very proud of.

### **CBD METRO RAIL**

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** My question is directed to the Premier. Despite impending cuts of 600 front-line positions from railway stations, overcrowded trains and unreliable train services—

**Mr David Campbell:** I just answered that. Why weren't you listening? Don't you listen?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Shut up, it's not your turn—why is the Premier planning to spend nearly \$1 million on a post-budget, taxpayer-funded advertising and public relations blitz to promote the ill-fated Rozelle metro?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The metro, which is an addition to the public transport network, would not exist if the Opposition were ever near the Treasury benches. The Opposition has consistently opposed public transport policy in New South Wales. Their half-baked replacement measure of a line to the north-west and a line to the south-west simply does not stack up, and they know it. They would spend the roughly \$5 billion not on Sydney's next piece of rail infrastructure but on tens of kilometres of new heavy rail. It simply does not stack up, as they know.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Barwon to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** In addition to building the CBD Metro, the Government has ordered some 700 rail carriages, hundreds of new buses are coming on line, and 385 new bus services have been introduced in the last two years.

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The question was specifically about why the Premier was spending \$1 million on a post-budget public relations campaign?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order. The Premier has the call.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I am happy to give further specific information. However, I point out to the House that in recent weeks the Opposition has done a good impersonation of Chicken Little. They have run around New South Wales and the greater metropolitan area of Sydney saying that the sky will fall on railway platforms across New South Wales. It will not. As members just heard from the Minister for Transport, we are conducting a review of station staff.

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The most recent advice to me indicates that the South Coast-Illawarra line will have 49 additional positions. Everyone who has a job is guaranteed a job. A couple of weeks ago on two occasions I challenged the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the commission of Max the Axe. Max Moore-Wilton has a history of sacking people. Tens of thousands of jobs evaporated when Max the Axe was in

charge of the New South Wales public service agency. Has the Leader of the Opposition withdrawn his commission? No, he has not. In recent weeks extraordinary progress has been made on jobs in New South Wales, as the Government remains single-minded about the task of protecting employment and jobs in the State. For example, 165 solar energy jobs were announced in Sydney earlier this week. Further, 700 jobs are attached to the Silverton approval, a \$2.2 billion project, which is the biggest wind farm in Australia, and it will have 120 ongoing jobs.

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** Members would be interested to know how many jobs are shown in this week's New South Wales Government tenders. I will go through them: planning experts to undertake work for the Northern Sydney freight corridor, 8 jobs; project managers to assist with the Sydney Metro, 6 jobs—they are 6 jobs that would not exist if the Opposition were ever near the Treasury benches—additional legal representation to members of committee, 5 jobs; maintenance workers on trains and carriages for Rail Corporation, 5 jobs; and additional bus drivers to provide transport services for home and community care in the Illawarra, 4 jobs.

Each job means that a mortgage repayment or rental payment is made, a family is secure, and a fellow Australian is rescued from the unemployment queue. The Government is investing \$56 billion in infrastructure and supporting 150,000 jobs each year for the next four years. The Opposition's answer is to cut public transport projects. Opposition members are on record to that effect. If they were ever near the Treasury benches public transport would go backwards in New South Wales. The on-time running of our rail service is at a 10-year high, at 95.6 per cent; patronage on our trains is up 5 per cent; and patronage on our buses is up 3 per cent. We are the builders; they are the wreckers.

### ROAD SAFETY

**Mr DAVID HARRIS:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads. What action is the Government taking to help keep motorists safe on the roads this long weekend?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Bathurst to order.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I thank the member for Wyong for his question and continued interest in road safety. At the outset I acknowledge that in my 10 months as roads Minister many members on both sides of the House have talked to me about road safety in their communities. I say on behalf of all members in this House that any fatality on our roads is a tragedy. The thoughts of all members go out to the families of those who have been killed on our roads. I spoke late last year in the House and on many occasions this year in the community about our road toll. We lost 395 people on our roads in 2008. Too many people were killed. But it was a record low. In all my communications on the subject this year, I have thanked the New South Wales Police, Roads and Traffic Authority officers and emergency services personnel, but most of all I have congratulated the community because driving is a matter of personal and community responsibility. The road toll cannot be reduced unless every member of our community plays his or her part. Up to this year that has occurred.

Earlier this year members of this House came together as one to acknowledge the Victorian bushfires as one of the greatest natural and human disasters ever witnessed in our nation. The final death toll from the Victorian bushfires was 173. Every morning I start my day by reading a document from the New South Wales Centre for Road Safety entitled "A Running Sheet of Fatal Traffic Crash Data for New South Wales". I get this document every morning. Yesterday, 3 June 2009, at 6.25 p.m. on Cabbage Tree Road, Williamstown, a car hit a pedestrian who was walking along the centre of the road—a 53-year-old male pedestrian lost his life. At 9.20 p.m. last night on Third Avenue, Blacktown, a car hit a pedestrian—a 36-year-old male lost his life. At 10.30 p.m. last night on Cemetery Road, Helensburgh, a car hit a utility pole—a 26-year-old female driver lost her life.

Those three fatalities have brought our road toll in New South Wales up to 200 this year. That is 55 more than at this time last year and it is an increase in every category of fatality, particularly pedestrians, except for our young drivers. For learner drivers and P-plate drivers, although they are overrepresented in fatal accidents, we have not seen an increase in the trend as we have in other categories of the road toll. Apart from the human cost, which is obvious to all of us, motor accidents in this State cost the community in excess of \$4.5 billion a year. As I said in the House this week in response to another question, and as I said yesterday to a

gathering of the Shires Association—mayors, councillors and general managers—all of us in this place have a leadership role to play in our communities in this respect. We all have a role to play in educating our respective villages.

In the past we have had some very successful campaigns in different areas of road safety. Over the past 20 years in particular we have had a very successful campaign in relation to drinking and driving. Most of us in this place, with the exception of some of the youngsters, would remember the time when booze buses and random breath tests were introduced. There was a time when, if you were in a pub and the police set up a booze bus down the road, some people in the pub would run around and ensure that everyone in the pub knew about it. That does not happen now. These days we make sure that the boofhead who is drink-driving gets caught, and rightly so. The people who have had the greatest success in absorbing the message about drink-driving have been our young people. The designated driver campaign and other campaigns have been very successful, and as that attitude washes through the community in future years we will see a marked reduction in the number of people killed on our roads due to alcohol.

Unfortunately, that attitude has not washed through in relation to speeding. Speeding is the number one killer on our roads—it always has been and it remains so. In New South Wales alone, each year 40 per cent of road deaths are attributed to speeding. That means that each year in New South Wales about 200 people die from speeding. In the years between 2002 and 2006 more than 1,000 people died in accidents where speeding was a factor. As well, more than 4,700 people a year are injured in speed-related crashes. The trauma units and spinal units at Royal North Shore Hospital and Westmead Hospital are filled with motor accident victims. It costs this community a bomb in terms of human and dollar costs—about \$780 million each year just for speed-related crashes. Heading into this long weekend, the New South Wales Government has a number of ways it hopes to prevent any more deaths occurring on our roads. Double demerit points will be in force again this long weekend.

We do not like them but they are effective in bringing the road toll down during holiday periods when our roads have the most congestion across all times of the day. New South Wales police are running Operation Stay Alert and are urging motorists to take extra care and drive to the conditions, particularly on rural and regional roads where the vast majority of accidents occur. More police will be out on the roads: if you speed you should expect to be caught.

Every year in New South Wales around half a million drivers are booked for speeding—that is half a million people too many. Double demerit points will be in force from midnight tonight and if you plan to drive over the weekend, plan ahead. Being a couple of minutes late to somewhere is better than not arriving there at all. As I have said, speed is a killer and so is fatigue. That applies not just to heavy vehicles, for which the consequences of a fatigue-related or speed-related accident can be catastrophic. Although it is very hard to pinpoint, statistics have shown that this year too many people are dying in light vehicles from fatigue-related accidents late at night and early in the morning. We have worked very hard to reduce fatigue-related crashes for heavy vehicles, but it is much harder to do that for smaller vehicles. Driving whilst tired causes the same impairment of a person's abilities as do drinking and taking drugs.

I hope that the threat of double demerit points acts as a warning to all drivers that endangering not only your own life but also the lives of everyone on the road is not on. Speeding is one of the fastest ways to kill someone you love or a complete stranger, and it can happen to anyone at any time. In recent weeks I have been discussing this issue with the Roads and Traffic Authority, the New South Wales Centre for Road Safety and the Minister for Police. Deputy commissioner Dave Owens and superintendent John Hartley have taken a very active interest in this, as one would expect. It is a common understanding that this year we are not winning the battle against speeding drivers.

I recognise that as a government and as a community we need to do more. We need to pull together the experts in their fields and the police and get some results on reducing deaths on our roads. We need to put our heads together with our experts and arrive at ways to reduce the road toll, particularly in relation to speeding and fatigue. I want the experts to tell us what new and novel campaigns there may be to reduce speed-related and fatigue-related accidents in the heavy and light vehicles sectors. One death on our roads is one too many but to have 395 people die on our roads last year and 200 so far this year is appalling. We can all play a role in reducing these accidents in our own communities. I have a message for all drivers this weekend: For God's sake, slow down.

### GAMING TAX

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier rule out that millions of members of New South Wales clubs will be forced to pay for his waste and economic management through increased gaming taxes in the upcoming budget?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** Those opposite can wait until 16 June when the budget is handed down. But I will give them a guarantee that it will contain \$56 billion worth of infrastructure, underpinning 150,000 jobs each year for the next four years.

**Mr George Souris:** Point of order: The budget has debits and credits. I did not ask about credits; I asked about the debits.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Upper Hunter will resume his seat. The House will come to order. The Premier has the call.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The Opposition's economic credibility is not far from here, and it is called Luna Park, or further at Eastern Creek.

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** A couple of fiscal barnacles the Opposition left for the people of New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Upper Hunter to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The budget is being prepared and will be released on 16 June. I am still getting over the Leader of the Opposition bagging the State's floral emblem. I just cannot believe this. He is the only man in Australia who wants Australia in recession and now he is bagging New South Wales' floral emblem. It is absolutely extraordinary. I alluded to this yesterday: I am willing to bet that the member for Upper Hunter would much rather see the New South Wales floral emblem—

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** —pinned up on some of the local trees on Wollombi Road than to see the Hunter Liberals sign remain up there. He is under threat. I bet the Leader of The Nationals still does not have an answer from the Leader of the Opposition on whether the Liberals are going to run in Wollondilly. They have not answered that. And they are coming after him in Monaro as well.

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I will not speculate on the budget content proper, but I can say that we are not planning tax increases for clubs.

### NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order. The House welcomes back the member for Blacktown.

**Mr PAUL GIBSON:** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning. What action is the Government taking to deliver the national broadband network?

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

**Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY:** As the House will be aware, on 7 April the Commonwealth Government committed to a \$43 billion rollout of a national broadband network. This network will connect Australian homes with broadband services up to 100 times faster than currently available and directly support up to 25,000 local jobs every year, on average, over the eight-year life of the project.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Manly will come to order. The member for Coffs Harbour will come to order.

**Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY:** Today I advise the House that the New South Wales Government will ensure timely planning approval of this infrastructure through the SEPP, the State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure). We will amend the infrastructure SEPP to expand the types of telecommunications facilities which do not need a development application or which can be approved through a checklist style of complying development code. The proposed amendments to the infrastructure SEPP and the draft New South Wales telecommunications facilities code, including broadband, are on public exhibition from today. Today the Government is calling on the people of New South Wales, including community groups, councils and the property industry, to make known their views and suggestions on the proposed amendment and the code.

The National Broadband Network will create jobs during the rollout and during its implementation, and it will provide ongoing jobs thanks to the economic benefits that world-class broadband infrastructure will bring to this State. New South Wales will maximise its share of these jobs and the \$43 billion investment in broadband. Indeed, it will ensure that the planning system delivers jobs as part of this infrastructure investment. Yesterday the Premier outlined to the House the jobs and investment that will flow to New South Wales as a result of the efficient planning decisions taken by this Government. In New South Wales we are building Australia's best planning system, where decisions are taken at the most appropriate level, be it local, regional or State.

Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act is the part under which this State ensures a whole-of-government, streamlined approach to major projects. It is also the part of the Act that requires significant community consultation in determining these projects. The Opposition promised to abolish part 3A. Yesterday we learnt what the Opposition proposes to put in its place—nothing! That is correct—nothing. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition said that a Coalition government would abdicate all responsibility for planning decisions. He would vacate the space; he would put every planning decision back on councils. That is every coalmine, every residential subdivision, every new town centre, every industrial estate, every business park, every power station and every new hospital, school and public housing development. These are major job creating projects that are important to the State's economic growth. The Opposition is promising to wash its hands of any responsibility to facilitate this investment.

**Mr Barry Collier:** Disgraceful!

**Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY:** The member for Miranda says that that is disgraceful, and it is. The Leader of the Opposition saying he will hand planning powers back to councils makes a good, glib 10-second grab, but it is not a planning policy that will create jobs and investment. Leadership is not only about the title and the 10-second news grab; it is about taking a view on what is important to the State as a whole and about being responsible for the economic wellbeing of the State. The figures the Premier and I released yesterday indicate that 336 projects have been approved since September, creating 55,694—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals will resume his seat.

**Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY:** I will repeat those figures for the benefit of the House. We announced that 336 major projects have been approved since September, creating 55,694 jobs and representing \$13.9 billion in capital investment in New South Wales. All of that would be lost under the Coalition. This Government is building Australia's best planning system, while on the other side of the House—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Baulkham Hills does not need the assistance of Opposition members.

**Mr Wayne Merton:** Point of order: The question was specifically related to broadband. The Minister is now dealing with another matter altogether. I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. Bunglers over there; workers here!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I give the member for Baulkham Hills 10 out of 10 for entertainment value but zero for content. There is no point of order.

**Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY:** We on this side of the House are building Australia's best planning system. On that side, they will shift everything—cost and responsibility—to local councils. They have abandoned the hard decisions. They abandon any decision-making; they duck for cover. That is not leadership, it is not a vision for the State's economic growth, and it would result in the loss of jobs and economic investment in New South Wales.

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

### **MENTAL HEALTH AND DRUG AND ALCOHOL WORKER TRAVEL REDUCTION**

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** My question is directed to the Premier. Mental health and drug and alcohol workers have been informed recently that due to the financial position of the Greater Western Area Health Service they were to reduce their travel by 25 per cent while at the same time considerable funds were being spent on an executive management training seminar. How are they, as community health workers, to provide the required home visits to their patients to treat an increasing health issue?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I thank the member for her question and her ongoing involvement in the delivery of better health services in her community. I have been advised that senior mental health and drug and alcohol workers have been participating in quarterly training sessions, which are important for them to stay abreast of developments with their peers. Those sessions will now be conducted in-house. I have also been advised that staff have been directed by the chief executive officer of the area health service to reduce non-essential travel expenses wherever possible. That is a commonsense request. However, it was not intended to impact on the delivery of any clinical services. I want there to be no confusion: If front-line workers need to travel to see their community clients, that travel will continue to happen. The area health service will reiterate that advice to mental health and drug and alcohol staff.

### **SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AT RISK**

**Mr ROBERT FUROLO:** My question is directed to the Minister for Community Services. What action is the Government taking to support families at risk?

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** I thank the member for his question, who I know is interested in this area as the parent of young children. Justice Wood made it clear in his landmark report on child protection that the key to preventing children from entering the child protection system is to have strong, early intervention programs. That reduces costs later in life in terms of health, juvenile justice, and involvement of police and corrective services. Most importantly, it gives children chances and opportunities. Brighter Futures is an evidence-based program that the Government introduced in 2003. Families participate in it on a voluntary basis and it is helping to keep children out of the statutory child protection system, which, of course, is the goal. In community services we see intergenerational cycles of disadvantage. In many cases where a child is abused or neglected, if one traces back through the family's history one often finds that the parents of that child were also abused and neglected. It is a harmful and unwanted inheritance.

When families are struggling and when someone wants to make an effort to be a good parent, they deserve community support. One aspect of the Brighter Futures program is that it gives priority access to Koori families. This is really important because we know that Aboriginal children comprise 30 per cent of children in foster care. That is an unacceptable proportion because Aboriginal children make up only 4 per cent of the child population in New South Wales. The Brighter Futures program provides—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members who wish to conduct conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** Brighter Futures also provides home visiting, parenting advice and personalised case management from a caseworker. One of the best things about the Brighter Futures program is that it gives heavily subsidised access to child care. Many children in the Brighter Futures program would simply never get access to child care otherwise, and we know how important that is. I am pleased to inform the House today that the Government is committing \$120 million to fund the Brighter Futures program for the next three years. This funding will go to the non-government sector, such as Mission Australia and Bega Valley Shire Council.

I share one story with the House. There is a young woman in the gallery; we met her earlier. Her name is Sam Bergen. She has a little girl called Sara who, I think, is watching Dorothy the Dinosaur in my office at the moment. Sam has travelled today from Coffs Harbour. It was her first time on a plane. Sam has a remarkable story and I thank her for letting me share it with the House. At 19 she summoned the courage to escape a violent relationship. She had a four-week-old baby called Sara in tow. She lived alone with her child in a caravan park. She had no support, no network and no prospect of securing a home or work. She is 21 now and Sam has her own home, a part-time job, and she is studying certificate IV in youth work at TAFE.

Not only has she made remarkable gains in her own life; she wants to help other people in need, as she once was. Sam is on her way to forging a career for herself and a great life for Sara. She is no longer in isolation. As she said, having a caseworker is like having a support network, like having a rock. Sam's story is a demonstration of the Brighter Futures program, and I recognise her bravery here today. Better parenting skills, more career opportunities and stronger support networks mean that the future looks bright for parents like Sam. At the end of last year more than 7,000 children in our State had benefited from the Brighter Futures program. The question for all of us is: Of that number, how many have we saved from the statutory child protection system?

I finish by saying thank you, Sam and Sara, for sharing your story with us today, and by saying that the Brighter Futures program is about parents growing in confidence and resourcefulness. It is also about partnerships with parents, families and non-government agencies, but mostly it is about breaking that cycle of disadvantage, and it has done that for Sam. Thank you, Sam.

**Question time concluded.**

## **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Report**

**Mr Allan Shearan**, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Committee—Annual Review 2007-2008", dated 4 June 2009.

**Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Allan Shearan.**

## **PETITIONS**

### **Drink Container Deposit Levy**

Petition requesting a container deposit levy be introduced to reduce litter and increase recycling rates of drink containers, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

### **National Parks Tourism Developments**

Petition opposing the construction of tourism developments in national parks, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

### **Wagga Wagga Base Hospital**

Petition requesting funding for and the commencement of construction of a new Wagga Wagga Base Hospital in this parliamentary term, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

### **Tumut Hospital and Batlow Multiple Purpose Service**

Petition asking that vital equipment be provided immediately to both Tumut Hospital and Batlow Multiple Purpose Service, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

### **Tumut Renal Dialysis Service**

Petition asking that the House support the establishment of a satellite renal dialysis service in Tumut, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

### **Schofields Railway Station**

Petition praying that Schofields Railway Station remain on its current site, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian**.

### **South Coast Rail Line Staffing**

Petition opposing the relocation of and reduction in staff on the South Coast Illawarra rail line, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

### **South Coast Rail Services**

Petition opposing any reduction in rail services on the South Coast line, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

### **Hawkesbury River Railway Station Access**

Petition requesting improved access to Hawkesbury River railway station, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

### **Bus Service 311**

Petition praying that the Government urgently improve bus service 311 to make it more frequent and more reliable, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

### **Cranebrook High School Security Fence**

Petition requesting a new security fence for Cranebrook High School, received from **Mrs Karyn Paluzzano**.

### **Berowra Housing Density**

Petition requesting that Berowra and Berowra Heights remain low-density dwellings or that adequate infrastructure be provided for the proposed high-density dwellings, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

### **Caged Birds Trade**

Petition requesting that legislation be introduced to stop the trade of caged birds, and ban trading and selling of Australian native birds, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

### **Pet Shops**

Petition opposing the sale of animals in pet shops, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

### **Sow Stalls**

Petition requesting a total ban on sow stalls, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

### **Wedderburn Longwall Mining**

Petition opposing Illawarra Coal's exploration lease application 3474 for longwall mining at Wedderburn, received from **Mr Graham West**.

### **Shoalhaven Police Station**

Petition requesting funding for the establishment of a new police station in the central Shoalhaven area, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

### **Culburra Policing**

Petition requesting increased police numbers in the Culburra area, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

### **Brooklyn Police Station**

Petition opposing the closure of Brooklyn Police Station and requesting an increase in the number of officers to man the station, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

### **Shoalhaven Mental Health Services**

Petition requesting the establishment of a dedicated mental health service in the Shoalhaven, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.



### **Iron Cove Bridge Project**

Petition opposing the construction of an additional bridge over Iron Cove, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian**.

### **Princes Highway Rest Areas**

Petition requesting adequate toilet facilities on the corner of the Princes Highway and Sussex Road, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Business Lapsed**

**General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 1 to 10 on the Business Paper for Wednesday 3 June 2009 lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).**

## **CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**

### **Hunter Valley Economy**

**Mr MATTHEW MORRIS** (Charlestown) [3.14 p.m.]: My motion should be given priority because the issue of jobs should be of paramount concern to every member of this place. Last night in this Chamber a matter of public importance was put on the table for discussion. It provided members of the Opposition with an opportunity to air some of their views and concerns, pertinent to their own electorates or more generally on a statewide basis. Interestingly, not one member spoke. In my motion I have made reference to the Hunter Liberals. I will get to them later. Nevertheless, the lost opportunity last night reflects the unfortunate state of the Opposition. It did not have the will or the capacity to come to this place and have a genuine discussion and debate about jobs.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Point of order: The member is required to argue the priority of the motion, not to debate the motion. He has started to debate the motion. He has to establish priority.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! As the Leader of The Nationals is aware, I extend a degree of latitude during these debates. The same latitude will be extended to the Leader of the Opposition when he speaks to his motion. However, I ask the member for Charlestown to state why his motion should be accorded priority.

**Mr MATTHEW MORRIS:** This motion must be accorded priority because jobs are fundamental to every person in the State. Jobs are critical. We all rely on incomes for our families, for our survival, and for our futures. If members of this place cannot come together and discuss the issue of jobs and have some genuine debate, it is a sad state of affairs. This motion must be discussed this afternoon in the interests of every person in New South Wales, not only in the Hunter. I hope members of the Opposition will take this opportunity to support me and allow my motion to have priority to ensure we have some genuine debate this afternoon.

### **State Economy**

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [3.16 p.m.]: I thank the member for Charlestown for advancing the reasons why my motion should take precedence today. We need a Government and Parliament focused on the serious challenges confronting New South Wales. We do not need the pretence motion, the motion that is all about politics, being moved by the member for Charlestown. The member for Charlestown's motion will not do anything at all about the green jobs package announced by the Government in the Hunter a week or so ago—a package around a study. The people of the Hunter—as well as the people of the Illawarra and people across the State—need action from the only State Government that has failed to put in place a State stimulus package at a time when people, as the member for Charlestown himself said, are facing difficulties in trying to pay their mortgages, put food on the table and send their kids to school.

The State is facing a myriad of crises. More than 200 jobs are being lost from the State every day. Small businesses, in particular, are struggling to keep open their doors. Roads are congested, trains are overcrowded, as the member for Willoughby again said today, and hospital waiting lists are at the highest level for four years. People in country New South Wales do not know where the water for their agriculture will be coming from. Families in country New South Wales cannot get access to medical services. What does this State Government do? What does State Cabinet devote itself to discussing? It devotes itself to discussing a new logo for New South Wales. It is not so new, because, as the Premier said in answer to the first question in question time today, the waratah has always been our logo.

But on 30 March Cabinet gave priority not to fixing the jobs crisis in New South Wales, not to fixing the crisis in our hospital system, the crisis in our schools, or the crisis in our public transport system, and not to assisting the Liberal-Nationals proposals for a State stimulus package based around cutting payroll tax to enable employers in this State, who employ two thirds of the State's workforce, to maintain those workers in jobs and ensure that Labor's so-called working families are working. No, Government members—proudly, from what the Premier said in answer to two questions today—spent time discussing a new State logo, a logo he lied to the media about. He told the media it was prepared in-house but, as the Leader of The Nationals exposed, it was produced by paid consultants. The Cabinet, as well as devoting its time and effort to a new logo, is spending taxpayers dollars on it at a time when the Premier will not put a single dollar on the table to support a single job across New South Wales, when he will not put a single dollar on the table to introduce a stimulus package that would give families in this State hope—hope that the Government understood what they were going through, hope that there would be some support and assistance at this time.

The Premier's performance in question time today, on the first question from the Opposition, the second question from the Opposition and the final question, indicates that the Government is out of touch and has the wrong priorities. The Government has no idea of the anger of people outside this Chamber when they hear that in the face of the world's greatest crisis, exacerbated in New South Wales by an incompetent, inexperienced Government, members opposite sat down in Cabinet and discussed a new State logo. The next time people cannot get on a train or get stuck on congested roads, they can gain comfort from the fact that we have a State logo. The next time people have a problem with any section of government the answer will be the same, "Here's the logo, it's okay." On the long weekend when motorists experience delays on our roads, they can look out for the flashing logo signs. They may not help, but they will distract, and, of course, that is what this is all about.

**Mr Paul Gibson:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Leader of the Opposition speaks about jobs and everything else in the State, but his first two questions today were about the waratah. He should get his priorities right as well.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Blacktown will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** As the member for Blacktown did yesterday and the member for Charlestown did again today, when given the chance yesterday to vote against CityRail job cuts both the member for Blacktown and the member for Charlestown wimped out; the member for Blacktown got thrown out and the member for Charlestown voted in favour of the job cuts. The Government puts spin before substance. It puts its own interests ahead of the public interest, and that is why after the budget we are about to see \$1 million spent promoting a metro that no-one wants, except the Minister for Education and Training—a metro that will not solve rail problems across the city. It is again demonstrates the Labor Party—*[Time expired.]*

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 48**

Mr Amery	Ms Gadiel	Ms Megarrity
Ms Andrews	Mr Gibson	Mr Morris
Mr Aquilina	Mr Greene	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Beamer	Mr Harris	Mr Pearce
Mr Borger	Ms Hay	Mrs Perry
Mr Brown	Mr Hickey	Mr Sartor
Ms Burney	Ms Horner	Mr Shearan
Ms Burton	Ms Judge	Mr Stewart
Mr Campbell	Ms Keneally	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Collier	Mr Khoshaba	Mr Terenzini
Mr Coombs	Mr Koperberg	Mr West
Mr Corrigan	Mr Lalich	Mr Whan
Mr Costa	Mr Lynch	
Mr Daley	Mr McBride	
Ms D'Amore	Dr McDonald	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Firth	Ms McKay	Mr Ashton
Mr Furolo	Ms McMahan	Mr Martin

**Noes, 40**

Mr Aplin	Mr Hazzard	Mr Piper
Mr Baumann	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Provest
Ms Berejiklian	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Richardson
Mr Besseling	Mr Humphries	Mr Roberts
Mr Cansdell	Mr Kerr	Mrs Skinner
Mr Constance	Mr Merton	Mr Stoner
Mr Debnam	Ms Moore	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Draper	Mr O'Farrell	Mr J. D. Williams
Mrs Fardell	Mr Page	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Fraser	Mr Piccoli	
Ms Goward	Mr Smith	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mrs Hancock	Mr Souris	Mr George
Mr Hartcher	Mr Stokes	Mr Maguire

**Pair**

Mr Tripodi

Mr Baird

**Question resolved in the affirmative.****HUNTER VALLEY ECONOMY****Motion Accorded Priority****Mr MATTHEW MORRIS** (Charlestown) [3.29 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Government on supporting jobs in the Hunter by investing in green job opportunities and attracting new business opportunities;
- (2) condemns the Hunter Liberals for failing to turn up to debate the matter of public importance yesterday; and
- (3) condemns the Hunter Liberals for turning their back on working families who are doing it tough.

Last night I raised a matter of public importance to debate jobs in the Hunter but, interestingly, not a single member of the Coalition bothered to turn up and speak on this important topic. Hunter members were here, though, because we know that jobs are important to families in the Hunter, particularly families who are doing it tough. We actually care about what happens to our constituencies. The arrogance of Opposition members to decide to knock off early is unbelievable. This is something I have not experienced during my time as a member of this place. Some would say that the State of Origin was an opportunity for members to sneak away, relax and enjoy their colleagues' company. That is not sufficient reason to not represent their constituencies and participate in such an important debate dealing with jobs, in this case, jobs in the Hunter region.

The question is: Will any of them fess up and tell us exactly where they were last night and why they could not be bothered to be in the Chamber to participate in the debate? Maybe during an Opposition contribution—if there is to be an Opposition contribution in this debate—one of them might have the decency to tell us exactly what took place. I am very proud of the Hunter region and the people of the Hunter, and jobs are important to the community's right across the region. We have a long, proud history of being a major player in the New South Wales economy. In fact, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey data for April this year, more than 287,000 people were employed in the Hunter. We have grown on the back of the coal and manufacturing industries, something we are very proud of. Exports from the port of Newcastle, the world's largest export coal port, totalled \$13.7 billion in 2008. This represents an increase of more than 100 per cent on 2007.

But, just like all regional areas in this State, the Hunter region faces its challenges, and it is important that the Government provide some support and leadership to recognise the importance of jobs for working families. Recently the Regional Jobs Summit was held in the Hunter at Warners Bay. The summit provided an

opportunity for the Government to listen to the regional issues and ideas raised by local industry, business and community representatives. The summit was also a chance to work with the Hunter business community to develop smart and green industries, and jobs.

At last week's Hunter Jobs Summit the Premier unveiled a package of programs to support jobs and investment. This included an extra \$3 million for the Hunter Advantage Fund, to encourage new businesses and create jobs. To date, this fund has already supported 91 projects in the Hunter, representing around \$430 million in business investment and the creation and retention of 2,900 jobs. Also at the Hunter Jobs Summit \$250,000 in funding was announced towards identifying green job opportunities for the Hunter as part of the Blueprint for a low carbon future for the New South Wales Hunter Valley project. The Government recognises the importance of the Hunter workforce. That is why we are committing additional Government resources and expertise to work with local businesses and industry to create and sustain jobs for thousands of local families. We are working closely with the industry, businesses and economic development organisations to ensure contracts are won by businesses in the Hunter.

The New South Wales Government and regional partners have worked to facilitate the rezoning of 88 hectares of employment land adjacent to Newcastle Airport and Williamtown Royal Australian Air Force base—another positive step, amongst many by this Government, in supporting and retaining jobs. The Department of State and Regional Development is now working with regional partners to jointly market this land, together with the Newcastle Airport aerospace precinct, as the Williamtown Aerospace Centre. To help attract increased defence business to the Hunter, and to improve support to defence industries, we will look to develop a technology hub in Newcastle based around the new air combat capability in the Joint Strike Fighter project. The \$16 billion Joint Strike Fighter project presents opportunities to secure a significant proportion of the jobs to be created.

Work associated with the production and support of the Joint Strike Fighter project is expected to create between 300 and 600 jobs in Australia, and we want as many of these jobs as possible to be located at Williamtown Royal Australian Air Force base. This week we have heard references in relation to the Hunter Liberals, and to some tail-end signage that, funnily enough, still happens to be located around a few parts of the Hunter.

*[Interruption]*

For the benefit of the House, I should query exactly who are the Hunter Liberals. The Liberal Party in the Hunter has been all but non-existent for many years.

**Mr Chris Hartcher:** Point of order: That is a falsification. We won 10 seats in the local government election.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order. The member for Terrigal will resume his seat. Members will come to order.

**Mr MATTHEW MORRIS:** Who exactly are the Hunter Liberals? We have Robin Parker in the upper House, who purports herself to be a representative of the Hunter. We have the member for Port Stephens, who I guess is the closest thing to a Hunter Liberal. But a membership of two is rather interesting—two members of the Hunter Liberals! Given that the Independent member for Lake Macquarie unfortunately was not able to be in the Chamber for last night's debate either, maybe there is some closeness, let us say, between the Independent movement and the Hunter Liberals, such as they are. Jobs are absolutely critical to the Hunter. We will consistently be proactive in supporting and creating jobs in the Hunter for our communities. It is about time members opposite did their job: represent the people who put them in this place and support job creation in New South Wales, particularly in the Hunter.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens) [3.36 p.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

this House congratulates the Liberal and National parties on their continued support for working families in the Hunter.

This motion shows in black and white just how utterly out of touch the Labor Government is. I am stunned that the Government would have the hide to expect this House to congratulate it on supporting jobs and attracting new businesses in the Hunter. That is an absolute insult. This Labor Government is so arrogant and out of touch

that, at a time when 200 jobs are being lost every day under this incompetent Premier's rule and this economy has contracted over two consecutive quarters, creating a recession, it expects a pat on the back for so-called new job opportunities.

I will give an example of how farcical this Government is. The member for Charlestown said that the Hunter region plays a major role in the economic prosperity of our State. He went on to say that the Premier recently unveiled a package of programs to support jobs and investment and that this included an extra \$3 million for the Hunter Advantage Fund. Three million dollars? For the region that houses the world's largest export coal port? That epitomises the neglect this Labor Government has shown the Hunter region, and just how much it supposedly supports jobs! The lower Hunter and Newcastle are the engine rooms of the State's economy. Ten per cent of the State's population live in the region, but that is not reflected in the funding the area receives.

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

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN:** In Port Stephens alone, the Government's so-called support for jobs has been pitiful. The Government has had plans for a major subdivision north of Raymond Terrace, which would create thousands of dwellings, house 10,000 people, and create many more jobs, but the Government has done nothing about that in the last seven years. It has simply sat on this proposal with no indication of when an announcement will be made. Perhaps we can congratulate the Government on creating jobs on the Tourle Street Bridge at Mayfield. The building of the new bridge created around 50 jobs. But, given that the bridge is already obsolete just weeks after opening because this incompetent Government decided to build a two-lane bridge instead of a four-lane bridge—which, incidentally, would have cost only \$15 million more—I suppose it will mean that another 50 people will have to be employed to build a new bridge in the near future. However, it will cost taxpayers an extra \$50 million or more. That is just the way the Government thinks.

But to claim that the Opposition has turned its back on working families who are doing it tough is an insult to all Government members' constituents, who are ignored by the Government day in and day out. I know this because every once in a while Government members' constituents come to me fed up with their local members and this State Government. Not only do my constituents contact me daily to complain about this inept State Government, but some constituents of Government members also contact me. I get calls from taxpayers in Newcastle and beyond who complain about ailing health services, substandard transport services and a severe lack of affordable housing. They contact me because they know that Labor will not listen.

The town of Raymond Terrace is split, with half in the Port Stephens electorate and the other half in the Maitland electorate. Mayfield is similarly split, with half in Port Stephens and the other half in Newcastle. I can not count the number of times I have heard people sigh with disappointment when I tell them they are not in my electorate and that they should go and see their Labor member. They know that their concerns will fall on deaf ears. During the last election campaign John Watkins, the then Minister for Police, promised a local area command for Raymond Terrace seven times in one interview. When I moved a motion in this House calling for the establishment of a local area command in Port Stephens, both the member for Maitland and the member for Newcastle spoke against it. I can see why Labor gets only 30 per cent of the primary vote in Raymond Terrace. The Coalition is fighting for better services and opportunities for the people of the Hunter. For example, just an hour ago I debated a motion calling on the Government to conduct an audit of health services on the Tomaree Peninsula in the hope that it will lead to an upgrade of the severely underfunded and underresourced Tomaree Community Hospital.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! Members who wish to conduct conversations should do so outside the Chamber. The member for Port Stephens has the call.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN:** Not only were there speakers against the motion—I understand that the member for Swansea does not know where the Tomaree Community Hospital is—but the Minister for the Hunter said that the existing facilities were adequate. I will have to invite the Minister to visit the hospital. The Minister for the Hunter is no stranger to spin. She accused Opposition members of not being in the Chamber last night, but where was she? The Minister did not turn up either! It is a bit rich for the Government to accuse the Opposition of laziness when the Minister for the Hunter did not come down from her office in Governor Macquarie Tower to contribute to the debate.

Bizarrely, the Minister for Tourism, and Minister for the Hunter also had an opportunity to speak on tourism and employment in her region during question time but she failed to mention the Hunter even once. On 2 June she indicated that her employment priorities are: attracting luxury Arab-owned Emirates airlines to Sydney, which will do a fat lot of good for people in the Hunter; supporting the Sydney tour of avant-garde

musician and intellectual Brian Eno; marketing campaigns to attract beachgoers to Manly, which is at least on the coast; and another marketing campaign to support an Asian food festival in Cabramatta, which is great. It is ludicrous to suggest that I watched the State of Origin or was perhaps as enthusiastic about it as the member for Blacktown—who made sure he had plenty of time for a flight to Melbourne yesterday.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Shellharbour and the member for Wagga Wagga will come to order.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN:** When I was re-elected to council in 2004 one of the first things we did was adopt the Medowie local area plan to increase the population of Medowie by 8,000 residents. I also had a meeting about north Raymond Terrace, which had been trying for three or four years to get approval for an additional 10,000 residents. Five years later, not one sod has been turned and not one block has been rezoned because the Government announced the Lower Hunter Strategy, and that stopped everything. Infrastructure was included in the Lower Hunter Strategy but that has long since gone. The original draft of the Lower Hunter Strategy was 36 pages long, but when you take out the infrastructure you are left with 18 pages. The Government has no idea what it is doing, and I encourage all members to support the amendment.

**Mr ROBERT COOMBS** (Swansea) [3.43 p.m.]: It will come as no surprise to learn that the Government will not support the amendment. I spoke to a number of elders of this place last night and they told me that they cannot remember a time when both sides of the House did not turn up to discuss a matter of public importance. I understand that this House has broken a number of records. It is usually good to break records but on this occasion it was a very sad record to break. We are talking about jobs, and there can be nothing more important than the family breadwinner bringing his or her wages home weekly, fortnightly, or whenever. The seat of Swansea provides a pretty good litmus test because there is not a lot of heavy industry in the electorate. Instead there are lots of small entrepreneurs, business people, tradesmen and so on. If they had been asked this time last year, "How much work do you have?" The reply would have been, "We have got six months work." If they were asked that question today, the reply would be, "We have got six weeks work."

**Mr Thomas George:** Whose fault is that?

**Mr ROBERT COOMBS:** There is a little thing called an economic depression going on, my friend, and it is happening throughout the world. A little fellow by the name of Barack Obama has just spent billions to stimulate the economy of the United States of America. The same thing is happening in Great Britain and in Europe. Hey, mate, there is another world outside Lismore! There really is. It is a big, round world with billions of people who have economies similar to ours, and they are all stimulating those economies. Do members know why? It is because they are going through times of economic uncertainty, market deregulation and market collapse. So you would think members of the Parliament of the State of New South Wales would at least turn up to discuss jobs. But that did not happen on the other side of the House. If members opposite had turned up last night they would have heard about some of the wonderful initiatives that are occurring in the Hunter.

**Mr Thomas George:** Here we go—the other side!

**Mr ROBERT COOMBS:** No, listen for a moment. It is all about jobs. Opposition members would have had the opportunity to hear about a group of businessmen who have set up an organisation by the name of Hunter Advantage. Those businessmen are very confident that, with the support of a number of local members of Parliament—probably even the member for Port Stephens—they can buck the international trend. They will work with the Department of State and Regional Development to ensure growth so that local people with six weeks work will have six months work, like they did 12 months ago. If members opposite had been here last night I would have told them a bit about Swansea and some of the marvellous initiatives that are occurring in the area to ensure that local mums and dads have a weekly wage and remain in decent employment.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS** (Upper Hunter) [3.46 p.m.]: I wish to raise some matters concerning the Upper Hunter. Many of the contributions in this debate have related to very parochial issues in the Newcastle area. I would have thought Warners Bay would not be mentioned today, especially given the disastrous Cabinet meeting. I have never seen a worse performance or outcome. Labor members have engaged in a lot of smart aleckery, wasting time with logos and attempting to bring on a condolence motion in the other place while 200 or more people waited in the gallery to hear debate on legislation. Those people had driven from the electorate of Upper Hunter, Gloucester and the Liverpool Plains to be here, and what did the Labor Party do? It tried to bring on a condolence motion instead of debating legislation that is important to them.

I will tell the Government what it can do to stimulate jobs growth in the Upper Hunter. First, the Government should forget about cutting the rail line at Wickham. Does the Government have any idea what

impact that will have on the people of Maitland and on those all along the line to Dungog and on the other line to Singleton, Muswellbrook and Scone? These are important transport connections that many people use to access employment and educational opportunities and to visit professional people in the heart of Newcastle. Cutting the rail line at Wickham would be the worst thing the Government could do for the communication and transport links associated with jobs in the Upper Hunter. The Government has not dropped electricity privatisation; it got a bollocking over it, but it has not dropped the policy. Privatising the electricity generation and distribution sectors would have cost a great many jobs indeed.

**Ms Lylea McMahon:** Point of order—

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** The Government's actions condemn it as being anti-jobs.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Upper Hunter will resume his seat.

**Ms Lylea McMahon:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 76, relevance. I ask the Deputy-Speaker to draw the member for Upper Hunter back to justifying why he was absent from the Chamber last night and failed to participate in the debate about jobs in the Hunter and failed to do his job.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** To the point of order: The point of order is out of order. This motion is about jobs in the Hunter and the Upper Hunter. What is the Government doing about stimulating jobs in the Upper Hunter? All it is doing is destroying jobs in the Upper Hunter and the Hunter. Those opposite should be ashamed of themselves for pulling this trick. They stand condemned by their own record of jobs that have been lost in the Hunter and the Upper Hunter. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr FRANK TERENCE:** (Maitland) [3.49 p.m.]: Last night when I was in the Chamber listening to debate on the matter of public importance, the member for Charlestown referred to the \$13 billion that is to be spent on defence contracts. He said that John Blackburn, AO, had been appointed as a defence industry adviser and that the Hunter stood to—

**Mr George Souris:** Point of order: Madam Deputy-Speaker, I ask you to rule on the point of order, rather than give the member for Maitland the call to debate this motion.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Upper Hunter wasted the remainder of his time by speaking to the point of order instead of the motion. I uphold the point of order taken by the member for Shellharbour. His remarks were outside the leave of the motion.

**Mr FRANK TERENCE:** As I listened to the debate on jobs and investment in the Hunter, I looked across the Chamber and was aghast and bewildered to see the Opposition benches empty. There can be no greater dereliction of duty than for a member of Parliament not to appear in Parliament to debate a matter. More than that, there can be no greater dereliction of duty than for a member of Parliament not to appear to debate a matter that affects his constituents. In particular, I refer to the member for Port Stephens and the member for Upper Hunter. I understand that the member for Upper Hunter is feeling second rate these days as a member of The Nationals. The Liberals come to the Hunter and put up their signs on the telegraph poles in his electorate. They forget all about him. I understand his frustration. But there can be no greater dereliction of duty than for a member of Parliament not to turn up to debate a matter that affects his constituents. When members hold the processes of Parliament in contempt they also hold their constituents in contempt. When the constituents of Port Stephens find out that the member for Port Stephens self-indulgently watched a football game instead of coming into the Chamber to talk about jobs in the Hunter—a matter that affects his electorate—they will shake their heads.

**Mr Thomas George:** Point of order: The point of order relates to relevance. Government members continually raise the issue that Opposition members were watching rugby league. The match did not start until eight o'clock. The debate took place at five past seven.

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

**Mr FRANK TERENCE:** Opposition members know that matters of public importance are debated in the evening, and they chose not to turn up. It was a disgraceful exhibition by a group of people who say they want to be in government. They say they are the alternative Government. Where were they last night during the debate? They did not bother to participate. The member for Port Stephens comes into the House today and reads out a written speech. It is a disgrace.

**Mr MATTHEW MORRIS** (Charlestown) [3.52 p.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Port Stephens, Swansea, Upper Hunter and Maitland for their contributions. Regardless of their

speeches today, they were absent last night during debate on a matter of public importance. Not one of them has been brave enough to own up and say why they were absent from that important debate. Jobs are an issue for all of us. Last night we had the opportunity to focus on the Hunter region. Yet the Opposition members were absent—no explanation. The member for Port Stephens was missing in action; the member for Upper Hunter, missing in action; and the member for Lake Macquarie, missing in action.

This afternoon Opposition members huffed and puffed about what the Government is doing to support jobs in the Hunter. Last night in the House, Government members put comprehensive information on the record for debate. But Opposition members have a total disregard for the parliamentary procedures of this House. They ignored the opportunity to come into the House and participate in a worthwhile and sound debate on the important issue of jobs. They should explain themselves. I want them to tell their communities that they walked away from their responsibilities in Parliament and did not participate in a debate on an important issue. Do their constituents know what they get up to? Rather than being in the Chamber participating in debate, they are off gallivanting around Lord knows where. It probably had something to do with last night's football match.

**Mr Craig Baumann:** Point of order: The member for Charlestown is not telling the truth. I would not watch the State of Origin if they played it in the yard next door to me.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order.

**Mr MATTHEW MORRIS:** Opposition members have had ample opportunity this afternoon to tell us where they were last night. They are not brave enough to do so.

**Mr Thomas George:** Point of order: Madam Deputy-Speaker, I know that you would be getting sick of this too.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** That is a very good observation!

**Mr Thomas George:** The Government members keep referring to the football. All I can put it down to is that they are disgusted and disappointed that New South Wales lost. Do they want to know where I was? I was protecting the monarchy down in the theatrette.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order. The member for Lismore will resume his seat.

**Mr MATTHEW MORRIS:** I am very happy for the member for Lismore. Nothing the Opposition members have said or can say changes the fact that they neglected their duty to be present in the Chamber and to participate in a debate about jobs in the Hunter. They failed their constituencies and, more broadly, the people of this State. They should hang their heads in shame.

**Question—That the words stand—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 51**

Mr Amery	Mr Furolo	Ms Megarrity
Ms Andrews	Ms Gadiel	Mr Morris
Mr Aquilina	Mr Gibson	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Beamer	Mr Greene	Mr Pearce
Mr Borger	Mr Harris	Mrs Perry
Mr Brown	Ms Hay	Mr Piper
Ms Burney	Mr Hickey	Mr Sartor
Ms Burton	Ms Hornery	Mr Shearan
Mr Campbell	Ms Judge	Mr Stewart
Mr Collier	Ms Keneally	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Coombs	Mr Khoshaba	Mr Terenzini
Mr Corrigan	Mr Koperberg	Mr West
Mr Costa	Mr Lalich	Mr Whan
Mr Daley	Mr Lynch	
Ms D'Amore	Mr McBride	
Mr Draper	Dr McDonald	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mrs Fardell	Ms McKay	Mr Ashton
Ms Firth	Ms McMahan	Mr Martin



**Noes, 36**

Mr Aplin	Mr Hazzard	Mr Smith
Mr Baird	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Souris
Mr Baumann	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Stokes
Ms Berejikian	Mr Humphries	Mr Stoner
Mr Besseling	Mr Kerr	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Constance	Ms Moore	Mr J. D. Williams
Mr Debnam	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Page	
Mr Fraser	Mr Piccoli	
Ms Goward	Mr Provest	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mrs Hancock	Mr Richardson	Mr George
Mr Hartcher	Mr Roberts	Mr Maguire

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment negatived.**

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 48**

Mr Amery	Ms Gadiel	Ms Megarrity
Ms Andrews	Mr Gibson	Mr Morris
Mr Aquilina	Mr Greene	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Beamer	Mr Harris	Mr Pearce
Mr Borger	Ms Hay	Mrs Perry
Mr Brown	Mr Hickey	Mr Sartor
Ms Burney	Ms Hornery	Mr Shearan
Ms Burton	Ms Judge	Mr Stewart
Mr Campbell	Ms Keneally	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Collier	Mr Khoshaba	Mr Terenzini
Mr Coombs	Mr Koperberg	Mr West
Mr Corrigan	Mr Lalich	Mr Whan
Mr Costa	Mr Lynch	
Mr Daley	Mr McBride	
Ms D'Amore	Dr McDonald	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Firth	Ms McKay	Mr Ashton
Mr Furolo	Ms McMahan	Mr Martin

**Noes, 40**

Mr Aplin	Mr Hartcher	Mr Roberts
Mr Baird	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baumann	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Smith
Ms Berejikian	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Souris
Mr Besseling	Mr Humphries	Mr Stokes
Mr Cansdell	Mr Kerr	Mr Stoner
Mr Constance	Mr Merton	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Debnam	Ms Moore	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mr J. D. Williams
Mr Draper	Mr Page	Mr R. C. Williams
Mrs Fardell	Mr Piccoli	
Mr Fraser	Mr Piper	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Goward	Mr Provest	Mr George
Mrs Hancock	Mr Richardson	Mr Maguire

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER:** Order! It being before 4.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to General Business Orders of the Day (for Bills).

## **HURLSTONE AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL SITE BILL 2009**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Debate resumed from 26 March 2009.**

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON** (Burrinjuck) [4.11 p.m.]: The purpose of the Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill 2009 is to ensure that the Hurlstone Agricultural High School site remains in public ownership and to limit the use of the site to that of a government school. The school has about 200 boarders and 7,800 day students. Those students attend the school because they do not have access anywhere else in Sydney or its surrounds to the facilities that are provided at the school. The closest agricultural school would probably be Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School at Tamworth or Yanco Agricultural High School. I have received a huge amount of correspondence from people in every town in my electorate who have attended Hurlstone Agricultural High School, or who have children or other relatives currently attending the school, who are firmly opposed to the sale of any land associated with this wonderful facility. Diane and Kendall McMaster state:

Hurlstone should be one of the gems in the crown of NSW State Education System but it would appear that once again our students are going to be made all the more poorer in their opportunities by badly made and short sighted decisions of a Government who is only interested in short term solutions.

In another letter to me they also state:

I have read that as other schools don't have the area that the Government is just bringing it into line with other schools. Hurlstone does have a very active and healthy Agriculture culture with a large range of students continuing into further agriculture studies ... Hurlstone is unique in how it exposes city based students on how agriculture is important to our lives and in these days of changing farming and environmental needs I would have assumed it would be even more important to retain the farm for ongoing education and awareness.

Our children have gained so much by being in this environment and it seems that in the government's short sightedness and money grab that this has made the school an easy target.

In these days of climate change and the need to pursue alternative environmental solutions one would have imagined that the Government would have sought to increase access to education, particularly within the agricultural sphere. The food and fibre grown in our nation, and indeed in our State, is becoming a precious resource as the Federal Government continues to undertake enormous water buy-backs. Just last week the Minister for Water placed an embargo on the future sale of environmental water. What impacts will that have on agriculture in New South Wales? How close are we to having to import our food in the way we import timber? We have our own natural resources and we should be developing them. We should be getting back to the "Australian made" theme.

We should be advancing this nation and this State instead of selling it off and reducing our education facilities to the point at which people will not be able to develop and blossom in the agricultural field. We should also be looking at alternative ways of getting through the climate change challenge. I have received several other letters that I will share with the House. David Philpott is the General Manager of Boorowa Council. He did not write to me in that capacity but, rather, as a former student of Hurlstone Agricultural High School. He attended the school for six years as a boarder together with his brothers, so he knows exactly what the school has to offer in agricultural education. His attendance at the school has served him well in his role as the general manager of a rural shire and it enables him to relate effectively with his community. He stated:

Having grown up on the land there was and will continue to be significant benefit in retaining the school and also the land that the school resides on. To say that the land is surplus to need is very incorrect. How can you train the future farmers of NSW on small agriculture plots when many hectares of land are required to keep agriculture surviving.

He is spot on the money. He continued:

To do this properly you need land that allows grazing by farming animals to have that hands on experience.

He lodged his objection in the strongest possible terms. James Kingwell of Cootamundra wrote:

As an Ex-Student, Hurlstone has influenced me strongly and I would be absolutely disgusted if the proposed sale was to go ahead. It would completely contradict Hurlstone's purpose and values, and would no longer be the prestigious agricultural school that many people in our community send their children to.

He asks us to pursue the State Government to reverse its short-sighted decision. He is extremely concerned and wrote a very strongly worded letter. I have also received calls from many people, including Trevor Schmidt from Cootamundra, who complained about the proposed sale of the school's land. He feels that Hurlstone Agricultural High School is a shining example of a government school and that it provides a wonderful opportunity for people from different cultures living in Sydney to learn about Australian agriculture and to mix with boarders from rural and regional New South Wales. The school shines in that regard. Steve Roberts, a senior veterinary officer in the Department of Agriculture, wrote to me stating:

As an alumnus of Hurlstone Agricultural High School I am alarmed at the NSW Treasurer's short-sighted proposal to sell off the farm land & memorial forest at HAHS. I urge you as my elected Member to petition the Treasurer to ensure that this valuable educational facility is not lost to future generations of students, particularly those intending to pursue a career in agriculture.

He feels very strongly about the Government's intentions, particularly in relation to the memorial forest. He stated:

To include the memorial forest in the sale is little short of sacrilege.

Geoff and Heather Bush from Cootamundra stated:

Our oldest son Sam is currently at Hurlstone in Year 8. He is actively involved in the Agriculture program ...

Good on you, Sam! Best wishes for a very successful career and school life. Mr and Mrs Bush point out that Sam is particularly interested in beef and dairy cattle. Naturally, all of the students are upset about the proposed sale. The Bush's letter continued:

He has always hoped to have a career in agriculture. At the age of six he told us he was going to go to Hurlstone ... As it was a selective school we were not sure that he would make it. He tried really hard at primary school (Cootamundra Public School)—

an excellent facility—

—because he knew he had to have good results to get to Hurlstone. He was so excited when he opened the letter saying that he had been accepted.

Ray Coates from Boorowa, a pharmacist and ex Royal Australian Air Force, wrote saying that he is very conscious of the tragic consequences of the sale. Tony Card, a former student of Hurlstone Agricultural High School now in a religious order, is extremely concerned about the proposed sale. The Government must support the Opposition in halting the sale of this land.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.19 p.m.]: My family's educational connection to Hurlstone Agricultural High School has continued for much of the past 25 years. I have probably spent more time involved with Hurlstone over the past eight years than anyone in this place. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Burrinjuck—a letter signifying acceptance to Hurlstone Agricultural High School is one of the more exciting times in the life of any family in New South Wales. The fact I have been closely involved with Hurlstone is well known to everybody involved on both sides of this debate. The quality of education for all subjects, not just for agriculture, is why there is such demand for places at Hurlstone. The quality of the education, again in all subjects, for those who now attend, and for our brightest young students who will attend in the future, is vital to everyone in south-western Sydney. This quality of education is much more important than politics or the media cycle.

Many of our community leaders in south-western Sydney—lawyers, teachers, politicians, journalists, doctors, vets, information technology specialists, electricians, miners and farmers—have all gone to Hurlstone Agricultural High School. I have worked with, taught, learnt from, treated, and lived with these people, and will continue to do so after this debate is over. As Churchill said, "Truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it and ignorance may deride it, but, in the end, there it is." The truth is that for some years the majority of students at Hurlstone are suburban, come from western and south-western Sydney, do not study agriculture-related subjects once it is no longer compulsory to do so, and do not pursue careers in agriculture-related professions.

However, the study of agriculture-related subjects remains one of the main reasons that the school exists. For those who do wish to study agriculture-related subjects, the permanent loss of the only broadacre agricultural school in the Sydney Basin is too great a price to pay. We need to retain the Hurlstone site, as is, to allow those students who wish to do agriculture for the Higher School Certificate, or those who wish to pursue a career in agriculture-related fields, the best possible facility. There is also potential for other primary and high school students to use the site in the future. That reason alone is enough to oppose the sale, but there are other issues that should be considered and which I wish to raise.

I am pleased that some members have also raised the needs of the other schools on the site. Again, I have had a close association with these schools for many years. Their needs are as important as any in this debate, and the welfare of those students is vital. Their current arrangements should also be left untouched. However, the main reason that this sale is opposed by the vast majority of the people in my electorate, few of whom will ever go to Hurlstone Agricultural High School, is the alienation of public green space in perpetuity. I have had six months to quietly ask the silent majority of people in my electorate, not just the vocal groups, for their views on the proposed sale.

At community gatherings, branch meetings or in casual conversation with constituents I would broach the subject. The vast majority of those I spoke with oppose the sale on the green space issue. Added to that, since the sale was first proposed we have had further evidence of economic pain to come, and the injection of new funds for the education system from the Federal Government. These are other reasons to abandon the proposed sale. Another reason is that there is already enough development land in the area. In fact, the people of Edmondson Park, just across the F5, would dearly love to have their land developed for housing.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the staff at Hurlstone Agricultural High School. The staff do a wonderful job, and I would like to thank them publicly for all they have done for the people of New South Wales and, in particular, the people of south-western Sydney. I have always held, and will continue to hold, Mr John Norris, the principal, in the highest possible regard for the difficult job he has to do—at this time more than any other. Neither of us has chosen to be a revolutionary. I also pay tribute to Ray Palmer and Tom Urry from the Department of Education and Training, whose only interest is the welfare of the students in their region. They are decent, caring and ethical servants of the people of New South Wales. As Tom says, he has 16 per cent of the students in New South Wales and 14 per cent of the State funding—words which I will not forget. The teachers at Hurlstone Agricultural High School have shown commitment, skill and dedication over many years, and will continue to do so. Their job is hard enough already, and all politicians need to remember not to make it any harder. This must be an extremely difficult time for these teachers. I know many of them, and offer them my support.

The uncertainty of the sale process is already severely disrupting the school, and this issue needs to be resolved sooner rather than later. For that reason I have asked, and will continue to ask, that this proposed sale be abandoned now. As for my vote, I will not be crossing the floor to vote with the Opposition on the Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill. For the benefit of posterity, I wish to place my reasons for not doing so on the public record. To cross the floor would make me the first person from the Australian Labor Party to do so in this place since George Petersen in 1987. I would walk into this place as a member of the Labor Party and walk out three minutes later as an Independent. In three minutes, I would deprive the 70,000 people of my electorate of the voice in government that the majority of them voted for in 2007. The electorate voted for the Australian Labor Party, not for Andrew McDonald.

I have been asked by those opposite to cross the floor—as you would expect; it is their job to do so—and also by some from outside the electorate. It does not matter to people outside the electorate if someone else's member of Parliament ceases to be a member of the Government. I have had no groundswell of majority opinion from inside my electorate to walk out of the Government of their choosing on their behalf, and will not do so. I would also like to point out that no member currently in this place, with the exception of the admirable Russell Turner in 2003 on a matter of conscience, has ever crossed the floor. To finish, I oppose this proposed sale. I will always oppose the sale of any part of the Hurlstone site to private interests. I have been talking to the silent majority of people in my electorate for six months. They oppose the proposed sale. Their views will not change; neither will mine.

**Ms PRU GOWARD** (Goulburn) [4.27 p.m.]: I support the Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill, which requires Hurlstone Agricultural High School to be retained for educational purposes. I commend the member for Macquarie Fields on being half pregnant, which is a feat very difficult to achieve, but the member has done so with some dignity. We are just disappointed that he does not feel able to be part of history by

completing it and crossing the floor. That would be quite a significant step forward in Sydney and for an electorate that, I suspect, often feels it is underrepresented in this place—not by the member so much but on the issues that confound and absorb that community.

This bill is incredibly important to the people of Goulburn. I have been lobbied, as have other members, a number of times on the need to preserve the site. New South Wales has a \$4 billion agricultural industry and this is one of those schools that prepares young people for that industry. Most significantly, it is a school with a commercial farm. This is not a sale—other than the sale itself—that will save the Department of Education and Training any money because the school's farm generates so much income that that is the source of the school's maintenance and, as I understand it, improvements. In a State where we still ride on the sheep's back, on the cow's back and on the wheat bales, it is still important that we have training facilities for young people. Those facilities should include a working farm. To reduce it to a mere 20 hectares means it is like so many country high schools in New South Wales—it has a bit of a farm on the side.

People in agriculture say that today the difficulties and complexities of running a modern farm—because of occupational health and safety requirements, Food Authority requirements, chemical and complex commercial arrangements—mean that one cannot just go out and become a farmer merely because he or she has been part of a group of four or five students managing a cow at a country school. They must be part of the entirety of the enterprise and must understand how all the sections of the regulation fit together. The loss of the Hurlstone Agricultural High School operating farm will deny a significant proportion of the future New South Wales agricultural industry workforce an opportunity to learn how that is best done. That is not the case with our independent school sector, and it is all the more shameful that a Labor Government should seek to deny lower income families the capacity to learn about the administration and running of a farm. That workforce is becoming divided between those who have inherited farms and those who may, as unskilled workers, have the opportunity to work on them.

The reduction of Hurlstone Agricultural High School's working farm to a largish high school on the fringes of Sydney denies families without the income the opportunity to send them to one of the independent schools or, for that matter, one of the other remaining agricultural high schools. It is a great loss to working families, particularly those of more average socioeconomic means. In addition, as the member for Macquarie Fields so eloquently described, it is a very important piece of green space in a part of Sydney that is rapidly becoming part of the tar and cement of the city. Also, it is a great loss to communities who are conscious that they do not have the same amenities still enjoyed in other areas of Sydney where open space has been retained. Like my colleagues and on behalf of the people of the Goulburn electorate, particularly the agricultural communities, I support the bill.

**Mr GEOFF CORRIGAN** (Camden) [4.32 p.m.]: I make a brief comment on the Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill to support my colleague the member for Macquarie Fields in opposing the sale of land at Hurlstone.

**Mr Russell Turner:** Are you going to cross the floor?

**Mr GEOFF CORRIGAN:** I will not be crossing the floor in some cheap political stunt to suit the Opposition so that it can put out a press release. I hope it includes the reasons why the member for Macquarie Fields and I will not be part of that stunt. I have received many representations on the matter, which has provoked great anger and anxiety amongst certain sectors of my community. I shall read onto the record an email I received from Jennifer Wright and Bernie Shipp, whose daughter currently goes to the school. They saw me in March and emailed me on 17 May as follows:

**Inquiry into sale of Hurlstone Agricultural High School farm a farce**

An enquiry into the sale of up to 140ha of the farm at Hurlstone Agricultural High School is not necessary as the arguments against it are obvious. Now that the terms of reference are available the state labor government has once again played a deceitful and dishonest hand. It is not an open enquiry into whether the farm land should be sold or not but **which parts of the current site of Hurlstone Agricultural High School should be sold**. It is a fait accompli and no matter what submissions are brought forward the decision to sell is already made.

Mr Peters the former president of the NSW Farmers Association has been appointed to chair the inquiry by Education Minister Verity Firth. His hands are tied and his reputation on the line. His ability to make an informed, intelligent and just decision is immediately hampered by the restrictive terms of reference ...

I shall not read the rest of the email, but that is the gist of it. I had intended to send a reply to her the next day. However, before I could do so the New South Wales Government, as part of its getting out to meet the community initiative, held a Community Cabinet at Macarthur. The next day Jenny Wright sent me a copy of an email she had sent to the Minister for Education and Training. At the Community Cabinet Jenny took the opportunity to speak to the Minister for Education and Training and the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, Michael Coutts-Trotter, as did a number of people. In fact, I think the Minister's time that night was taken up with people wanting to talk to her about Hurlstone Agricultural High School. The email states:

Thank you for the opportunity of speaking with you last night. Face to face communication is valuable, however, it's back to the boxing gloves and another new day.

I have enclosed part of a letter I sent to the SMH which actually was printed (and edited) in First Word SMH. I have highlighted the parts where I mentioned a combination/demonstration centre at Hurlstone, much along the lines that Michael Coutts-Trotter was speaking about last night.

Rural secondary and tertiary education is valuable as Australia still relies on primary produce for its local and international markets—although not totally on the sheep's back anymore—

at least she acknowledges that—

Encouragement to agricultural studies (and not only farm practices but the whole range of rural and land activities, which can even be city based occupations) is vital.

The average age of many in these activities is older than most other occupations. We do depend on Australia's rural productivity, even though living amongst 3+ million people in Sydney the importance is hidden from people, but we all drink water, eat food, wear clothes, have gardens, don't like pests and creepy crawlies, worry about climate change and so on.

It is important to encourage agricultural studies, to make this education as important as other studies. Country life is not about sleeping under a tree while the cattle get fat or stock agents driving around in mercedes; being subsidised by the city. It is hard work, dependent on many variables, taxing, often bringing in no income. Let Hurlstone be the educational core of 21st rural (including scientific, economic) practices. Don't be in such a hurry to sell any valuable parcel of land which can provide this important 21st century education.

So I will keep hammering on about the importance.

Those are the sorts of emails and representations I have received in my electorate for some time by parents whose children go to Hurlstone Agricultural High School or have previously been to Hurlstone Agricultural High School. Many veterinarians in the area attended Hurlstone Agricultural High School before they went on to Sydney University. I support the member for Macquarie Fields in his opposition to the sale of Hurlstone Agricultural High School. My reasons are the same as his. This area has been a green open space since the early 1960s. At the time the Sydney regional outline plan showed a spine between Campbelltown and Camden. It started at Liverpool or Hurlstone. That land is green open space to provide lungs for what was then envisaged to be the future growth of the tri-cities plan of Campbelltown, Appin and Picton. Thankfully that plan has faded into the distance.

I pay tribute to some of my colleagues at Campbelltown City Council, in particular, the independent mayor, Russell Matheson, who does not belong to a political party; I do know which way he votes. Russell has been a strong advocate for retention of Hurlstone in its present form. I pay tribute also to my Labor colleagues on Campbelltown City Council, Aaron Rule and Anoulack Chanthivong, who have spoken to me constantly and made representations to the Minister constantly opposing the sale of land at Hurlstone. Like the member for Macquarie Fields, I believe the land should be retained as open space. I oppose the sale but I will not vote with the Opposition in a cheap political trick.

**Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD** (Hornsby) [4.39 p.m.]: The Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill is a bill for an Act to require the Hurlstone Agricultural High School site to be retained for educational purposes. The objects are to ensure that the Hurlstone Agricultural High School site remains in public ownership and to limit the use of the site to that of a government school. I congratulate the Leader of The Nationals on introducing this bill because the concerns were deafening when it was announced that part of the school would be sold. I reiterate many of the reasons already outlined as to why the Government should support the bill. This is an important piece of green open space and, in this day and age of development and overdevelopment, it is important to retain such areas. It is extremely relevant to keep agriculture as a focus if there is a need to have a working farm on the school site.

I believe in the need to make the agricultural focus of education available to students. I have relatives who live in rural areas and whose children have attended rural high schools, and they have had the opportunity

to experience metropolitan-like education. In the context of students having the ability to seek out a school that provides this type of opportunity, it is extremely important to retain these agricultural areas. Many residents of my electorate have expressed concerns about the sale of part of Hurlstone Agricultural High School. At least one of the schools in my electorate has suffered the fear of having to sell part of its land. I refer to Berowra Public School, which is located in the Berowra area. Berowra is somewhat similar to a rural area, and it is close to significant national parks. The school is located on a large site and for many years—well before 2002 when I was elected to this place—it has fought extremely hard for a school hall. Over the years the teachers, parents, and particularly the parents and citizens groups, have put 110 per cent into focussing on getting a school hall.

Early in my time representing the electorate, it seemed that Berowra Public School could be forced to sell off part of its land to achieve the school hall. That was an unsatisfactory state of affairs. Fortunately, the Government changed its mind in relation to that, and now the Rudd Government has come from the rear to save the day for this rather inept Government in relation to the provision of funding for a school hall for Berowra Public School. Hopefully the need to sell part of the school land has now gone. However, in thinking that the sale of part of Hurlstone Agricultural High School was a perfectly acceptable thing to do, fear exists in relation to other schools where there are large property holdings and where the schools have been utilising land for purposes that are significant to the education of students. These parents, teachers, and the school students themselves should not have the fear that one day the Government will decide to sell part of their school land simply because it has not been able to manage a budget in the way it should have been managed and the Government needs to prop up its rather meagre funds.

It is therefore important to stand and be counted in relation to Hurlstone Agricultural High School. It is rather sad that two Government members who obviously are supportive of each other in relation to the need to retain Hurlstone at its current size cannot see their way clear to make a stand by crossing the floor and voting with the Opposition in support of this important legislation. It is significant that this legislation is being debated on the tail end of what has been a very successful Education Week. I reiterate that I have many wonderful schools in my electorate. I had intended to refer to each of them. On this occasion, however, I will defer to other speakers who want to contribute to this debate on Hurlstone Agricultural High School. In conclusion, I urge all members of the House to support this very important legislation.

**Mr KERRY HICKEY** (Cessnock) [4.43 p.m.]: The Opposition is seeking to close off debate on this important issue before the inquiry has even started. The member for Macquarie Fields beat down the door of the Minister for Education and Training with regard to this legislation. He worked the system the best I have ever seen a member do in this House, to work hard and fight for his community. It is easy for a member to stand in this House and score cheap political points. The member for Macquarie Fields is a diligent worker on behalf of his community and he is trying to achieve the best outcome for the whole of the State. The inquiry—called for by the member for Macquarie Fields and announced by the Minister—is now underway. The chair of the inquiry is Mr Mal Peters, an independent person, as was always promised. The member for Macquarie Fields fought for an independent person to be appointed to chair the inquiry and address the issues.

Mr Mal Peters is a former President of the New South Wales Farmers Association. He knows more about agriculture and the needs of the agricultural sector than almost anyone in this place. I defy any member of this place to say otherwise. Mal Peters is his own man, and he is not bound by any loyalties to the Government. The Minister has asked Mr Peters to find the best outcome for the school, the sector and the surrounding community. It is very clear: Mr Peters is trying to find the best outcome for the school, yet the Opposition seeks to close off the debate before the inquiry has even started. This motion by the Opposition seeks to preclude any finding that Mr Peters might make. It says to him: No matter what you find in your inquiry, no matter what the opinions of the key stakeholders, no matter what opportunities you find to make the school better, nothing at the school is to change. That is the Opposition's attitude on the issue.

The motion precludes any change at the school. The terms of reference for the inquiry ask Mr Peters to seek out community opinion from a range of sources, including current, prospective and former students and their parents. The inquiry will hear from these people how the school has served them in the past and what they want from the school in the future. The inquiry will ask students about their intended career paths, to make sure the school is delivering to them the educational options they need. The inquiry will also consult with local residents about green space and heritage issues. The inquiry will consult with experts in the sector, including the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Research Economics, university agricultural faculties, farming professional associations, and employers.

One of the most important aspects of the inquiry is to determine how agriculture has changed since Hurlstone Agricultural High School was set up. We need to know how Hurlstone fits into the agricultural sector

today and what skills the sector needs the school to be fostering. There is even an opportunity to explore the adequacy of the entire agricultural curriculum. This is a wide-ranging inquiry that will engage all those with an interest in the school to fashion a new vision for the school's future. I understand a website has been set up to provide information about the inquiry to people who wish to make a submission. The website is [www.hurlstoneinquiry.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hurlstoneinquiry.nsw.gov.au).

In this context, the motion is jumping the gun. The motion from the Leader of the Nationals pre-empts the inquiry. It assumes that we in this place know better than not just Mal Peters but all the people who intend to participate in the inquiry—the students, local residents, and agricultural sector experts—what is best for the school. This Parliament should get out of the way and let the community have an open and honest discussion about Hurlstone's place in the local community and the sector. There is an opportunity in this inquiry for those with a genuine interest in Hurlstone—rather than just a political interest—to help fashion a new vision for the school as it moves forward. I understand that in the other place members have already come to the same conclusion and deferred the bill until the inquiry has completed its work. I suggest that we in this place would be best to do likewise.

**Mr RUSSELL TURNER** (Orange) [4.48 p.m.]: In speaking to the Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill 2009 I acknowledge that the Leader of The Nationals introduced the bill. I also acknowledge the long history of Hurlstone Agricultural High School. Whilst I was not given the opportunity to attend Hurlstone Agricultural High School, when I lived at Frenchs Forest a couple of my friends who also lived in the Frenchs Forest area attended the school. I was aware of the length of time it took them to travel to the school on public transport each day. One of my friends would leave home in the dark and arrive home in the dark. He would catch the bus to Manly, then catch the ferry across to Circular Quay, and then he would catch the train. His parents, who came from a very basic background, wanted something better for their son so he persevered with the travelling. He graduated from Hurlstone. I have lost touch with him now but that indicates the importance of Hurlstone Agricultural High School over a long period in giving young students the opportunity to take up agriculture as a career.

I, too, have received many letters of concern from former students and parents of current students of the high school that no matter what the Government says about the retention of the school as an agricultural high school, the school will never be the same if the proposed land is sold off. It is important to retain this school as a working farm, as the member for Goulburn said, not merely a high school with a few classrooms in which to teach theoretical agriculture. I could give many examples of how the Government has failed to provide educational institutions specialising in agriculture. We have seen the demise of the basic Hawkesbury Agricultural College. The Government has attempted to virtually close down Yanco Agricultural College—it is still operating but is nothing like it was in its heyday. We have seen the emphasis removed from agriculture in what was the old Orange Agricultural College. That has now been included as part of the Charles Sturt University. That university is going from strength to strength in other faculties but not in agriculture, which is now a lesser ingredient in its curriculum.

I have watched the Orange research station being slowly downgraded and at the end of this month the veterinary research laboratory at Orange will close. Indeed, it is to be transferred to Camden under the guise that an upgrade will make it world-class. On a number of occasions I have emphasised in this House the importance of keeping our facilities world-class to deal with disease outbreaks, but world-class facilities can remain in country towns such as Orange. Why should that facility be transferred to Sydney? We have seen the continual downgrading of the Orange Department of Primary Industries, to the extent that anyone walking through that building will see numerous offices closed and a reduction in staff—a reversal of the greatest decentralisation policy direction in the history of New South Wales undertaken by the Coalition when it was last in government.

The member for Macquarie Fields noted that this land is not needed for residential purposes because ample land is available across the road that developers would love to have released. Therefore, it is not a question of land shortage, as I understand there is plenty of land in the area. The member for Goulburn emphasised the importance of retaining that green belt area, particularly this land for agricultural students. It is vitally important to ensure that an appropriate number of agricultural students pass through our education system to maintain expertise in farming throughout New South Wales. That will allow us to keep up with world standards and retain our record of excellence for developing new products and varieties. In this way we can compete in the world market and perhaps slow down the number of imports that seem to increasingly enter the



country. I call on the Government and those members who say they are opposed to the closure, in any form, of Hurlstone Agricultural High School to have the courage to cross the floor and vote with the Opposition in support of this bill.

**Mr PETER DRAPER** (Tamworth) [4.54 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill 2009. It is a great pity that there is a need for such a bill. However, yet again the Government appears to be on the verge of making another monumental blunder. Sadly for the residents of New South Wales, and in particular those who value this incredibly successful agricultural high school, the Government's mismanagement of finances has now seen the Minister contemplating yet another fire sale to put a bandaid on its financial woes. Hurlstone has a proud 100-year plus history of providing agricultural education to young men and women from right across our State.

I was first made aware of plans to sell off the school's invaluable land in November last year, and only a short time later I had the great pleasure of meeting Eliza Gill and Lindsay Brown, who are current students at Hurlstone Agricultural High School. Eliza comes from Tamworth, and I was pleased to have another opportunity for a brief chat with her at the recent Tamworth Gold Cup race event. Eliza is a very dedicated and passionate supporter of her school, and pointed out to me that while the Tamworth area has Farrer Memorial Agricultural College catering for boys who are interested in agriculture, Hurlstone offers the same sorts of opportunities for young women. Both Eliza and Lindsay are terrific ambassadors for their school. They are bright and articulate young women, who want to ensure that future generations of students have the same opportunities they currently enjoy at Hurlstone, and they are absolutely right in that pursuit. I had the opportunity also to meet Tiffany Spears in this place, and one would not find anybody more dedicated to fighting the good fight.

We have just heard from the member for Cessnock, who once again is hiding behind the inquiry announced by the Minister for Education and Training. I thought his speech was quite disgraceful. The inquiry is supposed to examine the needs of current and future students, the needs of the agricultural sector and the needs of the surrounding community. We do not need an inquiry to tell us what those needs are—they can only be addressed by retaining the land. It is not rocket science, yet the Government is going to waste scarce taxpayer dollars undertaking an inquiry that frankly seems to be an attempt to protect local members of Parliament. This decision resulted from the disastrous mini-budget that was introduced last year, where the Government announced that it was going to re-prioritise its spending. What a disaster that initiative has turned out to be. The Premier announced that he wanted to focus on front-line services—one cannot get more front-line than education.

I have to question the sanity of the Department of Education and Training bureaucrat who identified the Hurlstone farm as a site that was not being used currently for the benefit of students, and was not likely to be needed in the future. What planet is this person living on? The department advised the Minister that not all of the 160 hectares the school sits on was being used to the maximum benefit and that it would benefit the school if some of that land were sold and part of the proceeds reinvested in new facilities. The only beneficiary would be the Government because the money would go into its coffers.

The member for Penrith said that the agricultural sector has changed substantially since the school was established on its present site in 1926. She is right. In 1926 the Government valued agriculture, valued education, and valued facilities such as Hurlstone, which was educating and supporting many future farmers and agricultural specialists, as it continues to do today. I am the father of a student who attends the Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School. The member for Lismore said during his contribution that he recently visited Hurlstone and was very impressed with what he saw. He told of young students in their school uniforms at 7.30 a.m. milking cows in the dairy. He said one young girl told him that she gets up every morning at 4.00 a.m. and travels to school to work in the dairy before commencing her schoolwork. Last year I was one of those parents who got up before daylight to take their son to Farrer so that he could take part in regular farm duties before the education part of the school day started.

In year 7, Ben took his turn on calf duty at the dairy, and before he finishes at Farrer in year 12, he will have experienced milking duties, looking after sheep, pigs, poultry, plus the vegetable garden—just to name some of the activities. It gives the students exposure to these agricultural activities, and gives them a sense of pride and ownership in their school. The farm provides produce for the boarding school, and it also provides hands-on experience for the students. The Government seems to think that it can sell the bulk of the land and leave the school with some 35 acres. That is not a farm. There are 200 boarding students at this school because

they want to learn about agriculture in a practical way, yet there seems to be a school of thought that they will still be able to gain a proper agricultural education without the farm. The 700 day students also value the agricultural opportunities on offer.

I was pleased to hear the member for East Hills state that last year's mini-budget was not the best mini-budget ever to be handed down in Australia. Honesty in admitting the Government made a mistake is very refreshing from a Government member, and that should be acknowledged. He also pointed out that the briefing document was flawed. To quote him accurately, he said:

However, the briefing document produced by the boffins at the Department of Education and Training justifying the sale of a large portion of land at Hurlstone Agricultural High School contained inaccurate figures. One would not convict a criminal based on the quality of the information in the document provided to the Minister. If the Minister received inaccurate information, so too did the Government.

This is a frank and unequivocal admission that the decision to sell the land at Hurlstone was based on flawed information. That alone should be reason enough to drop the proposal. A number of previous speakers have pointed out that the departmental brief made comparisons between Hurlstone Agricultural High School and James Ruse Agricultural High School. Any such comparison is misleading and mischievous, to say the least. James Ruse Agricultural High School has very few students studying agriculture after year 10 due to the composition of its student body. Most students in the senior years at James Ruse study 4 unit science and mathematics. In the debate to save Hurlstone's farm, there is no validity in comparing its academic results with those of James Ruse. At Hurlstone there is a genuine interest in agriculture that continues into the senior school. To even be having this debate sends the wrong sorts of messages to the community. As we debate this matter, agricultural research centres across the State are under threat of closure. It makes me question whether the Government has lost interest in farming.

Today farmers from Gloucester and the Liverpool Plains congregated to protest outside Parliament House. They are concerned about the impact of mining on prime agricultural land in this State. I never thought I would see the day when hundreds of farmers would rally in Macquarie Street to raise awareness about the serious concerns they face. This debate is taking place against a background of skills shortages in the agricultural sector that need to be filled. Those shortages can be filled by agriculturally focused students coming through Hurlstone. Bad decisions should and can be reversed—as we saw with the back flip on charging parents for student bus travel. Should the Government proceed with its plans to sell the farm at Hurlstone, the school will lose its focus, identity and support.

As the member for Barwon rightly pointed out, it will become nothing more than another generic school. I have received advice that other agricultural high schools have been looked at for possible land sales. However, I have received confirmation that the Farrer farm is not under threat, for which I am very grateful. Like Farrer, Hurlstone and Yanco rely on their farms to provide an appropriate agricultural education for their students. We need more of these sorts of schools, not less. I was alarmed by the contributions of the member for Heathcote and the member for Wyong. The member for Heathcote read his brief very well, but clearly he had virtually no understanding of the issue. The member for Wyong stated that he knew what the outcome of the inquiry was going to be. To quote his words exactly, so that I do not get them wrong, the member said:

The inquiry will consider the relevant issues and an informed decision will be made based on the facts. Proceeds from the sale of school property are sometimes returned to a school to improve facilities, purchase equipment and increase the curriculum. I am sure the inquiry process will result in some of the land being sold off, but the school as a whole being strengthened. Whilst residential agricultural high schools have a long and proud history, many of the State's high schools run excellent agricultural programs. A school in Wyong has an agriculture program and in recent times won an award at the Easter show for cattle. The school breeds the cattle on limited land. The review will seek to achieve the best outcome for Hurlstone and at the end of the process school facilities and programs will be strengthened.

In other words, we can stop the inquiry right now because the decision has already been made. To compare the school at Wyong to the farm at Hurlstone is breathtaking. I have a question in relation to the cattle-breeding program at the Wyong school. Can the member for Wyong tell me the names of the cattle? There would be so few of them that they must have first names. The member for Wyong also pointed out that Hurlstone Agricultural Continuation School came into being in 1907, and that establishing an agricultural school in that period was deemed to be appropriate since it was believed that the future of Australia lay in agricultural development.

The Government in 1907 deserves commendation for its vision and foresight, while the Government today deserves condemnation for its lack of both qualities. I was impressed with the speech made by the

member for Macquarie Fields. He clearly has a passionate interest in the school and is doing everything in his power to retain that valuable agricultural land. However, I believe he is facing an uphill battle with his colleagues. The object of the bill is to ensure that Hurlstone Agricultural High School remains in public ownership and to limit the use of the site to that of a government school. That is exactly what should happen at Hurlstone. That is why this bill has my unqualified support.

**Mr WAYNE MERTON** (Baulkham Hills) [5.03 p.m.]: Many years ago as a small boy attending South Granville Public School, being a resident of Merrylands, I attended an open day at Hurlstone Agricultural High School. At that stage I was in sixth class and my parents were seeking a school for me to complete my high school education. The impact of my visit to Hurlstone Agricultural High School so many years ago has been impressed indelibly upon my mind. I was amazed that there could be such a facility for people who were interested in agriculture and seeking a good solid education. It was all there at Hurlstone Agricultural High School. Unfortunately, I was not selected to go to that high school. To complete the story, I was offered a place at James Ruse High School, which I declined. That was probably a mistake. I ended up going to the most convenient school, that is, Fairfield High School. At Fairfield High School I received as good an education as possible for a person of my calibre. I ended up a lawyer and I am here today as a member of Parliament.

The Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill is of great significance because it effectively is trying to stop this Government's desperate grab for cash. When the mini-budget was brought down the Government was in dire straits. It is in even worse straits today. It is obvious that the mini-budget was flawed. The Government was cutting expenditure when all others were priming the pump and stimulating the economy. The sale of part of Hurlstone Agricultural High School is a grave mistake. It should not be referred to as a sale. It should be described more appropriately as a gutting of the site, as it will leave the school with 35 acres. As the member for Tamworth eloquently stated, it will get to the situation where the cattle will have names. They will ring up a shearer and the shearer will say, "What are the names of the sheep?" That will be the consequence of Hurlstone being left with 35 acres.

Hurlstone Agricultural High School is an icon for the people of New South Wales. For people seeking a public rural education, this establishment provides intense agriculture on a working farm. Those people are being sold out by a Government that is supposed to support the working class, the battlers and the mainstream of society. The Opposition does not support the Government's notion that public assets should be sacrificed for a quick cash grab. Hurlstone Agricultural High School is also essential for environmental considerations. As the member for Tamworth said, Hurlstone acts as a barrier, a buffer zone between the Southern Highlands and metropolitan Sydney. It is a place where the city and country meet. Even more, this iconic educational facility provides for the public's fundamental right to obtain a State education in a State-owned facility that is a specialist school in agriculture.

Many people say that we no longer ride on the sheep's back. But the budget figures show that primary production is of paramount consideration to our economy. Wool, beef, dairy items and crops are essential to the Australian economy. All the attributes and skills needed in agriculture are taught at Hurlstone Agricultural High School. The New South Wales Labor-controlled Government is prepared to throw it all down the gurgler. The school's experience, training and culture over many years are to be thrown away for the quick quid. That is not on, because the Coalition supports the bill. We introduced the bill, which prohibits the Hurlstone Agricultural High School site from being sold, transferred, leased or otherwise alienated. We have a great conviction about the school, and we share that conviction with other people. I believe the member for Macquarie Fields has a similar conviction—he made no secret of that today. He is in a very difficult position but he had the guts to come into the Chamber and say what he believes should happen.

In society there are many people who could be described as "forgotten people"—tradespeople, some professional people and the battlers of New South Wales. In many instances those people form the nucleus of the families who are represented by students at Hurlstone Agricultural High School, and that includes farmers. It is a hard lot on the land at the moment, and for many farmers private schools are not on the agenda when they consider alternative education choices. Hurlstone is a wonderful facility and the Government should think very seriously about retaining it in toto. We believe that Hurlstone Agricultural High School should be preserved for the so-called "forgotten people". We support the legislation, which says quite simply that the site should not be sold. We believe that any inquiry into this matter has been settled already in the public domain by the thousands of people who have come forward and said they do not want Hurlstone to be sold. They want this community icon protected; they want to keep Hurlstone Agricultural High School. The Opposition supports those people to the nth degree, and we will fight to the end to ensure that happens.

**Mr Steve Whan:** We'll fight them on the beaches!

**Mr WAYNE MERTON:** You might talk about fighting on the beaches. We will fight in the paddocks rather than the beaches, because we know where the school is. But Labor members are prepared to betray those people; they are prepared to sell them down the river for a quick quid. We are not about that. We are about the long-term stability of education and preserving an integral public-owned education asset. Everywhere I go in my electorate I see signs about public education. Hurlstone Agricultural High School is an essential part of public education; it is an icon, and we will protect it. What about members on the other side? When they come to the Chamber to vote on this legislation they should remember that they are voting to sell an icon—something that can never be replaced. They should think about that. It is their children's legacy, and they are prepared to sell their children short.

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro—Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Small Business) [5.12 p.m.]: Mr Assistant-Speaker—

**Mr John Williams:** Isn't there an emergency somewhere?

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** The member for Murray-Darling should not wish emergencies on the poor people of New South Wales. The people in the electorate of the Leader of The Nationals have suffered enough in the past few months. I speak on the Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill 2009 from the perspective of a rural representative. I oppose the Opposition's attempt today to pass this bill, but my perspective is different from that of some of the local members who have spoken about it. Members representing the local area are fighting an extremely good fight, particularly the member for Macquarie Fields, who has represented his electorate very strongly. I attended one of the early meetings at which he pushed for an inquiry into this matter, and he did so very effectively. His constituents' concerns are different from those of my constituents.

There are two issues involved in this debate, and I believe it is important to separate them. The first is the issue of open space, which the member for Macquarie Fields and other Labor members in his area have raised and are putting forward very effectively on behalf of their constituents. But those constituents should understand that their members of Parliament can achieve better results by working within government than by voting for an Opposition stunt that is nothing more than a grab for headlines. The Opposition is not trying to resolve the issue. As a rural representative, I focus on the fact that Hurlstone Agricultural High School has provided education for a long time to people whom I represent but it is important to conduct a review to make sure that it is continuing to provide the sort of agricultural education that we need in New South Wales. I know people whose sons and daughters have attended the school. I am close to one family from the Jindabyne area whose three sons attended Hurlstone, and I understand that they and many other old boys have a very strong emotional attachment to the school, which offered them many educational opportunities.

A few years ago many people from Jindabyne and the Snowy Mountains area attended Hurlstone Agricultural High School. But in the past few years the Government has expanded secondary public education options in the region and we now have the Jindabyne Central School. That school has extended its curriculum to years 11 and 12 so almost no-one from the Snowy River area attends Hurlstone anymore. So from the point of view of the people whom I represent, the role of Hurlstone Agricultural High School has changed and needs to be kept under review. I am particularly interested in providing quality agricultural education in New South Wales. But we should not pretend that everything will stay exactly the same. Times change, and we must always make sure that we are providing agricultural education in the best and most effective way possible. The inquiry that the member for Macquarie Fields has successfully pushed for will afford a great opportunity to consider that issue. We must ensure that our schools are producing people who can manage properties during very challenging times, when there is climate change and when commodity prices fluctuate considerably and are often quite low.

It is vital that we provide the best possible agricultural education. So it is absolutely relevant to hold an inquiry that will make recommendations as to whether the Hurlstone site and school are still able to achieve the best outcomes. Other schools provide agricultural education in New South Wales, and they are fine schools. Two of those schools are located in country New South Wales and I tend to think—it is probably just a gut reaction—that those schools are probably producing more students who go on to work in agriculture. I would like to know how many students attend Hurlstone with a view to pursuing a career in agriculture. It is relevant that the review look into that issue. Educational opportunities in country New South Wales are changing. This Government is the first ever to provide selective education places in regional New South Wales. Partially selective high schools enable young people from regional New South Wales to get a selective education without

having to travel to Newcastle, Sydney or Wollongong—which they were expected to do under the Sydney-centric Coalition Government of the early 1990s. My children attend one such local school. This provides a great educational opportunity for all those who take advantage of it.

I hear the mumblings of members opposite. The Leader of The Nationals—the coastal Leader of The Nationals—spends more time surfing than visiting rural and regional New South Wales, certainly anywhere west of the sandstone curtain. As a consequence, his knowledge of agriculture is pretty limited. What I notice most about the Leader of The Nationals is that he is not willing to listen to anybody else's point of view. He thinks his point of view—which makes for good newspaper headlines—is the only one that counts. We need to take a more reflective view of the process in relation to Hurlstone. Opposition members have gone on about how the Government's decision was prompted by the budget and how it is a fire sale. Let us look at the facts. Every year the Government purchases land in order to build and expand educational facilities. It is unrealistic to expect that governments will retain everything they own. The sale of school land that is no longer required for educational purposes will occur on occasion in order to fund the development of education. I would have thought the Leader of The Nationals, who lives on the North Coast of New South Wales, would notice that the Government is acquiring land in growth areas.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** You are selling it up there too, you dill!

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** The Leader of The Nationals is implying that a Coalition government would never sell any land. That raises an interesting scenario. When the Government decided to expand the Queanbeyan hospital a few years ago it could not extend it across the road because a Coalition government had sold the land that had been set aside for future expansion. The Opposition is once again displaying its hypocrisy. The Leader of The Nationals is more interested in scoring a headline than in achieving anything because that is the way The Nationals do things. One member of his shadow ministerial team has said, "I'm not interested in the facts, only headlines!"

I congratulate the various members of the Labor Party who have been working hard within the party and within the Government to represent their constituents so ably. Their constituents understand that the best way to get a result is by having an effective member in government who is able to put their point of view and get results. As a member of Country Labor and a representative of an area that has an extensive grazing and farming community—many locals have utilised Hurlstone in days gone by, but, as I said, the number is declining—I want to see the Government provide the best possible agricultural education in New South Wales. I have confidence in the inquiry that has been set up to provide guidance. Rural communities will get a far better result if we await the outcome of that inquiry before a final decision is made. Rural communities who think carefully about this will see the legislation introduced by the Leader of The Nationals for what it is: a stunt to get headlines. It does not address the serious issue of delivering agricultural education in New South Wales. I will oppose this bill because I want to see good agricultural education. Unlike the Leader of The Nationals, I am not interested in cheap headlines.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [5.22 p.m.]: We have just heard it all! We have just heard Country Labor's position: Sell the property and close the school; we do not need an agricultural school. I was interested to hear the comments of the member for Cessnock. He said that we should not be debating the Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill 2009 because the Government has established an inquiry and is awaiting a report. We are debating this legislation because we do not trust the Government. This Government cannot be trusted. The inquiry report will say, "Bad luck, Andrew. Sorry, we've done what you wanted us to do and we are selling it." Sadly, this Government is short-changing many people who want to be involved in agriculture in New South Wales. It is sabotaging a great facility that has a history of providing education to many people in my electorate. They have been vocal in their opposition to this move and the winding down of this facility.

Members opposite are concerned about one thing and one thing only: voting in a bloc and closing ranks. I assure the member for Macquarie Fields that this is a burning issue. We have just heard Country Labor's position. The report will be bad news and the member for Macquarie Fields will get the boot. Members opposite will have to live with the report's recommendations because that document will drive the Government's decision. It is bad luck, but the sale will have to go ahead. Of course, it is part of the mini-budget, and we all know that was written on the back of a beer coaster. Unfortunately, much of the detail washed off when the coaster got soggy and some decisions have now been reversed. However, the Government is determined not to reverse this decision.

The report's recommendations will not be good news for the member for Macquarie Fields or the member for Camden. They will be dragged down by this Government. Their constituents will ask them: "Why did you do it? Why did you kill off these students' future? Why did you kill off one of the best agricultural education facilities in New South Wales?" Unfortunately, they will contest the next election with the Government's decision to downgrade this facility hanging over them. It is an absolute and utter disgrace. We hear the great words of the Premier every day about how expansive this Government is and how committed it is to education. This decision flies in the face of what he has said.

**Mr ANDREW STONER** (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [5.26 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Lismore, Barwon, Clarence, Burrinjuck, Goulburn, Hornsby, Orange, Tamworth and Baulkham Hills for their contributions in support of the Hurlstone Agricultural High School Site Bill 2009. I also acknowledge the contributions of those well-known chardonnay socialists, the members for the electorates of Penrith, East Hills, Heathcote and Wyong, who probably would not know a farm if they fell over it. Their contributions demonstrate that they obviously think milk comes from a bottle and eggs come from a carton. We also had contributions from the member for Cessnock and the member for Monaro. Both hid behind the so-called inquiry established by the Government into the sale of Hurlstone Agricultural High School.

We had a very good contribution from the member for Murray-Darling, who is obviously concerned about not only the farming constituency in his vast seat in western New South Wales but also public education opportunities in New South Wales. The contributions of the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Camden were bizarre in that they suggested that they oppose the sale of most of Hurlstone Agricultural High School. Of course, as the member for Baulkham Hills said, we know it is really the emasculation or the gutting of the school as a working farm. The members also indicated that they would not support this legislation. That is why I say their contributions were bizarre. I will come back to that point and what it is that we as members of Parliament—members elected to represent our constituents—should be doing in this place.

I will highlight some of the points made during the debate. Many of the members who spoke referred to the Hurlstonians, both former and current, in their electorates. I am aware of many famous former Hurlstonians, all of whom speak very highly of the school in its entirety as an iconic education facility in this State. One member mentioned Tiffany Spiers, who has established a Facebook group that has hundreds, if not thousands, of members who oppose the sale. Members of The Nationals visited Hurlstone Agricultural High School on 26 March this year. We met with staff and students, including some of the 200 boarders who attend the school. Amongst the boarders were fine young people who have a passion for agriculture and who come from the across the State.

I met students from the North Coast, the west, the South Coast and even from metropolitan areas. Many young people in metropolitan areas want to pursue a career in agriculture. Hurlstone students do not necessarily come from farming families. However, agriculture is their interest and passion in life. Hurlstone provides them with an opportunity to pursue that passion in the metropolitan area, and it has fulfilled that role for well over 100 years. On our visit we observed the school in its entirety. The important point the Government does not seem to understand is that this is a working farm. We saw the dairy and met some of the students who had been milking that morning. We saw the paddocks on which those dairy cows are grazed. We saw other paddocks on which there were beef cattle. Some of those cattle win prizes at the Royal Easter Show, and that is no mean feat. As a member who has eight country shows in his electorate, I know that people aspire to taking out a blue ribbon at the Royal Easter Show.

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

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

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

#### **CESSNOCK POLICE AND COMMUNITY YOUTH CLUB**

**Mr KERRY HICKEY** (Cessnock) [5.30 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House an issue I have raised previously. The Cessnock Police and Community Youth Club does great work each and every day in the community of Cessnock. On 9 April 2008 I spoke about the problems of antisocial behaviour, gangs, aggravated assaults, vandalism and graffiti—many of which are occurring in other communities across New South Wales.

There are particular problems on Friday and Saturday nights in the main street of Cessnock, Vincent Street, and many local shop operators have complained about graffiti attacks, smashed windows and other acts of antisocial behaviour.

The Police and Community Youth Club addresses many of these problems. It runs camps for many of our troubled youth at Singleton army camp, and it is great to see the outcomes that they produce. The police at the Police and Community Youth Club at Cessnock are role models and many young people are getting involved in the community. Police particularly target young people with a history of troubles and difficulties. They identify them and try to show them a way forward in their lives. The Minister for Community Services provided a grant to the club for a rock climbing wall and another grant for abseiling equipment for the young people. They go into the Watagans, a local destination for many of the programs, to learn abseiling and how to work as a team.

The problem is that the Cessnock Police and Community Youth Club has had very few injections of funds from government over many years. So we are looking at ways of addressing the problem by fundraising in new ways. The new manager of the Cessnock Police and Community Youth Club, Mr Paul Fellows, contacted me with the idea of raising funds by holding a charitable boxing match. Mr Fellows and I held an exhibition match, as did many youth participants who are trained at police and community youth clubs across New South Wales. I would not have found my way through the three rounds without having a certain person as my second, standing in the corner and coaching me. It was hard work. Any member who wants to see how their police and community youth club operates should do some training and boxing with the young men and women at the club. It opens up a whole new perspective on youth and the way they look at life. The second in my corner was unique. My second was the member for The Entrance, and he performed excellently. He turned up with lots of Gatorade and lots of talk, and helped me through the process.

It was a good night. There were other exhibition youth matches, and we raised \$5,000 for the Cessnock Police and Community Youth Club. Although the club gratefully accepted this money, it is in dire need of a new bus that costs \$40,000. The club needs renovations in order to meet the expectations of today's youth. The Minister for Youth has made a donation to the Cessnock Police and Community Youth Club—which was also gratefully accepted—but it was not enough to resolve many of its problems. I have written to other Ministers, and I will continue to do so, in an attempt to obtain more substantial funding for the youth of Cessnock. Many of our young people will appreciate the police and community youth club well into the future. I was genuinely taken aback by the professionalism that many of the amateur boxers showed on the night, by the way they were trained and by their outlook on life. It was remarkable to learn how many of them view life. They are not that different from many of us. But I must say that three minutes in a boxing ring is quite a long time. I encourage all members of the House to do three rounds in a boxing ring to see what I am talking about! It was an onerous task for me and for my second.

### **BUS ROUTES 272 AND 273**

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN** (Willoughby) [5.35 p.m.]: I raise an important issue concerning the constituents of the Willoughby electorate: the reliability of the 272 and 273 bus services. On 27 May snap industrial action by a particular union outside the Willoughby depot prevented many bus services from leaving the depot. Many commuters were stranded at their bus stops for long periods, not knowing what was happening. As members will appreciate, I received a number of emails and phone calls from very upset commuters who were late for important meetings in the city, late for work and late for other commitments. I will place on record some of the correspondence I received in order to highlight what it means to people when services are cancelled unexpectedly and they are not notified about what is going on. One constituent wrote to both Minister Campbell and me, and said:

I and my fellow commuters were really badly treated today. I know that you can't be held responsible for snap strikes but you should at least have some method of informing the travelling public. At the very least someone from management should have driven the route and told everyone waiting at bus stops that no buses would be arriving. As it was, I waited for 30 minutes before people walked down from other bus stops and told us about the strike. Then I was able to walk up to the Pacific Highway and catch a bus from Epping.

It's just not good enough! Normal days are bad enough but to be waiting and waiting only to find out that the buses would never be coming is just ridiculous.

This constituent makes a valid point. We do not have an appropriate mechanism to inform commuters that their services will not be turning up. So many commuters who contacted my office that day were left exasperated and extremely frustrated at the lack of information. Another constituent wrote:

I with a number of other people waited today for a 272 from 0630 to 0740—

that is one hour and 10 minutes—

before giving up and finding another way to work. I was leaving early because I needed to be at work for an early meeting, which I missed!!! I now know Willoughby depot had a strike. WHY DON'T YOU GET SOMEONE TO PUT UP SIGNS AT EACH BUS STOP TELLING THEM THAT THE BUSES ARE CANCELLED??? This is just the tip of the iceberg. Last week I found that for some reason on 3 occasions no 272s left the city between 1815 and 1910, while there were 2-4 273s. Further the 272 each morning is inconsistent—the 0720 is always late or leaves really early. The 0730 leaves [early] ... the 0740 is often cancelled and the 0750 is often late leaving people without a bus for over 20-25 min. Why is this the case and when will it be fixed?

Another constituent wrote specifically to me, saying:

I know you've raised this in Hansard ... but the absence of 272 buses on the morning peak route from Nth Willoughby to the city is getting ridiculous. In 12 years I have never seen such poor service. A few of my colleagues and I are unfortunately dependent on this bus to get us to work, and between about 8:20 and 8:55 it frankly doesn't run to timetable. In the majority of cases it doesn't run at all. For a service designed specifically for peak times it's failing in precisely the task it was created for.

Every single day this week I have been at the Forsyth Road bus stop by about 8:30. In theory this is in time for 2 to 3 272 buses that would get me to the city by 9:00. My arrival time has not been before 9:15 and is normally 9:30. An hour to commute 8 kilometres. I could nearly walk the trip quicker.

Could you please raise this again on behalf of the many residents who are being put out on a daily basis by this poor service.

I assure my constituents that this is a matter very close to my heart, firstly, because I am a regular user of that service. In fact, before I was elected to this place I used that service every day. Secondly, I am concerned that a few years ago the State Government slashed a number of 272 services so that during the peak period commuters in the Willoughby electorate do not have an express service to the city between 9.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. every day. This disadvantages part-time workers, students and older commuters, who rely on the bus to get to important appointments.

It simply is not good enough for the main peak express service leaving from the Willoughby electorate to the city to be so unreliable. That is not fair to commuters, even though there may be some reason why buses cannot leave the depot. It may be because of industrial accident or drivers are sick—and I know for a fact that many hardworking drivers from the Willoughby bus depot commute from the Central Coast to take up their positions in the morning and if they are delayed, their bus service will be delayed also. In 2009 there must be a better way to inform commuters. I know that in other jurisdictions various SMS technology and other information technologies are available to assist commuters. I call on the Minister to immediately address the inconsistency of these bus routes and to allay the angst of commuters. [*Time expired.*]

### YOUNGER PEOPLE IN RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.40 p.m.]: How does society deal with people with an acquired brain injury? Where do they live? Who cares for them? What happens if their injuries are so severe that families do not have the wherewithal to provide for them? Involved in a car accident 4½ years ago, 18-year-old James Bailey turned from a healthy young man with promise to a man requiring the full support of his family to survive with an acquired brain injury. Following three years of hospitalisation, James' family began the tedious task of looking for a nursing home. Most facilities were not willing to care for someone so young, and were not willing to care for someone with such high needs. This conundrum is echoed throughout Australia.

Only one facility in the Hunter cares for a group of young residents with such special needs. It is they who answered the prayers of the Bailey family. The family knew of the good reputation of the facility through James' grandmother, who was placed there suffering with Alzheimer's disease. Mrs Carol Bailey said that she was continually amazed at the nursing care that her mother received at the Wallsend Aged Care Facility. She said staff were always so caring, considerate and nurturing towards her mum. That comment contrasts to those echoed on *Four Corners*, which aired a report about care in nursing homes on Monday 1 June 2009. At Wallsend Aged Care Facility the family was most grateful to the staff for the dignified care received in the last years of her life. Carol said, "We have always been so grateful for that". Now of her son aged 23, Carol says:

I am very happy to say that he is in residence with 19 other young people, 19 other peers.

Why is Carol so happy with Wallsend Aged Care Facility? She is happy because it caters for young people. Wallsend Aged Care Facility provides a range of services, including allied health, continence therapy and, to aid their level of comfort, a set routine for all residents. Having read in last weekend's *Sun-Herald* and having watched Monday night's *Four Corners* about the problems that exist with some facilities in Australia, I am so



thankful that in my electorate there is a facility that provides a model of care for young people where it seems that no other exists. It is so comforting to me, as the people of Wallsend's representative, that Wallsend Aged Care Facility has brought peace of mind to many families like the Baileys.

What recent media reports have so sorrowfully revealed is that there is no minimum staffing level for qualified staff to patients, creating situations where there are so few staffed on some shifts that patient care is jeopardised and, more importantly, lives are needlessly lost. The media has highlighted that the cause of most problems is the lack of qualified and available staff to look after people in residence. The best possible model for all aged care is the current nursing staff numbers and skill mix that occurs at Wallsend Aged Care Facility. The particular location of the facility, housed within the Wallsend Community and Health care facilities, means that residents have ready access to allied health care staff, dieticians, speech therapists, social and welfare workers, and physiotherapists, all available on site, like no other known to me. It is for these very reasons that I mention today that the Wallsend Aged Care Facility not only acts as a model of care, but that it, too, be nurtured and protected from privatisation. If not, we will have the situation, as the families interviewed on *Four Corners* voiced:

I don't want to go to a nursing home, it will be the end of me.

And will this message be the new mission statement of care in Australia?

### NORTH COAST FLOODS

**Mr DONALD PAGE** (Ballina) [5.45 p.m.]: I place on the public record my congratulations and thanks to the State Emergency Service volunteers who so willingly gave of their time, energy and skills during the recent storm and flood events that hit the far North Coast of New South Wales, including my electorate of Ballina. At the start of the week beginning 18 May we knew that there was some bad weather on the way. The State Emergency Service gave residents plenty of warning, telling us to brace ourselves for strong winds and heavy rains. The service was not wrong. On that Wednesday night the coast was hammered by some of the strongest winds that many can remember. With that came the rain. It was not long before the Ballina and Mullumbimby units of the State Emergency Service began receiving the first of almost 800 calls for help.

By the time day broke on Thursday 21 May it was clear that damage to the region was extensive. Thousands of trees were down, many had been completely uprooted; many had been snapped off, including in plantations. Large branches and trees were laid across roads and driveways; others had crashed onto roofs. Some houses had their roofs ripped off. Many trees had fallen on powerlines. I understand that at least 20,000 people lost their power supply across the region. While the focus in places such as Lismore was on flooding, in the Ballina electorate it was the wind that caused most of the damage. State Emergency Service volunteers from Mullumbimby and Ballina had their heads down, working through what must have seemed a never-ending list of jobs.

The Ballina unit received more than 425 requests for assistance during that storm-flood event. Two crews worked for two days before help arrived in the form of reinforcements from Tamworth, Gunnedah and Narrabri, and eventually 10 teams from Sydney arrived to finish outstanding jobs. Gerry Burnage from the Ballina State Emergency Service, who comes up for 25 years of service in a couple of weeks, said the storm and winds were the most frightening he had ever encountered. "It was like the end of the world", he told me when I visited the Ballina State Emergency Service to thank them for their magnificent efforts. To know that the volunteers were out in that storm and high winds speaks volumes for their courage and commitment to the very dangerous task of helping those in need.

It was a similar story for the Mullumbimby unit, which had some 365 jobs over three days, with volunteers clearing trees, conducting four rescues, evacuations and attending the collapse of one building. At the same time the unit was in the process of moving into its new operations centre. When the wind finally subsided there was still no rest. Around Byron Bay, particularly at Belongil Beach, there were concerns about houses at risk of beach erosion and storm surge. Near Ballina the community of Cabbage Tree Island was evacuated as floodwaters from Lismore moved down the Richmond River. King tides then flooded parts of Ballina and the State Emergency Service helped residents to sandbag their properties. The efforts of volunteers were tremendous. In the most atrocious conditions they carried out their work professionally, always with a smile and a sense of humour.

It is not merely the State Emergency Service volunteers who need to be thanked for their service to the community. The men and women of the Rural Fire Service also deserve mention. They willingly rolled up their

sleeves and helped to fill and place some 11,000 sandbags around Ballina. Thanks go as well to the on-the-ground staff from Country Energy, who were called out in the most deplorable and dangerous conditions. More than 20,000 homes and businesses were without power on the North Coast during the storms and floods, some for as long as five days. Country Energy called in people from the south-east and Central West of New South Wales, as well as New England, to assist and relieve exhausted local crews.

Notwithstanding that, several constituents contacted my office to complain about the lack of information provided by Country Energy regarding when reconnections would occur. I have raised this issue with the new Regional Manager of Country Energy, and the company acknowledges that it needs to provide better information about the anticipated length of outages. The floods that consumed Lismore and other parts of the far North Coast as well as areas further south in Grafton, Bellingen and Kempsey were devastating, causing widespread damage and distress to hundreds of people. Flooding in the Ballina electorate was not as severe; however, the damage from wind and rain caused some of the most extensive storm damage in recent history.

One of the lessons to come from this natural disaster and the response to it is that requests from the Ballina State Emergency Service for backup were made on the Thursday but, even though backup was apparently available in other areas, no backup assistance was forthcoming until the Saturday afternoon. This delay was disappointing, especially when support units were eager and ready to help the Ballina State Emergency Service. Notwithstanding that, it is often in times of emergencies that we truly realise and appreciate how important our emergency services are. On behalf of the people of my electorate, I thank those State Emergency Service volunteers, the Rural Fire Service, the councils and those who work for them, and those who helped in any way.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Ballina and recognise all the State Emergency Service workers who contributed to the support of the community during the recent floods in the Northern Rivers area.

### **TRIPLE-0 EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SERVICE**

**Mr FRANK SARTOR** (Rockdale) [5.50 p.m.]: Today I speak about an issue that I believe needs urgent attention, an issue we have all become familiar with in recent times. I refer to the 000 emergency call system and my personal experience of it in relation to an incident that occurred in my electorate. As most members will be aware, the Deputy State Coroner, Carl Milovanovich, recently released his report on the tragic death of David Iredale. As a parent my heart goes out to David's parents, who conducted themselves with the utmost grace and restraint throughout the inquest. I feel sure that most 000 operators are conscientious and well-meaning people, but the service they administer has both systemic and cultural problems. Personal experience makes me reluctant to use the 000 number, especially when urgent action is needed.

Some years ago at about 7 o'clock one evening I was walking in Brighton-Le-Sands when a brawl erupted in front of me involving about 20 young people. It was ugly and, given the number and types of people involved, my personal intervention was clearly not an option. I instinctively called 000. My first contact was with an operator who did not seem to know where Brighton-Le-Sands was. Once I explained that it was a suburb of Sydney, and spelled it twice, I was put through to police. I then started again with a new operator, re-describing the problem and asking for the police to be notified urgently as I feared serious injuries were about to occur. At this point some officious functionary barked at me that she was not interested in my opinion, and she demanded to know my name and address. I explained that I was the local member of Parliament and that I would happily provide all my details if she would just communicate the mayhem around me to police first.

She stubbornly refused to proceed without verifying my name and details. Exasperated, I gave her my name, but she insisted that I spell it. I had to do that a couple of times, because obviously it was a name she was not familiar with. She then demanded my residential address, and she quizzed me about whether Carroll Street had two R's and two L's in it. The Deputy Coroner found that the operators in the Iredale case had a "preoccupation with establishing an address", which in that case was relevant but clearly impossible. In my case it was totally irrelevant—the brawl was nowhere near my home. Needless to say, it took about five minutes to get the call registered, by which time the brawl had disappeared around the corner. About 20 minutes later a police car arrived. By then the incident was ancient history.

On another occasion, this time with the Ambulance Service, I again found the operator more interested in the spelling of my surname and address than in the substance of the call. One can perfectly understand the benefit of identifying the caller, including his or her address, for verification and follow-up purposes. But surely

this should be the secondary information rather than the primary information obtained. People who call 000 are often anxious and distressed. Surely the emergency service should identify the nature and location of the problem that needs to be dealt with, dispatch that information to the relevant service, and then clarify the specifics of the informant. If the call turns out to be a hoax, it can be cancelled within minutes. I have raised this issue with Minister Kelly and his office, and with Minister Whan. I know that they, too, are concerned about this issue and the significant discussions going on about improving the service.

Clearly the technology needs to be improved so that repeat callers can be identified, relevant data collected automatically, and information transferred much more rapidly to responding agencies. Hopefully that will occur in time. In the short term, though, surely the most effective thing that can be done is to hire and train operators for their common sense—and to check that they are actually using it.

### **HORNSBY ELECTORATE POLICING AND RAILWAY STATION STAFFING**

**Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD** (Hornsby) [5.55 p.m.]: I speak about a dangerous trend currently occurring in my electorate that is affecting not only commuter safety but also community safety. The downsizing of railway stations has been spoken about quite a lot over the past couple of days. Two railway stations in my electorate, Brooklyn, which is on the Hawkesbury River, and Asquith, are being downsized with the loss of their station manager. At the same time, Brooklyn is having its police station sold from under its nose. This is causing a great deal of concern for the local residents, residents of the wider river area, and other entities such as the Police Association and the Retired Police Association. On Monday this week I attended a meeting of the Hornsby branch of the Retired Police Association. The meeting was extremely informative in relation to what retired police officers think about this issue. I wish to read onto the record a number of letters I have received regarding the issue. On 3 June Paul and Liz Surrent wrote to me as follows:

Thanks for your support on saving Brooklyn Police Station. Please point out to the polities the similarities and differences between Brooklyn and Millthorpe:

Both Brooklyn and Millthorpe are small country villages.

Both Brooklyn and Millthorpe are approximately 25 minutes drive from their nearest HQ police station.

Millthorpe has a full time manned police residence—Brooklyn has an empty police residence.

Both Brooklyn and Millthorpe have a similar population however, Brooklyn is the launching point for a much wider community that live offshore.

Brooklyn is on the major route north (F3 & Pacific Highway) which is the scene of many anguishing road accidents causing extensive delays for commuters,

Brooklyn is bordered by water and is a mecca for a massive weekend influx of boating enthusiasts—sometimes resulting in disaster.

Brooklyn is also a quaint village within 1 hours drive of Sydney's CBD making it a scenic and popular tourist destination.

Brooklyn supports the main northern Sydney Brisbane rail link—the scene of potential rail disasters as well as unruly behaviour of passengers.

Brooklyn also supports the largest homeless population in the Hornsby Shire.

Brooklyn is also bordered by national park where recent devastating bushfires have resulted in threat to the community.

25 minutes to Brooklyn from either Hornsby or Gosford is too long a response time.

Hardly a day goes by without something police related happening in Brooklyn. Since the disclosure of the proposed sale of the police station thefts, break-ins, assaults, vandalism, etc. have been on the increase, but even worse, an elderly couple suffered a home invasion at gun point.

I might add that the police station will be listed for sale on 11 June and will go under the auctioneer's hammer on 11 July, which is imminent. These people are very worried. As a result of the Retired Police Association meeting I attended on Monday this week, Ray Phillipson, Sergeant 2nd Class retired, wrote to me on 2 June as follows:

Following our Retired Police Association meeting today the 2nd June, 2009 at which you informed the members of the current situation re the Berowra and Brooklyn Police Stations. I would like to add my protest to the impending sale of both the Berowra Police Station and the Brooklyn Police Station.

As a member of the New South Wales Police Service during my last eight years of 31 odd years service I was the Community Based Policing Officer and was responsible for those duties from Brooklyn to St Leonards and across to Gladesville. During that period I was responsible for setting up 163 Neighbourhood Watches. During this period up to 1992 when I retired police at both Berowra and Brooklyn actively supported the scheme, both areas had experienced local police who knew the area, had the support of and assistance from their community and were highly respected.

Currently the ad hoc situation doesn't satisfy the needs of either community and if Brooklyn is auctioned off what will happen to the Police launch, shed and equipment. I am aware of the amalgamation of other emergency services on the river, but if the police Service is terminated it will leave a lot of residents and pleasure seekers using the facilities vulnerable.

I am aware of the impending high-rise developments and this alone should preclude any diminishing of policing.

That is entirely true for Berowra, which is facing the imposition of five-storey high-rise development with the Government's policy of increased density. I wish to acknowledge a couple of other people who have written to me to express their concerns. Carolyn and Mike Boyden wrote:

Everyone is aware that the NSW Government is broke and if it were a business it would likely be in liquidation by now. Selling the Police Station at Brooklyn is clearly a "token" sale of an asset for potential maximum return of say \$500,000 to the Government.

On 1 June Cheryl Gough wrote to me as follows:

We have recently experienced a wave of crime with a robbery at the Marina and I understand this was at gunpoint.

Surely this is demonstration enough that our station should stay and, ideally, be manned by police officer as it was in the past.

Graham White said:

Would you please pass on our apprehension at the thought of having no visible police presence in Brooklyn. We have lived on Dangar Island for the last 16 years and over that ... period have seen law and order deteriorate in Brooklyn in line with the reduction of police attendance at the station. In the last two months there have been a number of break and enters ...

There is huge community concern and this Government should listen.

### REVESBY BLUE LIGHT DISCO

**Mr ALAN ASHTON** (East Hills) [6.00 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the continuing success of the Revesby Blue Light Disco, which is held at the Bankstown City Young Men's Christian Association [YMCA] at Revesby each month. Blue light discos were originally established in the late 1980s at various places in Sydney and New South Wales. These discos were coordinated between local communities and the local police service, with council and community support. Only one remains in the Sydney metropolitan region: the one in my electorate at Revesby, and this is due to the tireless work and enthusiasm of many people.

The Revesby Blue Light Disco celebrated its twenty-first birthday this year. A check of *Hansard* shows that on 17 June 2003 I congratulated the Revesby Blue Light Disco on its 15 years of achievement—six-years later it is still thriving. The Revesby Blue Light Disco began in 1988 after the establishment of one in Sefton. Councillor Max Parker, who is still on the Bankstown council—he has been a Liberal, an Independent, back to the Liberals and then an Independent again, and twice opponent of mine, but must be given full credit for this—with the full support of Inspector Mal Slater of Revesby police station, began the disco.

**Mr Peter Debnam:** Will he run again?

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** He might do. There is talk that he might give me preferences—you never know! St John's Ambulance has also been involved since the beginning and I thank it for always being on board. The disco caters for 600 to 700 young people—one night over 1,200 turned up! The present executive committee comprises Senior Constable Shannon Simonite, Rosemary Daly as the secretary, and Gloria Hanson as the treasurer. I acknowledged the role of the latter two volunteers six years ago and it is wonderful that they are still involved. These people were involved at a time when their children, and the peers of their families, were attending the disco. Now, after 21 years, those children are probably parents themselves. It is great to see that while these people are not getting any younger they are still going along.

I also acknowledge the involvement of Max Parker and Sharon Bailey. As an indication of how bipartisan this is, Sharon Bailey also ran on a ticket with Max Parker at the local government elections against my wife, who was a Labor candidate. I am sure every member in this House would agree that on these issues everybody works together for the good of their community. That is why I am standing here saying what great

service they have given to their community. This blue light disco would not have survived this long without the active support of the police from Revesby and the Bankstown Local Area Command. I enthusiastically thank and congratulate those former police who played their part. Today Superintendent Stuart Wilkins actively supports the disco, as does Ian Pryde, the crime manager at the Bankstown Local Area Command.

Ian Pryde liaises with highway patrol police, transit police, general police and youth liaison officers to secure a speedy entry and exit from the YMCA at Revesby. I am advised that the present support of Superintendent Stuart Wilkins, Ian Pryde and Senior Constable Shannon is the greatest police support the disco has ever received in its history, but it has always been well supported by the police. The disco at Revesby would have raised funds in excess of \$100,000. In my 2003 speech I mentioned that more than \$90,000 had been raised. Unfortunately, I have not had a chance to check on that figure today. Those funds are put back into the community in schools and other very worthwhile projects. The disco gives young people between the ages of 8 and 16 a safe, supervised and fun evening. It also gives police the chance to see good young people enjoying themselves, whilst the young people get to see the police and community-concerned adults working together for them.

Since I have been the member for East Hills, the Revesby Blue Light Disco has organised a function at the Carolyn Chisholm School in my electorate each year. The school caters for children with special needs. A band is put together and it is the highlight of the social calendar at the school. Just over two weeks ago Bankstown City Council held a civic reception at the Bankstown Sports Club and acknowledged the twenty-first birthday of the disco. I place on record my appreciation of the support that Bankstown City Council and its councillors who have shown, and continue to show, to the Revesby Blue Light Disco. The disco continues to receive active support from local councillors and Federal and State members of Parliament but, most importantly, members of the public and the local police force.

### **ORANGE BASE HOSPITAL APEX REHABILITATION UNIT**

**Mr RUSSELL TURNER** (Orange) [6.05 p.m.]: Debbie Priest, a resident of Orange, who utilised the physiotherapy services at the Orange Base Hospital Apex Rehabilitation Unit as an outpatient can no longer do so. She has sent me an email about this with copies to Narelle Davis, Nurse Unit Manager at Orange Base Hospital, and the Hon. John Della Bosca, Minister for Health. It reads:

[I] am writing to inform you how shocked, disgusted and disappointed to be informed that I could no longer use the physiotherapy service at Apex Rehabilitation Unit in Orange as an outpatient.

[I] was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2000 and have been on many medications which have not worked. These range from Betaferon to chemo. I have primary progressive multiple sclerosis (Ppmultiple sclerosis) (This type of multiple sclerosis is characterised by a gradual progression of the disease from its onset with no remissions at all. There may be periods of a levelling off of disease activity and, as with secondary progressive, there may be good and bad days or weeks. Ppmultiple sclerosis differs from Relapsing/Remitting and Secondary Progressive in that onset is typically at the late 30s or early 40s, men are as likely [as] women to develop it and initial disease activity is in the spinal cord and not in the brain. Primary Progressive multiple sclerosis often migrates into the brain, but is less likely to damage brain areas than relapsing/remitting or secondary progressive—for example, people with Primary Progressive less likely to develop cognitive problems), and at this stage there is no medication for me that works. Physio is the only thing that is or was keeping me going, making me feel alive and not just living and been a burden on society. But I guess thanks to some person making this decision I will be a burden sooner than I expected. There is nowhere else in Orange I can go as I am on a pension and cannot afford to pay for private services. The staff at the physio department have a real understanding of the problems we have and face. They really do care for their patients. When I was going to physio the staff were there for support if needed, they did not need to help me with the equipment as I can manage that myself like most outpatients that go there. It was somewhere to go to try and keep our bodys alive and active like our brains. You have no idea how it feels to still have an active mind but your body just wants to give up and now you are making it harder for me and others to keep the body going. I would go on most Monday mornings for about an hour or until my body had had enough, and if they needed the equipment I was using for their inpatients it was no problem for me to get off it and use something else. I am to avoid stress but this does not help my stress levels. There are so many of us that aren't bad enough to be inpatients at Apex, but aren't well enough to have nothing at all. We are in the middle and like always the middle-class misses out. I hope you will reconsider your decision and allow outpatients back to the physio department.

This does not impose an enormous cost because most of the time Debbie can use the facilities on her own without assistance, and she is prepared to step aside if a more serious patient requires the equipment. She has nowhere else to go because she cannot afford private physiotherapy. I call on the Greater Western Area Health Service, or whoever made the decision, and ask the Minister to intervene and allow outpatients such as Debbie Priest to continue to use the Orange Base Hospital Apex Rehabilitation Unit. This unit was built by Apexians. I am proud to say I am a former Apexian—although this unit was built before my time. It was built from community funds and should continue to be available for the benefit of members of the community, at least until

the new hospital is built. It is not known whether the new hospital will replace Apex House or Apex House will continue to operate on its present site for the foreseeable future. On behalf of Mrs Priest and all the other outpatients who use the facility, I call on the Minister to reverse this ill-conceived decision.

### **"CELEBRATE SAFELY" YOUTH FORUM**

**Mr GRANT McBRIDE** (The Entrance) [6.10 p.m.]: I want to inform the House of the "Celebrate Safely" Youth Forum that was held on Thursday 28 May 2009 from 8.30 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. at the Regional Youth Support Services Youth Arts warehouse at Gosford. The forum host was Jesse Grimwood, a young Central Coast girl who is currently competing in the Women's World Pro Surf Tour and had recently returned to the coast from Brazil. Jesse is to be congratulated for volunteering to host the forum and supporting the youth of the Central Coast by giving her valuable time. One of the special guest speakers was Paul Dillon, who has been working in the area of drug education for the past 25 years. He has a strong interest in working with young people and regularly provides drug information sessions and workshops for young people. Another guest speaker was Angry Anderson, a pioneer of hard rock music in Australia through the band Rose Tattoo. Angry has committed himself to conducting workshops and seminars on drug and alcohol issues and educating young people about the dangers of misuse. Angry's experience, based on the grit of the hard rock industry, gives his advice power and credibility amongst young people.

The program and the theme of the day was "Celebrate Safely". The keynote presentation was by Paul Dillon and Angry Anderson followed with workshops. The workshops gave students from a number of schools across the coast the opportunity to work together to design communication tactics and strategies that will encourage them to recognise unsafe situations, to be aware of the appropriate response to dangerous situations, and to look after the welfare of their friends and others in unsafe circumstances. Many of the statistics presented by Paul Dillon challenged the views expressed in newspapers and tabloid television current affairs shows. In particular, he indicated that the usage of drug and alcohol by our young people was much less than that reported by media outlets as a result of so-called anecdotal evidence. I was pleasantly surprised by the information that was provided. The statistics were professionally collected and analysed, as against the superficial analysis done by newspapers and other media outlets. For example, less than one-third of all young people under 21 years of age have used drugs. Watching the news one would think that two-thirds or more of the community were using drugs.

An important issue raised in the workshops was the vulnerability associated with the consumption of drugs and alcohol. In particular, the workshops confronted the issue of the vulnerability of young girls who consume too much alcohol and advised on how to assist and look after people in such situations. One example given was that of a young girl who attended a party. Prior to the party, the young girl's parents rang to check that parents would be present at the house on the night. Unfortunately, the girl was overcome by alcohol, put in a room and left alone. Even though there were parents in the house, the girl was raped by two males. At the forum the young people were told that if they consume alcohol they must do so responsibly and safely and they should not consume drugs. The presentation by Paul Dillon from Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia focused on the statistical realities of youth issues with alcohol and other drugs. Paul's presentation was incredibly powerful. He confronted the youth with the reality of drugs and alcohol. However, his approach was non-confrontational and non-judgemental. With his open and genuine concern for young people, he connected with the audience, which resulted in a good outcome.

I personally was impressed with the program, the enthusiastic attitude of the participants and the value of the program to the broader community. Like all successful events, it was the result of the hard work of many people. A steering committee was formed of many partner agencies across the Central Coast—Regional Youth Support Services located in Gosford CBD, a number of local community drug action teams, Central Coast New South Wales Health, the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Gosford Safety Coalition, and many others, including local high schools and New South Wales Housing. In particular, I congratulate Barry Gold, who is Senior Client Service Officer, Communities, Department of Housing New South Wales. He was the leader of the steering group. I congratulate all the youth workers, volunteers and helpers who contributed to this very successful forum. Over the five to six years I have known Barry Gold I have formed a warm relationship with him based on the fact that we grew up in the same western Sydney public housing estate. A bloke like Barry is an outstanding example of the right bloke in the right job in the right place. I personally congratulate all who were part of this very successful Central Coast "Celebrate Safety" Youth Forum.

### **LAKE MACQUARIE LANDCARE**

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [6.15 p.m.]: Last October I spoke in this House about Landcare in Lake Macquarie and reported some of its achievements, including \$3.6 million worth of volunteer labour over

the previous year. Ecosystems benefiting from Landcare's work include critical habitat, wildlife corridors, stormwater and riparian processes, dunes, foreshores, rainforests and wetlands. Landcare works by engaging the public and translating the enthusiasm engendered into on-ground results, achieving far more than could ever be paid for. The Lake Macquarie Landcare Network was recognised as the best community group at the State level in 2003 and at the national level in 2004.

Unfortunately, the network has informed me that it faces difficulties in accessing grant funding for lead environmental groups through the New South Wales Environmental Trust. The program's criteria for eligibility include three types of activity fundamental to the network's success, namely, actively involving the community in projects to protect and enhance the natural environment; raising community awareness and understanding of, and gathering information, on environmental issues with a view to bringing about behavioural change across the community; and effectively advocating the community's environmental concerns. The Landcare Network meets these requirements at an exceptionally high level. It is the lead agency and support for 270 separate Landcare groups, with some 2,000 volunteers giving their time and resources. The network links them with Lake Macquarie City Council and the Hunter Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority. If the network is ineligible for lead group funding, it cannot be due to these first three criteria. It must be due to the next two.

The next criterion is being a State or national organisation that operates across New South Wales or across significant geographical regions of New South Wales. The Lake Macquarie Landcare Network should be seen as meeting this requirement because it takes a leadership role in New South Wales Landcare by filling the executive position of treasurer. It also operates across a significant geographical area. Lake Macquarie is the Hunter's most populous city and the fourth largest in New South Wales, with some 195,000 people accounting for 37 per cent of the lower Hunter population. The total area of the local government area is 758 square kilometres. Of this area 15 per cent is covered by the State's largest lake, with over 170 kilometres of foreshore.

This is a significant geographical region, with landscapes ranging from mountain forests to urban bushland, foreshore and coast. The Lake Macquarie Landcare Network takes a lead role in the vast community effort to restore, improve and protect the natural areas of this significant region. The final criterion is being actively involved in program and policy development initiatives with governments. I can state confidently that the network has contributed much to the planning and execution of environmental projects through its constructive and cooperative relationship with Lake Macquarie City Council. The network's achievements include: developing a community support program in conjunction with the Hunter Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority; developing a program to facilitate community stewardship of the environment in partnership with Lake Macquarie City Council; developing the "Folder of Onsite Landcare Skills", which has been circulated Australia-wide; and jointly preparing the Stream Bank and Foreshore Planting Guide and the Coastal Planting Guide with Lake Macquarie City Council.

I cannot see why the network would be ineligible, unless these criteria are applied with a sense of mean spiritedness. Consequently, the network's capacity to maximise returns through engaging, equipping and coordinating the effective participation of volunteers is being stifled. I have been informed that one limitation on funding for Landcare is the way in which the Commonwealth Government's Caring For Our Country funding is disbursed. I have been informed also that funding through Caring For Our Country is only for physical items, not for support groups. One of the six priorities for this funding is the enhancement of community skills, knowledge and engagement, and this is clearly an area in which the Lake Macquarie Landcare Network excels. It is therefore disappointing to hear that no funding currently is being directed for this purpose.

Funds from the Caring For Our Country Program are delivered via allocations to catchment management authorities. The problem here is that this process is not supporting the growth of the Lake Macquarie Landcare Network to achieve its full potential. Circuitous funding routes are generally inherently inefficient, and this appears to be a case in point. This inability to access direct funds reduces the ability to achieve on-ground results by a large number of coordinated volunteers of the Lake Macquarie Landcare Network. Of course, the intention should be to use the pool of Commonwealth and State funding to maximum benefit, but I think that the model can be adjusted in a way that will be seen as equitable while maximising the multiplier effect that comes with harnessing volunteer effort. I respectfully ask the Government to look at this matter and do what it can to support the Lake Macquarie Landcare Network.

#### **MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK ACCESS**

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly) [6.20 p.m.]: There is concern within my electorate that a favourite and growing recreational sport, mountain bike riding, is under threat on the northern beaches. At issue are the

apparent moves by the National Parks and Wildlife Service to restrict access to riding tracks. I have received reports of bars and locked gates being replaced across tracks. My concern is that we should be promoting people getting out and enjoying the environment, not barring them, particularly during this time of increasing obesity in Australia. Mountain bike riding is a popular sport and has enormous potential to bring people together in our community but, once more, we appear to have government action without appropriate consultation.

Concerns regarding access to the bike tracks have been raised by people involved in the Northern Beaches Mountain Biking Group, who have put together an Oxford Falls plan of management, which is outstanding—the research, the objectivity, the presentation and the argument are first-class. The group is a web-based community group with a membership of around 1,600. They are passionate about their sport and want to retain access to key riding tracks that they previously have been able to use. These tracks are in the Oxford Falls area and the Bantry Bay loop track opposite Manly dam.

A number of members of the group contacted my office and confirmed that fences and bars have been placed across tracks, restricting access for bike riders. I take issue with the fact that this was done without consultation. Officially, mountain biking is only permitted on fire trails in national parks. The biking group claims that this is not practical as trails are suitable as an introductory level but do not create the challenge that more advanced riders seek. There had been an informal arrangement that still allowed people to bike in these alternative areas, but it appears that this arrangement is at an end. There are concerns that there is a new direction at the National Parks and Wildlife Service to keep the bikes out, but there has been no consultation, which should happen as a priority. This is happening not just on the northern beaches but also across the State.

I understand that people have concerns that bike riders will damage the environment, and I share those concerns passionately. We want to protect and preserve our environment at every possible opportunity and if informal tracks are allowed with bikes going everywhere damage to the environment may occur. Cathy Griffin from the local Greens council told me she has reservations about the mountain bikes with the damage they cause, the potential conflict with walkers and the cost of maintenance of independent trails, but she said that if there were independent trails and there were plans to deal with these concerns she would be open to accepting them. That is a key environmental position.

Bike riders also are interested in protecting the environment. They are not four-wheel-drive vehicles ripping through the bush—and, ironically, four-wheel-drive vehicles can still go through these fire track areas. Bikes require a single track, which would have a minimal impact, and that should be agreed amongst the group if there was a formal consultation process. Designating an official track would minimise the number of bikers heading off through the bush with no controls. I am sure all reasonable groups would agree not to go informally through the bush but to use the dedicated trails. Walkers too would be aware of these dedicated trails.

We need to encourage people to get outside and exercise, not discourage them. We have a problem on the northern beaches with regard to young people and alcohol. If we are going to change the somewhat negative behaviour of young people we need to support them in activities that are healthy. A survey by Warringah Council, which is included in the group's Oxford Falls submission, showed that 47 per cent of mountain bike riders are under the age of 35. We seem to be ignoring the concerns and the interest of our youth in this particular activity. It is important that young bike riders who do not have independent transport access can still participate in the sport by riding locally. It is not practical for many people to have to travel to the Blue Mountains to ride when there is fantastic bushland and tracks in a breathtaking environment in their own neighbourhood.

As surfing is very much a part of the culture of the northern beaches, mountain biking could also become a significant recreational pastime. Already the biking groups claim it is the third most popular sport in the area after walking and swimming. One hundred and fifty people are employed in specialist bikes stores on the northern beaches. Of the 1.2 million bikes sold annually in Australia, 70 per cent are now mountain bikes. We should use this increased popularity to generate business and tourism. We should be working with these people to create tracks that bring people to the northern beaches and, in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, provide an opportunity to promote these areas by providing people with access to them.

As an example, the Stromlo Forest Park in the Australian Capital Territory recently held the world's largest 24-hour mountain bike race and a round of the World Cup in 2008, and it will hold the world bike championship this year with an expected 40,000 spectators. The Government has said it is committed to increasing the number of people who visit our national parks and it is working with interested stakeholders to develop opportunities for low-impact nature tourism. The Government should be consulting directly with these



groups. We should work together to find a solution that enables bikers to still have access to these areas whilst ensuring, most importantly, that the bushland is protected. The group has already made a submission and I am seeking a meeting with the Minister for Climate Change and Environment and the Northern Beaches Mountain Biking Group to discuss this issue further. I ask the Government to consider protecting the environment and providing an opportunity for this group and other groups to access the environment in an environmentally friendly way.

### GROUNDWATER AND MINING

**Ms CLOVER MOORE** (Sydney) [6.25 p.m.]: Inner-city residents support strong protection of our waterways in the face of numerous threats to clean drinking water supplies such as climate change, drought, development and rising populations. My constituents are concerned that longwall mining is occurring under waterways that serve Sydney catchments, threatening the quality and quantity of our water supply. Longwall mining extracts coal panels from underground. This can cause subsidence whereby land above the removed coal destabilises or collapses. When longwall mining occurs under waterways, including creeks, swamps and riverbeds, the waterways can crack and precious fresh drinking water can be lost.

Surface water also gets contaminated from contact with sub-surface water and groundwater and there can be changes to iron oxide levels and increases in bacteria formation. Other common impacts from longwall mining under waterways include loss of fish, bubbling gas on water surfaces and the release of wastewater into river systems. I have seen photographs of serious damage caused by longwall mining to rivers and waterways serving Sydney's water supply, which completely disappeared with nothing left but dry cracked rock. I understand that mining commenced in the Upper Georges River area in 1999 and the Lower Cataract River area in the early 1990s. Stark environmental impacts were discussed in the 2001 Healthy Rivers Commission, including cracked riverbeds, loss of surface flow and water quality decline. Community spaces, such as the popular local swimming pool Marhunes Hole, were ruined and are now virtually unusable by the local community.

While New South Wales law requires mining companies to develop subsidence management plans to rehabilitate land affected by subsidence, the New South Wales Scientific Committee reports that measures to repair cracking creek beds have had only limited success and are still considered experimental. In fact, two years after remediation efforts began and mining had ceased, the Mining Policy Institute reported in 2001 that there was still significant water loss in the Cataract River. In 2007 the Total Environment Centre reported that BHP Billiton was unable to restock the Cataract River following fish kills, due to a lack of water flow and water quality problems.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change says subsidence alters the habitat of species and ecological communities. Last year the New South Wales Scientific Committee identified five endangered species, 22 vulnerable species and four endangered ecological communities likely to be altered by longwall mining subsidence. It also identified another 10 species and populations that are not listed but could become threatened due to longwall mining subsidence. In a 2007 submission on the inquiry into the New South Wales Southern Coalfields, the Sydney Catchment Authority stated that 91 per cent of special areas would be damaged by longwall or bord and pillar methods within 20 years.

Special Areas surround our water storages and provide vital protection to their quality. The Sydney Catchment Authority says that because their topography involves "deeply incised valleys with fractured sandstone groundwater aquifers", the impacts from subsidence are much more severe. Yet there is extensive longwall mining activity in Sydney Catchment Special Areas, including the Metropolitan Special Area, the Woronora Special Area and the O'Hares Creek Special Area, with planned and proposed expansions. Although the Upper Cataract River provides 7 per cent of Sydney's drinking water and acts as an aqueduct to the Upper Canal, it is being heavily mined. Last year, expansions to the Dendrobium Mine were approved, which will see damage to bushland, rainforest and rare upland swamps that are part of Sydney's water supply catchment.

I am alarmed to learn of proposals to expand longwall mining in the Gardens of Stone National Park in the Blue Mountains, which I visited with environment groups in the early nineties. I understand longwall mining has already caused cliff falls in this beautiful, sensitive area, and expansions could also damage the headwaters of Baal Bone Creek and Jews Creek. With water restrictions only recently eased, and a desalination plant being built to drought-proof Sydney, it is hard to believe that we would significantly risk our waterways from mining activities. The extracted coal, once burnt, will only add to the risks because of its contribution to global

warming. While many countries and cities are working to achieve low carbon economies by significantly increasing the role of renewable energy in electricity supply, we should not sacrifice our access to clean water for out-of-date technology.

Rivers SOS, an alliance of more than 40 environment and community groups and residents, concerned with the impact of mining operations on New South Wales rivers, proposes a ban on longwall mining activity within one kilometre of water sources. The proposal has very strong community support. Protecting our waters is critical to our future survival and I call on the Government to prohibit longwall mining within one kilometre of a water source.

**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 6.30 p.m. until  
Friday 5 June 2009 at 10.00 a.m.**

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