

ASSENT TO BILLS	3175
AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT	3189
AUSTRALIAN FILIPINO ASSOCIATION OF THE CENTRAL COAST INC.	3228
AVOCA BEACH PUBLIC SCHOOL EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY	3160
BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA DAY COMMEMORATION	3172
BUSH TELEGRAPH PROGRAM	3162
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	3160,
3177, 3193, 3214	
CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR	3174
CHILDCARE AFFORDABILITY	3229
COFFS HARBOUR CENTENARY OF RAIL	3227
CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY	3193
CRIME STATISTICS	3181
DEATH OF JAMES BARTHOLOMEW "BART" CUMMINGS, AM	3175
DISTINGUISHED VISITOR	3199
GAVIN AND RAYLEE MCLEOD AND DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT	3163
GREATER SYDNEY COMMISSION	3183
INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL 2015	3190
JOBS FOR NSW BILL 2015	3202,
3215	
LANDCARE NSW	3164
LEARNING MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS REFORM PROGRAM	3177,
3179, 3182	
LEBANESE FILM FESTIVAL	3168
LEGACY WEEK	3171
LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE	3189
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3189
M4 EAST TUNNEL	3187,
3195	
NORTHERN RIVERS COAL SEAM GAS	3165
OATLEY ELECTORATE CRIME STATISTICS	3173
PARLIAMENTARY ETHICS ADVISER	3189
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP GROUP OF LGBTIQ	3163
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES	3175
PETITIONS	3189
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	3160,
3227	
PROPERTY, STOCK AND BUSINESS AGENTS AMENDMENT (UNDERQUOTING PROHIBITION) BILL 2015	3196
QUESTION TIME	3177
QUESTION TIME: SUPPLEMENTARY ANSWERS	3195
REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTION TIME	3175
RUSTY IRON RALLY	3168
SECOND WORLD WAR SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY	3167
SRI LANKAN BUDDHIST TEMPLE, SCHOFIELDS	3228
STATE ECONOMY	3178,
3187, 3195, 3199	
SURF LIFE SAVING NSW	3166
SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS	3161
TOAST URUNGA FESTIVAL	3168
TORONTO MOTOR REGISTRY	3230
TOURISM MAJOR EVENTS	3186
VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY	3169

VISITORS
WARRAGAMBA HEALTH SERVICES
WILLIAMTOWN

LAND

3174
3170
CONTAMINATION
31

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 8 September 2015

The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 12 noon.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

Pursuant to sessional order private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AVOCA BEACH PUBLIC SCHOOL EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) [12.12 p.m.]: I wish to discuss the eightieth anniversary of Avoca Beach Public School. The school celebrated its eightieth anniversary last Tuesday with a school assembly and it was a great honour to be invited to attend. All the students were involved in the celebration and performed a piece from each decade of the school's existence. They were outstanding. It was evident that huge effort was put into the performances by the teachers, the parents and especially the students. It all began some 80 years ago when on Monday 23 August 1930 a request was made to Mr B. Walker, MLA, for a local public school to be built at Avoca Beach. An official application was sent by Mr E. Kealkey on behalf of the Avoca Beach and District Progress Association on 1 October 1930. On the application were the names of 18 local children. This application was rejected by the Department of Education. In 1932 another application was made but it was again denied, even though the Department said that "there was a reasonable chance of a school succeeding".

Letters flew thick and fast until May 1934, when an agreement was made that if the progress association built the school, the department would rent the premises as long as the average attendance of 11 students was maintained for six months. Mr Halloran, a local real estate agent, donated a block of land and the progress association bought the adjoining block for £42.10s. Mr Halloran then generously donated a further portion of land to bring the total to two acres. The progress association and families then had to clear the land. The community had to fight again to have the school built after various problems, and finally permission to build a school was granted on the condition the community paid £40 towards the cost.

The building commenced on 8 February 1935 and the first students attended on 27 May 1935. It had taken four years and nine months from its inception to the school's opening. The first teacher assigned to the school was a Mr Arthur Hogg. He was transferred from Mount White Public School, which had been established earlier. The 22 local children who attended Avoca Beach Public School now no longer had to walk the four miles to Kincumber primary. Mr Hogg was eventually replaced by Mr John McLean, who was aptly renamed "Mr McCane" for his judicious use of the cane. In 1952 the school became Avoca Beach Public School, after 17 years of being classed as a provisional school. In 1953 a second classroom was built and a Miss Sullivan was employed as a second teacher. This meant that for the first time the school was divided into upper and lower divisions. The school's history and local

memories are recorded. Some from the late 1940s stand out and are worth retelling. One local recalled:

It is hard to believe that the school didn't receive its first phone until 1963. Up until then we had to rely on Nancy and Norm Hollis, who lived across the road, to communicate messages.

Another recalled:

Our daily proverb was written on the blackboard such as, "Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you."

One local said:

I had the chore of filling ink wells.

Fast forward to 1975, when the construction of a new brick school commenced. The old timber school was moved to the south of the new building and used for other purposes. The new school was built in record time and in November 200 students were ready to move into their new classrooms. As quoted in the school's stories of its history:

The new building marked a new chapter in the ongoing development of Avoca Beach PS. It is truly located in a beautiful area and a wonderful place to learn.

Today, as Avoca Beach Public School celebrates 80 years of delivering education and life experience to the children of the surrounding suburbs, it is clear that the school has grown dramatically since those historic days. This beautiful school is situated on a sloping site beside a tranquil lagoon. Between the school and the lagoon is an area of bushland that is presently being restored to its native state by a dedicated group of people including students, teachers and parents. As stated on the Avoca Beach Primary School website:

Avoca Beach Primary School is committed to developing tolerant and responsible students in a cooperative and supportive environment. The school's positive Student Welfare policy aims at keeping all students safe and happy at school. The school provides opportunities for its students to: Develop a love of learning; be courteous, cooperative and considerate; and to develop their potential to the maximum.

These are the principles of school leadership that create our good citizens of the future. This began in 1935 and those principles are still being taught some 80 years later. The school motto is "Ever to the best", which promotes excellence and commitment to education, and talented, resilient, tolerant and responsible students. Now with 507 students, the school continues to grow every year. The relieving principal, Mr Ross Hallaways, leads a team of assistant principals and administration staff. Avoca Beach Public School has a very involved and active parents and citizens association, which raises more than \$45,000 each year to support educational programs.

SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) [12.17 p.m.]: Last week I was shocked, saddened and deeply moved by the image of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, a Syrian boy, who, along with his mother and brother, were found on a Turkish beach after drowning in an attempt to seek refuge in Europe. I want to speak about this today because we must speak about it. In my inaugural speech I said that we cannot afford to sit in this House and do nothing. Today I am calling upon this House, and our country, to do something. More than half the population in my electorate of Lakemba was born overseas. Whether they are people from Vietnam, the Balkans, Sudan, Myanmar or Syria, each and every one of those people knows that the situation the Kurdi family faced could easily have been their own.

I will tell members a local story. Just over a year ago the Alawir family landed in Sydney and settled in Punchbowl. In Syria, this family had lost all their worldly possessions. They finally decided to leave their homeland when their eldest son, a father of three, was returned after being kidnapped for a ransom. One can only imagine their harrowing ordeal. In the lawlessness of Syria, the family somehow managed to find their way to a refugee camp in Lebanon. They joined hundreds of thousands of others in a country that has taken the equivalent of one-quarter of its population in a truly humanitarian response to those seeking asylum.

A week after they arrived in Australia I took the three youngest boys, aged four, six and seven, to watch my son play soccer. It was to be an enjoyable outing for them—a chance to meet with other kids; a bit of Aussie normality. When I picked them up their parents could not believe the boys could just travel around freely without their passports. They were adorable as brothers, holding hands—the youngest tightly clinging to mine. While my son's team was warming up we gathered together a few more boys and played kicks. Then a plane flew overhead. It was nothing unusual—a plane taking travellers to an exciting new destination. But what happened next I will never forget. All three boys ran straight to me. The youngest tried to hide behind my legs, with his terrified eyes peering from beneath the hands that instinctively covered his face. It was heartbreaking to see. Those boys were so innocent, so beautiful, so young and pure, but so traumatised. They did not stray too far from me after that. Every time a plane flew over I noticed that they edged a little closer.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge. Seeing the boys today, people would not believe their transformation. It is an inspiring story of what can happen when kids feel safe. Exactly one year to the day of the family's arrival we had lunch. The boys were as any boys their age should be—laughing, giggling, climbing trees, playing soccer and being cheeky. They struggle with the language and still do not like to be too far from their parents. Their local school, Punchbowl Public School, has done an extraordinary job. I pay homage to the school community and the lease on life they have given the boys. Today the boys' father, a former quarry manager, and his brother work washing cars. Their aunty, a trainee teacher before the war, works for a juice bar chain. Their youngest aunt and uncle are in high school and have dreams of attending university one day. Their grandmother and grandfather attend English classes daily and hope to open a small business. They are aspirational, happy and grateful. But if one scratches a little beneath the surface one will discover they feel a sense of guilt for those they have left behind.

I tell their family story because it is real and we need to keep reality in view when we talk about people seeking asylum. Like so many others, when I saw the image of Aylan in his blue shorts and red T-shirt I thought of my children. I thought of the many other boys and girls and their parents who are in situations so dire that they would risk their lives at sea just to escape it. Last night in Sydney my family stood like thousands of others across the nation to take part in the Light the Dark initiative. Refugees are people like us. They are men and women, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters. They have committed no crime yet they are punished because they exercised their human right to seek asylum.

It goes without saying that the haunting image of young Aylan has touched people around the globe. I am inspired by watching humanitarian reactions in Europe. Closer to home, we consider our stance towards people who seek refuge and our compassion begs that we do better. This is no time to shy away from our moral potential. It is no time for political point-scoring; it is a time for leadership. I am proud to be a member of a Parliament in which both the Premier and Leader of the Opposition have called for action. This is a time to respond morally and ethically in line with the global standards that we as a global community have accepted as the norm. Let us reach our moral potential by doing more and doing better. We can do better and we must, lest we reflect on this time and say that we should have done more.

BUSH TELEGRAPH PROGRAM

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.22 p.m.]: I update the Parliament on what the small not-for-profit organisation One of a Kind Community Support is doing for drought-affected farmers and

farming families in our rural and remote communities. The charity organisation One of a Kind Community Support has been around for more than 43 years and was once known as Lifeline North West. Its community vision is powerful and simple and aimed at creating a social network of farmers to support each other through the emotional, mental and physical challenges of life on the land. One of a Kind Community Support is creating small and large social networks of current and retired men and women farmers who are registered on the one Telstra mobile phone contract, which allows them to call each other about all things farming, friendship and family. It is called the Bush Telegraph program.

In general, men do not want to talk about their mental health. In addition, many do not wish to talk to a counsellor because they see it as a personal weakness. The Bush Telegraph program is simply a farmers' social support network. There is no formal counselling, no training and no compliance—just farmers talking to farmers through the bush telegraph. The program is creating a real sense of community, just like the old country telephone exchanges that locals would use to stay in contact and organise local events and social gatherings. The mobile phones will only have facilities to call others on the Bush Telegraph network. No external calls, texts or internet access will be enabled. However, a master phone held by the team leader will be used to text members with community updates and farmers' requests. For example, a farmer can contact the team leader to send a text message on their behalf to all those on the Bush Telegraph network. They could announce a local get-together or seek help from the network with damaged fencing, a tractor repair, and a lift to town or a medical appointment. It really is a case of locals helping locals, or farmers helping farmers.

I encourage all current and retired farmers, farmhands and individual farming contractors and suppliers to join the Bush Telegraph program. Retired farmers on the land or in town are also being invited to join the Bush Telegraph network to support their own health and wellbeing—as well as that of their partners, perhaps—while helping others. Farmers can lodge their Bush Telegraph nominations or be encouraged by other farmers, general practitioners, community agencies and rural counsellors. Local Bush Telegraph mobile telephone clusters have already been created in Walgett, Lightning Ridge and Curlewis, with further expansion planned through the Country Women's Association networks. One of a Kind Community Support also hopes to extend the unique health and wellbeing program to include some people who can provide free and independent legal, financial and agricultural advice for farmers and their families. The Bush Telegraph program will support men and women in a new community-based social network of current and retired farmers. I look forward to supporting the Bush Telegraph program as it helps to build and sustain the health and wellbeing of farmers and farming families in our rural and remote communities during this time of drought.

PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP GROUP OF LGBTIQ

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [12.26 p.m.]: Last month I was proud to be part of the launch of the Parliamentary Friendship Group of LGTBIQ at the Parliamentary Theatre, with more than 120 people in attendance. LGTBIQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer. I was happy to be joined by Minister for Health Jillian Skinner, who has been a long-time advocate for our community, Australian Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson, President of the Legislative Council the Hon. Don Harwin, and friendship group members deputy chair the Hon. Penny Sharpe, secretary Jenny Leong and treasurer Alex Greenwich. We were also joined by the inaugural Miss Fa'afafine Australia, Ella Collins.

The New South Wales Parliament launched the friendship group for the LGBTIQ community in a show of multi-partisan support. The group, which is made up of members from all major parties and an Independent member, will champion LGBTIQ issues in this House and across the State. I am humbled to have been elected chair of this group that will build support for the necessary law reform to ensure that members of the LGBTI community are treated as equals in all areas. During the last Parliament marriage equality was debated in the upper House. We missed out on having that debate in this House by just one vote. Although a State-based same-sex marriage regime is not a perfect solution, the debate showed that this Parliament is willing to have the conversation—even though the debate did not come to the lower

House.

Among some proud achievements in the previous term of Parliament were the passing of amendments to the Criminal Records Act 1991 to allow historical gay sex convictions to become extinguished and abolition of the gay panic defence, which were two major achievements in one parliamentary term. Much more needs to be achieved. Marriage equality is the issue that is uppermost in everybody's mind. It is the subject of widespread discussion, as it should be. Many other aspects of legislation require reform, and achievement of that will fall to people in Parliament championing the causes over the current and future terms of Parliament. In particular, reform of the Anti-Discrimination Act will be needed to remove the requirement for married couples to obtain a divorce and enable one partner, who is transitioning his or her gender, to have the change acknowledged on official documentation. Amending legislation also is needed to ensure acceptance of a statutory declaration as proof of a change of a person's gender for government records.

Policy should be developed on the placement of transgender and gender-diverse prisoners in correctional services and for access to hormone therapy to be based on medically identified need, not discretion. Establishment of a trans-specific policy stream across the health system also is required. There are many areas that the Parliamentary Friendship Group of LGBTIQ, the cross-working party for the LGBTIQ community and I will be working on throughout the term of this Parliament. It was great that so many members of this House and the upper House celebrated the launch of the first parliamentary group for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer community. I look forward to ongoing support from the Parliamentary Friendship Group of LGBTIQ and to its members participating in robust debate when legislative reforms, which include those to which I have referred, are before the Parliament.

GAVIN AND RAYLEE MCLEOD AND DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [12.31 p.m.]: Today I draw to the attention of the House two local business owners, Gavin and Raylee McLeod, who together own multiple McDonalds franchises in my electorate of Wyong and provide employment to hundreds of young and ambitious school students. Together Gavin and Raylee are winners of multiple local and statewide business awards. Recently they received community recognition by local news outlets and the business chamber for their efforts in hiring and training residents with a disability in the Wyong electorate. It takes someone really special not only to be a small business owner but also to make the decision to open a world of opportunities for people right across our community. That is exactly what Gavin and Raylee McLeod do.

By hiring community members with a disability, they are giving all people the opportunity to work and to be trained in the McDonalds systems, which will prepare them for future career possibilities both at McDonalds and through other sources of employment. People who open their hearts and their businesses and provide financial backing to deliver life-changing training and jobs to members of our community—who really want to be part of the working world—I believe deserve every possible form of recognition. From my experience as an educator and school principal, people who are disabled more often than not are discouraged from participating in what is said to be normal life.

As a primary schoolteacher and principal, my job was to provide an inclusive environment to ensure that all my students were encouraged to participate in all aspects of school life. My staff always encourage students, disabled or not, to participate in every activity and to build a strong community feeling in the classroom, in the playground and in the wider community. That is something that both Gavin and Raylee McLeod have achieved through their efforts in their McDonalds franchises. As a former local schoolteacher, that is something I thoroughly encourage.

Currently Gavin and Raylee own most of the McDonalds stores in my electorate of Wyong and provide jobs, training and life skills to all staff members. Recently they opened their latest McDonalds store at Wadalba, which is a very modern store in one of the fastest-growing residential areas on the Central Coast. When I spoke to one staff member from the store, they told me that working there made

them feel like it was a "McDonalds family environment, where you don't need to worry about anything because the other staff members always have your back and the managers are always looking after you". Gavin and Raylee, through their continued investment in our community, are providing more jobs, not just for the McDonalds crew that work there every day but also in the construction phase of franchise-building efforts with new stores throughout the Wyong electorate.

As the member for Wyong, I am constantly told that we need more jobs on the Central Coast. It is important for government to work with the private sector to provide jobs on the Central Coast—the ninth-largest region in the country. It is important that our most vulnerable citizens are provided with every opportunity to access training and jobs in the Central Coast economy. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Jenny from Job Centre Australia. I have known Jenny for many years. She works very hard to place people who have disabilities in meaningful employment in Central Coast businesses. Jenny networks right across the Central Coast in her endeavours to find opportunities for young people who have a disability to obtain meaningful employment and gain work experience.

I am pleased to inform the House that I have taken on a person who started with Jenny and who works in my office on a casual basis. I conclude my remarks by thanking Gavin and Raylee McLeod for their continued endeavours to better our community through their business by providing jobs and training for all our young people but, most importantly, for giving opportunities to people who have disabilities to ensure that they can actively participate in the life of the local community and in the local economy. The opportunities that Gavin and Raylee provide give people with disability a chance to acquire necessary skills for continued employment—not just in McDonalds stores but hopefully in other businesses in the future.

LANDCARE NSW

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.36 p.m.]: This afternoon I inform the House of Landcare—an important community group that is strong both in my electorate of Cootamundra and in my previous electorate of Burrinjuck. Volunteers of Landcare can be found everywhere throughout southern New South Wales and particularly in my electorate. When I first became a member of this House, I was invited to join the Murrumbateman Landcare group, and I did so. More recently I have become a member of the Boorowa Landcare group. The role of Landcare, which incorporates Coastcare and Bushcare, really is unlike any other community group and is unparalleled for the work it carries out in the regions. Landcare is a fantastic and truly grassroots organisation that is all about improving our landscape and our environment. One of the great benefits that Landcare offers my electorate of Cootamundra is that it addresses soil degradation. A great deal of erosion occurs in regional areas of New South Wales.

Landcare volunteers pitch in to address the problem by holding tree-planting days and many other activities to improve the environment. Landcare volunteers also work together on each other's farms and on public lands. Landcare is becoming much more organised. Recently I was pleased to note that a memorandum of understanding was signed at Orange between Alex Anthony, acting chairperson of Local Land Services and Landcare, and Mr Rob Dulhunty, chairman of Landcare. The co-signing occurred during the Landcare awards presentation ceremony, which was part of a three-day event. The event became a real muster of Landcare representatives, who attended the awards ceremony. Other projects that local Landcare groups in my electorate are examining, working on and coordinating include feral pig management and fox baiting. Damage caused by feral pigs is extremely costly.

Feral pigs, which are very persistent and difficult to eradicate, attack native flora and fauna and destroy the environment. I thank local Landcare communities for working on feral pig management. They are also coordinating fox baiting, which is important for the protection of our native fauna. Last year it was a pleasure to introduce a pest control order [PCO] against foxes in New South Wales. It is great to see Landcare really picking up the ball and running with fox eradication measures. The Roadside Vegetation Management Plans are underway. Of course many local Landcare events take place around the State,

particularly within my electorate. I also mention the great work of Lachlan Landcare, the last meeting of which I attended, at Grenfell. It really is a dynamic supergroup.

Recently in this Parliament we formed the Parliamentary Friends of Landcare Group. I am pleased that so many members of Parliament, from across the political spectrum, have come together as the Parliamentary Friends of Landcare Group. I have recently discussed this with Landcare groups in the regions, particularly in my electorate, and they are delighted that the Parliamentary Friends of Landcare Group has been established. I am honoured to be the inaugural chairman of that organisation. I think we are working well as a Parliament to broaden the general community's view of Landcare and what a positive organisation it is.

I also take this opportunity while discussing Landcare in my electorate to extend a warm welcome to the new Central Tablelands Local Land Services Landcare coordinator Liz Davis. She is well known as an excellent Landcare advocate. She has been appointed to the new role of Central Tablelands regional Landcare coordinator. It is wonderful that Local Land Services and Landcare now have facilitators in that role, because it puts the strength of our Government behind Landcare and makes it a more coordinated organisation. Once again, I send a big hooroo to everyone who is involved in Landcare both in my electorate and in the broader community.

NORTHERN RIVERS COAL SEAM GAS

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) [12.41 p.m.]: Today I put on the record in this Parliament my utmost support for those who have fought and who continue to fight against the industrialisation of the northern rivers and the threats to food and water security from unconventional gas mining. I stand with my community in calling on the Government to listen to our deafening roar—we want a gas field free northern rivers region. Neither we nor the Parliament and the citizens of New South Wales should be held to ransom by mining interests and corporations. There is no social licence for this industry to operate in my electorate, and there is a resolve held by me, The Greens and tens of thousands of people in my community to again stand up and be counted should this Government lead us back down the path to Bentley. How disturbing it is that the possibility of a frontline battle to protect the northern rivers region from this invasion of our pristine land and water has reared its ugly head again.

In May last year my community faced the threat of over 800 NSW Police Force officers, good men and women, arriving on this Government's orders to dismantle their peaceful blockade. This blockade was built by thousands of locals, united in their efforts to protect the northern rivers region from a drilling rig which was due to arrive any day. These protectors were everyday people—not fringe dwellers or hippies but nurses, doctors, teachers, blue-collar and white-collar workers, pensioners and lawyers. They came from all walks of life. Despite the total absence of a social licence, and because of an error in process by the Minister and this Government, gas company Metgasco announced a week ago to its shareholders that it will persist with its plans to drill for unconventional gas in my region.

The site is right in the heart of a community vehemently opposed to this. The company is defiant in seeking to impose its will and threaten our food and water. Here we are with this Government about to be dragged back to the courts again by a gas company throwing a tantrum to extort as much compensation as it can from the taxpayers of New South Wales. It is clear that the Government's NSW Gas Plan is a failure. The licence buyback scheme has been bungled. As it stands, the people of New South Wales could be forced to pay their way out of this mess. The Bentley Rosella well lies within the electorate of Clarence. The member for Clarence has said:

... you can't factor into your business plan having to call on police to act as security for your proposal.

But it is his Government that has allowed a business environment to develop where a gas company can willingly factor this into its business plan and has the ability to operate belligerently without a social

licence and despite overwhelming opposition by the community. My upper House colleague Mr Jeremy Buckingham delivered this Government a chance to get itself out of this mess by returning the public interest test. But his bill was defeated by members of The Nationals, who say one thing to the people of my electorate and the northern rivers and then turn their back on them when they get back to Sydney. Where is their courage? One of the tireless campaigners for Gasfield Free Northern Rivers, Aidan Ricketts, says it is clear that Metgasco is "throwing a tantrum, pulling out of negotiations, and trying to force the Government's hand".

The company, in a last ditch bid to save its failed business model, in a community that is awake to the horrors this industry poses, now has the Government over a barrel on this issue. We implore the Government to show courage and to refuse to let a tantrum-throwing mining company dictate good governance and grab millions of taxpayers' dollars. The Government must act quickly and legislate to protect my community. I saw a protest placard held by a "Knitting Nanna" outside the office of the member for Lismore one week ago today. It said:

The spring is sprung,

The grass is riz,

I ask when the cancellation is.

I would like common sense to prevail. The Government should cancel these coal seam gas licences, as promised, and introduce legislation that will ensure no community ever has to face this battle, forged at Bentley, again. The nanna's will continue knitting their yellow and black yarn. The Bentley protectors will continue watching and waiting—ready to call to action the social movement to protect Bentley at any moment. I pledge today here in this Parliament, should this Government fail us yet again, to return home and stand with the community at the blockade again.

SURF LIFE SAVING NSW

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.46 p.m.]: As the weather warms, I am sure that many of us are looking forward to relaxing with our family and friends on our beautiful beaches. This postcard picture would not be complete without the iconic red and yellow flags in the sand and the surf lifesavers and lifeguards who diligently patrol our beaches. Surf Life Saving NSW is committed to saving lives, creating great Australians and building better communities. In 2014, life savers performed over 5,000 rescues, 26,000 first aid treatments and 440,000 preventative actions. An independent PricewaterhouseCoopers report underscores that these volunteer lifesavers each year contribute \$1.6 billion worth of coastal drowning and injury prevention services in metropolitan areas. That is a return of \$29 for each dollar invested.

I am, therefore, delighted to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Surf Life Saving NSW to beach awareness, safety and volunteer management on the northern beaches and in my electorate of Davidson, which is home to its Belrose headquarters. I have spoken previously in this place about the Surf Life Saving movement and its many wonderful initiatives. It continues to receive deserved recognition across our community. For example, Surf Life Saving NSW received two recent accolades in the Minister's Sport Volunteer Management division of the 2015 Community Sports Volunteer Awards. They were awarded Highly Commended in the Event of the Year category for the 2015 Stramit Surf Life Saving Country Championships. The impressive three-day surf festival attracted more than 12,000 competitors from communities all around New South Wales. It was successfully coordinated thanks to the efforts of 120 volunteer officials. Volunteers were appointed to appropriate roles based on merit, individually mentored throughout the process, and recognised through gifts and a "VIP Recognition Function".

In training volunteers to navigate life and death situations, Surf Life Saving NSW certainly does

not throw lifesavers in at the deep end. The organisation offers numerous training opportunities in first aid, the bronze medallion and skill development, as well as professional roles in the Australian Lifeguard Service. Allegiance to the Statement of Principles for Recognition of Volunteers and a comprehensive Club Guide and Club Quality Program ensure that Surf Life Saving NSW consistently delivers excellence in managing its sizeable 75,000 volunteer force. Surf Life Saving NSW is first rate in recognising its volunteers with calendar highlights such as the annual Awards of Excellence ceremony and recognition dinner. The enduring heroism required by lifesavers is acknowledged by granting life membership to long-service volunteers and featuring exceptional acts of bravery in the Rescue of the Month program. Surf Life Saving NSW was thus also distinguished by the Minister in the 2015 Community Sports Volunteer Awards as a Highly Commended State Sporting Organisation.

In its long history Surf Life Saving NSW has nurtured generations of volunteer lifesavers who have saved more than 345,000 lives. I commend the vigilance and service of these lifesavers and the fantastic work of Surf Life Saving NSW based in my electorate but extending across New South Wales. Congratulations to all concerned on the recent awards, and I urge them to keep up the great work. Finally, I note that Sunday 18 October is Surf Life Saving open day along the New South Wales coast. It is a great opportunity for members of our community to find out more about their nearest surf life saving club and potentially to become more involved.

SECOND WORLD WAR SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) [12.51 p.m.]: I was delighted to be invited recently by the Australian Chinese Workers Association to join in its commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the Second World War, or the anti-fascist war. The seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War has not been as widely acknowledged and celebrated as the seventieth anniversary of the D-Day landings last year. The year 2015 is also the centenary of Anzac Day as we remember the ANZACs scaling the cliffs at Gallipoli. The anniversary of the end of the Second World War, or the anti-fascist war, is tremendously important for China and the Chinese people as they endured war with Japan from 1937 until 1945, and it is important to me as my father was a World War II veteran.

Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin were captured in 1937, along with the capital, Nanking, where 350,000 civilians were massacred, two years before Germany invaded Poland and four years before the bombing of Pearl Harbour. From the perspective of many in the West, China is the forgotten ally of the Second World War. For more than four years, until Pearl Harbour, the Chinese fought alone. Despite appeals at the League of Nations and the significant investment many Western businesses had in Shanghai, the West failed to assist China. The battle of Shanghai in 1937 was the major turning point. Japan had expected to capture Shanghai in three days and go on to conquer China in three months. The dogged resistance of the Chinese came as a surprise to the Japanese forces and, following a series of Chinese successes in 1939, the war reached a stalemate.

The war ended after imperial Japan surrendered following the use of atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and at the time parts of China were still occupied and controlled by Japan. China suffered greatly during the war with Japan. Before the war China was a deeply divided republic with pronounced regional divisions, and some regional leaders actively worked with imperial Japan, particularly in Manchuria. Twenty million Chinese people lost their lives during the war and another 15 million were wounded. About 90 million people were displaced. About 90 per cent of the casualties of the Pacific war occurred in China. And, of course, the final defeat of Japan inspired the Chinese people to seek their own independence and create the modern, unified Chinese nation.

Within four years of the end of the war mainland China was unified. Work began on modernisation and industrialisation, rebuilding after the devastation of war. Seventy years after the end of the war, China is now the world's largest economy, according to the International Monetary Fund. China overtook the United States last year with a gross domestic product of \$17.6 trillion, ahead of the estimated \$17.4 trillion for the United States. Even if the current downturn in the Chinese stock market

causes a slight reduction this year and next, by 2020 China's economy will be significantly larger than that of the United States, which has meant that hundreds of millions of people will no longer be living in poverty and it has meant tremendous prosperity for some. The Second World War also reshaped modern Australia. Many years ago Australia and Japan developed friendly relations and have become close trading partners.

Things change over time, although the great suffering endured by prisoners of war and others who lived under Japanese occupation is not easily forgotten. Now China is our largest trading partner and perhaps it is also time for Australia to acknowledge how much we benefitted from the brave, determined Chinese resistance that reduced the effectiveness of the imperialist Japanese forces in the Pacific. We have a shared history of defining our nationhood and our independence through this war, and it is something we should reflect on more. A former Federal member for Reid, Tom Uren, joined the Australian Army in 1941. He was deployed to Timor and was a prisoner of the Japanese from 1942 to 1945, during which time he worked on the Burma to Siam railway. Back home, he moved to Guildford and represented the area in Canberra between 1958 and 1990.

As a member of Parliament and a former Minister, Tom was a tireless advocate for veterans and former prisoners of war. I had the great pleasure of serving with Tom on the Parramatta Park Trust for 10 years and I know what a fighter he was. My father served with the Royal Australian Air Force in the war, from Darwin to New Guinea to Borneo. He did not talk much about his experiences but I know he lost some good friends in the war. I am proud of his services and I proudly wear his medals on Anzac Day. Things have changed a lot since I was at high school where the focus of the Second World War was the war in Europe.

Most of us are familiar with decisive events during the war such as the Battle of Midway and the hard-fought battles between July and November 1942 as Japanese and Australian forces fought on the Kokoda Trail. Nonetheless, I am pleased to see that the Higher School Certificate Modern History syllabus now focuses more on the Pacific war than it did in the past and includes China during this period. That means that today's students have a better and fuller understanding about the anti-fascist war.

LEBANESE FILM FESTIVAL

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [12.56 p.m.]: Last month I attended the Lebanese Film Festival run by the Lebanese Film Festival Association Incorporated. This organisation is a registered not-for-profit, and has been holding this event since 2012. The aims of the association are to provide a platform for Lebanese cinema to be screened in Australia; to be a premier international film festival event in Sydney, with a particular focus on Bankstown, improving local accessibility to the arts; providing insight into contemporary Lebanese culture to the large Lebanese-Australian community; and to challenge the perceptions of Lebanon, its people, traditions and culture in Australia.

Since 2012 the Lebanese Film Festival has screened more than 45 films from across the world that are either filmed or based in Lebanon, or made by Lebanese filmmakers from many countries, including Australia. Each year the Lebanese Film Festival Association strives to challenge itself in creating an event that is inspiring, challenging and captures the imaginations of its audience, and this year was no different. I was especially moved by a Lebanese film *Ghadi* in which a story of traditional Lebanese values in the modern world are portrayed through the characters Leba and Lara.

The Lebanese Film Festival Association has specifically identified a need for greater accessibility to arts and culture in Western Sydney, particularly in Bankstown and its surrounds. In identifying this need, the association continues to provide events of the highest quality in the local area, ensuring that the community has direct access to international cinema, and also attracting audiences from across Sydney to Bankstown. The event has grown year on year since 2012, and has played a great role in promoting harmony in the local community. This year's event was held in the newly constructed Bryan Brown Theatre in the Bankstown Library and Knowledge Centre. Bryan Brown was a local Panania boy from my

electorate who, despite his stardom, never forgets his humble beginnings.

Bryan Brown is a great role model for all in my community. He teaches people that if they apply their artistic talents their dreams really can come true. Bryan Brown's guidance and his Australian Film Institute award-winning expertise during the build ensured that the 300-seat theatre is fit to hold events such as this and many more of its kind. I thank the organisers for another successful year and look forward to similar events being held in this wonderful theatre.

RUSTY IRON RALLY

TOAST URUNGA FESTIVAL

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) [12.59 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the electorate of Oxley, which I am proud to represent. The electorate did itself proud this weekend, hosting two magnificent community events that would not have been held without the enormous effort of countless volunteers. The two events fit very well with Father's Day. The first was the Rusty Iron Rally, held at the Macksville Showground. What better activity is there for a dad than to go along to the Rusty Iron Rally and see blokey machinery, old and new, oil and steam engines, vintage tractors, cars, bikes and trucks, machinery displays and tractor games? There was an array of rusty iron and all things mechanical on display.

It was the twentieth Rusty Iron Rally. The rally started in Wauchope and has been held at the Macksville Showground for the past 16 years. An enormous amount of work goes into organising the rally. The Macksville Show Association caters for the event. It does a magnificent job, the men on one stand and the women on another. The catering throughout the event is a big fundraiser for the Macksville Showground. The event was attended by thousands of people from not only the Nambucca Valley. One exhibitor came from as far away as Eden; another came from Queensland. The weekend is a huge economic boost to the town, with exhibitors from all parts of New South Wales and many visitors.

I spoke to people from Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Grafton. The many people who attended the event watched the tractor races, the tractor pulling and the truck, tractor and motorbike parade. It was an extraordinary community event. I make special mention of the Macksville-Scotts Head Surf Life Saving Club, which collected the takings at the gate. In return for its efforts, there will be a donation to the club. The event would not happen if not for people like John Southwell, who was magnificent on the microphone. He came back from Uluru to be at the event. That is the type of community engagement we have in this area. The event has great sponsors, such as Midcoast Trucks at Macksville, which has been a big supporter over many years.

The Rusty Iron Rally is a feature of the Father's Day weekend in the Oxley electorate, as is the wonderful day at Toast Urunga, which is in its ninth year. More than 8,500 people attended this beautiful wine and food festival. It would not happen without the enormous amount of work done by volunteers. I talked to Toast Urunga committee members today and they all agree that Jan Baker is a hero. She is retired but only in the sense that she is not being paid; she still works full-time on Toast Urunga. Everyone toasts her effort and her work.

The other committee members—Steve Allen, Greg McPhee, Gavin and Janette Hickey, Micky Moore and Tony Wright—go above and beyond the call of duty. The event is a challenge for them. They must meet Office of Local Government [OLGA] requirements as well as local council requirements. I am happy to sit down and talk to colleagues about streamlining those requirements. It is a lot of work but it is a great event. Seeing 8,500 people, including my family, walk through the gates and taste the best food and wine from the region made it a special day.

There was also great entertainment. There were two concert stages, with entertainment from local choirs and bands. The sense of community was fantastic. The event highlights the work of the

Urunga Chamber of Commerce and the major sponsors, SI Clean Energy and North Coast Holiday Parks, and other sponsors throughout the region. They support our local producers and the sustainability and development of our area as a niche food supplier. Celebrity chef Terasse Davidson from Byron Bay also attended. Her favourite ingredient is goat's cheese. I understand that; I love goat's cheese. I am going to encourage her to go to Dorrigo to meet Justin Gilbert, who is doing amazing work selling goat meat to Woolworths and is about to develop a new range of goat's cheese. Toast Urunga was a brilliant event. Thank you to the volunteers; they are magnificent people. Thank you for making the Father's Day weekend in Oxley a great one.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.04 p.m.]: I thank the member for Oxley for her contribution highlighting two terrific events held on Father's Day in her electorate. The first was the twentieth Rusty Iron Rally. I know how much blokes love old and new machinery. I opened the West Wyalong Show last week, where there was also a tractor pull. Tractor pulls take place in towns the length and breadth of New South Wales. The Macksville Show Association members and the Macksville-Scotts Head lifesavers are great people. The other wonderful event the member spoke about was the Toast Urunga food and wine festival. I compliment Jan Baker and everybody on the committee. That so many people came through the gates is testament to the hard work of the committee at Urunga. The event had wonderful sponsors, such as the Urunga Chamber of Commerce. Congratulations to the outstanding member for Oxley. I thank her for speaking to the House today about these events.

VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.05 p.m.]: On Friday 14 August 2015, at the Cabra-Vale Diggers ex-servicemen's club, I took part in the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of Victory in the Pacific. The service was held on the date that Japan surrendered to the Allies in World War II, which resulted in the end of the war. I had the honour of marching alongside fellow parliamentary colleagues the member for Fairfield, Guy Zangari, and the member for Prospect, Hugh McDermott. We were joined in the march by members of the NSW Police Force, the Australian Defence Force and the RSL including the Canley Heights RSL Sub-Branch from my local area.

After the march we assembled at the Cabravale Memorial Park for the continuation of the program. The ceremony was attended by Brigadier John Crozier and RSL State President Mr Rod White, Chaplain Major William Phillips, and the member for Wagga Wagga and Parliamentary Secretary for Corrections, Emergency Services, Veterans and the Centenary of Anzac, Daryl Maguire, who represented the Premier. The member for Wagga Wagga spoke about the significance of the victory in the Pacific for Australia. We heard about the enormous number of casualties in the Pacific war and the terrible consequences for both Japan and Australia. During the ceremony a Royal Australian Air Force Hercules flew over us at a low altitude. It was a very moving moment, and it gave us a glimpse into what it would have been like in World War II.

I am pleased to see each year an increase in the number of school students attending the ceremony. This year's students came from Mount Pritchard Public School, Bonnyrigg High School, St Johns Park High School, Cabramatta Public School and Cabramatta High School. I thank the students for their attendance. The president of the Liverpool RSL Sub-Branch, Mr John Baron, relayed to me that the growth in attendance by schoolchildren signifies the respect and acknowledgment that today's generation have for the men who fought to preserve the freedom and democracy we enjoy today.

World War II cast a shadow of fear over all Australians, as the threat of invasion was imminent. Salvation appeared futile as the Japanese made advances in South-West Asia, particularly in Singapore and Papua New Guinea. The victory in the Pacific will forever remain an important chapter in Australia's history, as our nation faced the terrifying prospect of being invaded by the Japanese. In the aftermath of the fall of Singapore, Australia experienced the first-ever attack on its soil, with the bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942. Broome and Townsville were also bombed that year. It was a frightening time for

Australia. Our soldiers, along with the Allied Forces, fought a long and arduous campaign against the Japanese in the south-west Pacific.

Australia faced some of its hardest battles, especially through a series of great offensives within and around Papua New Guinea. The surroundings were unbearable; the Australians had to endure the rugged terrain while keeping the Japanese at bay. In total, more than 17,500 Australians were killed in the war against Japan. Victory in the Pacific culminated in celebrations worldwide, especially in Australia, but we must never forget the sacrifice, valour and perseverance of the fallen who died to protect our freedom and liberty. Lest we forget.

WARRAGAMBA HEALTH SERVICES

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.10 p.m.]: I wish to praise the resilience of the people of the Warragamba and Silverdale communities. They are a great bunch of people living in one of the most spectacular parts of the world. Of course, Warragamba is home to the famous Warragamba Dam. When it overflows, many tens of thousands of people visit to see this great event. Wherever I go across the State, everyone is aware of the Warragamba area and particularly the importance, the construction and operation of the dam. Apart from the engineering feat, I am often told by people who have visited the area that the area's locals are some of the friendliest and most welcoming people they have ever met.

Many local heroes and organisations volunteer their time to help one another and the entire community. I have often heard individuals who themselves need help say, "I'm okay, I don't need help. Go and help others". About 15 years ago these communities were devastated by the Christmas Day bushfires which destroyed homes, businesses and buildings and affected the entire community. The local people brushed themselves off and got on with helping one another and re-establishing the community, and Warragamba is all the better today for their spirit.

I am sure I am painting a picture that members in this place can relate to. The area is somewhat isolated in the Wollondilly shire and, therefore, helping one another is very important. Members then would not be surprised that as their local representative I advocate strongly—as I do for all my communities—that this community receives its fair share of services and that vital services in the area are not closed. On the whole, that is what happens. But just last week I was shocked to hear that the local area health service had plans to close the baby health clinic, which has operated and serviced the needs of the community for approximately 60 years. The clinic operates for half a day a week and over many years has seen dedicated nurses helping our mums and dads and, most importantly, our children.

I attended a meeting together with the mums and bubs of the area, who rely on this service for health check-ups, advice, Blue Book milestone checking and general referrals. They had nothing but praise for the clinic and the clinic nurse. The mums told me story after story and said how valuable the service was to them and their children, particularly for first-time parents. The clinic has been an extension of the family unit and, indeed, the entire community. Members of the community presented me with a booklet containing pictures of the clinic when it first opened. In fact, one of the first nurses at the clinic still lives in the village today.

With little notice, a decision has been made to close the service. I acknowledge that this is not a decision of the Minister or the Government but an operational decision of the local health service. I was appalled not to have been consulted. At the meeting, I was told that the service was shutting down in six weeks. I was informed yesterday that the date for closure is this week. My commitment and duty are to none other than the Wollondilly community. This is not the first time I have stood at these dispatch boxes to stand up for my community regardless of the potential backlash.

At the meeting, I asked why such a vital service is being considered for closure. I was told by representatives of the health service that numbers were low and a more streamlined approach was being taken. That is simply not good enough. I was told by the mums who attend the clinic that it can take a

couple of weeks to get an appointment—in some cases almost six weeks—because of the service's popularity and its value to the community. When I asked about the costs involved, I was informed that it cost \$160 to run the centre for half a day a week and that a different approach would not save any money at all. There is no logical reason to close the service. Further, if it will cost more to close the service, it seems to me to be a bad decision for no reason.

One mum told me that the clinic nurse had picked up on issues that had saved her child's life. I thank Councillor Judy Hannan for attending the meeting and joining with me to support this vital service. I also thank the Warragamba Silverdale Neighbourhood Centre for organising the meeting. The centre's premises also house the service. The neighbourhood centre does an excellent job and I am proud to have it as part of our community. We all learn from mistakes, but in this case let us take action before it becomes a mistake. When I first spoke in this place, I said I would not let my community down. Today I do not intend to do that and that is why I bring this issue to the attention of the Chamber. I call on the South Western Sydney Local Health District to reverse its decision and allow the clinic to continue to do the excellent job it has done in our community for more than 60 years.

LEGACY WEEK

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) [1.15 p.m.]: I wish to recognise Legacy Week, which occurred nationwide last week and was well supported in the electorate of Swansea. Legacy Week is one of Australia's most iconic fundraising campaigns. Beginning in 1942, it aims to raise awareness and funds for the families of our incapacitated and deceased veterans. It is held in towns and cities, big and small, across Australia and is supported by young and old. The funds raised from Legacy Week help Legacy continue to assist Australia-wide approximately 90,000 widows and almost 2,000 children and people with disabilities with essential services such as counselling, special housing and medical, advocacy and social support. Public support also helps Legacy nurture children's education, by contributing towards their school fees, books, uniforms, and recreational activities that aid their self-development and confidence. Currently, thousands of Australian Defence Force personnel are deployed overseas and Legacy stands ready to assist their families, if required.

Legacy is a voluntary organisation supported by veterans, service men and women, and volunteers drawn from all walks of life. While every person who contributes his or her time to assist with such a worthwhile cause is to be commended, I ask the House to note that the Legacy volunteers in the Swansea electorate are, in fact, the best Legacy volunteers in New South Wales. I can attest to this, because for the entire Legacy Week our local volunteers were stationed outside my electorate office, raising funds for this important cause. I can report to my fellow members that these wonderful volunteers—Lindsay, Noelene, Audrey and the rest of the crew—raised more than \$1,700 throughout the week. I give a particular shout-out to the students from Swansea High School who came on board for the big fundraising push on Friday, which also marked Legacy's Badge Day. It was a fantastic effort.

This fundraising effort was anchored by the wonderful and formidable Eastlakes Legacy Widows group. Many members in this place will recall how thrilled I was to be able to recognise the Eastlakes Legacy Widows twenty-fifth anniversary in the Parliament a few weeks ago. Eastlakes Legacy Widows has almost 40 active members, including five original members from its formation group 25 years ago. They hold monthly Legacy bus trips, which allow the members to socialise over lunch and during events, and they invite speakers of interest to their monthly meetings. I take this opportunity to recognise Mrs June Hughes, who was the Eastlakes Legacy Widows president and secretary for an amazing 19 years. June has recently retired from her executive duties due to macular degeneration but she still attends the monthly meetings and social functions and remains a staunch advocate for the Legacy cause. Thank you for your dedicated service, June.

I have said it in this place before but I will say it again: I find it difficult to think of a more noble cause than Legacy. I certainly understand the importance of Legacy in our community. My grandmother was widowed in 1941, when her husband was killed in action in Libya. She was left widowed with six

children and received much-needed assistance from Legacy. I know that assistance was very much appreciated by my grandmother and her children. Legacy has its origins in World War I in Gallipoli, Palestine, France and Flanders. Some of the men who returned from those battlefields felt that their colleagues in business were failing to adequately assist other returned men. One of them, who lived in Hobart, decided to do something about it. His name was General Sir John Gellibrand.

In 1923, Gellibrand founded the Remembrance Club in Hobart. Its aim was to encourage returned servicemen in business. Stanley Savige, a former 24th Battalion officer who had also served on Gellibrand's brigade staff, visited Hobart in August 1923. Gellibrand urged him to set up a similar club in Melbourne. Soon after Savige's return to Melbourne, six ex-servicemen met to farewell one of their group who was about to go to England. Savige used the opportunity to bring up the idea of a club similar to Gellibrand's Remembrance Club. After several informal meetings, the Melbourne club's inaugural meeting was held in Anzac House in Melbourne.

For the next 26 years, due to his commitment, energy and enthusiasm, Savige's name became inseparable from both the club and the movement. In 1925, it was suggested that Legacy should look at caring for the children of deceased servicemen. This proposal was accepted and Legacy found its soul. The legacy of care continues today. Almost 6,000 volunteers around Australia act as mentors to the widows and their families and ensure Legacy's promise to care for the families of deceased veterans is kept. It is pleasing to be able to advise the House that Legacy's support and services now extend to include the dependants of members of today's Australian Defence Force who lose their lives or their health as a result of their military service. I strongly encourage the New South Wales community to get on board and to support this cause by becoming a volunteer or donating to Legacy.

BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA DAY COMMEMORATION

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) [1.20 p.m.]: On Wednesday 2 September, I attended the annual Battle for Australia Day Commemoration at the Miranda War Memorial, which was conducted by the Miranda RSL Sub-Branch. In June 2008, the Governor-General officially proclaimed that the commemoration of Battle for Australia Day would occur annually on the first Wednesday in September. The commemoration pays tribute to those who served on land, sea or air repulsing the direct threat to Australia between 1942 and 1945. I take this opportunity to commend the Miranda RSL Sub-Branch for its commemoration of this significant day and for its inclusion of our surrounding sub-branches.

Those present at the service reflected on the bombing of Darwin, the first-ever attack on Australian soil in February 1942, the attack on Sydney Harbour by three Japanese midget submarines in May 1942, the shelling of Newcastle in June 1942, the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, and the battle along the Kokoda Trail between July 1942 and January 1943. During the service, Mr George Edward Rogers, a 90-year-old Second World War veteran and long-time Gympie resident, shared a poignant recollection of his personal experience in the Second World War. By way of background, Mr Rogers joined the Australian Army at age 18 and fought in Papua New Guinea, where many of his mates perished in the jungles of Bougainville. The master of ceremonies, John Goodger, remarked to local school students present that "there is no substitute for living history". This phrase resonated with me, and as such it was heartening to see students from Miranda Public School, Sylvania High School and Port Hacking High School present to listen to Mr Rogers's reflections and to take part in the wreath-laying ceremony.

I turn now to the participation of the Sylvania High School students in the service. I acknowledge Vice-Captain Liam Abbott, who delivered a moving Prayer for the Fallen, praying that the sacrifice and suffering of our diggers will not be forgotten. Liam was later joined by fellow Vice-Captain Claudia Kuhar in laying a wreath at the foot of the cenotaph. Liam and Claudia were accompanied by the principal of Sylvania High School, Mr Craig Brown. As noted previously, Port Hacking High School students were also present. I acknowledge the participation of incoming 2016 school captain William Cassimatis, along with Katherine Androulis, Reece Gledhill, Dayna Papastavros, Amy Mifsud, Daniel Gray and Rees Hopper.

The students of Port Hacking High School were accompanied by principal Greg McGrath. On behalf of Miranda Public School, wreaths were laid by captains Paiti Bartolo and Hannah Gwynn, alongside prefects Joel Peeters, Lily Stempel, Caroline Lu and Simone Kelly.

Miranda Public School students have a profound association with the Miranda RSL Sub-Branch. Earlier this year, as part of the 100 Years of Anzac commemorations, the school, in conjunction with the Miranda RSL Sub-Branch and Port Hacking High School, produced *Jack and Tom*, a fictional but realistic film recounting the story of two young shire lads who grew up together, signed up to the Armed Forces and set off to war. Sadly, only one of the young men returned. The president of the Miranda RSL Sub-Branch, Mr Bruce Grimley, played an older Tom at the conclusion of the film, reflecting on the loss of his friend Jack at the Miranda memorial in a scene set decades after the war.

I commend principal Glen Carter, teacher Mathew Egan and president Bruce Grimley for conceiving of and directing the production, which was screened at the community commemoration at Cronulla Beach on Anzac Day this year. The Miranda RSL Sub-Branch plays a vital role in the community life of our shire. The community outreach, accessible commemorations and educational initiatives for which the sub-branch is responsible throughout the shire are genuinely admirable. The sub-branch is truly ensuring that the message that "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance" is passed on to the children of the shire, and I strongly commend them for their work.

I conclude by recognising and thanking the dedicated committee of the Miranda RSL Sub-Branch: President Bruce Grimley; Senior Vice-President George Dunlop; Junior Vice-President John Goodger; Honorary Secretary Brian Senior; Honorary Treasurer Arie Havenaar; and committee members Mike Molloy, Barry Fletcher and Alan Lark. I commend them for the important role they played in the coordination of the service and the commitment they have consistently shown to the remembrance of fallen service men and women in various theatres of war over the past century. I also acknowledge life members Pat O'Riordan, Clifford Raatz, Brian Cole and Jim Lowe, who took part in the commemorative ceremony.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.25 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Miranda on her important contribution. The special service held at the Miranda War Memorial on the first Wednesday of September each year remembering war is extremely important. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Miranda RSL Sub-Branch and other district RSL groups that have been involved in the event and the students from Port Hacking High School and Miranda Public School. It is important that we continue to remember the lives laid down so that we may have a better life. We should never forget the terrible events that have taken place in wars over the past century. Lest we forget.

OATLEY ELECTORATE CRIME STATISTICS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [1.26 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the significant and valuable contribution that the men and woman of the NSW Police Force provide in caring for and protecting our community. This is evident in my electorate, where residents and I are pleased and grateful about the reduction in the incidence of serious theft and crime. Of particular note is the increase in the number of arrests relating to the use and possession of amphetamines. The work of frontline police officers is being supported by this Government with the recent move to halve the threshold required in New South Wales to charge people with manufacturing or dealing in commercial quantities of ice from one kilogram to 500 grams. That move has been welcomed by my constituents, the police and those impacted by ice across the community.

Last month I was accompanied by the Deputy Premier and Minister for Justice and Police, the Hon. Troy Grant, at a meeting with command and station staff at Hurstville Police Station. It was a great opportunity to speak with Inspector Paul Callaghan and the team at St George Local Area Command [LAC] about crime and safety issues in my electorate. I am always impressed by and grateful to the highly

skilled and well-trained officers who serve in the NSW Police Force. It was a great opportunity to discuss the formation of the Domestic Violence Unit with Inspector Paul Callaghan and Minister Grant and to review overall crime statistics across the three local area commands in the St George district. The region is a law and order priority for the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government. As a former police officer, Minister Grant knows the importance of providing our police officers with the resources and tools they need to do their job well and safely. They do a terrific job protecting the community and it is important that the New South Wales Government continues to work with our frontline officers to better deliver for that community.

Recently I had the privilege of welcoming six officers to the St George LAC who are part of 131 new recruits joining the NSW Police Force from Class 325. These new officers bring to the force a diverse range of life experiences in nursing, landscape gardening, carpentry, pub management, and military service. These new officers will be located in the St George LAC in Hurstville and will work to ensure the safety and protection of the community while also managing and reducing the incidence of crime and violence in the area. The NSW Police Force is 16,695 strong, including 859 new recruits since 2011. I know that existing officers will guide and support the six new recruits at the St George LAC. I take this opportunity to say how grateful I am to the St George LAC, and in particular former Sergeant Robert Grant. The St George LAC does a terrific job policing and protecting our local area and demonstrates high levels of professionalism and compassion.

I recently met with Sergeant Robert Grant, known affectionately as Bob, and he shared with me some details of the fundraising activities in which he has been involved during his time at the St George LAC. In 1999 Bob Grant was working at Hurstville police station, and he decided that he could use the good reputation and profile of the police in the Hurstville area to raise funds for charity. Bob and other police officers throughout the local area command formed a committee and decided to hold the St George District Police Charity Ball. I have had the privilege of attending the annual balls over the years since becoming the local member. The committee selected the Children's Hospital at Westmead as the beneficiary of funds raised. Each year since 1999 the ball has been held to raise money for the Westmead Children's Hospital and, more recently, Bear Cottage. As many members will know, the clinicians at the Children's Hospital at Westmead are leaders in the treatment and care of childhood illnesses and disease. The hospital provides world-class medical care and emotional support to children being treated and their families. To date, Sergeant Grant and his fellow officers have raised more than \$200,000 for the children's hospital and Bear Cottage. Each year the committee organising the ball selects a department to support and over the years this has included oncology, burns, neo-natal and the intensive care unit.

In addition, Sergeant Grant has enlisted the help of local RSL clubs, which have agreed to donate more than \$100,000 a year over the past five years to support the work of the children's hospital and Bear Cottage. Sergeant Grant has dedicated his life to serving others and his community, and he is to be commended for an outstanding career. I wish Sergeant Grant all the best and thank him for his work as a police officer—he is now in another area command—and for his work in raising funds for the Children's Hospital at Westmead and Bear Cottage. Once again, I thank and acknowledge the work of our police and wish them all the best for the future.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.31 p.m.]: I commend the hardworking member for Oatley and thank him for raising this important matter in this place today. He has told us clearly today that law and order, and ensuring his community is as safe as it can possibly be are absolute priorities for him. It is very pleasing to hear that there is a reduction in the production of some of the illicit drugs that are such a scourge on all communities. It is also pleasing to hear that St George Local Area Command has welcomed six new officers, who bring diverse community backgrounds to their new roles as police officers. It was also great to hear about the police St George District Police Charity Ball. I am sure that the Children's Hospital at Westmead and Bear Cottage are extremely grateful for the \$200,000 already raised by the St George Local Area Command. Once again I commend the member for Oatley and thank him for raising this important issue in the House today.

Private members' statements concluded.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.32 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome guests to the Parliament. First, I extend a very warm welcome to Harrison Miller, a visitor from my electorate of South Coast, and my guest today in the Chamber. I also acknowledge the presence in the Chamber today of Karen Howard, the former candidate for Newcastle, guest of the member for Coogee. I acknowledge the presence of University of New South Wales student Josh Gibson, also a guest of the member for Coogee. I extend a very warm welcome to the 60 students of Granville South Public School and their teacher, guests of the member for Granville. Welcome to all of you this afternoon. I warmly welcome also nine students and their teachers from Woonona High School, guests of the member for Keira.

CENTENARY OF FIRST WORLD WAR

The SPEAKER: One of the more remarkable achievements of Australia's military in the Great War was the movement of troops and equipment across the vast oceans to the conflicts in the Middle East and Europe. In order to meet these demands, the Department of the Navy created the Sea Transport Service. Its role was both to build transport ships and to convert existing vessels. With outstanding logistical planning, some 28 ships were made available by September 1914, with many more to follow. During the war the Sea Transport Service organised 44 separate convoys, conveying 337,000 men and 27,000 horses to various theatres of war. Despite the dangers of both German raiders, such as the notorious *SMS Emden*, and treacherous seas, not one ship was lost during the entire operation.

Two members of this Parliament served in the Sea Transport Service. James William Macarthur-Onslow, a direct descendent of John Macarthur and a distinguished soldier who had been decorated numerous times for his service in both India and South Africa, was the Liberal-Nationals Legislative Assembly member for Waverly from 1907 to 1913 and held the seat of Bondi from 1913 to 1917. He re-enlisted on 30 September 1915 and made numerous trips on the Sea Transport Service as a senior officer. After the war he held the seat of Eastern Suburbs from 1920 to 1922 before his transfer in 1922 to the Legislative Council, where he served for a decade.

The Liberal member for Maitland from 1911 to 1920, Charles Edward Nicholson, was another veteran of the Boer War. He had served with the Hunter River Lancers and the Australian Light Horse and was three times mentioned in despatches. He held senior commands in the Sea Transport Service between 1915 and 1917. The history of the Sea Transport Service is rarely recognised, but without it Australia's war effort would have been severely compromised. Lest we forget.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTION TIME

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I inform the House that today the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Medical Research, Assistant Minister for Health, Minister for Women, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault will answer questions in the absence of the Minister for Health.

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: On behalf of the Premier, I inform the House that on 26 August 2015 the following members were appointed as Parliamentary Secretaries to the offices indicated:

Dr Geoffrey Lee, MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism

Mr Daryl William Maguire, MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Corrections, Emergency Services, Veterans and the Centenary of ANZAC
Mr Anthony John Sidoti, MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, Roads, Industry, Resources and Energy.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills was reported:

Rural Fires Amendment (Bush Fire Prevention) Bill 2015
Health Services Amendment (Paramedics) Bill 2015

DEATH OF JAMES BARTHOLOMEW "BART" CUMMINGS, AM

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [2.23 p.m.], by leave: It is an immense honour to be afforded the privilege to speak in Parliament today on the late James Bartholomew Cummings, not only in my capacity as a member of this House but also as a former thoroughbred racing trainer and lifetime participant of the racing industry. I sincerely appreciate and thank our Premier, Mike Baird, for the offer of a State funeral to the Cummings family yesterday in acknowledgement of this iconic Australian. One knows someone has become part of the fabric of Australian culture when the whole nation calls him by his nickname—Bart. An adoring nation has certainly lost a favourite son.

But Bart Cummings was more than just a great horse trainer; he was to racing what Bradman was to cricket—an adored and respected Australian sportsman. Bart, like Bradman, set records which may never be broken, none the least winning a dozen Melbourne Cups. But it was his humble nature, his good humour and unpretentious manner, combined with his marvellous record of achievement on the turf for which he will be so fondly remembered by the Australian public. His sharp wit and famous cheeky one-liners will be forever etched in racing folklore. Once when asked by a journalist could he point to the one reason for his success, Bart simply said, "Horses". An inspector who visited his stables one day exclaimed, "Mr Cummings, there are far too many flies in the stable" to which Bart replied, "How many flies am I allowed to have?"

Bart was strapper for 1950 Melbourne Cup winner Comic Court trained by his dad, Jim, from whom he learnt his trade. Bart would take out his own trainer's licence in 1953 but it is a little-known fact that he was not an overnight sensation. Bart actually took nearly two years before training his first winner at Morphettville in February 1955. He used to say he had never forgotten how hard it was in those early days and what a test it was of his persistence to remain a horse trainer. He knew, as all trainers did, that it is one of the toughest businesses in which to be involved. However, three years after that initial winner Bart won his first Group 1 race with Stormy Passage in the South Australian Derby. It was a taste of things to come. He won his first Melbourne Cup when Light Fingers defeated stablemate Zieme in 1965, which achieved the quinella.

Apart from the 12 Melbourne Cups he won four Golden Slippers, five Doncasters, seven Caulfield Cups, five Cox Plates, 13 Australian Cups and more than 7,000 races in total, including 266 Group 1 races, a truly phenomenal record. When Saintly won the 1996 Melbourne Cup a reporter said, "Bart, you look very emotional. There's a tear in your eye", to which Bart said, "I am. I didn't have enough on him." In the 1989-90 racing season Bart Cummings was crowned Sydney's premier trainer, the first and still the only person to win training premierships across three Australian States.

Bart was made a member of the Order of Australia in 1982 for his services to the racing industry, was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame in 1991 and a decade later was an inaugural inductee into the Australian Racing Hall of Fame. Bart was Australian racing royalty. It is a legacy this country will long remember. It is often said that horseracing is the great leveller; being a millionaire does not guarantee success. It is a place where battlers and royalty compete on a level playing field and many of

racing's champions come from very humble beginnings.

As a former racehorse trainer I often had the opportunity of being in the presence of Bart as we saddled horses or gave jockeys a leg up in the mounting yard prior to a race. In 2011 as a guest of the Australian Turf Club on Golden Rose Day, it was my great pleasure to catch up and speak to him briefly once again. I said, "I'm sorry you lost that good horse", and I did not even have to mention the horse's name. Bart knew exactly what I meant. Six months earlier, following his third placing in the Melbourne Cup, Bart lost his horse So You Think, which was transferred to Europe and went on to race with huge success.

Bart had won two Cox Plates with So You Think and a Mackinnon Stakes in just 10 starts and even though he had trained some of the best thoroughbreds in this country he knew how good So You Think was. He was perhaps one of the best he had trained and one of the best ever to race in this country. His loss was deeply felt, but in true Bart fashion he just batted it away and asked me what I was doing now. I said, "I'm a politician", to which he said, "Yes, that's much easier than training racehorses", and I completely agree. Bart's final moments were spent with his family and wife of 61 years, Valmae, with whom he celebrated their anniversary on Friday 28 August at their beloved Princes Farm at Castlereagh. On behalf of the people and Government of New South Wales, I pass on my most heartfelt condolences to Valmae, his children, their partners, his 16 beautiful grandchildren and brand new great-granddaughter on the loss of their most beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

I conclude by saying that at a time when Australian sports men and women, famous actors, artists and politicians are regularly in the media spotlight, perhaps they could all take a leaf out of the Bart Cummings textbook. One never saw Bart making air punches after a win, never heard him spruiking his own achievements, abusing racing stewards or being rude to airline hostesses. Bart had time for everyone and was a gentleman. My dad, who was also a famous Australian sportsman, once said to me, "You always know when someone is good at what they do because they will often tell you about it. It is the great ones who keep it to themselves." In Bart Australia has lost one of the greatest. Vale James Bartholomew Cummings.

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn—Leader of the Opposition) [2.30 p.m.], by leave: On behalf of the Australian Labor Party I am pleased to add our support to the statement made by the member for Castle Hill. James Bartholomew Cummings, AM, died in the early hours of Sunday 30 August, surrounded by his family at his farm on the Nepean River at Castlereagh. With his passing, a family has lost a husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather. But the nation has lost a champion trainer and a dignified and decent man. Mr J. B. Cummings was born in Glenelg in 1927. The son of Jim and Nancy Cummings had trouble adapting to his father's business for Jim Cummings was a horse trainer, and horsehair and straw inflamed young Bart's asthma. Bart was told by a doctor to avoid stables. Thankfully, he ignored the physician's advice and continued in the family business.

In 1950 Bart began his long association with the Melbourne Cup, attending the event as a strapper for his father's horse. Later that afternoon, he led the victorious Comic Court into the parade ring at Flemington. Fifteen years later Bart had his own training success when Light Fingers won the 1965 Melbourne Cup. In his long career Bart Cummings would go on to win the Melbourne Cup 11 more times and 268 Group 1 races. It is said that Bart could read the future prospects of a horse based on its physical form: the intonations of its movements, the steadiness of its gait and the readiness of its eye.

Bart Cummings was a private man living in a public age. His success attracted admiration, but it did not engender arrogance in him. He remained reserved, measured and laconic until the end of his days. He had a lifelong aversion to those with bad manners and loud voices. He was, as one confidante put it, a man who spent more time thinking than talking. But when Bart spoke it was for a purpose, often a humorous one. As was stated yesterday at St Marys Cathedral, he was a Catholic who was committed to his faith. But he always knew where his interest lay. When Darren Beadman told Cummings he was going

to give away being a jockey for him because God had called him to the Ministry, Bart said, "I think you should seek a second opinion." Cummings was religious but irreverent. He held the Catholicism of Ireland close to his heart, and the dry wit of an older Australia so often sprang from his lips.

Asked about his enduring success he remarked, "Patience is the cheapest thing in racing and the least used." Like all in the racing game, Bart Cummings had his share of adversity. When a business venture threatened to send him bankrupt, he negotiated to pay back his debts to creditors from his future winnings. We remember him not only for the extent of his great success but also the strength of his character. On behalf of the Labor Party, I acknowledge Bart Cummings' regular support over so many years of the race day lunches for the Mick Young Scholarship Trust. Bart Cummings is the second great Australian from the world of sport to pass from us in the most recent weeks. I would hope that Arthur Morris merits a similar recognition in this place in the coming days.

This year for the first time in a long time, Bart Cummings' silhouette in the near dark of dawn will not be part of the images of the Spring Carnival in Melbourne. The cup's king is dead but his legacy will live on. Bart Cummings forever changed the race that stops the nation. We thank him for his service to racing and for the example he set for humanity but, above all else, our thoughts are with his wife of 61 years, Valmae, and his children, grandchildren and great grandchild, whom we were so blessed to see yesterday at St Marys Cathedral. May he rest in peace.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.37 p.m.]

LEARNING MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS REFORM PROGRAM

Mr LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier reveal the revised total project cost for the implementation of the Learning Management and Business Reform program?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In some respects it is great that the Opposition is almost in a policy area that State government is about—education. We have heard a lot from the Leader of the Opposition and I think his role in as a Labor historian as he loves talking about Labor's history; he does not like talking about public transport. Finally he is talking a little about something: education. The shadow Minister for Education finds this complicated, but when managing this IT contract—the Learning Management and Business Program was started under Labor—we had to tidy it up.

Ms Linda Burney: Tidy it up?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call and he is answering the question. Opposition members will listen to the Premier's answer in silence.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It does not matter what you did; you had a great capacity to get things completely wrong. As the Minister for Education said, it is no secret that from a pilot point of view some challenges were identified. That is part of the reason. I assume the member for Canterbury has run IT projects before. Has she run IT projects before?

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not an opportunity for the member for Canterbury to debate the Premier.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I did not think so.

Dr Geoff Lee: Yes, the Tcard.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They did the Tcard. A basic premise of implementing an IT contract is running the pilot to understand the challenges and then adjusting the system to make sure it works before rolling it out. Yes, it has cost a little bit more than anticipated.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah will have an opportunity to ask his questions.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We want to make sure we get the delivery of the project right. Members opposite are running around asking, "What's the cost?" We will tell them in good order. When calling for a project tender we do not tell the market how much it is expected to cost, because we want to get value for taxpayers. I know how the State got into trouble under the leadership of members opposite.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They had no idea.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is answering the question. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: It was a specific question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is answering the question extremely specifically. There is no point of order. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The shadow Minister may not understand it, but when Labor members put the project together they put aside some capital costs but forgot about the operational costs.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Canterbury does not come to order she will be placed on a call to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Operational costs are needed to run programs. The difference between operational and capital costs is all too complicated for them. The current Minister is doing exactly what he should be doing in ensuring that the LMBR works as it is rolled out and that it provides the assistance it should. That is what we are doing.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Wyong that if he continues to interject he will be placed on a call to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Before we go to market we want to ensure that we keep focused on customer value and deliver on the framework. That is exactly what we are doing. We have to make sure that it is working right. Once we have completed it and taken it to market the cost will be determined. We are very proud of what it will deliver, which is local decisions for local schools. We are very proud to be delivering that reform program. Members opposite can huff and puff and do what they like; members on this side will get on with the job of looking after our schools.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is what the people of New South Wales expect. It is embarrassing for

members opposite to pretend that they understand IT contracts when they clearly do not.

STATE ECONOMY

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the New South Wales economy performing relative to the rest of the nation?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: What a magnificent question.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting. There have been too many interjections this afternoon.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I congratulate the member for Holsworthy on not only her work in the community but also her outstanding election victory. Members opposite thought they would knock over that great member. The good news is that she was re-elected on the back of her great work in the community.

Ms Linda Burney: Ten on this side.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. She cannot be thirsty already.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is learning to count. That is great. I am sure members will be pleased to learn that New South Wales continues to outperform the nation. Everywhere we turn there is good economic news. I am surprised that members opposite are not standing up and clapping. It is unbelievable. As we heard, this week ANZ published some results with a new focus on the performance of the States. The ANZ report says that New South Wales is extending its lead and it highlights the outperformance of New South Wales. It says that the trend is accelerating to the moon—or words to that effect. Members opposite know that situation has not come about by accident. The Government has been doing a lot of hard work investing in housing and infrastructure, and ensuring that it is competitive to do business in this State. Even though members opposite wanted to go against the Jobs Action Plan, we are proud to keep it going.

Last week economic growth statistics showed that New South Wales was leading the country yet again at 3.3 per cent on an annualised basis, which is above trend, while others are struggling across the rest of the country. We have been in that position for 10 consecutive quarters and it is the first time in 30 years that New South Wales has led in that capacity. Last year 83 per cent of the growth in Australia's domestic spending on goods and services came from New South Wales. We are leading on spending and have the fastest rate in the nation. The acceleration in housing data started under the former planning Minister and is continuing under the current Minister.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Last month 6,800 dwellings were approved. That was the strongest month in history on top of the strongest 12 months in history. When we came to government we inherited 50-year lows; we now have 40-year highs. That is the difference when a government is focused on the economy. This morning New South Wales business conditions statistics were released. They show that business confidence in this State is up plus four while the rest of the country is up plus one. Business conditions in New South Wales are at plus 22, while in Australia they are at plus 11. New South Wales continues to lead in business confidence. There is only one risk to our economic growth: members opposite.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: When the Leader of the Opposition came off Troy Bramston's couch and out of his office with an intervention that said, "I am for the free trade agreement," I almost fell off my chair. But if you read the fine print he actually said, "I'm kind of for the free trade agreement provided the unions say it is okay." I encourage members opposite to continue to support the free trade agreement. I know the member for Lakemba and the member for Kogarah want to. They have to because it will mean 9,000 extra jobs for the national economy. We are continuing to support it. It is what the economy needs and what this State deserves. The lack of leadership from members opposite is clear for everyone to see. We are charging ahead in this State because we are interested in jobs and economic growth, and we are producing. New South Wales is back at number one again and we will continue to stay there despite the risk posed by members opposite.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS REFORM PROGRAM

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Given that the Treasurer confirmed during budget estimates hearings that funding for the remainder of the Learning Management and Business Reform [LMBR] rollout must come from existing allocations, where within the schools budget will the money come from?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I have answered questions on this before, but I will go through it again. In 2006 the previous Labor Government began the Learning Management and Business Reform [LMBR] process. It budgeted \$403 million for the capital costs of construction. The capital costs have come in at about \$406 million, which the Auditor-General has confirmed and which are within the Treasury allowances. At the time the previous Labor Government did not budget for the costs of training, implementation and making the IT system operational. As I said, they budgeted for the cost of building the car but not for the cost of operating it.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: An incoming Government does not get to see the Cabinet minutes or Expenditure Review Committee [ERC] minutes of previous governments.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: But I am told that they recognised at the time that they could not budget for the operational costs of implementing the IT upgrade for the Department of Education. Since then we have done the implementation of the LMBR program and, not surprisingly, it has cost money. All IT project rollouts cost money to implement. You have to pay for the training for staff. As I said in estimates, this is a very large organisation. Across schools and TAFE there is about 96,000 staff.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Last night I was talking to somebody from Google, a company that worldwide has a staff of 35,000. We are talking here about an organisation with 96,000 people in it across 2,500 schools and TAFE. The operational costs of implementing this IT upgrade were never budgeted for. The Auditor-General confirmed that, to the end of July, those operational costs were \$170 million. That is not all. There are additional costs.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. It is very interesting to hear about Google, but the question I asked was about where the money will come from in the schools budget.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is being entirely relevant. The Minister is clearly answering the question. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. It is just a stunt, when the Minister is clearly answering the question, for the member for Canterbury to take such a point of order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The member for Canterbury used to be a Minister—admittedly not a very good one and not a very effective one; but she would understand the process. Government agencies get an allocation from Treasury, approved by the Parliament in the budget bills that are presented. In those bills there are allocations for various components—staffing, capital works, et cetera.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The cost of implementing and paying for these operational costs are part of the allocation that Treasury gives to Education. That is why it will be paid off out of the Education budget. It is as simple as that. The member for Canterbury should understand that from having been a Minister. All of these things were well and truly canvassed in estimates.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Not everyone was there, although I am sure most people were watching the Education estimates hearing, fascinating as it was. I point out one of the questions I was asked in estimates—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on both sides of the Chamber will come to order. The Minister has the call.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: —by the Hon. Walt Secord, who was press secretary to Bob Carr, who provided the advice to John Aquilina in that infamous case of Cecil Hills High School when they misled Parliament about a student with a gun. So he has a terrible track record of misleading the Parliament.

Mr Luke Foley: Point of order: It is under Standing Order 73. Personal reflections and imputations against members are disorderly except by way of substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is correct; they certainly are. I accept the point of order, but I am not sure that the Minister has gone far enough as to make a personal reflection.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I will tell all members of the House the question I was asked by the Hon. Walt Secord about the LMBR program. He asked:

Have consultants been brought in from India and Malaysia to assist with the blowout ...

I made the point: What is wrong with Indians and Malaysians? It was an incredibly racist question trying to make cheap political points out of the LMBR. [*Time expired.*]

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

CRIME STATISTICS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing. How do the recent crime statistics reflect what the Government is doing to make our community safer?

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the member for Myall Lakes for his question. The answer is a good news story for the people of Myall Lakes, as it is for everyone in this Parliament. The member for Myall Lakes has just received the excellent news that in his electorate the crime rate has fallen across all major categories.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] has released its quarterly statistics. They show that, for the past two years, all major crime categories across the Myall Lakes electorate have either remained stable or are trending down. The member for Myall Lakes has seen firsthand how our record low crime rate is giving his constituents a community that is safer from violent crime. And the member for Myall Lakes is not the only one to receive good news. Across the State over the past two years every category of major crime has remained stable or dropped. Not one category has increased. In the past two years crime in six major categories decreased across New South Wales. Our crime statistics are at a record low. Our communities are safer than they have ever been

This Parliament should pause and thank the men and women of the NSW Police Force, and I know the shadow spokesperson for police will join me in congratulating the police on their work. They put their lives on the line every day to make our community safer. These statistics are undeniably the result of proactive police work and the policies this Government has put in place to better resource and protect our frontline law enforcement. We understand that proactive police work is the way to significantly increase detections, and that is exactly what our police officers have been doing to achieve these results. The New South Wales Government is absolutely committed to giving the police all the resources they need to keep us safe, and to continue to keep crime rates low.

BOCSAR statistics show us that across New South Wales robbery with a firearm is down nearly 14 per cent, across New South Wales robbery with a weapon other than a firearm is down 19 per cent, and across the State the category of steal from person is down almost 10 per cent. One category has increased, and I am pleased to inform the House that this has increased—that is, the possession of illegal drugs. Possession arrests showed an increase of 38 per cent for amphetamine possession and an increase of 47 per cent for cocaine possession. This reflects how our targeted policing efforts are cracking down on the circulation of drugs in the community. These efforts are working effectively, especially for the drug known as ice. We are seeing large increases in amphetamine possession in regional New South Wales. This has trended upwards in seven of the 13 regional areas captured by the data.

I have seen firsthand the devastating impact that drugs like ice can have on rural and regional families and communities. I support every move being undertaken by our police and this Government to target illicit drugs across the State. I welcome the support of our Attorney General in the wonderful announcement she made last week. As we begin to prepare for the holidays and head into the festive season we need to address the growing scourge of drug use when driving. This Government is determined to crack down on ice and drug-driving and is resourcing the NSW Police Force accordingly. The Government is also determined to address violence against women, and I applaud the outstanding work being undertaken by Minister Goward in this vital area of community safety.

This Government is absolutely committed to driving down the number of crimes involving violence, weapons and drugs. These figures speak for themselves. We are making inroads. But that is not all; there has been a significant reduction in the number of assaults on the streets of Kings Cross, which are down 38 per cent, and in the Sydney central business district, which are down 12 per cent. The New South Wales Government's tough measures are clearly working to reduce violence in and around Sydney entertainment precincts. The State Government supports the police. We always have and we always will. We are ensuring that our police are armed with the best technology available, and the \$100 million Policing for Tomorrow Fund will greatly aid their efforts. We will continue to invest in new technologies as they emerge to support our police on the front line.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr TROY GRANT: In addition to the \$100 million Policing for Tomorrow Fund, we have allocated \$64 million to plan and rebuild a number of police stations across New South Wales to give police the best possible working environments and stations to work from to serve our communities. These include the Bay and Basin area Police Station and the Gunnedah Police Station. There will be continued works on police stations in Deniliquin, Lake Macquarie, Liverpool, Riverstone, Tweed Heads, Walgett and Moss Vale. This Government will continue to listen to the concerns of the community and to resource the NSW Police Force. This Government will make every effort to keep the community safe.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS REFORM PROGRAM

Mr CHRIS MINNS: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Will the 1,800 schools yet to receive the Learning Management and Business Reform [LMBR] system be required to make a co-contribution from their budgets to implement the program?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I would like to hear the question.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: No. Training, and time for training and professional development will be provided by the Department of Education. I cannot say that schools will not use some of their resources for additional training for their staff, because the Government allows schools to make their own decisions.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Londonderry that this is not a debate. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the first time. The member will cease arguing across the table.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Resources, time and training will be provided. That is some of the cost that Opposition members have asked about. Staff will be given release time, which means paying for someone else to relieve administration staff and principals, if I recall correctly, so that they can attend training. That is part of the cost of rolling out the system to 2,000 schools. If schools choose to use their resources to provide additional training, as they are entitled to under Local Schools, Local Decisions, that is a matter for them. At the heart of the question was whether there would be support for schools. The answer is yes, there will be support for schools. It forms part of the additional costs that the Opposition did not budget for.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Shellharbour and the member Londonderry that this is not a debate.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Last week I had the pleasure of visiting Scone Public School in the Upper Hunter region.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Scone Public School is one of the 229 pilot schools. The administration manager demonstrated the LMBR program.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The administration manager said, "Please promise me we will not go back to the Office Automation and School Information System [OASIS]," which was the old model that they used, the disk operating system [DOS]. There was no mouse. That is the system Labor left us with.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The Minister has the call.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: A principal from a secondary school that is one of the 229 schools said:

SAP is much more powerful than OASIS—

which is their current infrastructure—

for financial management and we are able to understand our financial position better now than we ever have.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Another secondary school principal said:

Current and recent upgrades on LMBR have made significant and positive improvements, and this has been noted by a number of my 229 colleagues.

There has been substantial improvement. The reason for doing a pilot with 229 schools is, as the Premier said, to find out what the problems are and iron out some of the wrinkles. There are some obvious ones. Some schools had printers that were not compatible with the new software in their front office.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order and cease interjecting.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: When they tried to print receipts, they found that some printers did not work. The printers may well have been bought by the parents and citizens associations with the good intention of supporting their schools, but they are incompatible with the software. Some of the schools had not upgraded their operating systems, which proved to be part of the problem. There were some problems with the system itself. Anyone who has an iPhone or an Android phone will know that once a month there is an upgrade to the operating system. That is what has happened with LMBR.

I know the Opposition's primary source of information is the newspaper. Some of the newspaper quotes from principals were from 18 months ago. The department picked up those issues and dealt with them. It fixed them. I question the source of the \$1 billion figure. One source was a fellow from the North Shore whom the *Daily Telegraph* rang. That number was plucked out of the sky. The *Daily Telegraph* is not a source. The software rollout has been a long and complicated process, but the Department of Education is doing a fantastic job in bringing schools and TAFE into the twenty-first century.

GREATER SYDNEY COMMISSION

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning. What is the Government doing to boost housing supply and improve planning in Sydney?

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

Mr ROB STOKES: I propose to answer that question, but first I will reflect on it for a moment. It is an excellent question. We are asked excellent questions by members on this side of the House, but not so much by those on the other side. Members on this side ask really well thought through questions.

Mr Luke Foley: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 130. The Minister is debating the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister has the call. Members will come

to order.

Mr ROB STOKES: The New South Wales Government is committed to boosting housing supply and championing better planning for Australia's only global city. High-quality, sustainable and affordable growth will be possible only with a planning system that provides meaningful community engagement and more opportunities for homes in the right locations. Already, this Government has made great progress in achieving that goal. The results speak for themselves. The Government is delivering on increased housing supply.

In July in New South Wales 6,824 dwellings were approved. That is the highest monthly number in recorded history. That is 9.35 housing approvals per hour. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics also showed that there were 61,057 building approvals in the 12 months to July, the highest result in more than 41 years and 64.5 per cent above the decade average. The challenge remains to address a historical undersupply. The question is: What more can we do? English historian Edward Carr, a reference to whom the member for Liverpool would approve of, once wrote:

Change is certain. Progress is not.

In Sydney change is indeed certain, and it is coming regardless. We have a choice to make in response. We can throw our hands up in the air and say, "Good to see you, but Sydney is full," like Bob Carr did when he was Premier, as an excuse for failing to invest in vital infrastructure as a means of deterring growth. If we choose that path, we will still have a bigger city but it will not be a better one. Alternatively, we can take proactive steps to shape our city for the change that is coming, to ensure progress in becoming a great global city. If we choose that road, the road less travelled, to invoke Robert Frost, we can help people who live in Sydney to have better access to the things they value, such as open space, greater housing choice and world-class job opportunities. In the future, that will make all the difference.

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the Minister's quoting of poetry encouraging the member for Fairfield? The member Fairfield will cease interjecting.

Mr ROB STOKES: This morning the Government took another important step in generating good growth in Sydney by announcing the structure of the proposed Greater Sydney Commission. Over the past century there have been countless attempts to deliver metropolitan governance across greater Sydney, in an effort to plan strategically for its future. The first proposal came through a conference of mayors in 1898, followed by a number of bills to create the Greater Sydney Commission that went to Parliament in 1915, 1918, 1927 and 1931, before the County of Cumberland Council was established after World War II. The Cumberland scheme ultimately failed, after a troubled history, because it was too disconnected from the process of government. In 1963 the State Planning Authority was formed. It stumbled because it was too centralised and technocratic. Although the schemes were short lived, we have a lot to learn from the way they approached planning for an interconnected Sydney.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Port Stephens will cease interjecting.

Mr ROB STOKES: For the first time, an authority will be established that effectively brings together State Government, local government and independent experts to deliver, drive, develop and decide on the strategic planning priorities for greater Sydney. In doing so the Greater Sydney Commission will ensure that as Sydney grows it will become a more liveable, more productive and more just city. The authority will consist of 13 board members, including six district commissioners chosen by the elected officials from Sydney's local councils. This partnership model will give councils the opportunity to play a major role in the decisions that shape their broader districts. Real, genuine partnerships can be hard to come by and some people might think that a partnership between State and local governments is unlikely. Some very unkind comparisons have been put to me.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ROB STOKES: Some people have put to me examples of former strong partnerships that have broken down spectacularly, such as merging the North Sydney Bears and the Manly Sea Eagles in 2000—clearly not a great decision, as the member for Wyong concurs.

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

Mr ROB STOKES: Another example is Sonny and Cher—some people thought they had a future in more than just making folk music together. That is why the Greater Sydney Commission will be a genuine partnership, built to last. The authority will have three commissioners specifically tasked with considering some of the bigger, broader issues across Sydney: social, economic and environmental issues. These commissioners will be able to provide balanced advice on how to deliver sustainable development across greater Sydney. The authority will be the decision-maker on rezoning proposals and will also be the sole decision-maker on many significant development assessments across Sydney, speeding up the process of getting good-quality development. The Greater Sydney Commission will also work closely with government departments and agencies to deliver holistic thinking, integrating future transport corridors, social infrastructure and new housing across districts. Through this new commission our Government is committed to continuing our track record of boosting housing supply and better planning in Sydney and across New South Wales.

WILLIAMTOWN LAND CONTAMINATION

Ms KATE WASHINGTON: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning. Given Hunter Water suspended the use of bores near the Williamtown RAAF base in 2012 due to fears of contamination, why has it taken three years for the Environment Protection Authority to notify the community of the threat of carcinogenic chemicals seeping into nearby waterways?

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: We have had 103 questions from the Labor Opposition since the election.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has only just begun his answer. He will be heard in silence. I call the member for Londonderry to order for the second time.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: We have had 103 questions from the Labor Opposition since the last election and finally I am asked a question about Environment and Heritage. It is the responsibility of the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] to respond to contamination issues. However, there are constitutional issues that limit the regulatory role of State agencies in the matter to which the member for Port Stephens refers as the source of contamination is on Commonwealth land.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Port Stephens that this is not a debate.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: It is important to note that this incident is not an emergency pollution incident but rather a legacy contamination issue. I point out that there are no acute toxicity issues associated with this contamination. Whether perfluorooctane sulfonate [PFOS] or perfluorooctanoic acid [PFOA] cause adverse health effects in humans is currently unknown.

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

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: But they are persistent chemicals that do not break down, so their potential health effects cannot be excluded. The contamination in question has been caused by past use of firefighting foams on the base. These chemicals are found in many other industrial and consumer products. While I am advised at this stage that the risk to human health appears to be low, the New South Wales Government has taken a precautionary approach and continues to work with the Department of

Defence to determine the extent and potential impact of these offsite chemicals. Last week the chair and chief executive of the EPA advised a budget estimates hearing that the EPA was notified by the Department of Defence of potential contamination on Commonwealth land in May 2012. Subsequently, the EPA requested that the Department of Defence undertake additional assessments. I am advised as follows.

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

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: On 4 August 201 two EPA officers received an invitation to attend a meeting on 12 August 2015 to discuss a draft report arising from the stage two assessment to delineate contamination. On 20 August 2015 the EPA took the initiative to coordinate a meeting involving the EPA, NSW Health, the NSW Food Authority, the Marine Park Authority, the Department of Planning and Environment—Fisheries, the Department of Planning and Environment—Water, and the Hunter Water Corporation. The agencies raised concerns about the potential for impacts on fisheries, oysters, agricultural produce and groundwater bores. The extent and implication of any impact is not clear at this time. I am advised that my office was first made aware on 27 August 2015 by the EPA that a brief on this issue was being prepared.

A brief was received by my office on 1 September 2015 and I received a comprehensive briefing from the EPA on 3 September 2015. That afternoon the EPA participated in a teleconference with New South Wales agencies and the Department of Defence to determine an appropriate precautionary response. The EPA issued a media release following the teleconference, which advised that as a precautionary measure the Government was advising potentially impacted residents not to drink bore water and not to take or eat fish from the nearby area. Also as a precaution, recreational and commercial fishing and oyster harvesting will be suspended for up to one month in the Fullerton Cove and upper Tilligerry Creek. A letterbox drop to landholders and residents took place on 4 September. I am advised that the Department of Primary Industries and the NSW Food Authority have commenced sampling of fish and oysters.

Landholders and residents will be kept informed of developments via letterbox drops and a public meeting will be scheduled. The date for this meeting is in the process of being finalised. My agency attempted to ring the member for Port Stephens after hours on 3 September. It made contact with her before the opening of business on 4 September and requested the EPA to brief her directly. New South Wales agencies are providing a whole-of-government response to assist the Commonwealth with its management of this issue. The New South Wales Government will establish, via the EPA, an expert panel chaired by the independent NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer, Professor Mary O'Kane. The expert panel will include toxicologists, a hydrologist, a science expert in lab protocols and a representative from EPA contaminated sites. I am satisfied that the EPA's response to this incident is measured and proportionate.

TOURISM MAJOR EVENTS

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport. How is New South Wales outperforming the rest of the nation as a tourist destination?

Mr STUART AYRES: We heard from the Premier earlier that New South Wales is number one in the nation. That also applies to tourism. Just last week New South Wales was again named the number one destination in Australia, with a record 3.3 million international visitors in the year ending June 2015. Visitors stayed a record total of almost 80 million nights in New South Wales—that is the highest number ever recorded in this State. It is far and away larger than the totals in Queensland and Victoria, which recorded, respectively, 50 million and 55 million visitor nights. The trend does not end there. I am proud to say that during this period New South Wales also received almost \$7.7 billion in visitor expenditure—a

significant increase of 10 per cent on the previous year and once again showing why New South Wales is the number one tourist destination in Australia. Sydney continues to shine a light on the international stage.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: Earlier this year Vivid Sydney broke all records, with a whopping 26,000 people flying into Sydney on international travel packages. Sydney has held other international events, including Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea playing at ANZ Stadium; the Australian Badminton Open—a huge event across the Asia-Pacific that attracted a large number of people—the Sydney Film Festival; and Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, which continues to go from strength to strength. But Sydney is only part of the State's appeal. Visitors to the regions also grew by 9.6 per cent, with international visitations to the Hunter Valley up by 14 per cent and visitations to the Blue Mountains up by 18 per cent. This is no surprise given that Destination NSW is focusing heavily on the regions, particularly with a strong events schedule.

We have events like the Deni Ute Muster, the Orange Food Week, the Hunter Valley Food and Wine Month and the Perisher Peak Festival. Later this year we will have the International Touch Football World Cup in Coffs Harbour. In the electorate of the Upper Hunter, where I was with the member recently, the Dungog Festival will be held from 22 to 25 October, with DJ Paul Mack heading up the festivities. In the main street there will be the Long Table Dinner; and, continuing the fantastic history that exists in that town, more than 18 films will be shown during the festival. On the South Coast is the XTERRA Asia-Pacific Championships in Jervis Bay; and through Newcastle, the Hunter Valley and Port Stephens is the Port to Port MTB mountain bike race.

Internationally, two important visitor markets have had record growth, with China up 24 per cent and India up 20 per cent. China remained the top international market for New South Wales, with almost 530,000 visitors over the past 12 months. This growth is set to continue. Just last month I signed a memorandum of understanding with China's largest online travel agency, Ctrip. This means that Sydney and New South Wales will now be promoted as Australia's premier tourism and events destination to 250 million people across China.

The SPEAKER: Order! I note the member for Coffs Harbour is distracting the Minister.

Mr STUART AYRES: I have no doubt that all those Chinese residents will be very interested in the World Rally Championships taking place in Coffs Harbour. But it is not only the events in New South Wales that are attractive; so are our skills. In fact, the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement is opening up significant opportunities for New South Wales tourism businesses. The tourism industry has become an incredibly strong exporter, but the Chinese market is very interested in our skills. With our unique natural assets, Australia is a highly attractive destination for tourism infrastructure investment, including in hotels, transport, restaurants, retail and major attractions.

The agreement also works the other way around: Australian tourism services providers will now receive guaranteed access to the growing tourism market within China under the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. For example, China has guaranteed that Australian service suppliers will be able to construct, renovate and operate wholly Australian-owned hotels and restaurants in China, showcasing our fantastic skills to the world. It has also guaranteed that Australian travel agencies and tour operators will be able to provide travel services, tours and hotel accommodation directly to domestic and foreign travellers in China.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr STUART AYRES: Just last week a united group representing tourism businesses from across Australia—including the Tourism and Transport Forum, the Australian Tourism Export Council and the

Accommodation Association of Australia—strongly condemned union campaigning against the agreement, saying it threatens the future success of our promising export industry. We on this side of the House are serious about developing tourism. We understand its importance and its value to the New South Wales economy. This is underpinned by a record budget from this Government, with an extra \$127.6 million over the next four years to attract more visitors to this State. We have an extensive events schedule, and our tourism continues to go from strength to strength. Tourism is an exciting growth industry that brings billions and billions of dollars and jobs to the State. We will continue to ensure, not only in metropolitan Sydney but also across the regions, that New South Wales remains the number one tourism destination in Australia.

M4 EAST TUNNEL

Ms JO HAYLEN: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning. Given the M4 East Tunnel planning application and environmental impact statement have been lodged with his department, will the Minister now commit to a public exhibition period of at least 60 days to give my local community a chance to have their voices heard?

Mr ROB STOKES: I thank the member for her question. I note that the environmental impact statement has been received—I understand it was received last Friday. I will now consider the request that has been made for a period of consultation in addition to the statutory requirement of 28 or 30 days. I think there is a strong argument for the provision of some additional consultation. I have already made that commitment. I am not going to commit today to the actual number of days as I will need to get some advice from the department. But I think there is a strong case to provide some additional time to allow proper consultation on what is a complex project. I look forward to providing the member for Summer Hill with some advice in the very near future.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr GARETH WARD: My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance, Services and Property. Will the Minister advise the House how this Government is driving down the cost of doing business in New South Wales, and will the Minister advise the House whether there are any alternative policies?

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I thank the member for Kiama for the question. What a great job the member is doing for the people of Kiama. He is doing so well they call him the "King of Kiama" and the "Sheik of Shellharbour". He puts the prince back into the Princes Highway. We all know the Liberals and The Nationals are the parties of opportunity, the parties of the worker and the true parties of a fair go.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. The member for Shellharbour will come to order. The member for Lakemba will come to order.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We are the true parties of a fair go because we do not just believe in a fair go for the unions; we believe in a fair go for everybody, and that includes businesses in New South Wales. What those opposite have never worked out is that you cannot be a worker if you cannot get a job. That is a tough one for the Opposition.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We understand that to be a worker you have to have a job, and that is why we on this side of the House have already created a quarter of a million jobs—and there are more

to come. That is why, over the past five years, the Baird-Grant Government has transformed New South Wales into the new State of doing business.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: As the Premier pointed out, jobs growth is now four times higher in New South Wales than it is in any other State.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We have ripped up red tape and regulation to the tune of \$815 million.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We have reduced workers compensation premiums by more than 17.5 per cent—

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: —whilst, at the same time, increasing benefits for injured workers in New South Wales.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We have cut the payroll tax burden with the Jobs Action Plan to encourage businesses to hire more people; and more than 90,000 businesses have done just that.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We have introduced the employment incentive scheme, with payroll tax rebates for small businesses, which are the engine room of our economy.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Maitland to order for the second time. The member will cease interjecting. I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time. I call the member for Cessnock to order for the first time. I place the member for Cessnock on three calls to order. I place the member for Kiama on three calls to order. They will cease arguing and shouting across the table.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We have rolled out Services NSW to make it simpler, faster and more convenient for businesses to access government transactions, anywhere, anytime—from Grafton to Gosford, from Coffs Harbour to Camden. We are rolling out Services NSW everywhere. We have fixed Labor's failed procurements processes, making it easier for businesses to work with government. We have established a \$190 million fund to attract new business from interstate and overseas. We have kickstarted an infrastructure revolution that is touching every single corner of this State—from Darling Harbour to Barangaroo, from the second harbour crossing to new sports stadiums, and from WestConnex to now even a new zoo, which will create even more jobs and add billions to the State's economy.

Now that business confidence is booming, now that the budget is back in the black and now that there are more jobs than ever, we are the leading economy in the nation. That is why every Australian now wants to call New South Wales home. We have seen how those opposite treat business when they get into power because the only business Labor knows is the business of debt, deficit and destruction. We have seen Labor in Queensland scrap payroll tax cuts because the unions wanted them to do it.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: We have seen Labor in Victoria paying \$1 billion not to build a road simply because the unions wanted them not to do it, and for 16 dark years here in New South Wales we saw the Labor Party do its very best to crush businesses in this State because the unions wanted them to do it. We saw Labor drown business in tax, with 10 new taxes. Labor increased taxes 21 times. We saw Labor strangle business with red tape and regulation, and we saw it choke business by opposing free trade agreements. Just a few months ago we saw Labor try to smash every business in this State with a \$5 billion tax bill, equating to a \$7,500 tax on every business in New South Wales. New South Wales Labor is the Miley Cyrus of economic policy, bringing a wrecking ball to every single business in this State.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. Whoever wrote that line should be sacked now.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Keira will cease interjecting.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: Whilst Labor is the wrecking ball, the Baird-Grant Government will continue to be the best friend that businesses have had in New South Wales.

Question time concluded at 3.32 p.m.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the Performance Audit Report entitled "Transferring Out-of-Home Care to Non-Government Organisations: Department of Family and Community Services", dated September 2015, received out of session on 2 September 2015 and authorised to be printed.

PARLIAMENTARY ETHICS ADVISER

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to clause 6 of the resolution of the House relating to the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser, a copy of correspondence from the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser enclosing advice provided to the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, former Premier, dated 8 September 2015.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON INVESTMENT, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Inquiry

Mr Anderson, as Chair, informed the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development had resolved to conduct an inquiry into the management of sharks and the economic impacts of shark attacks on communities in New South Wales, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Mr Michael Johnsen, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislative Review Digest No. 5/56", dated 8 September 2015, together with minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislative Review Digest No. 4/56, dated 25 August 2015.

Report ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Michael Johnsen.

PETITIONS

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

Edgecliff Railway Station and Interchange

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

Companion Animals on Public Transport

Petition requesting that companion animals be allowed to travel on all public transport, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Low-cost Housing and Homelessness

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

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

Petition requesting the banning of pig-dog hunting in New South Wales, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Plastic Bags Ban

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

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

Strathfield Girls High School

Petition requesting funding for a new school hall at Strathfield Girls High School, received from **Ms Jodi McKay**.

Rankine Street Car Park

Petition opposing the sale or lease of Rankine Street car park and its airspace, received from **Mrs Melinda Pavey**.

The Clerk announced that the following Ministers had lodged responses to petitions signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—Agency Protection Board—lodged 4 August 2015 (Mr Kevin Anderson)

The Hon. Duncan Gay—Frame Drive Bridge Closure—lodged 4 August 2015 (Mr Andrew Gee)

The Hon. Gabrielle Upton—Magistrates Early Referral Into Treatment Program—lodged 4 August 2015 (Mr Adam Marshall)

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli—Murrumbateman Primary School—lodged 5 August 2015 (Ms Pru Goward)

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Mike Baird, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.36 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is resolute in its commitment to restore integrity in public administration. We have zero tolerance for corruption in this State. Ensuring that the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] is fully equipped to fight corruption is a key priority for this Government. Earlier this year, in relation to an investigation of Ms Margaret Cunneen, SC, the High Court found that the definition of "corrupt conduct"—and therefore the ICAC's jurisdiction—is narrower than the ICAC had previously assumed. The court held that the ICAC can investigate the conduct of public officials when they are exercising public official functions. The ICAC can also investigate the conduct of any other person but only if the conduct could adversely affect the probity of the exercise of a public official's functions.

This Government acted promptly in responding to the High Court's judgement, and I acknowledge the Opposition's support at that time. In May Parliament passed the Independent Commission Against Corruption (Validation) Act 2015 to validate actions and findings of the ICAC before the date of the Cunneen judgement where they were based on the ICAC's previous understanding of its jurisdiction. The Government also commissioned an independent panel of distinguished legal minds to review the jurisdiction of the ICAC in light of the High Court's decision and to provide considered and expert guidance as to the best way forward.

The panel was appointed by the Governor on 27 May 2015. It comprised former High Court Chief Justice, the Hon. Murray Gleeson, AC, and eminent barrister Mr Bruce McClintock, SC, and I pay tribute to both of them for their considered work and considerable effort in putting this together. The panel made four formal recommendations for legislative reform. The Government accepts all of those recommendations, to be implemented in the bill. The panel did not support the broader definition of "corrupt conduct" proposed by the ICAC, nor did it consider that the ICAC's jurisdiction should be confined to the High Court's narrower definition. Rather, the panel proposed a "fresh approach".

It recommended that the existing definition of "corrupt conduct" in the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act remain but that it be supplemented by a new limb to include certain conduct by any person that could impair public confidence in public administration. This new limb will ensure that the ICAC can continue to investigate conduct such as collusive tendering for government contracts, fraudulently obtaining government mining leases and fraudulently obtaining or retaining employment or appointment as a public official. The Government strongly supports this recommendation. The bill implements it by inserting a new subsection (2A) in section 8 of the Act, which defines the "General nature of corrupt conduct".

The new subsection will enable the ICAC to investigate those specified matters even if they involve no wrongdoing or potential wrongdoing on the part of any public official but could nevertheless seriously undermine confidence in public administration. As the panel noted in its report, the nature of the matters listed "should be sufficient to indicate that the confidence referred to is not confined to faith in the

probity of individual public officials". The bill also makes minor amendments consequential on the proposed new section 8 (2A) and provides that the proposed subsection extend to conduct occurring before the commencement of these amendments.

In addition, an amendment is made to section 8 to clarify that people who seek public office—such as candidates for an election—may be engaged in corrupt conduct even if they do not succeed in being elected or appointed to public office. A candidate who accepts an unlawful payment in return for promising to do something once elected will clearly have engaged in "corrupt conduct", and this should be so whether or not they happen to subsequently be elected as a public official. The proposed amendment will make this clear. Reflecting the panel's second recommendation, the bill will also amend the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act to clarify the broad scope of the ICAC's advisory, educational and prevention functions. The panel recommended that these functions be amended so that they may be used generally for "promoting the integrity and good repute of public administration".

Although there has been a great deal of attention placed on the ICAC's investigations and especially its public hearings, in many respects its functions of supporting government agencies to avoid corruption risks should be seen as equally, if not more, important. Prevention of corruption before it occurs, including through appropriate advice, education and training, is clearly a better way of promoting public confidence in the integrity of our public institutions. The panel's third recommendation was that, if Parliament sees fit to do so, the ICAC be given a new jurisdiction to investigate breaches of electoral and lobbying laws. As the panel explained:

Many but not all breaches of [the electoral and lobbying laws] strike at the heart of the democratic process and for that reason have a connection with public administration that may be regarded as warranting special treatment.

This bill will implement that recommendation by inserting a new section 13A to give the ICAC the function of investigating conduct referred to it by the New South Wales Electoral Commission that may involve possible criminal offences under the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, the Election, Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 and/or the Lobbying of Government Officials Act 2011. These particular Acts were specified by the panel in its report. The Electoral Commission will only be able to refer such conduct to the ICAC for investigation if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the conduct may involve a possible criminal offence from a specified list of offences against these Acts or if the conduct is related to possible corrupt conduct that the ICAC is already investigating.

If either of those criteria is met, the Electoral Commission will have the discretion to refer the matter to the ICAC for investigation. In deciding whether to exercise that discretion, the Electoral Commission will be required to have regard to certain factors including, importantly, the fact that we expect that primary responsibility for investigating, enforcing and prosecuting breaches of the electoral and lobbying laws rests and will continue to rest with the Electoral Commission. I stress that it is not the Government's intention in any way to supersede or downgrade the Electoral Commission's own jurisdiction in respect of these laws. Last year, we legislated to reform the structure of the Electoral Commission, a change that included the appointment of the Hon. Keith Mason, AO, QC, as its independent chair.

The Government also provided \$1.37 million in additional funding for the reconstitution of the Electoral Commission, including funding to support the commission's enhanced enforcement function. The Government will continue to work with the Electoral Commission to ensure that it continues to have the resources necessary to enforce and prosecute breaches of the relevant legislation. However, there may be some circumstances where an investigation would particularly benefit from the resources, statutory powers and operational expertise of the ICAC. To this end, the bill lists certain offences against the electoral and lobbying laws that are so serious or systemic in nature that they have the potential to undermine public confidence in public administration or the electoral process generally.

In such cases, the Electoral Commission will be able to refer the matter to the ICAC, initially for preliminary investigation. If the preliminary investigation confirms that there have been possible criminal offences from the list of designated offences or that the conduct is related to possible corrupt conduct that the ICAC is already investigating, the ICAC will be authorised to undertake a full investigation. If not, it will refer the matter back to the Electoral Commission, unless it is otherwise authorised to investigate the conduct. In deciding whether or not to continue an investigation, the ICAC will be required to have regard to the same list of factors that the Electoral Commission must consider before referring a matter, including the Electoral Commission's primary responsibility for investigating, enforcing and prosecuting breaches of the relevant criminal offences and the serious or systemic nature of the matter being investigated.

So that the ICAC might complete and report on its investigations in operations Spicer and Credo—which were current when the Cunneen decision was handed down—the bill ensures that conduct that may involve possible criminal offences against the electoral or lobbying laws that is already under investigation in these matters is taken to have been referred to the ICAC. The panel's final recommendation was that the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act be amended so that the ICAC's power to make findings of corrupt conduct may be exercised only in the case of "serious corrupt conduct". As the panel explained:

If the conduct investigated ultimately is found to be other than serious it should not be stigmatised as corrupt. A power which has such obvious capacity to harm individuals should be reserved only for cases where the misconduct in question is serious.

The Government has adopted this recommendation. We are conscious that—as the High Court recognised in the *Independent Commission Against Corruption v Cunneen*—the ICAC has "extraordinary" powers which may abrogate fundamental rights and privileges. These powers, including the ability to publicly denounce corruption when it is uncovered, are central to the goal of ridding this State of corruption. However, it is also crucial to ensure that these powers are exercised within appropriate boundaries. A balance must be struck, and this is what this bill seeks to achieve. Finally, I note that the panel also considered the ICAC's power to initiate criminal prosecutions, although it did not make any formal recommendation in this regard.

The practice of the ICAC initiating criminal prosecutions on the recommendation of the Director of Public Prosecutions is longstanding and consistent with arrangements for other investigating authorities. However, as the panel indicated in its report, legislative amendments may be needed to confirm the continuation of this practice, particularly in respect of common law offences. This issue will likely have implications beyond the ICAC and will affect other investigating authorities and their relationship with the criminal justice process and the Department of Public Prosecutions. As such, it is intended that this matter will be dealt with separately and will address the issue not only for the ICAC but for all investigating authorities that may initiate criminal prosecutions in a similar way. I commend the bill to the House.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Wednesday 9 September 2015 to:

- (1) Provide for the following routine of business after the placing and disposal of business:

- (a) the moving and seconding of an Address to Her Majesty The Queen, after which the debate will be adjourned on motion;
 - (b) motion accorded priority;
 - (c) government business;
 - (d) private members' statements;
 - (e) matter of public importance; and
 - (f) the House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.
- (2) In relation to the Address to Her Majesty The Queen:
- (a) permit its consideration during government business; and
 - (b) provide for a speaking time limit of 10 minutes per member with no extension of time.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

State Economy

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) [3.45 p.m.]: There are three elements to my motion to be accorded priority: firstly, the latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics confirm New South Wales is the number one State to live, work and do business; secondly, the ANZ Stateometer shows New South Wales is extending its lead; and thirdly, an acknowledgement that only a Liberal-Nationals Government could restore confidence in this State's economy. Getting one's financial house in order is essential, whether it be a domestic home or a State government. Without a proper financial platform a government cannot provide hospitals, schools, roads, transport and other services that our communities need.

It is therefore essential that this House be provided with information on and debate the state of the New South Wales economy, including the position of New South Wales as the number one State to live, work and do business, that the ANZ Stateometer indicates that New South Wales is extending its lead over the other States, and how the Liberal-Nationals Government has restored confidence in the State's economy. It is important that business and consumer confidence in New South Wales is supported by this House because their confidence is so important to the economic performance of this State.

It is highly significant that the ANZ Stateometer shows that New South Wales is extending its lead because it is an important measure of economic performance across Australia's State and Territories. The key advantage of the ANZ Stateometer is that it synthesises a large volume of monthly data and allows for a timely pulse to be taken of economic activity across jurisdictions as well as easy interpretation of a large volume of data. It is an assessment of a State's economic progress over time and provides a relative comparison of State and Territory economic performances.

The motion is also of great importance and significance from our State's economic point of view because the results have been achieved before our economy has been stimulated by the proceeds of leasing the poles and wires, when public assets will be recycled to provide an unparalleled economic stimulus to New South Wales. It is important for the citizens of this State to understand what it means to have a Coalition Government for 4½ years and the benefits that a non-Labor government can bring to our

State and its economy. It is for those important reasons that I encourage members to accord my motion priority.

Learning Management and Business Reform Program

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [3.48 p.m.]: My motion deserves to be accorded priority because the taxpayers of New South Wales and the staff, students and parents of public schools and TAFE campuses in particular deserve to know how much the Learning Management and Business Reform [LMBR] program will cost them. They deserve to know which capital projects the Minister plans to cancel and which services and how many staff will be lost. The Government must explain how much longer schools in this State will need to endure the cost of \$573 million for a system that does not work. In five years the system has gone from what the Auditor-General described as "well managed" to an unmitigated disaster, with a cost blowout from here as far as the eye can see. Only 229 schools are using the system so far. That means it has cost \$2.1 million per school, and there are 1,800 schools to go.

Last week the Minister revealed that he knows how much the system is going to cost but refused to divulge the figure. This House should call on the Premier to demand that the Minister shows respect to the people of New South Wales and reveals that cost. Many members will have heard from constituents about the disastrous consequences of the failed IT system—from schools failing to pay bills on time to being forced to source school supplies from opposite sides of the State, which affects local businesses and economies. Schools have had their utilities cut off, debt collectors at the door and staff depart or take stress leave because the system has made their lives so difficult. In addition, thousands of TAFE students are unable to enrol in their chosen classes. The department said it was going to fix it. That has clearly not happened.

We have now heard from the Treasurer that there will be no supplementary funding; the department will be forced to find savings of at least \$400 million from within the system. That means less maintenance, fewer new projects and less money for the business of education. The \$573 million that has already been spent on the project could have built 20 new schools. Will the final cost be \$1 billion? The motion deserves priority because the Minister, Premier and Treasurer must explain to the House and the people of the State how much they are willing to spend on an IT system rollout that is making the lives of staff and students more difficult. Members opposite may think that nobody will hear this contribution, but it will remain on *Hansard* for all time. The program is supposed to be rolled out by 2017, when the Commonwealth will withdraw its funds for Gonski. There is a crisis looming and everyone in this room knows it. There will be leaking roofs— [Time expired.]

Question—That the motion of the member for Ku-ring-gai be accorded priority—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 46

Mr Anderson
Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Mr Barilaro
Ms Berejiklian
Mr Brookes
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Coure
Mr Crouch
Mr Dominello

Mr Grant
Mr Gulaptis
Mr Hazzard
Mr Henskens
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Humphries
Mr Johnsen
Dr Lee
Mr Maguire
Mr Marshall
Mr Notley-Smith

Mr Provest
Mr Rowell
Mr Sidoti
Mr Speakman
Mr Stokes
Mr Taylor
Mr Toole
Mr Tudehope
Ms Upton
Mr Ward
Mr Williams

Mr Elliott
Mr Fraser
Mr Gee
Ms Gibbons
Ms Goward

Mr O'Dea
Mrs Pavey
Mr Perrottet
Ms Petinos
Mr Piccoli

Mrs Williams

Tellers,
Mr Bromhead
Mr Patterson

Noes, 36

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

Mr Harris
Ms Harrison
Ms Haylen
Mr Hoenig
Ms Hornery
Mr Kamper
Ms Leong
Mr Lynch
Ms McKay
Mr Mehan
Ms Mihailuk
Mr Minns
Mr Park

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

Tellers,
Mr Lalich
Mr Warren

Pairs

Mr Baird
Mr Kean
Mr Roberts

Mr Foley
Ms Hay
Dr McDermott

Question resolved in the affirmative.

QUESTION TIME: SUPPLEMENTARY ANSWERS

M4 EAST TUNNEL

Mr ROB STOKES: Earlier, in question time, the member for Summer Hill asked me a question about WestConnex. I can confirm, having received advice from the department, as foreshadowed in my earlier answer, that the New South Wales Government will extend the WestConnex M4 East public exhibition period to ensure the community has sufficient time to provide feedback on the environmental impact statement [EIS]. The WestConnex M4 East EIS will be on extended public exhibition for comment from 9 September for 45 days, exceeding the normal 30 day exhibition period required under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

The Department of Planning and Environment is keen to hear the views of the community on the application, which seeks approval for road upgrades, tunnel construction and associated works. To make a submission or to view the EIS, I advise members of the House and the community to visit majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au. Written submissions can also be made to the department. The EIS

will also be available to view in person at a variety of convenient locations.

Pursuant to sessional order government business proceeded with.

STATE ECONOMY

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [4.01 p.m.]: I seek leave to permit the consideration of the motion accorded priority after 4.00 p.m.

Leave not granted.

Pursuant to sessional order motion lapsed.

PROPERTY, STOCK AND BUSINESS AGENTS AMENDMENT (UNDERQUOTING PROHIBITION) BILL 2015

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Victor Dominello, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) [4.03 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Property, Stock and Business Agents Amendment (Underquoting Prohibition) Bill 2015. On 7 March 2015 the Premier announced that a re-elected Liberal-Nationals Government would reform the law in relation to real estate underquoting to better reflect community expectations. The bill I am introducing today gives effect to this commitment. The real estate industry is an integral and important sector of our economy and our community and the overwhelming majority of real estate agents act professionally and honestly.

This reform is part of a package of broader reforms that we are working on with the real estate industry to drive higher standards and greater professionalism. As a first step, a real estate and property division has been established within NSW Fair Trading with a dedicated Assistant Commissioner, who is leading the work on increasing professional standards among real estate agents through an industry reference group. This specialist area within Fair Trading will help the Government to provide a comprehensive and cohesive approach to real estate matters and deal quickly and effectively with current and emerging industry issues.

Key industry stakeholders such as the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales [REINSW], the Estate Agents Co-operative [EAC], and the Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association [ALPA] have been engaged throughout the process and provided input and advice in the development of these reforms. I thank the REINSW, the EAC and ALPA for their valuable contributions. We will continue to work with these peak bodies, through their involvement on the reference group, to conduct a thorough review of training standards across the industry, and to raise the standard in complaints handling, compliance audits and management of trust accounts. We are also looking at ways to strengthen protections for buyers against rogue property spruikers and possible options to reduce duplication in the purchasing of building and pest inspection reports.

In relation to underquoting, the provisions of this bill will provide NSW Fair Trading with the necessary powers to crack down on those members of the industry who are lowering public confidence

and integrity of the whole industry by not doing the right thing. Underquoting occurs when an agent provides a price guide to a prospective purchaser that is not the estimated selling price stated in the agreement with the vendor. While the provisions of the current Act prohibit this practice, they lack rigour and have an unnecessarily high evidentiary burden, which makes it difficult to prosecute the offence. Indeed, there has been no successful prosecution under the Act since its inception 13 years ago.

This bill addresses these outstanding concerns by providing clarity about when underquoting occurs and giving force to the offence provisions, increasing consumer certainty and ensuring agents know their obligations. Buying a property is one of the biggest financial decisions most people will ever make. Consumers rightfully expect that when they turn up on auction day—having conducted their due diligence on the property—they are operating in a fair and equitable marketplace. The surging property market and high sales prices, particularly in Sydney, have led to confusion and scepticism among consumers about the accuracy of advertised property prices.

While it is not possible, nor desirable, to curtail the market forces that are driving increasing sale prices for vendors, deliberate underquoting is a grossly unfair and unethical practice. It gives potential purchasers an unrealistic impression that a property might be in their price range. This is a costly exercise. If a property price guide is artificially low, people spend money on building and pest inspection reports or strata reports, believing the property is in their price range. Estimates of the total costs involved range from \$250 to more than \$1,000 per property; and if this happens to the same people for a number of properties these costs can mount up.

The amendments in this bill will strengthen provisions contained within the Act to prohibit the practice of underquoting—sending a clear message to all industry participants. The bill does this by: requiring agents to provide evidence of their estimated selling price to the vendor, and this estimate must be stated in the agency agreement; requiring that the estimated selling price must be based on reasonable grounds and must be updated during the sales campaign if market circumstances change; providing that an agent cannot quote a price that is less than the estimated selling price provided in the agency agreement when marketing a property; prohibiting advertisements and representations that say "offers above " or "offers over" or any similar statement; and requiring that agents keep records of prices quoted on a property, verbally or in writing. The reforms include penalties of up to \$22,000 plus forfeiture of any commission or fees from the sale.

I will now talk through the amendments in some detail. The estimated selling price must be included in the agreement and must be based on evidence, which must be provided to the vendor when the agency agreement is entered into. This can be a single price, or a price range; however, if an agent uses a price range, the upper end of the range cannot exceed the lower end by more than 10 per cent. It will be illegal for agents to advertise or market a property for a price that is less than the estimated selling price in the vendor agency agreement. If the estimated selling price is a price range, the advertised price cannot be less than the lower price in the price range. In addition, words like "offers over" or "offers above" or anything similar, such as a plus symbol, will not be allowed.

During consultation on the draft bill, the Government considered requiring that the price in agency agreements and property advertisements be exactly the same. However, feedback from consultation was that this would unnecessarily curtail the rights of the vendor and that the aims of the bill could be achieved by requiring the price to be not less than the estimated selling price. This means that if a vendor wants to pursue a higher price for a property, it can be advertised for a price above the estimate in the vendor agency agreement. This is because the aim of the reforms is to prohibit the practice of underquoting—luring in potential buyers by advertising a lower price than the estimate. The objective of the reforms is therefore met by ensuring that the advertised and quoted price is not lower than the one that the agent has based on evidence from the market and that is contained in the agency agreement.

To enable effective compliance monitoring for the new measures, the changes will introduce strict liability—that is, NSW Fair Trading will not have to show that the agent intended to underquote. It will

simply be a matter of comparing the price in the agency agreement to that in any advertisement or given verbally to prospective clients. This will remove the difficulties with pursuing prosecution for an offence under the current provisions. Agents will need to keep written records of any verbal price estimates given to potential sellers or buyers, providing clear evidence of any estimates offered. A property can be on the market for some time, and in that time the estimated selling price can change. If there are grounds for revising the estimated selling price, the agent will have to notify the vendor and update the vendor agreement.

Agents will also be obliged to take all reasonable steps to update any marketing material to ensure it is consistent with the vendor agreement. This obligation is a crucial element of the package. It provides the impetus to ensure that the estimated selling price remains accurate. Reasonable grounds for revising the estimated selling price would be, for example, if sales or auction results for similar properties in a certain area have increased since marketing a property. These results would have a direct flow-on effect on the value of other properties in the same area that are still on the market. As per the requirement when entering into the agency agreement with the vendor initially, agents will also need to substantiate what they believe a property may be worth by providing a vendor with evidence, such as comparable selling price data for similar properties.

Good practice regarding the revision of estimated selling prices will be clarified in updated underquoting guidelines that will be developed by Fair Trading. Agents will face fines of up to \$22,000 for failing to comply with the new laws. In addition to fines, if agents are found guilty of an offence, they may also have to forfeit their commission and fees. This money will be paid into the Property Services Compensation Fund, managed by Fair Trading. The compensation fund was established to help people who find themselves out of pocket as a result of their dealings with an agent and other licensees under the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act. Fair Trading will also establish an underquoting hotline so that members of the public can make complaints and provide tip-offs for Fair Trading to investigate.

Once the measures in the bill have been passed by Parliament, the Government will undertake further industry consultation on supporting regulations and revised underquoting guidelines. The Government plans to complete the consultation process later this year so that the industry and Government will be fully prepared for the implementation of the new laws at the beginning of 2016. I emphasise that these new measures are not designed to stifle what is a very hot property market. Nor will they stop a property selling beyond its advertised price if competition is fierce. Anyone who has been to a recent auction for residential property probably has seen firsthand how competitive that environment can be. Fundamentally, the new underquoting laws are about transparency, accountability and disclosure of accurate information. They are also about creating a fair and level playing field for everyone.

Agents have access to comparable sales and should be in an informed position to provide an accurate market appraisal based on the current market values. They also have details or lists of potential buyers with whom they may have dealt. The experience and knowledge of agents places them at a distinct advantage in their dealings with vendors and purchasers. As the selling agent is the agent of the vendor, purchasers need to understand that the agent is acting for the vendor and promoting their interests. In a hot property market, properties will often be sold for prices that exceed the best estimate of the selling price that the agent could possibly have foreseen. These reforms will not and should not try to curtail the market.

The aim of the reforms is to stamp out the dishonest practice of price-baiting, where potential purchasers are led to believe that the property will go for much less than the true estimate by the agent. An important part of this reform will be an extensive information and education campaign for both agents and consumers. An educated marketplace will help to ensure that potential purchasers know their rights and the responsibilities of agents, and will assist agents to ensure that they comply with the laws. The new underquoting legislation will go a long way towards improving confidence among home buyers. The Government will continue to work with the industry to maintain high professional standards across the State.

The Government has worked hard to ensure that the measures in the bill strike an appropriate and reasonable balance between protecting consumers while minimising the degree of regulatory intervention. I thank the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, MLC, former Minister for Fair Trading, who did an outstanding job championing these reforms ahead of the last State election. I thank Commissioner for Fair Trading Rod Stowe and Assistant Commissioner Andrew Gavrielatos, as well as officers from Fair Trading Rhys Bollen, Gabbie Mangos, Warren McAllister, and my policy director, Jane Standish, for their outstanding efforts in developing this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Motion Accorded Priority

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [4.16 p.m.]:
I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to permit the resumption of the debate on the motion accorded priority forthwith.

Question put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 42

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

Mr Gulaptis
Mr Hazzard
Mr Henskens
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Johnsen
Dr Lee
Mr Maguire
Mr Marshall
Mr Notley-Smith
Mr O'Dea
Mrs Pavey
Mr Perrottet
Ms Petinos
Mr Provest
Mr Roberts

Mr Sidoti
Mr Speakman
Mr Stokes
Mr Taylor
Mr Toole
Mr Tudehope
Ms Upton
Mr Ward
Mr Williams
Mrs Williams

Tellers,
Mr Bromhead
Mr Patterson

Noes, 34

Ms Aitchison
Mr Atalla
Mr Barr
Ms Burney
Ms Car

Mr Harris
Ms Harrison
Ms Haylen
Ms Hornery
Mr Kamper

Mr Parker
Mr Piper
Mr Robertson
Ms K. Smith
Ms T. F. Smith

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

Ms Leong
Mr Lynch
Ms McKay
Mr Mehan
Ms Mihailuk
Mr Minns
Mr Park

Ms Washington
Ms Watson
Mr Zangari

Tellers,
Mr Hoenig
Mr Lalich

Pairs

Mr Baird
Mrs Davies
Mr Grant
Mr Piccoli

Mr Foley
Ms Hay
Dr McDermott
Mr Warren

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I welcome to the gallery this afternoon the former member for Miranda Barry Collier.

STATE ECONOMY

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) [4.23 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures have confirmed New South Wales as the number one State to live, work and do business.
- (2) Notes that last week's ANZ Stateometer shows New South Wales is extending its lead.
- (3) Acknowledges that it has taken a Liberal and Nationals Government to restore confidence in the State's economy.

I am pleased to inform the House that recent economic data has confirmed that the New South Wales economy is powering ahead of the other States and is extending its lead. In fact, the New South Wales Government could be described as being to the Australian economy what Usain Bolt is to the 100-metre sprint. Whilst there are economic challenges nationally, New South Wales keeps getting stronger and stronger. In the first piece of good news, I am proud to update the House on the latest gross domestic product [GDP] figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS]. New South Wales is continuing to prop up the rest of the nation amid the post-mining boom transition. A phenomenal 83.5 per cent of the growth in Australian's domestic spending on goods and services came from New South Wales.

For 10 consecutive quarters, our domestic spending has grown faster than the national average. Taking out New South Wales, domestic demand for the rest of Australia grew by just 0.3 per cent through

the year to the June quarter. New South Wales domestic demand grew by 3.3 per cent, compared to a national average of 1.2 per cent through the year to the June quarter. While other State economies are struggling to keep their heads above water, our economy is keeping the nation afloat, and those achievements have been reached without any proceeds from the leasing of electricity poles and wires.

We know this has not happened by accident; it has happened through 4½ years of hard work, strong policies and putting the community first. With its inaugural Stateometer released last week, ANZ offered further confirmation that New South Wales is outperforming the rest of the nation. Thanks to the strength of our economy, consumers in New South Wales are feeling more confident. We are ahead of the pack on retail sales growth. The latest ABS figures show retail sales in New South Wales grew at the fastest rate in the nation through the year to July, and New South Wales has stayed above the national average for 24 consecutive months.

Not only is our economy number one; New South Wales is the best State in which to live, work and do business. The proof of that is in industrial dispute figures from the ABS, which show they remain near record lows in New South Wales. Only 0.7 days were lost to strikes for every 1,000 workers in the June quarter. Compare that to the shockingly high level of industrial disputes when those opposite were in government. I am sure that Victorians must be rueing the election of a Labor Government in their State as the Andrews Government plunges Victoria into strike after strike. During Labor's 16 years in office in New South Wales, on average more than 51 days were lost for every 1,000 workers each year. Let us not forget that for a decade under a Labor Government New South Wales had the lowest employment growth of any mainland State.

In yet another sign of our economic momentum, housing approvals have reached record highs in New South Wales. In the 12 months to July there were 61,057 building approvals in New South Wales—the highest level in more than 41 years and 64.5 per cent above the decade average. This is positive for those who want to enter the housing market, as increased supply means downward pressure on prices. When we look at all those facts and figures separately, they are obviously encouraging and exciting. None of these achievements were within the capacity of the former Labor Government. Time and again, Liberal-Nationals governments are required to clean up a huge mess left behind by those opposite. Only Liberal-Nationals governments are capable of properly managing the economy in hard times as well as good. [*Time expired.*]

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [4.28 p.m.]: These motions, which compare States against States, fail to take into account the inherent characteristics of a State's economy. But, more significantly than that for us in this place and for those who watch and rate the performances of governments, they fail to consider, analyse or address the levers that governments could pull—but do not pull—to get their States moving. On 18 November last year, when this House was discussing CommSec's State of the States report, I said this:

Unlike the economies of other States, the New South Wales economy does not bounce around; it does not have the boom-bust cyclical factors that attend a mining boom, for example—which we see with Queensland and Western Australia, off the growth of mining booms streaking forward and then having huge corrections such as are now happening to those States. CommSec's State of the States report compares a limited number of factors in State economies. I have always said that the New South Wales economy has always been strong; it has always had a strong services-based sector; it has always had, and still has, strong manufacturing—despite the difficulties that a very high Australian dollar has brought. New South Wales has always had steady growth, and has always had an unemployment trend that is comparable with trends in the rest of the country—except for the past four years, when unemployment has increased by almost 1 per cent.

Not much has changed, except for the fact that since I spoke last year unemployment in this State has worsened. The fact is that the State economy is now benefitting from factors for which Mike Baird can

take absolutely no credit. Mike Baird and the New South Wales Government should thank the Reserve Bank of Australia for record low interest rates, because that is what is driving the investment and housing sector. Pent-up demand, coming out of the global financial crisis, for residential and commercial property is also driving the stamp duty boom in New South Wales. Foreign investment decisions in other countries, particularly China, have meant that a lot of middle-class people in China who want to invest their money are not investing it in China; they are investing it in residential and commercial real estate, particularly in Sydney. Another factor that the New South Wales Baird Government cannot take credit for is the population growth.

One of the things that the State of the States report does not look at in isolation—but which it should—is jobs. Do not tell me that one of the criteria of a State Government doing its job well is not its ability to get its people into work. The fact is that in March 2011, when the Coalition Government came to power in New South Wales, there were 183,000 people unemployed. There are now 229,900 people unemployed in this State; that is, 46,900 more people out of work today than there were in this State just over four years ago. Some of the employment statistics, looked at in isolation, are scary. On the Central Coast the employment figure is now 7 per cent; in Blacktown 8.4 per cent; in Parramatta 8.4 per cent; and a whopping 11.5 per cent in the Hunter Valley, excluding Newcastle. On the mid North Coast unemployment is 10.9 per cent.

When we look at youth unemployment, we know that this Government has been negligent in getting youth into work. Unemployment on the Central Coast is at 14.9 per cent. It is 13.3 per cent in Blacktown; 14.5 per cent in outer Western Sydney; a whopping 19.1 per cent in the Far West and Orana; 20 per cent for the Hunter Valley, excluding Newcastle; 20 per cent for New England and north-west; and 14.9 per cent for the Southern Highlands and the Shoalhaven. One of the reasons for those statistics is that the Government has been hugely negligent in failing to expend its capital expenditure budget over the past four years.

Four years ago, Mike Baird promised in his first budget to spend a record, he said, \$62.5 billion in infrastructure over four years. In fact, he failed to spend almost \$6 billion of that money. Every dollar that a government does not spend in infrastructure and capital expenditure means that jobs go begging. What the Stateometer and the State of the States report should look at—but fails to—are the measures that a government can take to get people into work and to make the State's economy stronger. But this Government has not done that. Another thing that this Government has done is gut TAFE, with 85,000 fewer students. If you are looking for a job or you have lost your job, Mike Baird is not your friend.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) [4.33 p.m.]: Mr Deputy-Speaker—

Mr John Barilaro: Tell us the good news in Terrigal.

Mr ADAM CROUCH: It is always good news in Terrigal. I commend the motion accorded priority moved by the member for Ku-ring-gai. I draw an analogy: The New South Wales economy is the Usain Bolt of the economies of Australia, while those opposite are the guy on the segway who tried to bring Usain down. They are just not interested in the State's economy. For 16 years they delivered deficit after deficit, failure after failure. How can they sit opposite with straight faces and try to lecture this Government on how to run an economy? The ANZ Stateometer, a new indicator of economic activity for all Australian States, announced on 1 September 2015 that New South Wales is yet again outperforming all other States in Australia. I am pleased to inform the House that the economic data has confirmed that the New South Wales economy is powering ahead, and this Government is about extending that lead. This is great news for the people of New South Wales.

I am proud to update the House on the latest gross domestic product figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A phenomenal 83.5 per cent of the growth in Australia's domestic spending on goods and services—outlined by the Premier this afternoon in question time—is coming from New South Wales. For the third consecutive month, New South Wales had the strongest retail trade figures of all States; and

it has topped the chart in 11 of the past 13 months. The strongest jobs growth in this country, low rates of strikes and moderate public wage rises bode well for strong economic growth in New South Wales. The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that New South Wales retail sales are growing at an impressive rate not enjoyed by those elsewhere in the country, staying above the national average for 24 consecutive months.

While other State economies are struggling to keep their heads above water, the New South Wales economy is keeping the national economy afloat. New South Wales has a beaming Minister for Planning. In the 12 months to July there were 61,057 building approvals in this State. That is the highest result in more than 41 years, and it is 64.5 per cent above the decade average. This is positive news for those wanting to enter the housing market, as increased supply means downward pressure on prices. But all the facts combine to create a larger picture of New South Wales as the economic powerhouse of this nation. We know challenges lie ahead and that there is more to be done, but when we look closely and plan well there is good news for our great State. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) [4.36 p.m.]: What would a parliamentary sitting day be without the same old tired question giving another opportunity to repeat old lines, another opportunity to replay old slogans, and another waste of time? The only beneficiary is the Liberals-Nationals' parliamentary political vanity. Today we heard more of this verbal vanity, wasting parliamentary sitting time, rather than focusing on the issues that need to be addressed to ensure that New South Wales can meet the economic challenges that will have to be faced for decades. There will be times of economic strain for thousands of people in this great State. This Liberal-Nationals Government has turned the New South Wales economy into a casino economy, with all the bets being on an overheated housing market. The Liberal-Nationals are betting our future economy on the housing market roulette, blinded to the risks ahead, crossing their fingers and hoping that it will all turn out all right.

We have all too often seen how the short-term, risky, backward economic behaviour story plays out. As families across this State have their lives ruined through gambling addiction, somebody will be left to pick up the pieces when the economy slows down and the money runs out. The Liberal-Nationals are indeed the great economic visionaries—but their eyes are in the back of their head. Under this Liberal-Nationals Government, New South Wales has an economy that is reliant on the housing boom continuing for many years to come. But, of course, the warning signs are there already, and the good times will not last. Government members talk about making New South Wales number one. Let me give them another fact and another figure. We are currently ranked fifth in terms of expected economic growth—not first, as this Liberal-Nationals Government's political spin machine would have us believe. When it comes to this State's economic future, that is a fact Government members conveniently omit.

Government members like to talk about making New South Wales number one again. Just like the gambler in denial, the truth is somewhat different. The New South Wales 10-year average unemployment rate was just over 5 per cent but it is currently at 6 per cent, with tens of thousands more people struggling to pay their bills. The average unemployment rate under the Baird Liberal-Nationals Government since April 2014 is no better, also at around 6 per cent, with tens of thousands more people wondering where their next pay cheque will come from. For our young people, the unemployment rate is more than double. They are losing hope in the future under this Government, which has no concern or care for their wellbeing.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) [4.39 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Terrigal for his contribution to the debate but I cannot say the same about the contributions of the member for Maroubra and the member for Macquarie Fields. I expected the member for Macquarie Fields, a graduate of the London School of Economics, to make a finer economic contribution to the debate. The member for Maroubra and the member for Macquarie Fields seem to have economic amnesia. They say that the economy is doing so well because of the current property boom. They seem to have forgotten that there was a fairly significant property boom from 1996 until 2010. But what did they do with it? There was no investment in infrastructure or in the New South Wales economy. Labor squandered all the stamp duty

revenue from that significant property boom.

Mr Ryan Park: Have you heard of a thing called the GFC?

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The GFC?

Mr Ryan Park: Yes.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The global financial crisis [GFC] was from 1996 to 2008 apparently.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Keira will come to order. The member for Ku-ring-gai will be heard in silence.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: Not only does the member for Keira have amnesia; now he is dreaming. He is like a character from *The Castle*: He is making it up as he goes along. Anyone seeking to sledge should do better than that. The member for Macquarie Fields began by saying that the motion is a waste of time, while the member for Maroubra insisted on deferring the debate, requiring a division and wasting the valuable time of this House. Again, that is selective amnesia. The real problem is that members opposite do not understand the importance of growth to creating jobs.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order. He has made his contribution to the debate.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: The New South Wales economy has the strongest growth in Australia, which must be great for jobs in this State. [*Time expired.*]

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

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to resolution Government business proceeded with.

JOBS FOR NSW BILL 2015

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 26 August 2015.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [4.44 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. It is a complex bill—unbelievably important—and I will shortly deal with it in detail. I will lay on the table of the House a comparison of how the bill could have been drafted, because members on this side have done some work in this area. The Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 establishes the Jobs for NSW Board and Jobs for NSW Fund. Membership of the board will be part time and members must have demonstrated commercial acumen and knowledge of, and senior business experience in, growing jobs and improving industry competitiveness. That clearly rules out any Government members from holding positions on the board. As part of its functions, Jobs for NSW will advise the Minister on opportunities for developing the New South Wales economy, identify opportunities to attract new businesses, provide support for economic development, assess proposals and make recommendations and provide advice about employment matters.

The board is to provide an annual report of its activities, which will be fantastic. Under the legislation the Minister will have the power to appoint advisory committees to advise Jobs for NSW. We will have about 15 layers of bureaucracy but we will get there in the end. The Opposition does not oppose the bill. I state at the outset that its introduction is timely. Indeed, the shadow Minister, the member for

Shellharbour, the member for Wollongong, my Federal colleagues the member for Cunningham and the member for Throsby and I released on Friday a detailed 10-point plan about government responses and real action on how we support jobs in the third largest economy in New South Wales—the Illawarra—as it faces some of the challenges outlined in this bill.

I will now go through the bill and provide the context in which we have responded in a practical manner in advance of the bill's introduction. The bill refers to strategically targeted support for economic development in New South Wales. An important thing the State Government can do to encourage economic development, as outlined in the bill, is bring forward some of the key infrastructure projects that Labor members in the Illawarra have advocated for. This is a timely way to boost, support and retain jobs in the Illawarra region. The bill seeks to develop job-generating strategies and proposals, while our proposal, which I will lay on the table, highlights 10 strategies. We also refer to infrastructure projects. Functions of Jobs for NSW include providing advice and employment matters related to carrying out its functions. We believe a Western Sydney economic and jobs task force should be established in the Illawarra to develop long-term partnerships between Western Sydney and the Illawarra, particularly in light of the construction of the new airport in Western Sydney.

The bill refers to calls for proposals for which job creation incentives may be granted under the legislation. The Opposition's proposal highlights the need to develop a streamlined and rapid response process in relation to development applications that are generating employment in the Illawarra region. We know that most councils, including Wollongong, struggle with large- and medium-scale development applications that often are not dealt with in a timely manner because of a lack of resources. We believe, as outlined in the bill, that this is an opportunity to expedite and resource some of those areas. The bill also talks about providing advice about advisory services in New South Wales. The Opposition's proposal refers to the immediate expansion of further education places and training for the men and women who are transitioning from the heavy manufacturing and mining industries, in particular, to other industries within the region that the member for Shellharbour, the member for Wollongong, our Federal colleagues and I represent.

The bill refers to assessing any proposals that are job generating according to the eligibility and assessment criteria approved from time to time for that purpose by the Minister. Approximately two years ago the \$100 million Illawarra Infrastructure Fund was formally announced and projects were approved, but very little of that money has been spent. My colleague the shadow Treasurer has outlined on many occasions his concerns about this Government's lack of capital spending and its failure to spend budget moneys. This means that positions are not being filled and opportunities are not being delivered. The bill refers to the preparation and recommendation to the Minister for approval for eligibility of incentives and assessment proposals and also developing a strategy to deliver cost-effective and targeted support, and expanding the competitive advantage.

The Opposition believes one of our competitive advantages is the amount of industrial land that is owned by BlueScope Steel. Yesterday I attended a detailed roundtable discussion at which BlueScope representatives said that one of the challenges the company faces in off-loading its land is that it is not serviced. Servicing industrial lands creates a very strong competitive advantage and is important for companies in deciding whether to relocate to our region. Our document, which I will lay on the table, aligns very closely with the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. The Opposition will not stand in the way of any proposal in relation to creating jobs in New South Wales. Yesterday the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy gave us a commitment to look at our proposal in a bipartisan way. We believe our 10-point plan is strong and aligns very closely with the bill.

I commend my parliamentary colleagues the member for Shellharbour, the member for Wollongong, the shadow Treasurer and my Federal colleagues for joining me last Friday to make this important announcement. The Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 should be seen as one component of the solution and the Opposition's proposal—particularly for the Illawarra region that we represent, which is facing great economic challenges and great uncertainty at present—complements the bill. I encourage the

Minister to consider our proposal in the spirit of bipartisanship. We must use our time in this place to advance the opportunities of men and women, particularly in regions like the Illawarra, who are facing great economic challenges.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [4.55 p.m.]: I support the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 and commend the Government for its strong commitment to regional development and sustainable jobs growth. This bill is about growing the whole State and includes a dedicated focus on job creation opportunities for regional and rural communities. I welcome the impassioned plea by the member for Keira but remind him that this bill refers to jobs for New South Wales. That includes the Illawarra, Sydney, Tamworth, Bathurst and the whole of the State, so I ask him to look beyond the horizon. This Government is doing the right thing, as indicated by our ranking as the number one State, under the careful guiding hands of Premier Mike Baird.

A minimum of 30 per cent of all payments made from the Jobs for NSW Fund for job creation incentives will be for proposals in rural and regional New South Wales. I urge regional New South Wales businesses and business leaders to get behind Jobs for NSW. Jobs for NSW may recommend approval for more proposals for job creation incentives in rural and regional New South Wales. Jobs for NSW will advise on major opportunities for and impediments to growth in rural and regional areas. Specifically, it will advise the New South Wales Government on how regional areas can expand job creation initiatives and improve their competitive advantage. Jobs for NSW will comprise seven members, known as the Jobs for NSW Board, who will be largely drawn from the private sector. The board will include eminent business leaders with substantial commercial acumen. One of Australia's most respected business leaders, Mr David Thodey, will be the Jobs for NSW chairperson.

Jobs for NSW is critical to rural and regional New South Wales and comes on the back of a number of very effective programs that have continued to assist economic development and growth in those areas. One success story is Thomas Foods International, Tamworth, which is Australia's largest 100 per cent family owned meat processing company. Through a recent joint venture Thomas Foods was the recipient of a \$25 million upgrade to help it to become one of the world's most advanced small stock processing plants. Significantly, this joint investment will create approximately 200 extra jobs and inject more than \$70 million over the next five years. Thomas Foods currently employs close to 400 people and its expansion will have a significant multiplier effect in the Tamworth electorate, the greater New South Wales region and, indeed, the State. That is on the back of the regional investment fund, which has now become part of Jobs for NSW. Some great work has been done already in rural and regional New South Wales. Improvements to the Thomas Foods plant in Tamworth include plant processing, packaging and refrigeration facilities, and will eventually lift production to 11,000 lambs daily. That is an astounding level of production in a major regional city such as Tamworth.

Through Jobs for NSW we will continue to strengthen our economy by investing in industry and creating jobs at an unprecedented level. The new private sector led organisation is charged with taking a strategic approach to developing the competitive advantages of the New South Wales economy, then attracting, developing and consolidating new and existing businesses and strengthening our economic leadership and competitive advantage. The main objective of Jobs for NSW is to help the Government deliver 150,000 new jobs by 2019, and to drive jobs and economic growth in a strategic and proactive way. The Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 will complement the other Government initiatives that I mentioned earlier. They include the successful \$5,000 Jobs Action Plan payroll tax rebates, which will be extended until June 2019; the \$2,000 small business employment incentive, which rewards small businesses for every additional employee they take on; and the new \$25 million Jobs of Tomorrow Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships for students undertaking qualifications in technology and growth areas.

The Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 will also establish the Jobs for NSW Fund, which will be a dedicated source of funding for targeted job creation initiatives and programs. The fund will deliver on the Government's election commitment to boost funding for the Investment Attraction Scheme to \$190 million. A minimum of 30 per cent of fund payments for job creation incentives will be provided for proposals in

regional and rural New South Wales. To grow rural and regional New South Wales we need only open the door and provide the opportunity. We want to create incentives for businesses to start up or relocate to regional New South Wales and provide a vast range of employment opportunities. As I said, Jobs for NSW will advise on major opportunities for and impediments to jobs growth in rural and regional areas. In doing so, Jobs for NSW will support how the State adapts to changes in the global economy and seizes jobs growth opportunities in the future. The eminent business leaders on the Jobs for NSW Board will be able to draw on a vast array of experience and business acumen to make sustainable decisions that will deliver growth in regional New South Wales.

We want to ensure that Jobs for NSW sets the new benchmark. Gone are the days of corporate welfare, when we propped up some businesses only to find that they were receiving funding from other organisations and avenues. We will ensure that we are focused on providing the very best for people in rural and regional areas. There is no doubt that the bill will help us drive jobs creation. The bill is great news for regional communities and demonstrates the priority that the Government places on regional development and building resilient communities. It builds on commitments in the Government's regional economic development strategy and the Jobs Action Plan, as I mentioned earlier. The bill also represents a significant step forward for businesses and the people of New South Wales.

I encourage rural and regional businesses and business leaders to get behind Jobs for NSW. I will be taking it to the Tamworth Business Chamber, which last Friday evening held its business awards. More than 600 people attended. With more than 400 members, the Tamworth Business Chamber is the largest chamber in regional New South Wales. This sort of incentive will support the chamber in its efforts to grow and develop its area. It is a significant step forward. The Government is making things happening. We are listening to the community and to business. We will continue to push ahead and keep New South Wales number one. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) [5.04 p.m.]: On behalf of my constituents in the Swansea electorate, which straddles both the Hunter Valley and the Central Coast, I raise some concerns about the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. The Jobs for NSW program establishes the Jobs for NSW Board and the Jobs for NSW Fund that aim to grow jobs and improve industry competitiveness in New South Wales. The truth of the matter is that this is a bill to form a committee. We have a serious jobs problem in the region where I live. The bill is short-changing regional New South Wales by delivering a 75 per cent cut in real funding to help grow businesses and jobs in the region. Funding specifically allocated to the regions has been cut from \$58 million to around \$4.5 million a year under the proposed Jobs for NSW program. Jobs for NSW is set to replace the Investment Attraction Scheme and the Regional Industry Investment Fund that between them make available a total of \$58 million for regional areas. The new scheme will offer \$190 million over four years, which is \$4.25 million a year and represents a 75 per cent cut.

In another blow for the regions, the bill proposes that only one of the seven board members will be appointed by the Minister for Regional Development—demonstrating how seriously this Government takes issues affecting regional New South Wales. The very name of the authority could not be more disingenuous. The Government could give some further thought to it. Perhaps "Axing Jobs for Regional NSW" might be more appropriate. At least two board members from regional New South Wales should be appointed to the Jobs for NSW Board to ensure that a fair proportion of attention is given to regional New South Wales. I am uniquely placed to speak in debate on this bill because the Swansea electorate takes in not one but two regions that have been hit particularly hard by the unemployment crisis that is gripping regional New South Wales. They are the Hunter and Central Coast regions.

Those regions are in crisis because State and Federal Liberal Governments are not being genuine in their attempts to invest in them and create jobs. How have the Hunter and Central Coast fared under the State and Federal Liberals? Sadly, the news is not good. The latest labour force unemployment statistics published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicate that the unemployment rate in many of our towns and suburbs has reached double digits. Many more places come close to that figure. The unemployment rate in the Hunter Valley, not including Newcastle, is currently 11.3 per cent, while youth

unemployment on the Central Coast is around 15 per cent. Government members should be concerned too, especially those who represent regional communities. How will a 75 per cent reduction in specific regional funding to help grow new businesses and jobs go down in places such as the mid North Coast, the New England and north-west or the Tweed, where unemployment rates continue to be far too high?

A good start to addressing the jobs crisis in the Hunter and Central Coast regions would be to make some serious, concrete commitments to those areas. I call on the Government to consider establishing the Jobs for NSW base in either the Hunter or the Central Coast region and to commit to using its ability to employ staff under the Jobs for NSW banner in those regional centres. We have the skills, the expertise and the knowledge of regional New South Wales and we know what it takes to adapt to large-scale economic change, all the while being just a stone's throw from Sydney. How could the Government possibly lose? I make this call on the back of the Hunter and Central Coast regions being hit hard, with an economy that is undergoing further transformation while being ignored by State and Federal governments.

Just today we have seen the first of the real-life results of the privatisation of our electricity network and its impact on jobs in Newcastle and the Hunter and on the Central Coast. Sadly, tomorrow Ausgrid will announce the names and locations of those to lose their jobs—the first 600 jobs that will be cut under phase one of the total 1,102 jobs to be axed from the Hunter and the Central Coast. While we stand in this place and the Government gloats about the creation of Jobs for NSW, 600 families are preparing for the loss of a breadwinner. It is ironic. With the downturn in mining as a result of falling commodity prices and a Federal Government that has walked away from manufacturing, while its State counterparts simply stand by and watch, unemployment in the Hunter and Central Coast remains stubbornly high.

It is safe to say that the manufacturing sector in the Hunter is at the frontline of the job crisis in New South Wales. The train building sector has shed hundreds of jobs since the election of the Liberal Government in 2011, and recently the iconic Forgacs has been sent to the wall by the failure of the Abbott Government to announce a coherent industry policy. Those opposite can fix this problem, and part of the solution is already before them. The Liberals need to stop sitting on their hands, stop the continual delays, and commit to building the trains that will service the intercity routes between Sydney and Newcastle, the Blue Mountains, the South Coast and the Hunter.

The Government has announced plans to build this new rail stock, along with six new ferries, by 2024. This amounts to over \$3 billion worth of infrastructure. If these contracts are awarded to local manufacturers, this could create around 1,200 direct jobs, which would help alleviate our unemployment crisis and assist our struggling regional economy. The sad fact is that when it comes to delaying manufacturing projects, the Liberals have real form. The announcement of the Government's intention to purchase 65 new inner-city trains—more than 500 carriages in total—is by no means recent news. In fact, the original announcement came way back in April 2014. It was one of Mike Baird's first commitments made as Premier. The Government needs to build these projects, and it needs to build them now. We want them built in the Hunter.

It is a similar story for the Central Coast. We saw recently just how little this Government cares about the Central Coast and creating jobs in that growing region. The release of the Central Coast Growth and Regional Infrastructure Plan has once again been delayed by the Government. In 2014 the Government made a fanfare of announcing the Central Coast Growth and Regional Infrastructure Plan, but it has delivered nothing. The report has still not been delivered. The Government needs to be working and actively talking with businesses and the community to deliver a long-term framework so that we have a strong plan for local jobs. This lack of direction from the State Government is leaving businesses in the lurch and our local councils fighting over scraps, which is bad news for jobs on the Central Coast. I do not want to and nor could I ever be accused of talking down these regions. These are resilient communities who know how to put in a hard day's work. But we have a lot of work to do to replace the jobs that have already been shed and we need help from governments at both State and Federal levels.

If this Government were serious about jobs creation, the one thing it would not be doing would be putting a wrecking ball through our local TAFE facilities. I was disappointed last week that the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business would not say that the Belmont TAFE campus would not be closed. It is a sad time for Belmont TAFE, with the Minister pretty much admitting that the Government is absolutely and unequivocally prepared to close that campus. If the Belmont campus is sold off, generations will lose the opportunity to obtain the skills they need to get a good job—something our local kids deserve. To date, TAFE enrolments are down and we have fewer TAFE teachers as well. Just yesterday I read in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

The number of Australians starting an apprenticeship or traineeship plummeted by 20 per cent over the past year ...

This is even more evidence that instead of closing campuses and cutting jobs we should be investing in TAFE in New South Wales. What can the Government do in a genuine attempt to create jobs in New South Wales? For my region, the blueprint for jobs is already on the table: we can bring on manufacturing jobs with government contracts. We can make sure that the Hunter and Central Coast continue to build the trains, ferries, ships and buses that we need in New South Wales. We can set up the structure of the Jobs for NSW in the Hunter or on the Central Coast and we must ensure that regional New South Wales is better represented on the board of Jobs for NSW.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.14 p.m.]: The Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 sets a new course for jobs creation in this State, and not before time. Regional New South Wales is always hard hit when unemployment climbs and one cannot overstate the agony unemployment causes to families and communities. As a new, private sector-led statutory organisation, Jobs for NSW will set the strategy for the State. It is with great interest that I note the emphasis will be on developing the competitive advantages of the New South Wales economy as a means of attracting, developing and consolidating new and existing businesses.

When we talk about "competitive advantage" in Sydney, it is perhaps understood in terms of beating Melbourne or Brisbane—somewhere a long way off. We talk about attracting major sporting and cultural events to the heart of Sydney and of getting national and indeed international businesses to set up office in this city. In Albury, we have two State governments staring each other directly in the eyes, with just a river between them, as they strive to encourage businesses to settle on their side of the border. It is a contest that is personal and sometimes in your face. Incentives are given and grants are obtained, councils offer concessions and local chambers of commerce roll out the welcome mat. But be under no illusion: this trading is competitive and it can be costly.

Councils set aside land for new industries. Huge capital costs are associated with the acquisition of this land and the development of necessary services and infrastructure. Industrial land abutting the Albury airport is now highly prized. At one point in time, many years ago, you almost could not give away that land. Now everyone wants it. Albury has become a regional transport hub. Everyone can imagine the convenience of moving stock and supplies in and out of a factory or warehouse when it takes just five minutes to drive to the airport and where there is never a traffic jam.

Albury City Council is now developing a new industrial estate, Nexus, comprising 447 hectares on the northern perimeter of the city. Here there is a rail hub and Hume Highway access. It has been costly for council to undertake this initiative. The State has provided some infrastructure support but the risk is all borne locally. Of course, we have the occasional business closure too. What is not publicised, deliberately by my office, are the private tours I lead, taking prospective business customers to inspect industrial land and factory sites that are made available usually as a result of a business expansion or relocation or the closing of a factory. This is all part of the process of working to create and maintain jobs for the people of the electorate of Albury.

I have spoken before in this place about a number of businesses that are growing strongly, such as the River Deck café and restaurant. It expanded dramatically following a New South Wales Government grant. Cool Off, Howlong's pet food manufacturing business, is successfully exporting to the world. In this context I also mention Jolly Berries. Based in Tumbarumba, Jolly Berries was one of the State's 16 best fine food producers selected to showcase the very best of New South Wales produce to thousands of national and international buyers over the four days of the Fine Food Australia trade show to be held this month in Sydney.

I find it encouraging that the operators of Jolly Berries came to a workshop in Sydney last May where they were able to meet with Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business John Barilaro. The workshop helped prepare the business for the Fine Food Australia show. These workshops are very important for regional businesses and bring contacts and opportunities that can make a world of difference to both business growth and regional employment. Make no mistake, employment is a critical issue on the border. In fact, the last New South Wales election was run on two key issues in the electorate of Albury: jobs and how the leasing of poles and wires would help create jobs.

With that in mind, we are all looking forward to receiving a fair and equitable share in the proceeds to be set aside by the Premier for regional areas. This is a generational opportunity to provide and update the infrastructure on the southern border of this great State so that businesses can thrive and create lasting employment. The replacement of the NSW TrainLink XPT service will be welcomed with open arms. Cutting the travel time to Sydney will facilitate business opportunities and make the trip easier for the many people who are not able to travel by plane, whether due to disability or other reason. Perhaps when the Minister selects the new rolling stock for the TrainLink service he might seize the opportunity to improve the coffee served on the train. That, too, could be a once-in-a-generation change.

The context of the Jobs for NSW Bill is the uncertainty in policy development, promotion and implementation in the Federal sphere which, for many years, has hurt border communities and frustrated employment retention and growth. We on the border are also concerned about the lack of resources coming from the new Victorian Government. A number of critical joint New South Wales and Victoria infrastructure projects have stalled. One, the replacement bridge for Mulwala, has now passed the time when a new bridge can be built before the existing weir bridge is decommissioned for safety reasons. Unfortunately, that bridge carries the trucks from the munitions factory which makes components for bullets used by Australian soldiers. The New South Wales Government put up its share of the rebuild cost last year. There is still no answer from Victoria. Perhaps someone should warn the Minister for Defence.

All these elements work in a complex matrix to supply jobs in the electorate of Albury. When one limb is limp another must do even more. At this time and in this place, that task falls on the New South Wales Government. Cometh the time, cometh the bill. With radio silence from Victoria and policy confusion in Canberra, Albury and the south-west region rely on the initiatives of the New South Wales Government. The New South Wales Government is already making progress on the two largest infrastructure projects in my electorate in more than 20 years. For those I thank the Minister for Health and the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. They are transformative projects that will create many jobs during the construction phase.

It is to the Jobs for NSW Bill that we look for a structure to maintain and create new jobs. The new strategic agency Jobs for NSW will have access to the Jobs for NSW Fund, which is to be created by this bill. The fund will help to deliver on the Government's election promise to boost funding for New South Wales investment attraction schemes to \$190 million. Of the total payments made from the Jobs for NSW Fund for jobs creation incentives, 30 per cent will be for proposals in rural and regional New South Wales. That is a minimum. Jobs for NSW may recommend a higher allocation for rural and regional proposals, depending on the proposals received.

At this stage, it is not possible to say what the total allocation to regional and rural New South Wales might be. A 30 per cent allocation to regional and rural New South Wales is consistent with

regional allocations from Restart NSW and Rebuilding NSW. I applaud the initiative. Sydney has its problems and challenges. There are more job opportunities but unaffordable housing. In regional New South Wales there are fewer job opportunities but affordable housing. It is my profound wish that Jobs for NSW will be a scheme that delivers on its promise to all of us living in regional New South Wales. That is where Jobs for NSW will have the most impact and where fledgling businesses can dig deep and grow profitable roots, drawing upon a skilled workforce trained at one of our regional universities. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [5.22 p.m.]: I am pleased to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. The Government's bill is remarkably similar to a bill introduced by the Opposition in the last session of Parliament prior to the March election. The House will recall the introduction of the NSW Jobs Commission Bill. At the time, the Government attacked and criticised the Opposition's bill. Yet today we are debating the Government's bill, which is very similar in substance to that Labor bill. The introduction of the Government's bill highlights that sometimes it is wise for the government of the day to cease playing politics and to consider thoughtfully the proposals of the Opposition.

This debate is timely for the Illawarra, which is experiencing a regional crisis of confidence, in part due to the uncertainty facing BlueScope Steel. For the last two months there has been announcement after announcement of job losses in the Illawarra. I note that this bill creates a framework for the administration of the Jobs for NSW Fund. The \$190 million fund seeks to create 150,000 new jobs over the next four years. I hope that the Jobs for NSW Fund will not become a political slush fund or be focused only on Sydney. I hope that a fair share of that funding finds its way to the Illawarra. I hope that the Jobs for NSW Fund will not be a repeat of the Resources for Regions program, under which, during the last Parliament, the Illawarra was awarded funding for just one project in four years. The fund must be administered fairly and equitably. I note that the Minister's second reading speech indicated:

It will be clear to all where New South Wales Government funding for job creation incentives is being directed and for what purpose.

The Opposition will carefully monitor the annual reports of Jobs for NSW for evidence of investment in the Illawarra region, especially following the experience with the Resources for Regions program. It is often said that governments do not create jobs, businesses do. Such clichés are too simplistic to accurately reflect the complexity of how jobs are created and secured. The involvement of the public sector in creating jobs, providing funding support for creative and new ideas, and adopting innovative processes is too often underplayed. I understand that those with a fundamentalist approach to the market like to undermine the crucial role played by government in jobs creation, but that is not an accurate reflection of how the real world works. The implementation of much of the technology we take for granted was only made possible through public sector seed funding, as it was simply too risky for the private sector.

It would be remiss of me not to highlight in this debate the pathetic effort by the Government to relocate public sector jobs to the Illawarra. Over five years, despite having a target to relocate 1,500 public sector jobs to regional areas, the Government has managed to relocate just 38 to the Illawarra region. Labor, when in government, moved 900 jobs to the Illawarra—600 from Pillar Administration and a further 300 when relocating the Office of Local Government to Nowra. I call on the Government to get serious about relocating public sector jobs from the Sydney central business district to regional areas like the Illawarra.

The Minister's second reading speech was critical of "the old, reactive approach of responding to economic issues as they arise". I believe we saw some of that reactive approach to the jobs crisis facing the Illawarra yesterday during a stakeholders meeting in Wollongong. When regional areas face an economic shock, the Government of the day gathers together a range of stakeholders and seeks ideas on how to address the crisis. I suggest that an improvement in this bill, in line with the Minister's criticism of a reactive approach to economic issues, would be for the Government to adopt clause 7 of the Opposition's

NSW Jobs Commission Bill and incorporate it into its own bill. Incorporating clause 7 of the Opposition's former bill would put Jobs for NSW on the front foot by proactively addressing the needs of regions and the industries within them that face the challenges of economic disruption. The Opposition supports the bill.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.28 p.m.]: I support the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015, which demonstrates this Government's commitment to creating jobs and a business friendly economic climate that provides real opportunities for people in New South Wales. As I listened to some of the earlier speeches, I thought how wonderful it is to be in Government, because in Government one can recognise positive news and be happy about it and one can accept the challenges of the future. In Opposition, as we just heard, there is a lot of negativity. Opposition members are sad.

Mr John Robertson: You would know. You spent 16 years sitting there.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: That sadness is personified by the members on the Opposition backbench. I experienced four years of Opposition. I understand that it is a function of Opposition to be negative and to whine and whinge. In fact, when one looks objectively at jobs in New South Wales, it is a fantastic story. But it is a story we are not satisfied with, because we can do better. Economies worldwide are undergoing immense change and are facing substantial challenges. Australia is not alone in that regard. To continue to prosper into the future we have to continue to adapt to an environment of labour-saving technology, globalisation and pressure on wages. High rates of employment are fundamental to a fair and thriving society and employment rates are critically affected by changes to market forces.

The challenge for governments, including in New South Wales, is to provide strong incentives for business to increase employment in this environment. This creates social benefits not only from the revenue generated but by reducing the myriad social problems potentially created by higher levels of unemployment. Ongoing jobs generation is vital for New South Wales. We currently lead the country in employment growth, and we want to keep that momentum going. Despite New South Wales recording the lowest unemployment rate in July of any State in Australia, we can do more to maintain and strengthen this position.

Jobs are vital for providing financial independence and a sense of both identity and purpose for workers. Employment also creates community connections, takes pressure off social services and reduces social problems. We want these benefits for New South Wales, as the nation's jobs State, as well as to build long-term global competitiveness for the State's industries. The Jobs for NSW Bill will help deliver all this. To generate jobs growth, New South Wales needs to embrace the new global marketplace by increasing exports, expanding inbound tourism and embracing new technology. We need to take account of economic changes and work them to our advantage. New South Wales should provide incentives to business to hire more people in the right areas, complementing its already established Jobs Action Plan and Small Business Employment Incentive Scheme.

New South Wales is already an outstanding performer in a number of sectors and the Government wants to continue to expand those sectors to boost employment levels. Jobs growth is this Government's number one priority. The Baird Government has pledged to facilitate or create 150,000 new jobs by 2019 while driving growth in a strategic and proactive way. The Jobs for NSW Bill will help to do just that. With the proposed establishment of Jobs for NSW, private sector specialists will be consulted by the Government to ensure the needs of investors and jobs creators are considered when making recommendations to government. The new Jobs for NSW Fund will create job incentives to grow employment and the economy. Regional areas will benefit from a significant 30 per cent of this jobs creation fund.

A number of economic sectors in New South Wales are already outperforming other States and have potential to continue expanding, particularly in light of the falling dollar. Agribusiness has become

big business again. The value of New South Wales food and agricultural exports has increased by an average of 13 per cent each year over the past five years. Coal, cotton and wheat exports are key drivers of this boom. With a declining dollar, agribusiness is ripe for expansion and could potentially provide vital regional jobs. Education is Australia's fourth largest export behind iron ore, coal and natural gas. I understand that education-related travel services currently account for some \$5.3 billion, or 26 per cent of New South Wales service exports.

Tourism is another booming sector and one in which I have particular interest. Tourism from both China and India is at an all-time high and this sector could become the fastest growing sector in New South Wales. A Tourism Research Australia survey recently showed that total spending rose by 10 per cent in the past financial year, and that included a 32 per cent rise in spending by Chinese tourists and a 39 per cent rise by Indian tourists Australia-wide. This increase is particularly due to the rise in international students from those locations. Students' families regularly visit and contribute to both local and regional economies. New South Wales can do more in that space.

As a service-based industry, tourism is a large employer; restaurants, bars, shops, tourist attractions and airports hire a sizeable workforce. More tourists for New South Wales mean more jobs for New South Wales. By encouraging more tourists the New South Wales economy will subsequently grow. Conferences and major events also generate employment. Specialist infrastructure, including the proposed opening of the new convention centre and facilities at Darling Harbour at the end of 2016, will create a considerable opportunity for major events and conferences and that will help create tourist-related employment and growth, even more so in the future. Information technology and communication [ITC] is another sector that has the capability to employ many more people into the future.

On a recent visit to Google's Pyrmont premises in Sydney I was impressed with the work culture, which is largely modelled on its Silicon Valley headquarters in San Francisco. However, I am far more excited by the homegrown potential in New South Wales. New South Wales has a thriving internet and software sector, with 64 per cent of Australia's technology start-up companies based in New South Wales. These include companies such as Atlassian, which I have spoken of previously in this place. Currently there are three technology parks in New South Wales: Macquarie Park, Innovation Campus Wollongong and the Australian Technology Park [ATP]. Hub facilities encourage industries such as ITC to collaborate and hire new staff. They provide support for an industry that has not seen high historical support from Australian governments when compared to that provided in the United States of America. These hubs encourage information, ideas and business exchange between similar industries while providing support to the industry as a whole.

One current example of a specialised hub is the newly opened Stone and Chalk, which is a not-for-profit fin hub in Bridge Street, Sydney. The \$190 million Jobs for NSW Fund could help make such important physical locations more of a central focus as a catalyst for growth. There are a plethora of opportunities in New South Wales to generate employment and grow the economy. If growth remains stagnant or falls, unemployment usually increases and productivity rates fall. The New South Wales Government has introduced the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 to keep the momentum going and to target industries where strong employment growth is forecast. Leveraging private sector expertise will be critical to grow jobs, develop existing businesses and attract new businesses. I applaud the bill for recognising that, particularly in relation to the composition of the Jobs for NSW board.

Eminent business leaders on the Jobs for NSW board will call for jobs creation proposals and will make recommendations to government on which ones should be empowered through the Jobs for NSW Fund. We are recruiting the best and brightest from industry to ensure that New South Wales can make informed and proactive decisions about growing jobs and improving industry competitiveness. Jobs for NSW board members will largely be drawn from the private sector and will include business leaders with substantial commercial acumen and business experience. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

I applaud the Government for recruiting Mr David Thodey, one of Australia's most respected

business leaders, to be the incoming chairperson of Jobs for NSW. David Thodey is a former Telstra chief executive officer with significant global business experience, including ongoing involvement on the Australian B20 leadership group—the business advisory forum of the G20. He will bring a wealth of real-world insights to the role. The Jobs for NSW board will include an additional four appointed members to provide up-to-date expertise on where the next wave of jobs will be and how we can harness these opportunities for businesses and communities in New South Wales. Employment in New South Wales is robust; and by introducing the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 we are preparing to make it stronger for longer. The New South Wales Government is planning for the future, and is not taking jobs growth in New South Wales for granted. This is a proactive, consultative and strategic piece of legislation targeting effective job creation and long-term economic growth. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [5.39 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015, and support the aim of focussing New South Wales Government attention on increasing jobs and job-related investment. I have circulated amendments that would require at least three members of the Jobs for NSW board to be female and at least one member to have expert knowledge of digital innovation and entrepreneurship. Following my meeting with the Minister's office this morning I understand that the Government agrees with the intention of these amendments, and will ensure that there will be equitable female participation on Jobs for NSW and that there will be members with expert knowledge of the start-up sector. I look forward to the Minister confirming this in his reply.

Jobs for NSW is tasked with identifying opportunities for developing the New South Wales economy, attracting new businesses to New South Wales, advising on barriers and opportunities to economic growth, and strategy for effective targeted support for economic development, including recommendations for incentives for job creation. The bill would establish a Jobs for NSW board of seven members, four appointed by the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, and one by the Minister for Regional Development. The secretaries of the departments of Industry, Skills and Regional Development and of Premier and Cabinet or their nominees are the other members. I commend the Government for action in this area.

When introducing this bill, the Minister said that the Government has set a target of creating 150,000 jobs within four years and is focused on incentives for commercial innovation and entrepreneurship. He referred to the new technologies and business models bringing about fundamental change in supply chains, industry structures and the nature of work. I am pleased to see the Minister welcoming disruption in order to grow the economy, moving towards new and emerging growth opportunities, not the old models of industry assistance. This approach is most welcome and much needed. Indeed, I raised the need for this new approach in February 2013 in this place, calling on the Government to support start-ups and digital enterprises with practical help, and removal of barriers to development and growth. We need an approach that addresses automation, globalisation and collaboration where there will be multiple employers and new jobs.

The June Committee for Economic Development of Australia [CEDA] report "Australia's future workforce?" predicts the potential disappearance of more than five million Australian jobs over the next 10 to 15 years as a result of technological advancements. Put another way, it estimates that 40 per cent of existing Australian jobs may disappear over this time. CEDA's report concludes that Australia needs to build on those areas of the economy operating at the technological frontier to create wealth and jobs in the future, along with concerted effort to reskill workers from old industries. We need jobs for the future, what the CEDA report identifies as the Infotronics Age because of its base on information, electronics and the internet. The report indicates that computers, machine-learning algorithms and robotics will replace jobs in higher skilled sectors that have not been automated previously, with key shortages in digital skills.

The Foundation for Young Australians report "The New Work Order" reports that 30 per cent of young people are currently unemployed or underemployed, and that 70 per cent of young Australians are getting their first job in roles that will either look very different or be completely lost in the next 10 to 15 years due to automation. Nearly 60 per cent of Australian students and 70 per cent in vocational

education and training are studying or training for occupations in which at least two-thirds of jobs will be automated. More than 50 per cent of jobs will require significant digital skills, but young people are not yet learning them in schools. The report says that future employees need to be digitally literate, financially savvy, innovative and adaptable, with enterprising skills in communication, project management, financial literacy and digital literacy, plus have the ability to critically assess and analyse information, be creative and innovate.

Bernard Salt's just-released report "Super connected jobs" for NBN shows that future jobs will be fundamentally different from those of the past. He says we need to develop a culture of entrepreneurialism built on connectivity, with five new types of jobs: personalised care givers, highly skilled technocrats, specialist professionals, skilled workers, and creatives. How will the Government ensure that the expert Jobs for the Future board of seven members contains members of the technology and start-up industries, people with the knowledge and experience to create these future jobs? To modernise and incentivise economic development and support commercial innovation and entrepreneurship, there must be strong representation of these industries on the Jobs for NSW board. We need new ideas from people with direct expertise about the new job-creating industries and workplaces.

I am also very concerned that the bill does not include mention of ensuring female representation on Jobs for NSW or anyone with expertise in increasing jobs for women. Women returning to the workforce after caring roles with children and other family members are often a highly skilled and educated group, and we should be harnessing their capacity to create jobs into the future. The Australian Government's Department of Social Services Report "Women, Work and the Global Economic Downturn" highlights gendered economic impacts, largely due to the difference in the male and female workforce, with female underemployment at 10 per cent compared with 5.6 per cent for males, and underutilisation 15.2 per cent for women but 10.8 per cent for men.

Workplace Gender Equality Agency data shows that the women's labour force participation rate is 58.9 per cent compared with 71.8 per cent for men. But this underestimates the gender gap, as this assessment does not incorporate the massive part-time female employment, so the real gender gap is more like 40 per cent. The Diversity Council's research paper "Older Women Matter" shows participation rates for Australian women aged 55 to 64 years of 55 per cent, compared with 70 per cent in New Zealand, and estimates that Australia's gross domestic product in 2012 would have been 4 per cent higher if we had the same participation of people over 55. Access Economics modelling shows that increasing women's workplace participation could lift national output by \$98.4 billion over 30 years.

This is a significant social and economic loss, and increasing the job participation rate for women is therefore vital. To ensure that Jobs for NSW does not further entrench this gender gap, I believe there should be strong representation of women on Jobs for NSW. Ensuring new technology experts and women are on the Jobs for NSW board is not to detract from the considerable expertise of the Secretary of the Department of Industry, Simon Smith, and the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Blair Comley. However, it is important to address the challenges of the future and create jobs in the challenging new economy.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.46 p.m.]: I make a contribution to the debate on the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015, and say at the outset that I support the bill. As the overview of the bill notes, the objects of the bill are to facilitate job creation and economic development through jobs creation incentives, and to establish Jobs for NSW to provide high-level strategic advice to government for the purpose of jobs creation and driving investment in New South Wales. Jobs for NSW will help to deliver on the Government's commitment to create 150,000 jobs over the next four years. We have heard much about this during debate today. This is a very big topic at the moment.

I acknowledge other contributions that have been made in this House. In fact, I respond to the remarks made by the member for Sydney about gender balance by saying that the New South Wales

Government is very conscious of, and actively encourages, gender balance and expertise on all boards and for all board appointments. The Premier, too, supports that. New South Wales will change the way that the Government supports job creation, and will ensure that we continue to cement our position as the lowest-unemployment State in the Commonwealth. What an achievement that is. In the past 4½ years this State has had an economic turnaround in employment, jobs growth and a sustainable economy.

I am very proud to be part of the Government that has delivered in spades over the past 4½ years. Having been Minister for Small Business, obviously I am cognisant of the need to reduce regulation and red tape. We have been very strong in doing that over those years, and we will continue to do so into the future. That helps businesses to grow, and it helps stimulate the economy. This Government has done many things to grow small business. We have created, by legislation, two new Small Biz buses that now travel round New South Wales and let people know more about establishing a small business, how to exit gracefully out of small business, and how to improve a small business so that one day it will become a big business.

This bill will deliver on the Government's \$190 million election commitment to boost funding for State investment attraction. As the member for Davidson stated, the Jobs for NSW board will be chaired by David Thodey, the former Chief Executive Officer of Telstra, someone who has my great admiration and respect and who is currently serving as chairman of the CSIRO. The board will be drawn predominantly from the private sector, as it should. There will be commercial expertise of talented businesspeople, such as David Thodey, who will assist the New South Wales Government to drive job creation and private sector investment in New South Wales. This board of business and industry experts will actively identify and advise the Minister on major challenges and industry growth opportunities for New South Wales, including where we can gain a competitive edge.

Jobs for NSW will call for, assess and make recommendations on job creation incentives to be paid out of the Jobs for NSW Fund. It will build on this Government's incredibly strong record. Today's National Australia Bank Monthly Business Survey shows that business conditions in New South Wales are by far the strongest in the nation and well above the national average. We saw on the front page of Saturday's *Sydney Morning Herald* that New South Wales is leading the entire Commonwealth and really supporting the nation. That is a great tick for the Government, certainly for the Premier and for all members in the ministry. The survey shows that New South Wales is truly the number one State for doing business in the nation and Jobs for NSW will build on this success.

There is no doubt that the world we live in is changing very rapidly. That applies as equally to rural and regional New South Wales as it does to the metropolitan area. New technologies and new business models are bringing about fundamental changes in supply chains, industry structures and the nature of work. Great progress is being made in areas such as abattoirs and areas that require substantial physical labour. They are becoming more modern, with new technologies and new production lines. Therefore, we need to think smarter and work out new ways of keeping people employed into the future. We live in a global world. We need to make sure that we are competitive and innovative when it comes to jobs. We must be focused on new and emerging growth opportunities. That will be the function of Jobs for NSW.

We must change, as older models of industry assistance do not necessarily deliver the best value for the taxpayers of New South Wales. Jobs for NSW will provide the foundation for change. It is a new and strategic approach and I welcome it. It will take a strategic approach to identifying the competitive advantages of the New South Wales economy and then attract, develop and consolidate new and existing businesses in New South Wales. This will clearly strengthen our economic leadership. The bill will help us to deliver major jobs growth opportunities across the State, including rural and regional New South Wales.

I am pleased to say that at least 30 per cent of all payments made from the Jobs for NSW Fund for jobs creation incentives will be for proposals in rural and regional areas of New South Wales. This is

great news; it is guaranteed funding for rural and regional New South Wales, and it is just the minimum. I strongly urge regional New South Wales businesses and business leaders to get behind Jobs for NSW. Jobs for NSW may recommend approval of more proposals for job creation incentives in rural and regional New South Wales and will help us to ensure that New South Wales remains the jobs capital of Australia. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [5.53 p.m.]: I speak on the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 as a regional member on the Central Coast and the shadow Minister for Regional Development, Skills and Small Business. What we have here is a new name and new logo. Once again the Coalition Government is seeking to fool the people of New South Wales, and particularly the people of regional New South Wales, by throwing out existing programs, combining them, creating a new name and logo, telling us it is new and exciting, and that it will lead us into the future. The only new thing it does is create a board, privatise it, give a few more people an additional salary and continue what is already in existence. So let us be frank about what the bill actually does.

In the 2015-16 budget \$32 million was allocated to the State Investment Attraction Scheme and \$22 million to the Regional Industries Investment Fund. Adding those figures together, the total available to regional areas is \$54 million. If one multiplies \$54 million by four years, the available amount would have been \$216 million. However, this Government program actually takes that \$216 million program, turns it into a \$190 million program and tells us it is a good deal for the regions. I am not quite sure how that works. The Jobs for NSW Fund is supposed to provide \$190 million over four years, which is \$47.5 million a year, and the 30 per cent available to regional areas is \$14.25 million. The Regional Industries Investment Fund is \$22 million for just this year. The Government says that the regions should celebrate. The Nationals should sell the program, which is giving the region's \$7 million less than what they are receiving now. The program is being reduced from \$216 million to \$190 million, yet those opposite suggest everyone should celebrate.

If The Nationals looked at the figures in their own budget they would realise this is a two-card trick and the regions are being ripped off. I know this because people in regional organisations have rung and told me this is bad for the regions. It is taking money that was quarantined for the regions and opening it up to the whole State, but the Government is telling people it is a good deal for the regions. It is not; it is a fraud. Once again The Nationals have sold out regional areas. They started by agreeing to cut regional Ministers. The Nationals stood by while support was cut for farmers in drought, dozens of offices were closed and regional-based staff were cut. In addition, country TAFE is threatened, with massive cuts to TAFE in regional areas. I must admit that the member for Barwon stands up for his area and I commend him for that. I think he cringes every time one of these programs is introduced because he knows how detrimental they are to regional areas.

Let us consider the Government's actions in the regions. Nine regional directors are employed in the Department of Industry to facilitate business in regional areas. Under this Government their power to make decisions and allocate grant money has been removed. People in the central organisation now make those decisions and give the tick; regional managers cannot make those decisions any more. Business development managers in regional areas, those who travelled around regional areas talking to businesses, working out ways to help people, have had their cars taken away from them. They now sit in their offices and do everything by phone. This demonstrates the level of the Government's commitment to regional areas and once again The Nationals stood by while this happened.

The Nationals used their new motto, "Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil." They do not want local people to know what is going on, but regional people understand. Last week I was in Moss Vale and Goulburn talking to people and the local media. They will tell you they are actually seeing the changes. Essential Energy jobs have been cut, with 700 job losses across rural and regional New South Wales and 10 depots being shut down. Essential Energy revealed that an expansion of the spill and fill process requires staff to reapply for their existing jobs. The Nationals are standing by in the regions while regional jobs are being abolished.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson): Order! The member for Wyong will be heard in silence.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Since January and the introduction of Smart and Skilled, 4,000 fewer students have enrolled in TAFE Western. In 2012-13, 8,695 students enrolled in the Western Institute of TAFE received subsidies to get certificates compared to 137 students this year. The Nationals run around and say that this Government is doing a good job for their constituents, but one need only look at the loss of jobs in the energy sector, the shutdown of the country embassy in Sydney without a murmur, the cut to TAFE jobs across country areas and now under this fund, which took money that was quarantined for regional areas and a proportion returned to them, a reduction of 30 per cent of that \$190 million, that is, \$14.25 million a year. This year the budget was \$22 million. In that one program the Regional Industries Investment Fund has been cut by \$7 million.

Any way we look at it this process it is rebadging, combining things and throwing a little less money in, and telling everyone that the Government is doing a good job for people in regional New South Wales. The Regional Development Australia Orana chairman expressed concern that a decline in TAFE numbers and staff cuts will impact on regional skills shortfall. The Regional Development Foundation says that all the companies that had submitted applications for the Regional Infrastructure Fund program were told their application was void, and that is happening right across regional New South Wales. In relation to employment figures the story is worse.

Mrs Melinda Pavey: It was much worse under Labor.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: No, it was not. Under the previous Labor Government unemployment rates in country New South Wales were less. Youth unemployment is 15 per cent on the Central Coast, 19.1 per cent in Far Western Orana, 20.6 per cent in the Hunter, 14 per cent in the Illawarra, 15.2 per cent on the Mid North Coast, 15.7 per cent in the Murray, 20.3 per cent in New England north west, 15 per cent in Newcastle and the Illawarra, 17.6 per cent in the Richmond and Tweed, 10.3 per cent in the Riverina and 14.9 per cent in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven. Despite that, the Government has developed a new program with a new name, employed another board and cut back funding that has previously been available to regions and told people how good it will be for them.

The Opposition supports the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 because it is better than nothing. The Nationals need to compare this board to the programs that were already in place and then tell us whether they have a good deal. Quite frankly, they have not. Their areas have had cutbacks disguised as an improvement under a new name and logo but with no real benefits to the people of regional New South Wales. It is about time The Nationals stood up for their constituents and not pay too much respect to their Liberal Party masters.

[Business interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the following routine of business for the remainder of this sitting:

- (1) government business;
- (2) private members' statements;

- (3) matter of public importance; and
- (4) the House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.

JOBS FOR NSW BILL 2015

Second Reading

[Business resumed.]

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) [6.04 p.m.]: I support the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to set the record straight after the earlier lesson in Labornomics. This bill is a part of the Baird Government's dynamic and comprehensive policy framework in pursuing long-term business growth opportunities to ensure that New South Wales remains the economic hub of Australia. Since coming to office in 2011 the Liberal-Nationals Government has overseen the economic revival and turnaround of New South Wales. Following 16 years of Labor failure, New South Wales was left in the economic doldrums, ranked last in the Federation in key indicators of economic performance, such as home building starts, unemployment and economic growth. Truly, it is an indictment of those opposite, who were responsible for ensuring that New South Wales was the worst performing economy in the country.

The long-term economic decline of New South Wales has been reversed and the premier State has once again been restored to its namesake. As a result of reducing the burdens, excesses and largess of the former Labor Government, New South Wales now leads the way, reflected in the ANZ Bank Stateometer, which graphically illustrates the reality that economic momentum has returned to this State, with above-trend growth. While not the sole indicator, the growth in jobs over the past four years in New South Wales has been impressive, illustrative of this Government's success in attending to the economic deficiencies that previously pervaded the State. Indeed, over the course of the past four years, 250,000 jobs have been created in New South Wales, 100,000 more than in Victoria over the same period. Further, this Government has already committed to a target of an additional 150,000 jobs within the next four years.

The people of Miranda have particularly benefited from the growth in employment prospects in New South Wales since the Liberal-Nationals Government came to power in 2011. While national unemployment sits at 6.1 per cent, the unemployment rate is at a mere 4 per cent in the Sutherland shire. This is a testament to what good governance can achieve. However, while all of this is undoubtedly positive news, the Baird Government will not rest on its laurels. With global economic headwinds on the horizon, now, more than ever, is the time when we must harness and invest in the entrepreneurial spirit and talent that underpins the business community of New South Wales. That is why the Baird Government is turning to those with business and private sector experience and acumen, through the advent of Jobs for NSW.

This new statutory body, established under this bill, will be given the responsibility of adopting a strategic, long-term vision to develop and create a competitive, dynamic and flexible environment that attracts and consolidates new and existing business. In doing so, Jobs for NSW will bring about increased business confidence and levels of investment necessary to maintain our State's economic competitiveness. Jobs for NSW will come to represent the gold standard of how governments ought to support jobs growth. This bill will introduce a new approach to Government support for job creation programs and initiatives that will harness the expertise of the private sector by adopting a proactive approach to investment and employment. Such an approach is required to identify and seize the economic impetus, with newly emerging industries challenging conventional economic wisdom.

This has been felt nowhere more than in the rise of new forms of technology. Jobs for NSW will

focus on how to identify the jobs of the future, and on industries with scope for expansion and new innovative approaches to job creation in an increasingly changing and competitive global economy. In particular, the key functions of Jobs for NSW range from advising the New South Wales Government on the most advantageous methods to attract new businesses to the State. In addition, the body will be charged with advising the Government on the impediments that exist, along with strategies to overcome these challenges, and improve and expand the competitive advantage in New South Wales. Moreover, by developing a strategy to deliver cost-effective and targeted support for economic development, Jobs for NSW will act as a focal point in gathering and analysing proposals that will underpin strategies to enhance the prospect for further job growth.

In line with the Baird Government's recognition that jobs creation is driven by growth in the private sector as opposed to government, unlike those opposite, the Jobs for NSW Board will consist of eminent business leaders with substantial commercial acumen. As such, it is fitting that one of Australia's leading businessmen, Mr David Thodey, someone who has both my admiration and respect, will be the inaugural Chairperson of Jobs for NSW. Further, the bill is also responsible for the advent of the Jobs for NSW Fund, which will be a dedicated source of funding for targeted job creation initiatives and programs. The fund will meet the Government's election commitment to increase funding for State investment attraction schemes to \$190 million.

Significantly, Jobs for NSW will develop and recommend to the Minister robust eligibility and assessment criteria for job creation proposals with respect to those projects and initiatives that receive funding from the Jobs for NSW Fund. That will ensure that funding is being used prudently and wisely and is directed to those areas that will most maximise returns and have the greatest economic impact in the immediate, short-term and long-term future. Innovation is a crucial component of productivity and, along with population and jobs growth, a central source of economic growth. In order to forge the economic growth and prosperity of tomorrow, innovation and economic dynamism is a necessity. Innovative firms make an important contribution to gross domestic product and employment across all business sizes and sectors.

According to the Commonwealth Government's 2014 Australian Innovation System Report, in 2011-12 innovative businesses represented less than half of all employing businesses in Australia yet they were responsible for around 70 per cent of total employment. Further, for each high-tech job created by firms such as technology start-ups, an additional five jobs are created outside the high-tech sector. The New South Wales Government recognises the importance of innovation and has made it central to its economic policy strategies, which will further strengthen the State's innovation system to build the basis for long-term economic and jobs growth in New South Wales.

In 2013 analysis by PricewaterhouseCoopers showed that 64 per cent of Australia's tech start-ups are based in Sydney, equating to about 1,000 start-ups. Forecasts based on that data suggest that tech start-ups alone have the capacity to create 345,000 jobs and deliver up to \$70 billion to the New South Wales economy by 2033. PricewaterhouseCoopers research has further suggested that global revenues from key collaborative economy sectors could reach \$335 billion by 2025, up from \$15 billion in 2014. That growth is expected to provide new opportunities for New South Wales businesses. All that will be at the heart of the newly established Jobs for NSW as it seeks to identify and foster innovation—the touchstone of twenty-first century economic growth and competitiveness.

Importantly, the advent of Jobs for NSW will complement a suite of initiatives that the Baird Government is systematically implementing in order to foster an environment that is conducive to employment growth and opportunities. Such initiatives include the successful \$5,000 Jobs Action Plan payroll tax rebates, which have been extended until June 2019; the \$2,000 small business employment incentive, which rewards small businesses for every additional employee they take on; and the new \$25 million Jobs of Tomorrow Scholarship Fund, which is responsible for providing scholarships for students undertaking qualifications in new economy jobs, such as in the technology industry. All that demonstrates this Government's profound commitment to championing jobs creation through the private sector, which is

embodied in Jobs for NSW.

In concluding my remarks, I reiterate the beneficial impact that the creation of Jobs for NSW will have on our State. The Baird Government rightly recognises that employment growth and opportunities are a result of a thriving, innovative and dynamic private sector. Unlike the 16 years of Labor failure, which were typified by unnecessary and burdensome regulatory frameworks, this Government is committed to ensuring that the private sector can thrive. This bill is good for jobs. It is good for my local economy in the shire and our State economy. I congratulate Minister Roberts on this important initiative and commend the bill to the House.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) [6.13 p.m.]: On behalf of The Greens and as The Greens spokesperson for small business I speak in debate on the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. We welcome the Government's focus on creating jobs and sustaining them into the future. There would not be a member in this House who does not have full employment and participation at the top of their wish list for their community. The Greens would like to work with the Government because we think the bill has a lot of potential and we welcome investment in jobs creation. We must focus on meaningful careers, particularly in my electorate where young people are finding it increasingly hard to remain. I know that my parliamentary counterparts are struggling with the same issue. I welcome the contribution of the member for Sydney and his suggested amendments to ensure gender equity on the committee and someone who understands the new technologies of the twenty-first century. Let us hope they are from generation Y. We encourage the Government to take those suggestions on board.

My Federal counterparts in The Greens are trying to work with the Federal Government to improve the capacity for jobs creation and sustainability. I note that proposed section 6 (1) (c) relates to advising the Minister on impediments to and opportunities for improving and expanding competitive advantage in New South Wales. We encourage the Government to work with its Federal counterparts. Just over a week ago a Greens senator asked the Coalition Government why it was not acting to stop larger companies such as those in the supermarket duopoly from abusing their market power to hurt small businesses and agricultural producers. We wonder why it has taken the Coalition Government so long to accept the recommendation of its review into competition policy that was carried out by well-known economist Professor Harper to amend section 46 of the Competition and Consumer Act and bring in an effects test.

An effects test would allow the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to better distinguish between fair and unfair competition, and would stop supermarkets from using their overwhelming market power to erode competition further. The Greens have long campaigned for an effects test and included it in the comprehensive small business and competition policy that we released at the last election. I look forward to working further with the Government on that to see whether we can make progressive changes in New South Wales that will remove the duopolies that cut out small businesses, particularly in my area.

The bill also refers to making sure that regional areas have representation. A month ago I was fortunate to hold a jobs summit in Ballina. More than 60 business leaders attended and they had many innovative ideas about how to create sustainable jobs into the future. Not surprisingly, public transport and high-speed broadband were mentioned. I note that in proposed section 6 (1) (h) it is a function of Jobs for NSW to provide advice about business advisory services in New South Wales. A huge impediment to small businesses growing to medium-sized businesses in my region is that we cannot attract business and mentoring services because of our incredibly slow broadband. I look forward to working with the Government on those things and creating meaningful jobs for regional areas into the future. The Greens support the suggested amendments of the member for Sydney and we support the bill.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) [6.17 p.m.]: I support the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 and congratulate the Government on a new, more measured and interesting approach to encouraging jobs. It is important

to put some context around the contributions to debate that we have heard. Let us not forget that in July New South Wales had 6,824 building approvals, which was the highest number in the country and the highest ever July figure. In July we also added 29,500 jobs, which was more than four times the number added by the next best State. New South Wales is growing faster than the national average and is performing strongly on a number of indicators. That is because we are building and doing things.

As we speak, thousands of jobs are being created in the Oxley electorate due to the \$3.2 billion worth of construction taking place on the Pacific Highway dual carriageway. That project is long overdue. The major investment shows what can happen when State and Federal governments work collaboratively not for spin but for jobs and construction. Another big investment in the electorate of Oxley is of course the redevelopment of Kempsey District Hospital, which is nearing completion. This project would never have happened under a Labor Government. Everyone in that community is excited about this redevelopment. In the meantime, we have begun planning for the Macksville District Hospital redevelopment. Labor could not commit to this project at the last State election, much to the embarrassment of the poor local Labor candidate. She flew the flag for Labor but her party did not have enough respect to support her, let alone the Nambucca Valley community. Those projects are creating jobs via Government investment in our region and our community.

Works to improve the ambulance station in Nambucca Heads are complete, and there have been improvements to the Bellingen ambulance station and new ambulance stations in Kempsey and Wauchope. These important infrastructure projects are being provided by this Government in my electorate, and they would not have happened under a Labor government. It is about jobs and investment. The next phase in growing our regional economy will come about through this type of legislation. This type of initiative will bring together people with business and industry experience, who know how to create jobs and who know how to be successful, to ensure that we are supporting the next leaders within the State economy, not only in Sydney but also in regional New South Wales.

I am very excited about the Jobs for NSW commitment to create 150,000 jobs across the State. As I have said, New South Wales has the lowest unemployment rate and the strongest monthly jobs growth rate of any State in Australia. Jobs for NSW will build on this momentum. It will change the way government supports jobs creation. I acknowledge the contribution made by the member for Sydney to this debate. I was pleased to hear comments about supporting women, in particular, to enter the workforce, business and entrepreneurship. That is most important. It builds on the work of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, who has proven time and time again, with case studies from around the world, that the more you engage with women—the more you engage them in the private sector and put them on boards—the greater the profitability of the companies involved. It is exciting. The greater the contribution of strong women—within both the private and the public sectors, leading the way—the greater the benefit to our economy and to the people of New South Wales.

I agree also with the member for Ballina who said that ultimately we are aiming to create a job for every citizen who is able and who wants to work. We will not rest until we achieve that objective. That is a very strong principle for our party, which is why we support this approach and why we support both young people and older people into work in our communities. It is vital. Jobs for NSW will deliver on the Government's \$190 million election commitment to boost funding for State investment interaction. It is also about working with other people across the sector. For example, the TAFE North Coast Institute and AgriFood Skills Australia last year conducted a study, working with the Federal Government, on how to improve the capacity to employ local people, both young and old, within our horticultural industry. This is a real challenge on the North Coast. On the mid North Coast we have a high rate of youth unemployment. It beggars belief that we have to engage people on section 457 visas to pick the crops of local farmers. It is challenge that we have to face at a policy level, working with the Federal Government.

This type of approach, looking at skills and creating clusters of people working in these industries, is one way forward. I was happy to receive the final report from AgriFood Skills Australia recently. It is that type of local work that it is important to feed into this process. Jobs for NSW will call for, assess and make

recommendations on job creation incentives to be paid out of the Jobs for NSW Fund. Its focus will be on making sure that New South Wales Government funding for job creation incentives goes to where it will have the biggest impact on jobs and economic growth, both for now and into the future. So it will include emerging industries. There is no better place to have a technological job or to work in the start-up sector than on the North Coast, and we have some great success stories.

Workers there enjoy an enviable lifestyle; they can be surfing at the beach, walking in the mountains or swimming in the river one moment and then back in the office working on innovative projects the next. Businesses do not have to be based in Sydney. I agree with the comments made by the member for Albury earlier. This is one of the policy challenges facing government: We need to work towards encouraging people to live and work in regional New South Wales. Housing is more affordable there and, I am proud to say, the lifestyle is much better. It is about getting a better balance—

Mr Andrew Gee: It is a better quality of life.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: Absolutely, it is a better quality of life. We need to promote that and to support that. We have some wonderful examples on the mid North Coast of New South Wales in the electorate of Oxley. We have some great companies that have moved outside Sydney and come to the region. They have a productive and loyal workforce on the mid North Coast. Jobs there are at a premium so people tend to stay, which is very good for the company. There is not a lot of job turnover. So there are many benefits for small- to medium-sized manufacturers who move their operations to the regions and employ people who live and work locally. It is about not only growing our own but also exploring other opportunities to take some pressure off Sydney and to encourage people and businesses to come to the regions, where the lifestyle is quite simply better.

I applaud the bill for its new and proactive approach to Government support for employment and industry growth. It will include leveraging the value of our best private sector minds. Jobs for NSW will comprise a board with substantial commercial expertise, drawn predominantly from the private sector. This board of business and industry experts will actively identify and advise the Minister on major challenges and industry growth opportunities for New South Wales, including where we can gain a competitive edge. Recently I travelled to Dorrigo and met Justin Gilbert, a young farmer who has direct contracts with Woolworths to supply goat meat. His vision and his plans for growing his business to markets in the Middle East and all over the world—it is the most commonly eaten meat in the world—are very exciting. It is that type of work and being able to support and promote emerging industries that will be a very big part of Jobs for NSW.

Jobs for NSW will develop practical, real-world strategies to deliver strategically targeted support for economic development to best position New South Wales in the global economy and to attract the next wave of high-value jobs to the State—whether that be in tourism, agriculture, or new and emerging industries. It will be at the forefront, given the level of expertise on the board, so that we can capture and seize opportunities for New South Wales. The bill will help us to deliver major jobs growth opportunities across the State. At least 30 per cent of all payments made from the Jobs for NSW Fund for job creation incentives will be for proposals in rural and regional areas of New South Wales. This is a minimum only. I urge regional New South Wales businesses and business leaders to get behind Jobs for NSW. Jobs for NSW may recommend the approval of more proposals for job creation incentives in rural and regional New South Wales.

It is up to us as local members to be champions for those businesses and those opportunities and to create those pathways. I sincerely congratulate Minister Roberts, the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, and Minister Barilaro, the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business, on their work on the bill. This is a great achievement and the results will come. I know they will come, because they are two very genuine and sincere Ministers. I have known Minister Barilaro for many years. As a successful small business owner and a manufacturer, he brings the type of energy required to help the economy to continue to grow across New South Wales. I commend the bill to the

House.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) [6.27 p.m.]: Since June this year my region of the Hunter, excluding Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, has had the highest unemployment rate in the State of New South Wales. In July the figure announced was 11.3 per cent. For young people it is even worse, with more than one in five young people—or 20.6 per cent of people aged between 15 and 24—in my region unemployed. Again, that figure tops the statistics across the State. For young people this is a tragedy. Is this what the Premier meant when he bragged about making New South Wales number one again? Did he mean number one in unemployment? This is an absolute for my region.

I have a strong commitment to reducing unemployment in my local community. I want people in my community to have the opportunity to work and the dignity of being able to find a job and to contribute to our economy and our community. That is why I am convening a roundtable in my electorate in October with the shadow Minister for skills and many organisations involved in the delivery of employment, training and community services for the unemployed. These people have come from businesses, training organisations, TAFE, unions, and community service organisations. They are on the front line of our jobs industry.

My aim will be to work, as always, with my community to find effective local solutions to the jobs crisis that this Government continues to tackle ineffectively. I seek a more meaningful response than yet another government-funded talkfest with the private sector that will achieve little. I am pleased to see that, at last, the Premier has agreed that his Government is failing on jobs in my region. It is good to see that the Premier is taking the time to ask for the opinions of others. That is the basis of good policymaking. However, yet again, the Liberal-Nationals Government is looking at only one sector of the economy. I turn to the objectives of the bill. The bill has four stated objectives in establishing Jobs for NSW. Clause 3 (c) states:

- (c) to establish Jobs for NSW to utilise high level private sector business experience to provide strategic advice to government for the purpose of creating jobs and driving investment in New South Wales ...

That is, yet again, an example of the Government seeking advice from its mates in big business, without any input from the community, job skills networks, unions, the long-term unemployed or any other stakeholders. That will colour the advice that the Government is given. The Liberal-Nationals Government is a union-bashing government that wants people to work day and night for multinational companies, without penalty rates or any acknowledgement. The Government remains silent while jobs are lost because it refuses to do business with companies in its own State.

The Government cut the funding to my local Business Enterprise Centre, which provided assistance to small businesses in regional areas that are grappling with changes to technology and industry, to give them practical help that would create more jobs. The bill outlines in clause 6 (1) (c) that Jobs for NSW is "to advise the Minister on impediments to, and opportunities for, improving and expanding competitive advantage in New South Wales". The Government will use that forum to bash unions. Is it any wonder that a government that hates workers cannot seem to create enough jobs for them?

[Interruption]

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson): Order! The member for Maitland will be heard in silence.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: The Government's attitude is having an impact on our largest manufacturers and miners. The Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy made disparaging remarks about the Department of Planning and Environment at a mining awards dinner. There is a lack of

coherent Government policy on jobs, a potluck approach to tackling unemployment, and now the Government is calling on its mates in big business to join it in attacking workers' rights. At every turn this Government causes further indignity for those who cannot get a job, blaming them for not being able to find employment because they expect to receive a living wage for their hard work and their contribution to our community.

This Government is bereft of ideas. It is bereft of goodwill towards the unemployed in our community. On 5 August I wrote to Premier Mike Baird on behalf of the more than 12,000 people in my region who are looking for work and who cannot find it. I humbly and respectfully asked the Premier to increase the allocation of funding for Maitland and the Upper Hunter in the Community Building Partnership program to \$300,000, based on unemployment figures in those two electorates.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson): Order! The member for Orange will come to order. The member for Maitland will be heard in silence.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: The member for Upper Hunter is in the Chamber. I wonder whether he wrote a similar letter to the Premier. If he did, did he get a different response? The Community Building Partnership program provides base funding of \$200,000 per electorate to support local infrastructure projects. An additional \$100,000 is available for the 48 electorates with higher levels of disadvantage, as indicated by higher comparative unemployment rates. The Government has ignored the opportunity to help my region, the region with the highest unemployment, to access extra Community Building Partnership funds.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson): Order! The member for Maitland will be heard in silence. The member for Oatley will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: If, as the Community Building Partnership guidelines suggest, inclusion on this list is based on "comparative unemployment rates" then the exclusion of Maitland and Upper Hunter cannot be justified and these electorates should immediately be included on the list for additional funding. In addition, in the recently released "Dropping off the Edge" report, many of the suburbs of Maitland were found to be disadvantaged. Suburbs including Thornton, Beresfield and Woodberry in the 2322 postcode fell into the most disadvantaged category across the State. Much of the disadvantage involves lack of skills, training, mental health, domestic violence and long-term unemployment. The cycle of disadvantage caused by and impacting on unemployment is well advanced in my community. The Government has missed an opportunity to fix this. The forum that it is putting together with its mates from big business will not go any way towards fixing the problem. The community needs more funding for community-building partnerships to increase the community engagement of youth and unemployed in the short term and to increase employment in the longer term.

On 24 August I received a response to my letter from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, the Hon. Catherine Cusack, MLC. The Premier could not take the time out of his day to concern himself with the affairs of Maitland and respond in person. Ms Cusack advised me that the unemployment figures that the Government was relying on to allocate the Community Building Partnership funds were adjusted from the 2011 census—that is, adjusted in the redistribution at the last election. The figures are rubbery, to say the least. The statistics are four years old. What else of significance has happened in the past four years? Liberal-Nationals governments have been elected in Federal and State elections. The State Government and its Federal Government mates have doubled unemployment in my community.

New South Wales was in a great position post the global financial crisis, thanks to the former State and Federal Labor governments. I invite members to contrast that with the doubling in unemployment since the Liberal-Nationals Government came to power. I was at the Hunter Business Chamber lunch last month with the new chief executives of our airport and port. Chamber members at the lunch expressed to me their view—and they are the Government's business friends—that the Government has lost its focus on the Hunter. They said that former Deputy Premier Stoner had showed

significant commitment to regional defence strategies that would have impacted positively on the Hunter in the Gillard Government's 2013 defence white paper.

In contrast, the recent infrastructure audit ignored the Hunter. In the past four years our economy has been affected negatively by the Liberal-Nationals at State and Federal levels. Thousands of people with fantastic skills and abilities have lost their jobs as a direct result of the Government's lazy and incoherent approach to employment. I stand with everyone in my community who cannot get a job. I support this bill's aspiration to increase employment, but, like so many others in our community, I have lost faith in the ability of this Government to ease unemployment. I am committed to getting Maitland working again, to getting the essential services to ensure that everyone in our community is able to participate fully in work and education, with high-quality health and transport services.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson): Order! Government members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber. The member for Maitland will be heard in silence. Government members will respect her contribution.

Ms JENNY AITCHISON: I note the comments of the last speaker about infrastructure development in her region. The pace of infrastructure development in my region is glacial. The lag is directly responsible for the lack of jobs in my community. It is time the Government did more than set up another committee of business hacks who not be able to solve the unemployment problem.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [6.37 p.m.]: Members on this side of the House support creating employment, jobs growth and building a strong economy. I speak in support of the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. We need this bill to continue to attract investment, to strengthen our economy and to provide jobs and opportunities for the people of New South Wales. We owe it to the good people of New South Wales to pass this bill so that they are afforded the opportunity to find well-paid jobs and to play their part in the continued growth of the economy. Central to the bill is the establishment of a new private sector-led organisation called Jobs for NSW. Jobs for NSW will take a strategic, business-like approach to developing, consolidating, sourcing and strengthening existing and new opportunities for the State. It will ensure that the State is driven by competition and strong economic leadership.

Three months ago, Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian stood in this House and informed New South Wales that the budget was back in the black and back on track. She said the budget presents "a horizon without a deficit in sight" and "cements New South Wales as the place to live, work and invest". I could not agree more with the Treasurer, because this Government has acted in a fiscally responsible way and we have been able to deliver a surplus and boost spending in the areas of health and education. Importantly, we are building much-needed infrastructure across New South Wales, which had long been ignored and neglected by those opposite. Projects such as the redevelopment of St George Hospital and WestConnex and upgrades to the M5 are applauded by residents in my electorate as well as by people across Sydney and New South Wales.

The key objective of this Government is to sustain and boost economic growth so that we can continue to deliver on services and infrastructure for the people of New South Wales. That is why the Government has commissioned Jobs for NSW to assist with the creation and delivery of 150,000 new jobs by 2019. By creating and delivering 150,000 new jobs for New South Wales this Government is supporting and fostering economic growth in a strategic and proactive way that will benefit the workers of New South Wales, their families and their communities.

The Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 is in partnership with existing and new Government initiatives to boost jobs growth. That includes the \$5,000 Jobs Action Plan payroll tax rebate, which has been so successful that the program is being extended until 2019; and the Small Business Employment Incentive Grant Scheme, which provides up to \$2,000 for every additional employee a business that does not pay payroll tax employs. This incentive acknowledges that small business is the backbone of our economy and is worthy of our support and investment. The new \$25 million Jobs of Tomorrow Scholarship Fund

provides scholarships for students undertaking qualifications in technology and growth jobs, thereby supporting and nurturing our future workforce.

Mr Alister Henskens: Great news.

Mr MARK COURE: It is great news for the economy, not only in my electorate and in the Ku-ring-gai and Orange electorates but for everyone in New South Wales. The bill establishes a new statutory body that will advise the New South Wales Government on how to continue to boost jobs growth, to a competitive and strong economy and to ensure that New South Wales remains the best place to live and work.

Mr Andrew Gee: And help Oatley.

Mr MARK COURE: And it will help the Oatley electorate. To achieve this, the Government has introduced the Jobs for NSW Bill to attract new business and to provide an environment of economic growth that companies want to invest in. According to recently released Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] figures, New South Wales retail sales are the fastest growing in the country. In fact, they have been above the national average for the past two years. This demonstrates that New South Wales is the place to do business, and this Government, with the introduction of the Jobs for NSW Bill, is providing more opportunities, promoting growth and creating jobs.

The Jobs for NSW Board will have seven members who are leaders in business throughout New South Wales. The board will provide advice to the Government regarding cost-effective and targeted strategies to support economic growth in New South Wales and, importantly, jobs creation incentives to boost that economic development. As a member of this Government, I am proud of our record when it comes to managing industrial disputes. The recent ABS figures show that industrial disputes in New South Wales are at an all-time low, which is good for business and good for the economy. Combined with low rates of industrial disputes, an increase in business conditions from 13 index points to 22—twice the national average—and the establishment of the Jobs for NSW Fund, this Government is helping to create the best possible conditions for jobs growth and prosperity in our State.

The Jobs for NSW Fund will provide funding for targeted jobs creation initiatives and programs and will deliver on the Government's election commitment to boost funding for State investment attraction schemes to \$190 million. I am pleased to report that a minimum of 30 per cent of fund payments for jobs creation incentives will be provided for proposals in regional and rural New South Wales. The New South Wales economy is ripe for investment and continued growth. The ABS data show that in July this year 29,500 jobs were added across New South Wales—more than four times the next highest State. These are real jobs and are the reason New South Wales has the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Since the Liberal-Nationals Government came to office in 2011, more than 250,000 jobs have been created. Almost 60,000 new jobs have been added since the March 2015 election. A lot of people are working for the very first time. This bill will support and promote growth and will help to protect New South Wales and

New South Wales jobs against national and international markets and forces that may otherwise negatively impact on our strong economy. The Government promised strong leadership and a strong economy and we are delivering on that election commitment by bringing this bill to the House. I understand that those opposite are speaking against the bill but are supporting the bill. That makes perfect sense. I congratulate the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy for proposing this bill. I urge members on both sides of the House to support and speak in favour of the bill so that New South Wales continues to have the nation's strongest economy and to be the leader in jobs growth.

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [6.45 p.m.]: I speak in the debate on the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. I support the bill but with amendments. The purpose of the Jobs for NSW Bill is to establish an advisory board on how to grow jobs in New South Wales. The bill establishes the Jobs for NSW Board

and the Jobs for NSW Fund. The board is to advise the Minister on opportunities for developing the New South Wales economy; to identify opportunities to attract new businesses to New South Wales; to advise the Minister on impediments to and opportunities for improving and expanding competitive advantage in New South Wales; to develop a strategy to deliver cost-effective and strategically targeted support for economic development in New South Wales; to call for proposals for which jobs creation incentives may be granted under the legislation; and to assess proposals and make recommendations to the Minister about those proposals.

Further functions of the board are to prepare and recommend to the Minister for approval criteria for eligibility for jobs creation incentives and for assessment of proposals for which the incentives may be granted; to assess any such proposals according to the eligibility and assessment criteria approved from time to time for that purpose by the Minister; to make recommendations to the Minister about the proposals and approval of jobs creation incentives; to provide advice about business advisory services in New South Wales; and to provide advice about employment matters related to the carrying out of its functions. The board is to provide an annual report on its activities.

There is no doubt that jobs growth in New South Wales, including in the regions and the Hunter—for which I am the shadow Minister—is essential. I am sure that all members of this House agree that every person who wants a job should be able to obtain one. If we are to have a vibrant economy to which our residents feel they contribute, we need more jobs. The bill has lofty ideals; however, the devil is in the detail. Previous speakers on this side of the House spoke about unemployment rates. I particularly want to speak about the youth unemployment rate in the Hunter Valley and in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. As at July 2015, the youth unemployment rate in the Hunter Valley stands at 20.6 per cent—the highest in the State—and in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie it is 15.1 per cent. Unemployment is certainly an issue in my region in New South Wales and there is a need for more jobs throughout New South Wales.

When we look at the fine print in the Jobs for NSW scheme—as previously identified by the member for Swansea and the member for Wyong—funding for our regions effectively has been cut by a massive 75 per cent. The amount of money targeted, before this bill, to help our region has been cut. In a completely bizarre move, the amount of money available for regions has been massively cut. The former Regional Industry Investment Fund and the State Investment Attraction Scheme's combined annual funds of \$58 million have been cut. Under the new Jobs for NSW formula, there is funding of \$190 million over four years, or \$47.5 million a year. The Government says "at least 30 per cent" of that amount can be accessed by regions. But 30 per cent of \$47.5 million is \$14 million, a paltry amount when compared with the \$58 million under the Regional Industry Investment Fund and the State Investment Attraction Scheme. It is a cut of 75 per cent.

Jobs for NSW is being sold to us by the Government as something that is good for the regions. Obviously, the facts and figures show the truth to be very different. I mentioned that the regions themselves, in a very bizarre move, have been cut. This bill includes Newcastle and Wollongong in the Sydney metropolitan area, so they are not considered eligible for any of the regional funding. I am sure the people of the Hunter and the Illawarra will be very concerned to hear that they will not be eligible for regional funding. I am concerned that neither the Newcastle region nor the Wollongong region will see any of the possible 70 per cent of this new funding, that is, the 70 per cent that is not being tagged for the regions.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson): Order! Government members who want to have a private conversation should do so outside the Chamber.

Ms JODIE HARRISON: I will go through some of the facts in relation to the Hunter. The Hunter has a long and proud history of manufacturing, and manufacturing has had an incredibly important role in the development of and support for the Hunter mining industry. The Hunter has been responsible for building ships for this country, it has been responsible for building trains for the State, and it has had a

key part to play in the development of other sectors of the local economy. In fact, manufacturing continues to dominate our local economy. Many people still think of the Hunter's economy as being the BHP steelworks and mining. That is no longer the fact. The Hunter has transitioned; we are a very resilient lot.

Manufacturing in the Hunter directly accounts for 99 per cent of total employment in the Hunter, a rate that is higher than the statewide average. It provides almost double the number of jobs in the region's mining sector, and has a rapidly developing innovative culture and track record. In Charlestown, the 2014 census shows around 3,000 residents, or 8.6 per cent of the electorate, work in manufacturing, and those residents join thousands of others in the Hunter who work in manufacturing. Manufacturing is vital to the future prosperity of the Hunter region, but it does not get the support from government that it deserves. New businesses, start-up businesses, in the manufacturing area need help and encouragement.

Manufacturing generates wealth; it is vital to our wellbeing. But in New South Wales manufacturing jobs have fallen by 6.6 per cent over the past five years, that is, since this Government came to power. That leaves more than 20,000 skilled employees out of work. In fact, there is popular support for governments to invest in local jobs. In Victoria, we see trams with "Made in Melbourne for Melbourne" stamped on the side. But, under this bill, the Government is slashing assistance and mechanisms to help industry in our regions by up to 75 per cent. In the Hunter, bus manufacturer Volgren invested \$18 million in its factory at Tomago in 2010; recently, it has had to lay off 85 staff. Why is that? It is because this Government decided to send the State's bus contract to Queensland, instead of supporting jobs in New South Wales.

In addition, Downer EDI and UGL have a long history of supplying high-quality trains for this State, as well as nationally and internationally. They have the skilled and experienced workforce needed to build the next fleet of intercity trains for New South Wales. Both companies, Downer EDI and UGL, have struggled with this Government's ongoing tendering delays, which have created economic uncertainty for those businesses and forced them to lay off hundreds of people. A simple yet effective way to help, support and grow jobs—particularly in manufacturing in my region—is to buy locally, to spend in this State, to help our manufacturers compete in other State markets, and to help our manufacturers compete on the world market. It is not rocket science, but it does require the Government to do more than leave jobs growth to the free market.

Governments should consider the lifetime cost of its contracts, from construction to maintenance to disposal. They should consider the jobs multiplier effect and flow-on social benefits of a project. Not only will skilled workers employed under such contracts continue to be consumers in the local economy, they will also be responsible for investment in local areas. If this bill is to have any positive effect, there has to be a much better commitment to regional New South Wales. Otherwise, this should be called the Jobs for Sydney bill. The bill needs amendment to allocate designated board positions for regional voices, to mandate a minimum percentage spend of the fund in the regions, and to give an absolute commitment to transparency in the spending of the fund. This spending must be publicly available; and this reporting should not be at the Minister's discretion. Otherwise, this legislation should just be seen as a piece of legislative fluff.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.55 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. Jobs are vital for regional communities, otherwise they wither and die. I commend the Minister for bringing this bill to the House. I say at the outset that I was nonplussed by the contribution to this debate by the member for Wyong. It was typical Labor tripe; it was Laboronomics at its best. The member added one fund to another fund, extrapolated over four years, divided by four, and came up with a deficit. That is pretty well typical of what Labor governments did for 16 years—they came up with deficits and played around with numbers. But when they ended their term in office, New South Wales was stone motherless last. That is a fact, and there is no disputing it.

I was also somewhat nonplussed by the member for Maitland's supposed support for regional

jobs. Labor members seem to have forgotten that their leader is supporting the Australian Energy Regulator's determination, which will cut jobs in regional New South Wales. Did Labor make a submission opposing the Australian Energy Regulator's determination? Did the member for Wyong or the member for Maitland put in a submission opposing the Australian Energy Regulator's determination? Why are they now crying crocodile tears? It is all show. I assure Opposition members that the New South Wales Nationals did make a submission to the Australian Energy Regulator, as did I, because we are concerned about regional jobs, network safety and network security. We understand the vastness of the network in regional New South Wales, and we understand how important regional jobs are to those communities.

New South Wales is the powerhouse of the country, and that is not by chance. If left to chance, we would still be last—where Labor left this State when they were at the helm. Since we came to office in 2011 more than 250,000 new jobs have been created in New South Wales. In July alone 29,500 jobs were created in this State. This is four times the amount of the next highest State. As I said earlier, this success is not achieved by chance; it is a result of some difficult and strategic decisions taken by the Liberals and Nationals over the last term of government. We cut wasteful costs, brought our budget back under control and reaffirmed our triple-A credit rating. And we have allocated \$68.6 billion over the next four years for an unprecedented investment in infrastructure which will benefit the whole of New South Wales. Jobs for NSW will set a target of creating 150,000 jobs over the next four years. We want to build on the jobs we have created and help sustain regional businesses and improve the broader economic investment environment of New South Wales.

The Australian economy is very much dependent on New South Wales. It is incumbent on us to remain strong and prosperous and to embrace innovation and rapid change in the workplace. The Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 establishes a new body, known as Jobs for NSW, which will utilise private sector expertise to provide strategic advice to the Government for the purpose of creating jobs and to drive investment in New South Wales. I will not outline the main objectives of the bill as other members have done that already. I know full well the impact of the loss of jobs on regional communities. I saw this firsthand when the Grafton jail was downsized. But in the three years since, we have had a complete turnaround in my electorate, with significant State and Federal government investment in major infrastructure projects.

Indeed, \$4.5 billion is being spent on upgrading the Pacific Highway in the Clarence electorate and \$200 million has been allocated to the second Grafton Bridge. This project is finally coming to fruition. It was promised under Labor but never delivered. The Liberal-Nationals Government made a commitment which in its first term it is honouring. A new 600-bed jail is proposed for Grafton, which will create approximately 200 full-time jobs. This is in addition to the 100 public service jobs that were created in Grafton after the jail downsized. These are real jobs in regional New South Wales that have come about directly as a result of the initiatives of the Liberals and The Nationals in the last Parliament. But we have more to do and that is why the New South Wales Government has committed to deliver 150,000 new jobs over four years. This bill and Jobs for NSW will help us achieve this goal and strengthen our position as Australia's economic powerhouse. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [7.01 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. I did not intend to make a contribution because the Opposition does not oppose the bill—on the premise of supporting anything that may create jobs. This bill does create jobs; it creates an army of public servants who will work for Jobs for NSW. I have looked at the bill and the second reading speech, which, under the Interpretation Act, is an important part of stating the intentions of a bill. I commend those who wrote the second reading speech. It is the closest thing to a Sir Humphrey Appleby speech from Yes, *Minister* that I have ever seen.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the member for Kiama that he is already on three calls to order.

Mr RON HOENIG: The Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, Mr Anthony Roberts, for

whom I have the highest regard at various times, stated:

We now turn to modernise our approach to incentivising economic development so that commercial innovation and entrepreneurship can come to the fore.

I would like an interpreter to tell me what that actually means and how that would translate into the creation of jobs. The second reading speech contains waffle. I sought to find out how the Government might be able to implement some strategy that might create jobs. I listened with close attention to the contributions of Government members to learn whether there was something in the bill or whether they could expand upon what I have just quoted. The Minister further stated:

Rather than the old, reactive approach of responding to economic issues as they arise, Jobs for NSW will be charged with taking a strategic approach to identifying the competitive advantages of the New South Wales economy; then attracting, developing and consolidating new and existing businesses in New South Wales to strengthen our economic leadership.

I looked at the bill to see how that would be achieved and I listened to Government members to see whether they understood how that would be achieved. There was nothing, other than the same inaccurate waffle we continue to hear from the Government.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: Ignoring the adverse reflections, the member for Heffron, for whom I have a deep respect, is not referring to the substance of the bill. He is merely unleashing a diatribe on the Minister. I ask that the member return to the leave of the bill rather than simply attacking the Minister.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members do stray in debate on bills but the member for Heffron is returning to the leave of the bill.

Mr RON HOENIG: I have heard everything now—quoting from the second reading speech is somehow departing from the bill. That is bizarre.

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

Mr RON HOENIG: Before I was politely interrupted by the member for Kiama I was seeking to refer to how a number of Government members continually state that New South Wales is number one, how they have created all these jobs and how New South Wales is leading the nation. I remind the House of one statistic. As at May 2012 the unemployment rate in New South Wales was 4.9 per cent. As at May 2015 the unemployment rate was 6 per cent. This graph, which I cannot incorporate in *Hansard* as it is on my iPhone, shows that the unemployment rate has gone up since the time the Coalition was elected. Since February 2012 14,500 jobs have been lost in New South Wales, so Government members should not beat their chests about being great economic managers. I know that the reason for the loss of jobs and the slowdown in the economy relate to the collapse of the Australian dollar and the slowing of the mining boom, which has not impacted on New South Wales to any great extent.

I find it remarkable that the Government claims credit for economic statistics to its advantage, even if it has played no part in them, yet it seeks to disassociate itself from any statistic not to its advantage. Since the Government came to office, unemployment in New South Wales has increased dramatically. The only statement with which I agree in the second reading speech is the statement that the purported level of infrastructure investment will generate economic activity. In four years the Government has not yet spent sufficient funds to make a significant contribution, but it will in the future. That is the typical way that governments nationally respond: to try to prime the economy with public sector funds when an economic slowdown is occurring. Treasuries apply those sorts of levers. One of my concerns with this bill is that the Government is creating yet another statutory body, with appointed

experts who are supposed to provide advice. The Minister stated:

... board members will largely be drawn from the private sector and will include some of Australia's pre-eminent business leaders.

I thought that was the Minister's job. I thought governments are supposed to be able to implement policies to drive the economy. In every question time every Government member who has contributed in this House continues to say that this Government has generated all this economic activity; New South Wales is number one again because of the actions of the Executive Government; but the reality is that it wants to abdicate its responsibility to a private sector board that will drive New South Wales for the next four years—just as governments have abdicated their responsibility for planning and public transport by giving them to bureaucrats. The Government outsources to other people the decision-making process that governments are elected to undertake and are supposed to drive in this State. This is not the first time a bit of legislative fluff has appeared in this House.

In the past two or three months I have contributed to debate on the Small Business Grants (Employment Incentive) Bill 2015, which the Government claimed would create 150,000 jobs in New South Wales by providing \$40 per week for employees who employ someone for a 12-month period. If we multiply \$40 a week by 150,000 jobs, we are talking about \$300 million. At the time I pointed out that there was no way small business would achieve that. How many tens of millions of dollars has the Government given away to payroll rebate allegedly for small business when 90 per cent of small businesses do not pay payroll tax?

Mr Gareth Ward: It's a rebate.

Mr RON HOENIG: I will seek an extension of time if members opposite continue to interrupt. As I pointed out, a huge amount of research is available that indicates how to target unemployment and how to create a successful unemployment scheme. Those opposite say tax and spending. This bill creates an army of public servants and that is where the jobs are. [*Time expired.*]

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) [7.11 p.m.]: I support the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 and thank the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy for his work and that of his staff on this bill. I welcome this bill, as it will grow and establish jobs and build competitiveness for New South Wales through a new private sector led organisation. The bill not only focuses on the metropolitan centres but also reinforces the Government's support for regional areas of New South Wales. I, like everyone in this Chamber, think that New South Wales is a fantastic place to live and work, and I believe the Liberal-Nationals Government is implementing fantastic changes to ensure that this State continues to grow and develop, and remains number one.

The best way to do this is by continuing to develop the New South Wales economy through attracting, developing and, importantly, retaining new and existing business in all areas of New South Wales. This bill complements some of the work the Government has already put into place and which I have spoken about before, such as the Jobs Action Plan and payroll tax rebates, which I am proud to say have helped to create more than 1,700 jobs in the Liverpool area since this Government came to office.

Mr Gareth Ward: More to come.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: There are more to come. One local company that has benefited under the Jobs Action Plan is a Prestons business called All Round Supplies. I have had the pleasure of meeting with this organisation. I took the then Treasurer, Mike Baird, to meet with All Round Supplies and I know he was really impressed with the work undertaken by that business. We were thrilled that its finance manager, Ken Thomas, was so impressed with the scheme that he called a number of his best clients to tell them about the scheme and how they could benefit.

I have since spoken to a number of other companies who have also benefited from the Jobs Action Plan as well as some of the employees they have hired. The feedback has been extremely positive. It is a great way not only to get people back into the workforce after they have been retrenched but also to enable local small business to grow with an incentive from the State Government. The bill also complements the Small Business Employment incentive, which rewards small businesses for taking on additional staff and the new \$25 million Jobs for Tomorrow Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships for students undertaking qualifications in technology and growth industries.

This bill will ensure that the best business brains in the country are driving the policy and funding to unleash the full economic potential of the great State of New South Wales. The Jobs for NSW Board will help meet the commitment of creating 150,000 new jobs in New South Wales by 2019. New South Wales currently has the strongest growth rate and the lowest unemployment rate of any Australian State. To assist with future growth, the Jobs for NSW Fund has been established to deliver on the Government's election commitment to boost funding for State investment attraction schemes to the value of \$190 million. To ensure that there is transparency around the new fund, an annual report will be produced outlining funding grants and outcomes.

What is great about this initiative is that at least 30 per cent of the Jobs for NSW Fund will be allocated to the regional areas of New South Wales, and I know my colleague the member for Kiama is thrilled about that. This money will go to areas where people have had to move away from their home towns due to not being able to find a job close by. They will benefit from having access to different and new businesses, and they will also see an increase in the number of people remaining in or moving to the area or nearby areas to live and work. The Jobs for NSW Fund, replacing the State Investment Attraction Scheme and the Regional Industries Investment Fund, will be easier for businesses to understand and use, and will also help increase transparency.

What is great is that all current funding under the previous scheme and fund will continue under the terms of the current agreements, which means that we are not creating additional red tape for people who have already met the necessary criteria and does not slow down the process for new applicants. The Liberal-Nationals Government has worked hard to take the State from last among the States and Territories for economic performance and make it first in the nation, as was its promise. This bill will continue to ensure that New South Wales remains in first place for growth and economic performance, and will continue to set up our State for the future. I thank the Minister again for his work in developing this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COFFS HARBOUR CENTENARY OF RAIL

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [7.17 p.m.]: I congratulate the Centenary of Rail Committee in Coffs Harbour. Two Saturdays ago, after 12 months of very hard work and organisation, the committee commemorated the Centenary of Rail in Coffs Harbour and on the North Coast. Mr Deputy-Speaker, no doubt you, as well as our colleague the member for Clarence, would have seen media coverage of the steam train taking crates of bananas to Casino, as they did in the old days. Over the weekend more than 3,000 people took the opportunity to ride on the steam train. Some went north to Coramba through about seven tunnels and others went south to Boambee.

Every seat on the train was booked out for the whole weekend. The committee held a competition

to win a ride in the engine area, and the competition was so well patronised that no more entries could be received. I met the winner of the competition, who was absolutely thrilled. The number of children and families that flooded the foreshore and the station was unbelievable. In conjunction with the centenary of rail, the airport had a display of old planes. My wife, Kerry, and I took a trip up north to Woolgoolga in an old DC3. It was a festival of vintage things. Down on the jetty was an old pirate boat, an imitation obviously.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! You would not have looked out of place.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: No, I was right in amongst it and well and truly a vintage member. At Coffs Harbour railway station I had the opportunity to unveil a plaque commemorating the 100 years. The chairman of the organising committee, Mr Neil Manson, and his committee were thrilled with the result on the day. They worked long and hard to get it done. I congratulate each and every one of them. I think many people were not sure whether it would take off. Last August or thereabouts we had a trial run for which a rail motor was brought in. Even on that day it was booked out. People tend to love vintage rail.

As a result of the success of the event, Neil came to me and said, "Wouldn't it be great if we could make this an annual event and give more people an opportunity to ride on a steam train?" That would be especially good for those who missed out this year because the seats were 100 per cent booked, as I said. I believe that is a fantastic idea. I have asked Neil to write to me in the hope that we can secure a government grant. He can submit a proper business plan and possibly get some tourism or regional development money to give the committee an opportunity to develop an annual rail event.

As Mr Deputy-Speaker and my North Coast colleagues know, a World Rally Championship event will be held in Coffs Harbour this weekend. I was fortunate to attend the breakfast yesterday. In addition, three weeks ago the Offshore Superboat Championships were held in Coffs Harbour and we also host off-road racing events. If we were to bring all the events together during the August, September and October period we could turn the end of the winter months into a boon for Coffs Harbour. I congratulate everyone involved in the World Rally Championship and thank my staff for the great job they have done in preparing for the event. I thank Rally Australia Chairman Ben Rainsford and Peter Wardman, who chaired a community committee. The community has been very supportive and the shop owners have decorated their premises to welcome the event.

If we had a month to six weeks of celebrating everything from vintage rail through to modern-day rally cars imagine what a boost it would be for tourism in the area and the accommodation houses that find it hard to fill their rooms at this time of year. Once again, I congratulate Neil Manson and appeal to the Government to find some funding to give him an opportunity to prepare a plan for next year in the hope of making the steam train event an annual occurrence like the rally and the motorboat events. Conn Saloumidis, who headed up the Offshore Superboat Championships, is a bit of a larrikin and a great bloke. On the day of the championships 5,000 to 10,000 people lined the foreshore of Coffs Harbour. Coming into spring is a great time of the year to do it. I appeal to the Government to give us some seed funding to get the steam train event going as an annual event.

AUSTRALIAN FILIPINO ASSOCIATION OF THE CENTRAL COAST INC.

Ms KATHY SMITH (Gosford) [7.22 p.m.]: I will take a few moments to introduce the Australian Filipino Association of the Central Coast Inc. and acknowledge its work. The Australian Filipino Association was founded on 9 July 1989 by a dozen or so Filipino ladies who had the desire to better connect Filipino Australians living on the Central Coast. The association's first objective is to provide social activities for its members and other Filipino families and individuals, especially newcomers to the coast. It also helps new migrants to overcome homesickness and, with cultural adjustment, makes it easier for them to settle into their newly adopted home. Upon the association becoming incorporated, additional objectives were added. They include: to reach out to all Filipinos living on the Central Coast; to foster existing friendships and encourage unity among members; to recognise and develop existing

talents of its members; and to foster the arts and appreciation of all other cultures.

At the birth of the Australian Filipino Association a folkloric dance troupe also emerged and became the unofficial standard flag bearer for the group. Mothers, fathers, children and grandchildren are all encouraged to be members of this noble troupe that has performed at many and varied venues to a wide audience. More than 100 families are registered members and hundreds of supporters of both Filipino and non-Filipino origins form part of the group. As well as providing help to Filipino Australians, the organisation undertakes many charity fundraising events and helps groups or organisations on the Central Coast who may be in need of support. Some recent recipients of funds raised are Give Me 5 for Kids—Central Coast, the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, the police citizens youth club, the Rural Fire Service and cancer research.

Recently I was delighted to attend the Australian Filipino Association of the Central Coast Inc. Charity Queen Coronation Night. This year the association was celebrating its twenty-sixth anniversary. It was certainly a night when I learned just how hard our Filipino community likes to party. This year the entrants in the Charity Queen contest helped to raise much-needed funds for Typhoon Haiyan victims in the Philippines who live in certain areas of the country that are struggling to get back on track following the devastation caused by that dreadful catastrophe. The association works tirelessly in our community I am looking forward to working closely with the warm and friendly people who constitute the membership of the organisation for many years to come.

SRI LANKAN BUDDHIST TEMPLE, SCHOFIELDS

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [7.25 p.m.]: It is my great privilege to be the local member for the Sri Lankan Lankarama Buddhist temple at Schofields. When I first became the candidate for the Riverstone electorate I had never heard of the temple, which is hidden away in a secluded and peaceful spot along First Ponds Creek. I was made aware of the temple and its people by my good friend Prasan Ulluwishewa, who introduced me to the community and chief monk and showed me the work and commitment of Lankarama at Schofields. Since that time I have had the great pleasure of assisting the temple association through Community Building Partnership grant applications. A successful grant was submitted to help with the cost of installing air conditioning in a new meditation hall constructed on the site. Since then I have been privileged to attend a number of special events in that venue and in other parts of the facility.

Lankarama provides great services to the Sri Lankan community in Sydney. It is a positive contributor to our community through the provision of religious programs, youth services, educational programs and community networking. It also supports people in difficult times, offers counselling and runs compassionate programs to fundraise for those in need. It is a positive influence on my electorate of Riverstone and Sydney more broadly. The chief monk at Lankarama, whom I now count as a good friend, is the Venerable Nayaka Pundit Meegahakumbure Dhammagavesi Thera. He is a learned gentleman who, like all Buddhist monks, has trained intensively so that he can minister to his followers and lead them on the right path. He is an inspirational man who is much loved by the Sri Lankan Buddhist community and is a great force for good in our part of the world. Not so long ago he was recognised in an official capacity as the leader of the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Australia.

As I said, the temple complex has a new meditation hall that was completed a couple of years ago. It also has a residence for the monks, facilities for engaging in youth group work and supporting education, and religious shrines and elements that are most important to the Buddhist community. Of significance is the Bodhi Tree, which is a cutting grown from an ancient tree in Sri Lanka that itself came from a cutting from the tree under which Buddha sat in India at the time of enlightenment. The Buddhist community venerate the continuity represented by the tree that is growing in what was a difficult initial environment at Schofields. It is now flourishing, having been tended very carefully by the Buddhist community for the past 18 years. At the precinct there is also the stupa, which is a distinctive-shaped Buddhist shrine containing relics of the Buddha and is a gathering place for devotees.

In Buddhist tradition the Bodhi Tree and the stupa are permanent fixtures. Once the tree has grown or the stupa is constructed they are never allowed to fall into decline or disrepair, and they are never demolished or removed. They are permanent devotional symbols of the Buddhist faith. The reason I raise it is that, in the context of the Riverstone East precinct being put on public exhibition, it was most unfortunate that the Department of Planning and Environment did not appreciate the religious significance of this site and initially proposed a zone that would probably be incompatible with the ongoing religious use of this location. Fortunately, I have been in discussion with the Department of Planning, as has the temple association. I believe there will be a way forward to modify the proposed zoning so that the religious use of the site can continue. I believe it is absolutely compatible with the precinct plan, as released by the Department of Planning. I trust that sensible, wise counsel will prevail and that what is a very valuable facility, and a very positive contributor to my local community, will be able to continue operating indefinitely.

CHILDCARE AFFORDABILITY

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) [7.30 p.m.]: Hillary Clinton noted in a recent speech that affordable, flexible and high-quality child care is the key to delivering fairness to families. As a new mum, I get to speak to lots of other parents—at the park with my mother's group, often with a strong takeaway flat white to counteract the lack of sleep; or sometimes at my son's favourite Marrickville's Magic Yellow Bus, which is celebrating its fortieth anniversary. I get to share laughs and stories, and also hear about people's challenges. What is clear from those conversations is that when it comes to child care we are a long way from fairness. Some parents in my electorate are paying upwards of \$120 a day for child care. That is almost double the national average and up to 150 per cent more than what parents paid in 2003.

Last year the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling released a report into childcare affordability, which showed that the average mother returning to full-time work loses up to two-thirds of her gross salary once we deduct childcare costs, tax and the loss of benefits. I repeat: She loses up to two-thirds of her salary. This forces families, and most often mothers, to make really hard choices: Can I afford to return to work or is my only option to stay home? Can I afford to pick up those extra shifts? Can I afford those extracurricular activities or those special treats? Can I afford to keep my child in day care for another year, or should he or she start school early so I can afford my mortgage repayments? Can I afford to have more children? These are the real and scary everyday questions that mums and families have to confront.

Let us look at the statistics. Only about 67 per cent of women aged 15 to 64 years are currently in paid work compared with 78 per cent of men. While 55 per cent of employed women work full time, 85 per cent of employed men work full time, with the remainder working part time. These rates are substantially lower than in many other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] countries. The Grattan Institute has found that the vast majority of women who do not do paid work, or who work part time, have children. They found that women who provide care for their own children have significantly lower participation rates than those who do not, and that the female workforce participation can only change significantly if more mothers have jobs.

If Australian women did as much paid work as women in Canada—implying that an extra 6 per cent of women were in the workforce—Australia's gross domestic product would be about \$25 billion higher. As a society, we need to ask ourselves: Can we afford to continue to force women to make choices that limit their ability to earn a living, to make a career and to contribute to the economy? One of the principal drivers behind the gender pay gap—now at 17.9 per cent—is the fact that women are often forced to stay home for longer due to cost-of-living pressures, including the cost of child care.

We all know that the cost of living is on the rise. We are in the midst of an unprecedented affordable housing crisis across Sydney, with families facing ever-increasing rents and astronomical house prices. We know these pressures are greater for single mums. Without affordable child care,

mothers often sacrifice years of their working lives, with real impacts on their salary, superannuation and seniority. It makes it harder for them to get ahead and to earn more money as their careers progress. For mums who work casually, the loss of income can be immediate as they have to forgo hours of work to care for their kids.

The recent news that penalty rates may yet again be under fire from the Abbott Government worries me deeply. I fear for the mums and dads who rely on weekend or night work to pay the cost of child care or to just get by. Clearly we need to find a solution. I think Hilary Clinton's speech gives us a good starting point. We need to find ways to make child care more affordable—placing downward pressure on daily costs so that people have greater freedom to make choices for their families. We need flexible day care and parenting policies, including—and this is key—making sure that dads have access to the same levels of parental leave as mums so that family choices do not become choices only to be made by women. And, of course, we need child care of the highest standard, because our kids deserve the best start in life.

I welcome the recent decision by Marrickville Council to invest \$5 million in a new childcare centre at Steel Park in South Marrickville. More than 2,000 families are on the waiting list. The new centre will provide an additional 60 spots, which is a great start. I will say now what I say to the mums and dads I meet: I do not have all the answers, but as a society we must have the conversation about reforming child care now. Making child care affordable and flexible will have a real impact on families and mums; it is also an important investment in a more productive and inclusive economy. It is an investment we cannot afford not to make.

TORONTO MOTOR REGISTRY

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [7.35 p.m.]: I again draw to the attention of this House an issue that has Lake Macquarie residents upset and perplexed—that is, the proposed closure of the Toronto Motor Registry. Correspondence to my office on this one topic has been off the charts, with residents overwhelmingly opposed to the decision announced on August 19 to relocate the office to the Warners Bay Service NSW centre. The registry is due to close in mid-October, just over a month from now. At the moment there are few other topics my constituents want to talk about. With no exaggeration, almost everywhere I go people in the electorate stop me to express their disappointment at the decision and ask me to do everything I can to have it reversed. Facebook posts on the issue on my page—and I say this without a hint of hyperbole—have gone viral, with my normally quite modest following exploding. One post urging people to sign a petition was shared more than 600 times. It almost rivals the Facebook exploits of the King of Kiama, the member for Kiama sitting opposite.

This is a hot button issue in my local area. In just over two weeks, a petition circulated among more than 50 local businesses has received more than 10,000 signatures. I will be presenting that petition to this House next week so that this important issue can be debated in this House. The concerns of people in my electorate arise from a well-founded perceived lack of suitability of the Service NSW site at Warners Bay to meet the needs of people in western Lake Macquarie. This is due to a number of factors, including poor public transport access, restricted parking, lack of proximity to other services, and travel distance from the southern suburbs of the electorate.

The Warners Bay centre is not in what most people would describe as the main business and retail district of the town; it is in a commercial precinct which, while quite large, comprises mostly bulky goods retailers, service outlets, sports centres and light industrial workshops. In other words, it is not the sort of place where people can combine a trip to the supermarket, post office, bank, library, doctor, dentist or Centrelink office with their visit to the motor registry, as they often do now at Toronto, where all those other services are in close proximity. The Warners Bay Service NSW centre is poorly serviced by public transport. The hub bus route for Warners Bay passes along The Esplanade, some two kilometres to the south. Very few buses pass the commercial precinct where the Service NSW centre is situated.

In contrast, Toronto is a hub for buses from all points of western Lake Macquarie and surrounding suburbs, and many of them run right past the motor registry. There is a direct bus link from Fassifern railway station a couple of kilometres away and ample parking at and nearby the registry for those who use private transport. Residents from Coal Point, Wangi Wangi, the Morisset Peninsula and Cooranbong, for example, have been poorly served by this decision, particularly if they rely on public transport. Many constituents have reported parking problems and extended waiting times at the busy Warners Bay Service NSW outlet, and they fear these will be exacerbated by an increase in clientele following the closure of motor registries at Toronto and Belmont. In addition to these inconveniences, residents from the southern part of my electorate will face a round trip of about 60 kilometres to visit their closest Service NSW centre.

I acknowledge that the Minister for Finance, Services and Property has engaged with me on this matter and spoke to it in question time on 27 August. I also acknowledge the willingness of staff from his office and Service NSW to meet me and discuss issues relating to the closure. I have heard their reasons for deciding to close the registry; but, with respect, the arguments are unconvincing and show little appreciation for local needs and for the interest of communities. The willingness to engage came, unfortunately, only after the announcement, with no prior consultation with the local member or the community.

I support the concept of Service NSW. I congratulate the Government on the initiative. However, I cannot understand why, when the Government was deciding which registries would be changed over, a central, accessible location like Toronto was overlooked for conversion to a Service NSW centre. Western Lake Macquarie is a large and growing area that warrants its own Service NSW presence, and Toronto qualifies as a suitable location on all criteria. Toronto is very much the hub for suburbs and towns on the western side of the lake, offering complementary access to government services, as well as retail and other businesses. I realise that difficult decisions on registry closures have been made all over the State, but I believe the case for retaining and converting the site at Toronto is strong. I urge the Minister and the Government to reconsider the decision.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.40 p.m.]: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his advocacy on behalf of his community. I acknowledge that he is an example of an Independent member who works hard and achieves great results. I respect him for his contribution. I acknowledge the comments made by the member for Lake Macquarie about the Warners Bay Service NSW centre and his advocacy for the retention of services at Toronto and Belmont. I acknowledge that the member has discussed those issues with the Minister. I am sure that he will continue to use this forum to take up those issues, as he does so stridently for a number of causes.

Service NSW, an initiative founded by the former Premier, has a number of great attributes. The online access, the 24-hour phone line and the capacity to open at weekends have meant that the centres have brought government services under one roof like never before. I encourage the member to continue to raise these matters in this place. I am sure that his advocacy on behalf of his community will continue to achieve great results. [*Time expired.*]

Private members' statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution matter of public importance proceeded with.

NORTH WEST RAIL LINK

Matter of Public Importance

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) [7.42 p.m.]: Today is the first anniversary of the commencement of tunnelling for the North West Rail Link, which is the biggest infrastructure project in the Southern Hemisphere. Yesterday I received the following email:

Good afternoon

Please find below an update to the weekly email with an adjustment to the total tunnelling distances.

It went on:

Dear neighbours,

Welcome to our update on the progress of tunnelling for Sydney Metro Northwest (formerly known as the North West Rail Link) between Cheltenham and Epping.

Where is Isabelle?

The third tunnel boring machine (TBM3), *Isabelle*, was launched from Cherrybrook Station site on Monday 3 November 2014. *Isabelle* has tunnelled about 5.3 kilometres since her launch. Last week *Isabelle* made her way under Ray Road, Epping, near its intersection with Kandy Avenue. This week she will continue her journey along Ray Road and is expected to be close to crossing over into Edensor Street, Epping, by the end of this week.

It will be arriving at Epping. The email continued:

Where is Maria?

The fourth tunnel boring machine (TBM4), *Maria*, was launched from the Cherrybrook Station site on 14 January 2015 and has completed just over 4.4 kilometres of tunnelling. Last week *Maria* continued on her journey towards Epping Service Facility site, making her way under the Beecroft Reserve. She is expected to be approaching under the Kent Street footbridge which spans the M2 by the end of this week.

Another two TBMs, *Elizabeth* and *Florence*, are tunnelling from Bella Vista to excavate the twin tunnels towards Cherrybrook.

...

Tunnelling operations occur 24 hours a day, seven days a week in accordance with Environment Protection Licence conditions. We will continue to keep you updated on the progress of *Isabelle* and *Maria*.

Thank you again for your patience and cooperation as we carry out this important work.

Kind regards,

The TJHD Community Team

This is a wonderful story. The tunnel-boring machine is about to break through at Epping. This is a story of achievement and delivery. It is a story of jobs creation and service delivery for generations to come. How stark is the contrast with our opponents, whose record on this vision for the future is a betrayal of the families of the north-west, the largest growth area in metropolitan Sydney? Labor's record on this project is a deplorable example of rhetoric without delivery. Labor first promised it in 1998. It was supposed to be finished by 2010. That was five years ago. Not one centimetre of tunnel was bored or infrastructure delivered under the Labor Government.

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

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: What has the Government done? It has concentrated on getting on with the job. There are now four tunnel-boring machines digging in the ground. The \$8.3 billion Sydney Metro Northwest will be open to customers by 2019. It is the largest public transport infrastructure project under construction in Australia. It will deliver eight new railway stations and 4,000 new commuter car parking spaces. There will be trains every four minutes. This project is ahead of schedule and \$300 million under budget. More than 30 million customer trips a year are expected on Sydney Metro Northwest between Cudgegong Road—which I hope is renamed—and Chatswood within seven years of opening.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Tudehope Way.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Indeed. There will be 14 million fewer car trips each year, soon after the rail line opens. That is 12,000 fewer car trips in an average two-hour morning peak. Sydney Metro Northwest is part of the broader Sydney's rail future, which includes Sydney Metro City and Sydney Metro South West. There will be a new metro rail line under Sydney Harbour, through the central business district and to Bankstown. There will be investment in infrastructure and signalling for Western Sydney. Up to 60 per cent more trains every hour will travel across the network. There will be capacity for an extra 100,000 people every hour during peak times. There will be express trains from Penrith, Parramatta and Blacktown to the city.

Four new underground stations in the central business district will ease congestion at Wynyard and Town Hall. This is a success story. The benefits of the metro are clear. More doors and no stairs will reduce the time trains spend at stations. Initially there will be 15 trains per hour—a train every four minutes—moving large numbers of customers, with 98 per cent reliability. We should be proud of this project on this day, which represents 12 months since the commencement of tunnelling. I commend the project to the Parliament.

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) [7.47 p.m.]: As a new member in this place, my understanding was that the matter of public importance discussion was intended to be confined to matters that are apolitical and bipartisan. A quick look at *Hansard* shows that this agenda item has included discussions about social issues that have an impact on the day-to-day lives of Australians. There is almost never political backslapping or displays of tactless political point-scoring. I have listened to members in silence; I expect the same courtesy to be extended to me. Some of the subjects discussed in previous months have been Daffodil Day, the Gold Telethon, multiple sclerosis, road safety, emergency services, bushfire responses and Thank a Paramedic Day. It is unfortunate that today the Government has used this segment to promote its self-interest by continuing the backslapping and self-congratulatory drivel that we continually see in debates on bills, Government business and motions accorded priority each afternoon.

The Government's interest in looking inward prompts me to respond and bring some facts to the table. On researching the history of the North West Rail Link, I note that any mention of a business case is conspicuously absent from the project. Apparently one was not done before the project was announced. To this day, a business case has never been published, despite the enormous price tag of \$8.1 billion. The project is very expensive. One would have thought that a competent government would be required to justify whether a project of this size was value for money, but apparently this was not the case.

I do not claim to be an economist, but as an observer of the political process and a civil engineer I know that a project of this magnitude should undergo a cost-benefit analysis, sometimes called a benefit-cost ratio [BCR]. This Government has been very cagey about any mention of the BCR. That is because the BCR for the North West Rail Link is 0.8 to 1, meaning that every dollar of taxpayer money

the State spends returns only 80¢ in economic activity. That explains why the Baird Government is suggesting that we need to build another tunnel under the harbour for trains to connect to the North West Rail Link—it is simply to give it a positive BCR. That means we need to spend approximately \$20 billion to give this project a positive BCR. With figures like these no wonder the Government is hiding behind a veil of secrecy. Put simply, this Government's transport and infrastructure record has been high on rhetoric and low on transparency and delivery.

The best indicator of the Government's ability to deliver infrastructure promises is what has been done over the past four years. Capital expenditure on infrastructure has been underspent by 11.14 per cent. Capital spending by the Government is closely related to jobs creation and unemployment has risen in New South Wales from 5 per cent to 5.7 per cent—that is 38,000 more unemployed people since Labor left office. The \$5.1 billion underspent in the past four years could have meant thousands more jobs and projects like WestConnex, which could have started years ago. The Government's \$68.6 billion promise of infrastructure over the four years is not true. The budget papers show that \$7.8 billion is to be spent on electricity network investment that the Government cannot possibly deliver because it is privatising the corporations that are supposedly going to be spending the money. This means that the Government is promising to spend less in the next four years on infrastructure than it promised to spend over the past four years.

Rather than backslapping, Government members should focus on the important matters that need to be addressed, such as train cancellations. Peak train cancellations across the Sydney rail network have increased by a staggering 23 per cent in the past year. Figures obtained by the New South Wales Opposition reveal that there were a whopping 172 more peak train cancellations across Sydney in the past year compared with the previous year—not to mention bus cancellations. The Government should stop the self-interest and looking inward and start focusing on addressing the matters that impact on people's lives every day.

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) [7.52 p.m.]: I will try to get us back on track. This is certainly not about self-interest; this is about providing transport, providing jobs, unlocking congestion, getting families home so they can have dinner together—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): That would be a good idea.

Mr MARK TAYLOR: —and it is about growing our economy. There is no doubt that the Government is going to leave a stamp on this State—a stamp of infrastructure across this great city and across the State. This project has led to a jobs boom in Sydney's north-west; there are already 400 people on the building site of the sky train as we speak and about 900 others working to deliver Australia's longest railway tunnels. The member for Epping described the four boring machines. They are at work now in the dark, quietly tunnelling away to improve our city and our State. They work 24 hours a day to deliver tremendous transport outcomes for our State.

We are getting on with the job and the result will be eight new railway stations, 4,000 new commuter car parking spaces and trains every four minutes—all delivered ahead of schedule and \$300 million under budget. There will be 14 million fewer car trips a year and, after Sydney Metro Northwest opens, 12,000 fewer car trips in an average two-hour morning peak, which will be applauded by the constituents of Seven Hills. At Seven Hills railway station every morning constituents from far and wide travel down the Western line, but when the new railway line opens that will no longer be the case. We will be able to unlock the Western line and provide more seats for commuters, more services and more facilities—as I said, getting more people to their jobs, getting more people home to their families and providing greater economy in this great city.

Thirty-six kilometres of the Sydney Metro Northwest is on time and on budget and 60 per cent of the tunnelling is done. People can see the cranes at Kellyville and Cudgegong Road as we speak. Planning is underway by the Department of Planning and Environment to preserve a North West

Transport Corridor, extending from Cudgegong Road to Marsden Park via Schofields. We are planning for the future, we are thinking ahead and we are delivering the infrastructure this State needs. It is a magnificent anniversary and I commend it to the House.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) [7.55 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Seven Hills and the member for Mount Druitt for their contributions. This was an opportunity for the member for Mount Druitt to be bipartisan and to recognise that the Sydney Metro Northwest is one of the great pieces of infrastructure to be delivered to this State. It now bears repeating: Labor promised 12 rail projects and delivered none. Labor had 10 transport plans and delivered none. Labor had a Rozelle light rail project, which it promised and did not deliver and paid \$800 million in compensation.

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

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: This is a project that today we should be celebrating. It has created numerous jobs for the people of New South Wales and in many respects it creates marvels of engineering that have to be seen to be believed. Those opposite say they do not want this project, they do not want another harbour crossing and all the jobs that would bring with it, and they do not want a train system that unlocks the train congestion in Sydney. This project is about the future of New South Wales. This Government is absolutely hell-bent on planning for the future but those opposite come into this place on this anniversary and say it did not have a business case to support it.

This project is a plan for the future of this State and every time we see one of the tunnel-boring machines emerge at Bella Vista or Castle Hill or Cherrybrook or Epping we should celebrate the great achievement of this Government. We debated in this House today the Jobs for NSW Bill 2015. This project is exactly the sort of project that will create jobs for the people of this State. If there was ever an opportunity for Opposition members to come into this place and tell the people they got it wrong but they support us now, this was it. We gave them that opportunity and they fluffed it.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 7.58 p.m. until
Wednesday 9 September 2015 at 10.00 a.m.**
