

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 23 August 2012

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

FINES AMENDMENT BILL 2012

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

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

RETAIL LEASES AMENDMENT (MEDIATION) BILL 2012

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Paul Lynch, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [10.04 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Retail Leases Amendment (Mediation) Bill 2012 aims to restore what has long been considered the procedure required for retail trading leases when a dispute arises between landlord and tenant. The commonly understood position was that recourse could not be had to the courts or a tribunal until mediation had been attempted or the failure of mediation had been certified. That was the common understanding. It is sufficiently common that it is enshrined in the heading of section 68 of the Retail Leases Act.

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

Mr PAUL LYNCH: That heading says:

Disputes and other matters must be submitted to mediation before proceedings can be taken.

A recent decision in the Court of Appeal of New South Wales has changed that position and will now allow access to courts and tribunals with no real regard to attempted mediation or to the certification of its failure. That case is *Kim-Po Sor v Fordham Laboratories Pty Ltd*. The decision was handed down on 14 October 2011 by their Honours Justice Young and Justice Campbell. The legislation at the core of this issue is the Retail Leases Act. It was a product of this Parliament in 1994. The relevant Minister was Mr Ray Chappell, the member for Northern Tablelands, and the shadow Minister was Mr John Murray, member for Drummoyne. The then Minister noted in his second reading speech that retail leases were often a matter of contention. The legislation sought to ensure that retail leasing agreements were entered into from a position of reasonably equal negotiating strength. In the Minister's view the bill provided for cost-effective and timely dispute resolution. That, of course, was not always the case with traditional court arrangements. The shadow Minister noted that the bill dispensed with the myth perpetrated by some that there was somehow a level playing field between lessees and lessors. As the shadow Minister noted:

A dispute may not be the subject of proceedings before a court, including an arbitrator, unless the registrar has certified in writing that mediation has failed. It can then go to the normal New South Wales court system.

In the Committee stage the Minister stated:

Should mediation fail, one or both parties will now be able to approach either the commercial tribunal or a court to seek an order.

A little later the Minister stated:

This is a high priority for me. All parties, regardless of where they live in New South Wales, should have easy and timely access to dispute resolution.

Whilst the identity of tribunals may have changed since 1994, there has been no change in the desirability of the principle since 1994. In 1994 it was a bipartisan position. The relevant provision in the Act is now section 68, which states:

A retail tenancy dispute or other dispute or matter referred to in section 65 (1) (a1) may not be the subject of proceedings before any court unless and until the registrar has certified in writing that mediation under this part has failed to resolve the dispute or matter or the court is otherwise satisfied that mediation under this part is unlikely to resolve the dispute or matter.

The practice of the industry has been that unless mediation occurs or certification is provided that it has failed or is not an option proceedings cannot be instituted. This receives support from the official documents of the Retail Tenancy Unit of the Small Business Commission—a document issued under this Government, not just the last Government and which is still current on the website. Whilst there have been some changes in the wording of this document and that under the previous Government, on this point there has been no change. The application for mediation form has the following wording under the subheading "Mediate":

Mediation is required by the Retail Leases Act 1994 prior to going to a court or tribunal to have the matter decided. Approximately 80 per cent of the disputes mediated at the SBC are settled.

I am not critical of the wording provided by the Retail Tenancy Unit. It was the common understanding of that section and indeed the understanding of the parliamentarians concerned in 1994 that was reflected in that wording, and it is in the heading to that section. That common understanding has been overturned by a recent court decision. The decision that has prompted this bill is a decision in the Court of Appeal in a case resulting from a lease entered into in May 2003 for retail premises in south Camden. It was a three-year lease with an option to renew for two further terms each for three years. Following the exercise of the first option to renew the lease expired in May 2009, continuing as a monthly tenancy. Disputes arose between the parties. Part, but part only, of the disputes was mediated.

The landlord commenced proceedings in the Local Court on 10 November 2009. The tenants filed a defence which, among other things, referred to section 68 of the Retail Leases Act in relation to so much of the applicant's claims that the matter had not been subject to mediation. The case came on for hearing before a magistrate on 23 August 2010. The magistrate was informed that on the Friday before the hearing the landlord had sought mediation. The magistrate delivered a reserved judgement on 3 September 2010. The magistrate in his judgement said that the landlord had commenced proceedings without all of the dispute being mediated, that the landlord sought to bypass the requirement to mediate before commencing court proceedings and had thus commenced proceedings in the Local Court before complying with the requirement of section 68 of the Retail Leases Act. In the magistrate's decision he stated:

The statement of claim is an abuse of the process of the court, consequently the pleadings are struck out.

That would seem to be the general understanding of the industry at the time. The landlord then appealed against this decision to the Supreme Court. On 6 May 2011 Justice Price upheld the landlord's appeal on the point of law about whether proceedings could be instituted in these circumstances and remitted the case to the magistrate. It was clear that there were no previous authorities positively deciding whether the terms of section 68 (1) as a matter of law must be complied with before proceedings could be commenced. His Honour determined that the requirement to mediate is not a condition precedent to the commencement of proceedings. He did find however that the court could not hear and determine a dispute unless satisfied that mediation was unlikely to resolve the dispute. That certainly did not prevent the institution of proceedings before mediation and thus was not what had been commonly understood within the sector. The tenant then appealed to the Court of Appeal and judgement was handed down on 14 October 2011. The Court of Appeal upheld Justice Price's decision and refused leave to appeal. The comments from the Court of Appeal judgement, which recite the argument put to the court by the tenant, are worth noting:

Justice Price's decision means that a landlord can elect when to go to mediation and that that allows landlords to harass tenants by commencing expensive litigation without complying with the policy of the Act, that policy being that there is to be as inexpensive resolution of the dispute as possible by mediation being commenced before the proceedings are commenced.

The tenant's lawyer had argued that if leave to appeal was not granted the litigants generally would make what they would of Justice Price's decision, that is, that mediation would be optional at some stage but not before the proceedings are commenced. The judgement continued:

That may be a by-product of the decision.

Likewise, Appeal Justice Campbell in his judgement said:

It may well be that this is a conclusion that has difficulties from a policy point of view, of a type that Young JS has referred to.

Both appeal justices based their decision upon statutory interpretation while adverting to the difficulty this caused to the policy issues surrounding the matter. It is the Parliament's role to resolve policy issues such as this by altering legislation so that it is consistent with good policy. That is precisely what this bill seeks to do. I have raised the matter with the Government but there has been absolutely no action in response. The only thing that happened was that when I gave notice of this bill the Premier accused me of trying to Sovietise New South Wales. That is a reflection of his entire inadequacy on this issue. I commend the bill to the House.

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

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (OCCUPANCY AGREEMENTS) BILL 2011

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 25 November 2011.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Fair Trading) [10.15 a.m.]: The Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011, introduced by the member for Sydney, seeks to confer rights and obligations on parties to an agreement to occupy certain residential premises, including boarding houses. These rights and obligations are provided in a set of principles which are largely based on those in part 5A of the Australian Capital Territory's Residential Tenancies Act 1997. These principles provide a number of specific entitlements that apply to occupants or residents, including accommodation which is clean, secure and in a reasonable state of repair, a written agreement and written receipts for any money paid, reasonable notice of any rent increases or evictions, disclosure of what circumstances could lead to an eviction and the right to not be liable to pay a penalty for a breach of the house rules or the occupancy agreement.

Under the principles set out in the bill the grantor or landlord would have the right to set reasonable rules for the premises and to enter the premises on reasonable grounds to carry out inspections or repairs. Both parties would be obliged to use reasonable dispute resolution processes to resolve disputes. These principles would apply to occupancy agreements made in a number of different residential arrangements, including those involving a boarder in a boarding house, an occupant of an educational institution or residential college, a person who lives in a group home or centre for persons with disabilities and an occupant of a serviced apartment. The member for Sydney is to be commended for her ongoing efforts to improving the lives of boarding house residents. I know that this is something that she holds very dear to her heart and is something she has been passionate about for her entire political career—and, indeed before that.

On a number of occasions the member for Sydney has highlighted the fact that these residents are often among the most vulnerable people in our community. It is for this reason that the Government is looking at options to reform the boarding house industry. In considering the options for reform the Government believes that legislating for occupancy rights in isolation is not the most effective response to what is a complex and longstanding issue. If the rights of vulnerable people in boarding houses are to be better protected we must ensure that the viability of this and other forms of low-cost accommodation are better assured. The Government believes that reform needs to take into consideration a range of issues that are not addressed in the bill put forward by the member for Sydney.

For example, the report of the Social Policy Committee's inquiry into international student accommodation contained a number of recommendations aimed at improving the regulation of boarding houses and the rights of residents. Although some of the committee's recommendations cover issues specific to student accommodation, others have a broader relevance to the boarding house industry, such as the establishment of a register of boarding houses. The Government is aware also of the need to consider the important

recommendations in the Ombudsman's report released in August 2011. The House would be aware that the Ombudsman made a number of recommendations aimed at addressing the shortcomings in the Youth and Community Services Act and the management of licensed boarding houses.

Licensed boarding houses are those that provide accommodation for two or more people who have a disability. These issues must be properly considered in any reform of the boarding house sector. Last year the Interdepartmental Committee on Shared Residential Accommodation, established by the previous Government in 2008, was asked to provide recommendations to government on a detailed reform proposal for the industry. I am aware that for a number of years there has been discussion on whether boarding house residents should be given some form of legislated occupancy rights. An important part of the committee's work is to consider a system of occupancy rights for boarding house residents, giving consideration to the principles-based regime operating in the Australian Capital Territory.

The Government shares the deep concern of the member for Sydney that boarding house residents need to be better protected. I note that the bill introduced by the member for Sydney extends to a wide range of accommodation not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. This accommodation includes a range of diverse and unrelated occupancy types for which a blanket occupancy rights regime is not considered appropriate. The Government is focused on addressing the issues faced by residents of unlicensed boarding houses and those residing in licensed boarding houses. It is important to recognise that the nature of boarding house accommodation is fundamentally different from that of private residential premises. Under the Residential Tenancies Act occupants usually have a right to exclusive occupation of the entire rented premises.

Typically in boarding houses, residents have a right to the occupation of a room and shared access to kitchen, bathroom and other facilities. Issues relating to cost, security of tenure and facilities are very different in the forms of accommodation listed in the bill from those under a residential tenancy agreement. The committee on shared residential accommodation will also consider the effect of any regulatory proposal on the ongoing viability of the boarding house sector. The Government is fully aware of the need to ensure that additional regulation does not result in further boarding house closures, leaving homeless the very residents that the regulation is designed to protect. For that reason the committee's recommendations, which the Government announced in May this year, will be tested through a targeted consultation process involving all of the key stakeholders.

I am proud to inform the House that the Government's reform package will create a registration system for boarding houses; promote the sustainability of and continuous improvements in services provided at registered boarding houses; provide a set of occupancy rights for residents; enable disputes to be resolved in the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal; provide for licensing and regulation of residential centres for people with disabilities and their staff; establish service and accommodation standards for licensed boarding houses; significantly increase penalties for non-compliance by operators; and provide strong enforcement powers to deal with breaches by operators.

It is crucial that the views of residents and boarding house owners are considered before any reform proposal is adopted. Boarding house regulation is a complex issue that cuts across a number of portfolios, including Housing, Local Government, Planning, Fair Trading, and Disability Services. Regulatory reform of the sector requires a considered, whole-of-government approach which strikes a balance between protecting vulnerable residents and ensuring the ongoing viability of an important form of low-cost accommodation. Rather than being subject to piecemeal reform, the Government is committed to ensuring that the boarding house sector is subjected to a comprehensive analysis; that reforms are designed and implemented to make a real difference; and, importantly, that these efforts are coordinated across the different areas of government. The Government therefore opposes the bill.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [10.22 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011. I state at the outset that the Opposition will support this legislation. I commend the member for Sydney for bringing this bill before the House today and for the hard work she has undertaken to complete this legislation. I thank her for giving me the opportunity of a briefing regarding the legislation. I also thank the New South Wales Tenants Union, which helped the member for Sydney write this legislation, and I acknowledge Dr Chris Martin, Senior Policy Officer of the New South Wales Tenants Union. I have had the opportunity to work with Dr Martin since becoming shadow Minister for Fair Trading. I commend Dr Martin and the Tenants Union for the great work they do to support some of the most vulnerable people in New South Wales.

Marginal renting is presently not subject to existing residential tenancies legislation. Neither tenants nor landlords have access to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal to resolve disputes. This is, therefore, worthwhile legislation. The legislation was introduced following the Ombudsman's report in August 2011 entitled "More than board and lodging: the need for boarding house reform". I know that the Government has developed its own legislation to implement boarding house reform with the exposure draft boarding house bill. Unlike the bill of the member for Sydney, that bill—still in draft form—does not cover the other categories of marginal renting covered by the member's bill. This bill covers educational institutions and residential colleges, long-term occupants of hotels and motels and those who live in refuges or crisis accommodation. At this stage the Government's bill does not cover those areas. As I previously stated, there is real need for this legislation.

Services provided by the Tenants Union include tenant advice and advocacy services. The Tenants Union has provided a series of real-life examples of tenancy disputes that would be covered by this bill but are not covered by existing legislation and will not be covered by the legislation proposed by the Government. The names have not been disclosed in the following examples for security purposes. B is a home owner but she and her children have left the home to escape B's violent partner. B cannot afford private rental accommodation so she now shares a room with her children in a small private hotel. B has raised concerns about the cleanliness of the shared bathroom and kitchen and she has been told by the caretaker that if she does not like it she and her children can leave. Currently there is no legislation to protect B in that situation. This bill would provide B with protection but the Government's proposed legislation will not.

E is an international student who rents a room in a house with four other international students. Each has an accommodation agreement with the landlord, the terms of which include a fee of \$10 for each day rent is paid late; a fee of \$10 each week if the student uses a heater; a fee of \$20 if the student does not keep the premises clean; a requirement that students vacating the premises during November and December give two months notice; and a provision that the rent may be adjusted from time to time and at the accommodation provider's discretion. E has advised the Tenants Union that his landlord has told him, "That's the way it's done here in Australia". E too has no protection under existing legislation and will not under the Government's proposed legislation but he would be protected by this bill. F lives in a licensed boarding house for people with a disability. The rent is 85 per cent of F's disability support pension, and after other service charges are subtracted F is left with \$12.50 per week to spend as he wishes. F is concerned that the boarding house manager is not forwarding mail to residents but F is too scared to raise the matter personally. He explained in a letter to an advocate:

If they find out I wrote to you they could make things very hard for me and I'm in the process of leaving here ... and they could try to find a reason to keep me here.

G and H are Chinese students attending university in regional New South Wales and sharing a room rented from a private landlord. The landlord charges each of them \$140 a week for the room plus \$84 for internet access and \$70 for electricity and a bond. When the landlord informed them that the rent would increase the following week by \$45 these Chinese students objected to the increase and queried the amounts they are being charged for internet access and electricity. The landlord told them, "This is the law in Australia. You better get used to it", and he gave them four days notice of termination.

J is studying at a university in Sydney and shares a house with nine other persons. He shares a bedroom with two other students. Each of the residents has a separate agreement with the landlord—a single A4 sheet of paper stating the rent and a list of house rules. The landlord appears to operate several similar properties. The house is in a very poor state of repair. The entire house is damp and mouldy, there are rats in the kitchen, there is no oven and the back door to the property cannot be locked. There is a single smoke alarm for the whole property. In J's room the ceiling leaks and there are exposed wires by the door. J has been told by an electrician acquaintance that the wires are live.

The Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service has advised him that he most likely is considered to be a lodger and as such he has little prospect of getting the necessary repairs done and his best option is to look for safer accommodation elsewhere. Another student lodges in a house owned and occupied by the landlord, his family and a pensioner. When the landlord asked the student to pay water and electricity charges the student declined because neither charge was provided for in the written agreement drafted by the landlord. The landlord taped over the power points in the lodger's part of the premises and disconnected the washing machine from the water. Late at night the landlord went to the student's room, threatened to kick him out and then called the police to evict him.

There are many more examples of people living as marginal renters in circumstances where no protection is afforded to them under existing legislation. The Opposition supports Ms Moore's legislation

because it affords marginal renters the opportunity to seek assistance from the tribunal and to gain some type of protection by way of an occupancy agreement. These examples involve real people with real problems. Marginal renters are not included in the Government's bill at this stage and I call on Government members to vote for this legislation. Some key features of the legislation include that occupancy agreements may be oral or in writing or partly oral and partly in writing. Also, an occupancy agreement is set to have commenced when it is formally agreed to by both parties or when the tenant first occupies the property or the first time the grantor receives rent, depending on the circumstances of the occupancy.

The occupancy agreement must embody certain principles contained in the legislation. Those principles include: the right for occupants to reside in a property that is clean, tidy, secure and in a reasonable state of repair when an occupant first moves in; the right to have an agreement in writing; the right to receive a written receipt for any moneys paid; and the right not to be charged arbitrary fees. Grantors have the right to require occupants to comply with a reasonable set of rules, the right to enter the property at a reasonable time to carry out inspections or repairs, and the right to charge for the use of utilities. This legislation offers us the best opportunity to extend protections to some of the most vulnerable renters in New South Wales. If Government members are unwilling to vote for this legislation I urge them to amend their draft legislation to cover all the categories of marginal renters covered by this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.32 a.m.]: I oppose the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011 introduced by the member for Sydney. I note that, unlike the very responsible legislation that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is developing to make New South Wales number one again, this bill has not been subject to public consultation. The concern expressed by the member for Sydney for boarding house residents is commendable. Some of the most vulnerable members of our society reside in boarding houses. Having said that, Labor had 16 years to do something about this issue and it did absolutely nothing. I do not think the Opposition's support for the bill is all that commendable. The Government believes reform needs to take into consideration a range of issues that are not addressed in the bill sponsored by the member for Sydney.

The bill proposes a complicated regime of rights and obligations for occupants and operators of boarding houses that is inconsistent with the different expectations about cost, security of tenure, flexibility and facilities that apply to this sector of the housing market. Accommodation provided to boarders and lodgers—whether in a room rented in a private home, a boarding house, or student accommodation—is a more flexible arrangement with no fixed terms, shorter notice requirements and lower entry costs. The rights of vulnerable people in boarding houses will be better protected if we ensure the viability of this and other forms of low-cost accommodation. We need to ensure that additional regulation does not result in further boarding house closures, leaving homeless the very residents that the member for Sydney wishes to protect.

The bill extends to all accommodation, including a range of diverse and unconnected occupancy types currently not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act. The imposition of a blanket rights regime for these disparate occupancy types is not appropriate. Legislating for occupancy rights in isolation is not the most effective response to this complex and longstanding issue. I remind the member for Sydney that there are another 92 electorates in this great State and another 151 local government areas. Responsible legislation must be developed for everyone's benefit, not just the relatively small group the member purports to represent. The Government's reforms have been tested through a comprehensive consultation process involving key stakeholders. The Government has ensured that the views of both boarding house residents and operators were considered in its reform proposals.

Regulatory reform of this sector requires a considered, whole-of-government approach that respects the views of boarding house residents and operators and can ensure that this essential, low-cost housing option remains viable into the future. The Government opposes the bill introduced by the member for Sydney as it proposes changes to the operation of boarding houses that are inappropriate and have the potential to undermine the continued viability of this essential form of low-cost housing. I find the Legislation Review Digest a valuable tool when considering legislation. The Legislation Review Committee, under the great leadership of my neighbour to the north, the Member for Myall Lakes, has expressed some concerns about this bill. The committee also expressed concern about commencement by proclamation or retrospectivity. The digest states:

The Committee notes that the possible commencement by proclamation may be a concern for both grantors, who have new obligations under the Act, and occupants, who may be subject to removal by grantors who do not wish to continue to provide accommodation upon commencement of the Act.

In addition, as the Bill states that applications relating to breaches of occupancy agreements or occupancy principles that occurred prior to the commencement of the Act must be made within 28 days after the commencement of the Act, the Committee is of the opinion that advance notice of the Act's commencement date would provide affected individuals with sufficient time to seek a judicial review of a potential breach.

The Committee refers to Parliament whether commencement by proclamation is appropriate in these circumstances.

As I said at the outset, concern expressed by the member for Sydney for boarding house residents is commendable. However, this bill is not the right mechanism to achieve responsible reform in residential tenancy legislation.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [10.37 a.m.]: I reiterate the Opposition's support for the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011. The bill aims to extend certain rights and duties under the Residential Tenancies Act to occupants of residential premises who are not covered by that Act, and for other purposes. This is a sensible and flexible bill, which is modelled on the Australian Capital Territory occupancy agreements legislation. I commend the member for Sydney for bringing it to the House. The bill upholds protections for many marginal renters who are not subject to mainstream residential tenancies legislation. This includes people living in boarding houses and those who lodge in private residences, refuges and residential colleges, and who live in shared housing arrangements. It also provides both tenants and landlords with access to dispute resolution through the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal.

The bill reflects amendments made in 2005 to the Australian Capital Territory Residential Tenancies Act 1997. I note that that legislation was recognised as sensible and workable by the New South Wales Legislative Assembly Social Policy Committee in its inquiry into international student accommodation in this State. It was also upheld in the December 2010 report by the Interdepartmental Committee on Reform of Shared Private Residential Services Sector. I think all members in this Chamber would have come across the issues of marginal renters and would acknowledge the need for better protection for them, whether they be international students or boarding house occupants. Many live in the Sydney metropolitan area and they are some of the most vulnerable people in our community—many on low incomes, some experiencing what the Australian Bureau of Statistics calls tertiary homelessness, and often open to exploitation. In his publication of August 2011 entitled "More than board and lodging: the need for boarding house reform" the Ombudsman pointed out:

The absence of occupancy rights for residents in licensed and unlicensed boarding houses heightens their vulnerability, with the potential to be evicted with little or no notice, and no recourse to tenancy dispute resolution options...

He went on to say:

The welfare of residents should not be dependent on the goodwill and favour of individual proprietors. Instead, it should be guaranteed through a robust regulatory and monitoring framework.

The strength of this bill lies in the occupancy agreements between occupants and grantors where residential tenancies legislation does not otherwise apply. The 12 occupancy principles in the bill—nine of them from the Australian Capital Territory legislation—in the words of the Tenants Union:

Set out the entitlements of occupants and grantors in a general way, without prescriptive detail. This level of detail would be left to individual occupancy agreements, and any standard occupancy terms that may be made by regulation. This means the occupancy principles would have a flexibility that is appropriate to the wide variety of rental arrangements covered by the bill.

As I have noted, effective dispute resolution relating to an occupancy agreement is provided for occupants and grantors through application to the tribunal. Importantly, grantors do not have to apply to the tribunal for termination of an occupancy agreement; however, occupants can apply for orders when they dispute a termination. These 12 principles seek to remedy many of the problems associated with marginal renting in New South Wales. I will not go through them individually, but note that they address issues such as excessive penalties and charges, which are such a problem for international students—for example, excessive utility charges or penalties against those who seek to end their agreement mid semester.

When it comes to evictions, the bill provides a balance between the interests of grantors and occupants. Common issues around bonds are also dealt with by the bill's limiting the amount of bond payable by an occupant to the equivalent of two weeks rent, and the sensible and workable requirement that the grantor lodge the bond with the Rental Bond Board. In concluding, I acknowledge the important work of the Tenants Union of New South Wales through its longstanding and ongoing advocacy in this area. It was the union that first brought to the attention of many the potential of the Australian Capital Territory occupancy agreements legislation to reform the system in New South Wales. I emphasise that the principle of broadening the full potential of

occupancy agreements to uphold the rights of our most vulnerable is sound. I obviously commend the bill to the House and ask the Government to consider it, given that the bill balances the interests of all who would be impacted by its principles.

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyong) [10.42 a.m.]: I speak in opposition to the private member's bill introduced by the member for Sydney. The Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011 proposes a range of new rights and obligations for occupants and operators of boarding houses, covering matters such as accommodation standards, written agreements and receipts, house rules, rights of entry, notice of eviction and dispute resolution. The member for Sydney is to be commended for her ongoing efforts to improve the lives of boarding house residents, who are often among the most vulnerable in our community. While I reiterate my commendation of the member for Sydney, I cannot help but note the emotive issues raised by Opposition speakers this morning and wonder why the former Government failed to address them during its tenure. One has to wonder about the motivation behind their crocodile tears this morning.

Our Government is taking action on this issue. In May this year the Minister for Disability Services, who is in the Chamber paying keen attention to the arguments in this debate, announced a package of reforms that will deliver protections to boarding house residents. A draft bill is currently being prepared to enable full consultation to be undertaken with stakeholders before legislation is introduced in Parliament. The Government's proposed reforms encompass a set of protections for boarding house residents similar to those covered in the bill from the member for Sydney. However, we propose to go a little beyond her single-issue approach to occupancy rights. We will be introducing standards for boarding houses, a set of occupancy rights for residents, increased penalties for non-compliance by operators, strong enforcement powers and a registration system for boarding houses. We also propose to reform extensively the regulation of licensed boarding houses for people with disabilities.

Our proposals will ensure that vulnerable people no longer live in unlicensed facilities, where they have no rights. Unlike the member for Sydney, the Government is also considering a range of ways to support the boarding house sector more broadly. This is a vital component of the reform package that will ensure the viability of boarding houses and other forms of low-cost accommodation. The best set of rights in the world will not help residents if boarding houses close. The Government's reforms take into consideration a number of issues that have not been addressed in this bill. Among other things, we are looking at relevant recommendations of the report of the Social Policy Committee's inquiry into international student accommodation and the NSW Ombudsman's report released in 2011. The Ombudsman made a number of recommendations in relation to the management of licensed boarding houses that accommodate people with disabilities. It is not possible to reform the boarding house sector effectively without considering these issues.

The Government's interdepartmental committee on shared residential accommodation has provided a comprehensive set of reform proposals that will include a system of occupancy rights for residents founded, like the proposals in the bill, on the Australian Capital Territory's principles-based regime. The Government is taking action to better protect boarding house residents in areas that go well beyond the scope of this bill. For these reasons we oppose the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011—although we agree in principle with what the member for Sydney is trying to achieve. I take the opportunity again to condemn Opposition members for their crocodile tears this morning. This is just another problem that Labor failed to address during its 16 years in office. Now Labor is in opposition it is looking to us to fix all those problems and asking why they have not yet been resolved. We oppose the bill; however, I commend the member for Sydney for addressing this issue and bringing it to the House.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [10.47 a.m.]: I thank the member for Sydney for introducing this private member's bill. While we are in the midst of discussions about boarding house reform and a draft exposure bill, which was the subject of targeted consultation during the winter recess, I think the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011 is important. I will go away and examine it more closely, beyond this parliamentary debate, to see whether it contains elements that could be incorporated in those consultations as they relate to the boarding house reform that we have embarked upon. All members in the House would be conscious that the state of play when it comes to boarding house residents is concerning. As the Minister for Disability Services and the Minister responsible for the licensed boarding house sector in this State, upon coming to office I was absolutely horrified to hear of incidents that had occurred in some licensed boarding houses in New South Wales. That led me to express concern also about the circumstances of vulnerable people in what is known currently as the unlicensed sector.

In May I announced a number of reforms in relation to boarding houses, particularly regarding the youth and community services legislation that was drafted back in 1973—so it is as old as I am—and has some major shortcomings. As part of our reform, we are seeking to enhance the provisions of the current Youth and Community Services Act. This includes introducing a central register for all New South Wales boarding houses. There will be principle-based occupancy rights to guide the relationship between operators and residents. We intend to extend to smaller boarding houses the accommodation standards that currently apply only to boarding houses that house 12 or more residents. We want to enhance the powers of entry and associated inspection regimes to better safeguard those people in a vulnerable situation. Of course, this will involve increased penalties for non-compliance with the regulations.

The exposure draft, which has been on exhibition, has provoked some interesting responses from across the sector. I know there are people in the sector who are deadset against this process. I say to them that government—regardless of whether it is Labor, Liberal, Independent or The Greens—must ensure that protections are in place for people in vulnerable situations. I do not think the proposals in this bill are particularly onerous. We are trying to introduce a registration process that allows better access to information in order to ensure that individuals receive appropriate support. As to the current licensed and unlicensed regimes, under the new reform those facilities that house two or more people with disabilities who are in a vulnerable position will remain under the responsibility of the Department of Aging, Disability and Home Care, which will continue to administer the regulatory regime. The remaining facilities will be required to be registered through a process administered by NSW Fair Trading.

I reiterate that I do not see this being a reason for boarding houses to close. The new regime will not be onerous for boarding house operators, but we must get the balance right. The Ombudsman has released ongoing reports and a nasty coronial inquest judgement was handed down recently regarding six deaths in a boarding house in Marrickville. We need to deal with these issues. The exposure draft has been out in the community and some terrific points have been made. The Government will reflect on those, but ultimately the thrust of the draft exposure bill will not change. My intention is to introduce the bill during this parliamentary session. The issue should not be dragged out any longer.

An enormous amount of work has been undertaken at an official level by the interdepartmental committee that has overseen this reform process. The private member's bill introduced by the member for Sydney extends beyond boarding houses, and I am happy to look at those provisions and engage further with the member. This debate is important as it has enabled discussion of this issue. From the Government's perspective, it is a preliminary discussion because we are about to introduce the legislation that we flagged earlier this year. I am conscious that there are enormous challenges in the electorate of the member for Sydney, and we are trying to resolve them through our reform process.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [10.53 a.m.], in reply: I thank the Minister for Fair Trading, the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services and members representing the electorates of Bankstown, Port Stephens, Auburn and Wyong for their contributions. Home is our respite from the world; it is the place we long for when we are travelling, sick, cold or tired. It is a place where we grow and where we can be ourselves. Having a safe and comfortable home is essential to our wellbeing and is the reason we have laws to protect people's right to live in their home, particularly if they do not own their residence. But many renters have no specific legislative protections in their homes because they are not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act. They are at risk of eviction without reason or warning and have few options to enforce basic rights such as getting urgent repairs or bond refunds. When I briefed the Minister for Fair Trading about my Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011, he assured me that the Government shared my concern and would introduce its own legislation to protect marginal renters.

The Government's draft boarding houses bill has been released for public comment and final legislation is expected, as both Ministers have mentioned. I welcome the bill, particularly after the long history of inaction in this area. However, I am concerned that, unlike my bill, the Government's draft bill covers only boarding house residents, leaving other marginal renters without protections. I was concerned when I heard the Minister for Fair Trading say that this bill is not the right response to a complex issue, that he wants to consider a whole-of-government approach and that there must be comprehensive analysis. I feel anxious because I have tried for many years to get reform in this area where, as I said, there is a long history of inaction. However, I am comforted by the words of the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. I am certainly appreciative that two Ministers have engaged in this debate and that Opposition members have also made a positive contribution. I hope the issues I have raised in this bill will be included in the legislation that the Government is considering.

Marginal renters such as lodgers, students in educational residences, persons in crisis accommodation and people in shared houses not on a lease would have rights under the bill before the House but not under the draft government bill. They will continue to have no straightforward access to effective dispute resolution and will be required to rely on the Supreme Court. So the most vulnerable people in our community will have to rely on the Supreme Court. This is unfair and unreasonable. The problems other marginal renters face are highlighted by the case of a man who recently contacted me in the hope that my bill would soon become law. He rented a room in a two-bedroom North Sydney apartment between November and January, paying \$250 a week to a tenant, who was on the lease. He was not covered by the lease and was not even provided with a key, having to get his own cut.

The man told me that one Friday night at 11.00 p.m., without any reason, the head tenant told him to leave the apartment, stating that he was going to be evicted. He says he declined to leave because his rent had been paid, but he was again asked to leave the next evening. When he refused, police were called and told that he was a visitor who would not leave. So the police assisted with his eviction, took his keys and left him on the street at 7 o'clock on a Saturday night. This man has to pursue the return of rent paid through the Supreme Court. Under my bill he would have access to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal and would have a range of enforceable rights, such as receiving reasonable notice prior to eviction. Under the draft government bill, his situation remains unchanged.

The draft government bill also fails to include provisions for the payment of bonds despite regular reports of difficulties experienced by marginal renters in getting bonds refunded. The Tenants Union recommends that bonds be limited to two weeks occupation fee with mandatory provisions for their lodgement with the Rental Bond Board. The Tenants Union is also concerned that the Government's bill fails to ensure that the occupancy principles are properly reflected in occupancy agreements and provides only statutory and not contractual rights to residents. While the draft government bill includes a centralised register for all boarding houses and my bill does not, it is no reason to defeat my bill. A boarding house register could complement my bill. Occupancy principles should apply wherever a person is granted the right to occupy residential premises if that person is not subject to tenancy law.

The Government could have consulted on my bill during the winter recess, passed it now and then worked to develop prescriptive protections through the regulations, starting with boarding houses. The Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011 would introduce rights and responsibilities for all residents and landlords who are not covered by existing tenancy law based on the Australian Capital Territory model of occupancy agreements. Under the bill, occupancy agreements would comply with basic principles, regardless of whether there is a written, oral or implied agreement.

The basic occupancy principles identified in the bill include the right to quiet enjoyment of one's home, a clean and secure home, written receipts, being charged for one's fair share of utilities, the carrying out of inspections, and reasonable notice before rent increases or evictions. Under the bill, both occupants and grantors would have access to the Consumer, Trading and Tenancy Tribunal to resolve disputes. I am sure all members would agree that those are reasonable rights for any person living in a country like Australia, whether living in metropolitan Sydney or in regional areas. The bill would require grantors who take bonds from occupants to lodge those bonds with the Director General of Fair Trading. This would be a big improvement as there are current reports of some grantors withholding a bond and using it to threaten occupants. I call on the Government to include this in its bill.

My bill would provide basic flexible protections for all renter situations not covered by any other legislation, so that occupants have access to basic rights such as a clean, safe and secure home, as well as responsibilities like having to follow rules. My bill has the support of the Tenants Union, the Redfern Legal Centre and the Eastern Area Tenants Service; and I thank those organisations for their assistance in developing this bill. Their experience is very much based on the reality of the incredibly challenging situation of housing in Sydney and, of course, housing for our most vulnerable and Sydney marginal renters. I am sorry that the Government is not supporting this bill, because many people will be disadvantaged as a result. I urge the Ministers to immediately work on legislation to ensure all marginal renters will have protections. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 21

Mr Barr
Ms Burney
Ms Burton
Mr Daley
Mr Furolo
Ms Hay
Ms Hornery
Mr Lalich

Mr Lynch
Ms Mihailuk
Ms Moore
Mr Parker
Mrs Perry
Mr Piper
Mr Rees
Mr Robertson

Ms Tebbutt
Ms Watson
Mr Zangari

Tellers,
Mr Amery
Mr Park

Noes, 59

Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Mr Baird
Mr Barilaro
Mr Bassett
Mr Baumann
Mr Bromhead
Mr Brookes
Mr Casuscelli
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Cornwell
Mr Coure
Mrs Davies
Mr Dominello
Mr Doyle
Mr Elliott
Mr Evans
Mr Flowers
Mr Fraser

Ms Gibbons
Ms Goward
Mr Grant
Mr Gulaptis
Mr Hartcher
Mr Hazzard
Mr Holstein
Mr Issa
Mr Kean
Dr Lee
Mr Notley-Smith
Mr O'Dea
Mr O'Farrell
Mr Owen
Mr Page
Ms Parker
Mr Patterson
Mr Perrottet
Mr Piccoli
Mr Provest

Mr Roberts
Mr Rohan
Mr Rowell
Mr Sidoti
Mrs Skinner
Mr Smith
Mr Souris
Mr Speakman
Mr Spence
Mr Stoner
Mr Toole
Mr Torbay
Ms Upton
Mr Ward
Mr Webber
Mr R. C. Williams
Mrs Williams
Tellers,
Mr Maguire
Mr J. D. Williams

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

Bill not read a second time.

NSW JOBS COMMISSION BILL 2012**Second Reading**

Debate called on, and adjourned on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

INTERPRETATION AMENDMENT (INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS) BILL 2012**Second Reading**

Debate called on, and adjourned on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES

Question—That the following motions given by the members as indicated pursuant to notice be formally agreed to—proposed.

QUEEN SCOUT AWARD RECIPIENTS ELLERY DURANT AND CRYSTAL PATCH

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Ellery Durrant and Crystal Patch, of the 1st Raymond Terrace Venturer Unit, on receiving their Queen's Scout Awards.
- (2) Notes the award is a highly regarded accomplishment with participants having to attain high standards in leadership development, outdoor activities, personal growth and community involvement.

TILLIGERRY PENINSULA LIONS CLUB AND JAN COLMAN

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jan Colman, of Tanilba Bay, for receiving the Melvin Jones award for her outstanding service to the Lions Cub of Tilligerry Peninsula.
- (2) Notes Mrs Colman's husband, Kevin, is a past recipient of the award and that the award is named after the founding member of the Lions Club.
- (3) Thanks the members of the Lions Club of Tilligerry Peninsula for their continued good work in the local community and worldwide humanitarian assistance.

RETIREMENT OF NEWCASTLE LORD MAYOR JOHN TATE

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Newcastle Lord Mayor John Tate on his retirement.
- (2) Notes Councillor Tate will not seek re-election to the council at the forthcoming election.
- (3) Commends his service of 30 years as a councillor and 13 years as Lord Mayor of Newcastle.
- (4) Recognises Cathy Tate, in her role as Lady Mayoress.

TAYLOR CORRY PARALYMPICS SELECTION

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Taylor Corry, of Anna Bay, on her selection in the Australian Paralympics team.
- (2) Commends 17-year-old Taylor and her coach, Tom Davis, for their hard work and dedication to make the team.
- (3) Extends its best wishes to Taylor for the forthcoming Paralympics.

BALLET SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT DANN WILKINSON

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House congratulates Dann Wilkinson, 17 years, of Lemon Tree Passage, for earning a ballet scholarship to study at the John Neumeier School of Ballet in Hamburg, Germany.

RAYMOND TERRACE MEN'S SHED

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Raymond Terrace Men's Shed on the official opening of its premises.
- (2) Commends the committee on providing a community-based, non-profit, non-commercial organisation which aims to provide a safe and friendly environment to advance the health and well being of its members.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT DR JAN NOBLE

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Dr Jan Noble on becoming a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia in the 2012 Queen's Birthday Honour's list.
- (2) Notes that Dr Noble was awarded the honour for her service to the community, particularly through her contribution to the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens.
- (3) Thanks Dr Noble for her continued hard work for the volunteer community organisation, guiding and promoting the gardens as a magnificent attraction in the Hunter Region.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTEERS PETER PLAIN AND PETER ECONOMOS

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the work of the volunteer members of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service.
- (2) Congratulates Peter Plain, of Tea Gardens, for the recent recognition of his 36 years of dedication and commitment to the service.
- (3) Congratulates Peter Economos, of Pindimar, for the recent recognition of his 27 years of dedication and commitment to the service.
- (4) Thanks both men for their selfless contribution to their communities.

HUNTER REGION APPRENTICE AND TRAINEE OF THE YEAR GLENIS TENISON-WOODS

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates early childhood educator Glenis Tenison-Woods, of Medowie, for being named the Hunter Region Apprentice and Trainee of the Year.
- (2) Notes that Glenis won the Community Services Children's Services (early childhood education and care) Diploma category as well as taking out the overall award.
- (3) Extends its best wishes to Glenis as she represents the Hunter Region at the state awards.

SURF LIFE SAVING LOWER NORTH COAST BRANCH AWARDS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates all winners of the Lower North Coast Surf Life Saving Branch annual awards of excellence held at the Tuncurry Sporties Club.
- (2) Acknowledges the following award winners:
 - (a) Mark Cerezo (Forster) Under 19 Lifesaver of the Year, with Amber Walters (Black Head) highly commended.
 - (b) Alan Bawden from Cape Hawke and Dan Brauer from Pacific Palms highly commended in the Lifesaver of the Year award.
 - (c) Lillian Smith (Black Head) Under 19 Competitor of the Year and Jordan Connolly (Black Head) – Open Competitor of the Year.
 - (d) Masters Competitors Kim Winter (Forster) and Terry Brooker (Pacific Palms) were highly commended.
 - (e) Team of the Year Forster women's IRB crew with Taree Old Bar women's surf boat crew and Cape Hawke women's veterans highly commended.
 - (f) Coach of the Year Kellie Connolly (Black Head), with Kel McCredie highly commended.
 - (g) Official of the Year Bernadette Nicholson (Black Head) and Rookie Official of the Year Helen Waller (Forster).
 - (h) Kel McCredie (Pacific Palms) and Deborah Dodd (Taree Old Bar) highly commended in the awards for Memorial Volunteer of the Year.
 - (i) Administrator of the Year Gary Curtis (Cape Hawke) and Sandra Wilson (Pacific Palms) highly commended.
 - (j) Age Manager of the Year Tim Koch (Cape Hawke).
 - (k) Training Officer of the Year Dan Brauer (Pacific Palms), with Paul Kremer (Black Head) highly commended.
 - (l) Assessor of the Year Jim Wells (Forster).
 - (m) Support Operations Member of the Year Greg Brown with Wayne Barry highly commended.
 - (n) Junior Branch Champion of the Year and Junior Branch Handicap winners Forster.
 - (o) Branch Champions of the Year and Branch Handicap winners Forster.
 - (p) Most Outstanding Contributors of the Year to Surf Lifesaving Julie Wilcox (Forster) and Richard Ellery (Cape Hawke).

OLD BAR BARBARIANS FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the members of the Old Bar Barbarians Football Club on celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.
- (2) Notes that the club is striving to reach the finals series of the Mid North Coast Premier League by winning the final game of the season at Old Bar Oval.
- (3) Notes that the club beat Tuncurry-Forster 2-0 in front of a large and enthusiastic crowd at its home ground in Old Bar.

NICHOLAS BUTTERS TRUST

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the Nicholas Butters Trust for its charitable work that has led to the opening of a suite of rooms at Manning Rural Referral Hospital in Taree to comfortably accommodate terminally ill children and their families.
- (2) Notes that the room is named the Nicholas Room in honour of Nicholas Butters who lost his battle with cancer in 2005.
- (3) Notes that a donation of \$55,555 from the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation enabled the Nicholas Room to be built.
- (4) Notes that Nicholas' mother, Jenny Butters created the trust in memory of her son and has been tireless in her pursuit of creating a permanent and significant legacy to him.

WINGHAM HIGH SCHOOL BLOOD DONATIONS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the students of Wingham High School on winning the annual Australian Red Cross Blood Service Vampire Shield, a state-wide competition encouraging students to donate blood.
- (2) Notes that Year 11 and Year 12 students at Wingham High School made 103 blood donations, organised by teacher Steve Harrell with the assistance of students Codie Ellul and Whitney Millikan, to win the competition.

SCOTT WILLIAMS UNDER 18 RUGBY LEAGUE SQUAD SELECTION

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Scott Williams, of the Wingham Tigers, on his selection in the Australian Institute of Sport's (AIS) under18 rugby league squad.
- (2) Notes that Scott and the squad will tour the United Kingdom and France later this year.
- (3) Notes that Scott plays under 18s for the Wingham Tigers, backs up and plays in the first grade team, and travels to the AIS six times each year for training camps.

CAMPDRAFTER JAYDEN DORNEY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jayden Dorney, a student at Bulahdelah Central School, on winning the Eastern Zone highest point score for juvenile campdrafting.
- (2) Notes that Jayden will be presented with an embroidered jacket at the Gresford Show and will travel to Rockhampton to compete at the Paradise Lagoons campdraft.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE ASSOCIATION FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR CLIFFORD FITNESS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Clifford Fitness, of Wingham, on being awarded the Rural Fire Service Association Fire Fighter of the Year award.
- (2) Notes that Clifford's tireless work in gaining the support of more than 150 businesses in the Manning, Great Lakes, Gloucester and Hastings communities for the Rural Fire Service Association Membership Benefits program.
- (3) Notes that Clifford is a deputy captain at the Taree Rural Fire Service Brigade for the communications team, manning the radios and monitoring fire fighters and conditions in the field.

WINGHAM DISTRICT TIGERS RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB PLAYER CRAIG RYAN

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates long serving player and club stalwart, Craig Ryan for playing his 500th game over 30 seasons for the Wingham District Tigers Rugby League Club.
- (2) Notes that a large crowd attended the game where Craig was presented with special awards to mark the occasion from the Wingham District Tigers Rugby League Club, Group 3, Country Rugby League and the Men of League group.
- (3) Notes that Craig's team, the Wingham Tigers reserve grade side won the match 16-10 to keep its semi final hopes alive.

KYANI MCCUBBIN UNDER 18 CRICKET TEAM SELECTION

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kyani McCubbin on her selection in the Australian under 18s indoor cricket women's merit team for the second time.
- (2) Notes that Kyani plays indoor and outdoor cricket as well as women's football.
- (3) Notes that Kyani was captain of New South Wales at the national championships where the team finished third and she will still be eligible for selection in the under 18 side in 2013.

MOLONG WORKING DOG TRIALS

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the New South Wales Working Dog State Selection Trials were held in Molong from 21 to 23 June 2012.
- (2) Notes that the event brought more than 60 competitors to Molong.
- (3) Congratulates all competitors at the trials and thanks Molong enthusiast Andrew Heath and his partner Elise for bringing the event to Molong.

MOLONG ROTARY CLUB

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Paul Smith on his induction as president of Molong Rotary Club.
- (2) Thanks outgoing president Margaret Dean for her leadership of the Molong Rotary Club over the past year.
- (3) Wishes Paul Smith a successful term as president and that the Molong Rotary Club will continue to provide a valuable contribution to the town of Molong under his leadership.

"WASTE OF ART" WINNER MICHAEL FERRIS

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mudgee student Michael Ferris on his win in the "Waste of Art" final held in Forbes.
- (2) Notes that Michael's exhibit in the final was a scrap metal fountain that he constructed for his Year 12 metal technology major work.
- (3) Hopes that his use of recycled products proves an inspiration to others in the community.

LOGAN WINES, MUDGEES

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Recognises Logan Wines, of Mudgee, being awarded the Best Cellar Door experience in Australia, by readers of Gourmet Traveller magazine.
- (2) Notes Cellar Door Manager, Leigh Sargent, accepted the award on behalf of owners Peter and Hannah Logan.
- (3) Congratulates the team at Logan Wines on winning this award and in promoting Mudgee as a prime wine growing area.

GEORGE NAIM KHATTAR FOUNDATION

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the George Naim Khattar Foundation on its fundraising efforts, including its 2nd Annual Gala Ball to support The Children's Hospital Network at Randwick and Westmead through much needed equipment to help treat brain tumours in young children.
- (2) Acknowledges the work of the foundation in contributing funds directed to improving the health, education and quality of life outcomes for those in the local community who are in need.

BEIRUT HELLENIC BANK, MERRYLANDS BRANCH

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the board of directors, management and staff of the Beirut Hellenic Bank on the official opening of its branch to serve the Merrylands community.
- (2) Acknowledges that the bank represents the coming together of different cultures in an Australian setting.

TRIBUTE TO GHASSAN HARIRI

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Commends the contribution of Ghassan Hariri, made over 25 years, in providing a theatre forum to spread the word about the dangers of drugs and gambling, and promoting a healthy life style for young people and their families.
- (2) Notes the play "Shou Shou and Bum Bum" has an important message for youth and families, as have many other similar plays presented by Mr Hariri.

ST PAUL'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates St Pauls Catholic College on celebrating its 50th anniversary of providing secondary education, and on the very joyful and heartening celebration Mass led by Bishop Anthony Fisher, OP.
- (2) Acknowledges the importance of a spiritual learning environment in providing the best educational and holistic experience for students and commends St Pauls Catholic College for providing such an experience to its students.
- (3) Commends principal Mr David Bourne and other devoted teachers and staff at St Pauls Catholic College for providing students with a strong sense of purpose, empowering their own transformation and leading them to contribute to the advancement of their community.

MERRYLANDS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Commends Merrylands High School and the Beacon Foundation on their efforts to expand student understanding of post school employment opportunities and careers by establishing closer links with the local business community.
- (2) Notes students are effectively educated and mentored on all aspects of finding employment and empowered to achieve personal success for themselves and their communities.

TRIBUTE TO MONSIGNOR SHORA MAREE

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Monsignor Shora Maree on 25 years of service preaching the word of God and supporting the spiritual growth and health of the Marinate Catholic community throughout Australia.
- (2) Recognises Monsignor Shora Maree for being an unwavering inspiration to others; leading his parishioners to discover their own purpose and identity centred on God; and filling peoples lives with love, joy, peace, patience and goodness with a loving gentleness.

**AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC ONE SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION FINALIST
ANDREW LAM**

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House congratulates 17 year old Andrew Lam, of Merrylands, on his achievement and recognition as a top ten finalist in the Australian International Conservatorium of Music One Scholarship contest.

HANNAH DODD PARALYMPICS SELECTION

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Hannah Dodd, of Arcadia, for winning a place on the four-member equestrian team to compete at the London Paralympics Games.
- (2) Notes Hannah is the youngest member of the team at 20 years of age and extends its best wishes to Hannah in her Paralympics quest.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT RAYMOND PHILLIPSON

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Raymond Phillipson, of Hornsby, on being awarded the Order of Australia Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours.
- (2) Notes the award recognises Ray's tireless service to the community through a range of service and youth organisations, including: Hornsby Lions Club; Hornsby & Ku-ring-gai Life Education Centre and Mobile Van; Asquith Bowling Club; Hornsby & Ku-ring-gai PCYC; and Blue Light Disco Coordinator.
- (3) Notes that Ray was a Senior Sergeant in the NSW Police Force for 31 years, including service as the Community Relations Officer involved in the establishment of 163 Neighbourhood Watch programs in Northern Sydney suburbs.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT LESLIE REDDMAN

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Leslie Reddman, of Dangar Island, on being awarded the Order of Australia Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours.
- (2) Notes that Les received the award for services to architecture and to professional and historical preservation organisations.
- (3) Notes that Les is the author of "Early Architects of the Hunter Region: A hundred years to 1940".
- (4) Extends its best wishes to Les in his future endeavours.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT RAYMOND BLACK

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Raymond Black, of Dural, on being awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours.
- (2) Notes that Ray received the award for his service to the advertising industry, particularly through the development of talent in the fields of writing and art direction.
- (3) Notes that Ray is the founder of The Award School, Australasian Writers and Art Directors Association 1983 and was the Chairman of the Caxton Awards Seminar from 1989 to 2004.
- (4) Notes that he has received many creative awards from the advertising profession, both in Australia and overseas, and extends its best wishes to Ray in his future creative endeavours.

AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDAL RECIPIENT WILLIAM LEA

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates William Lea, of Dural, on being awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal for 33 years service to the West Pennant Hills Bush Fire Brigade.
- (2) Notes that Bill has been: the deputy captain and captain at the Galston and Dural Brigades; and deputy group captain and group captain for the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai district.
- (3) Notes that Bill is the district's most senior volunteer and wishes Bill many more years of volunteering in our community.

HORNSBY KU-RING-GAI HOSPITAL PINK LADIES AND MEN

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the past, present and future volunteers at Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital.
- (2) Congratulates the 110 Pink Ladies and Men who volunteer each week, thanks them for their service to the community and wishes them all the best.

SERENADE OF SILENCE ROCK BAND

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Serenade of Silence on winning the people's choice award at the Rock the Block Competition on 16 June 2012.
- (2) Notes that Serenade of Silence is a 5 piece alternative rock band of Tim Sharp, bass player who is in year 8 at Turramurra High School, Joel Peterson on drums and Lachlan Anderson on guitar who are in year 8 at Asquith Boys High School, Jasmine Morton on keyboard and Tarna Rosentreter on vocals who are both in year 7 at Asquith Girls High School.
- (3) Extends its best wishes to the band in its future endeavours and thanks Steve Passfield and Michael Bradley for their guidance and support to the band.

BOB AND ANNE CORBETT COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Bob and Mrs Anne Corbett for their service to the community.
- (2) Notes the couple have 60 years of State Emergency Service volunteering experience between them.
- (3) Thanks Bob and Anne for their tireless efforts to help others in times of need and for the inspirational leadership they have provided to the community.

ARTIST SUSAN WHITE

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Susan White, of Mt Kuring-gai, on being awarded the Trustees' Watercolour Prize in the NSW Art Gallery's Wynne Prize for landscape.
- (2) Notes that Susan was also a finalist in the Plein Air Art Prize at Parliament House and has had a solo exhibition in the Drawing Room Gallery.
- (3) Notes that Susan used happy childhood memories to help her through the tough times after she was diagnosed with cancer two years ago and those memories have inspired her award winning painting.
- (4) Extends its best wishes to Susan in her cancer treatment and success in her future painting endeavours.

MICHAELA WHITEHOUSE GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Michaela Whitehouse on winning 6 medals at the recent Australian Gymnastics Championships: gold in the club final; an all-round bronze medal; bronze medals in the hoop, ball and ribbon disciplines; and silver with the NSW team.
- (2) Notes that Michaela trains at Meriden Rhythmic Gymnastics Centre and extends its best wishes to Michaela in her competitive gymnastics career.
- (3) Acknowledges Michaela as a wonderful ambassador for her school, teams and community.

MASTERS PENTATHLON CHAMPION ALBERT GAY

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Albert Gay on winning the masters' pentathlon 70-74 age category at the NSW championships.
- (2) Acknowledges that Albert won silver medals in the pole vault, long jump and 300m hurdles; bronze medals in the 60m sprint and the 80m hurdles in a new New South Wales record time of 15.06 seconds.
- (3) Notes that Albert competes for the Campbelltown UWS Collegians Athletics Club and extends its best wishes to Albert in the World Masters Games.
- (4) Notes that Albert is a fantastic role model within the community, setting an example that age is no barrier to a healthy lifestyle.

KAY SIDMAN AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kay Sidman on her fundraising efforts for the Cancer Council's Biggest Morning Tea, raising \$27,060 in 2012.
- (2) Notes that Kay has raised \$219,957 in the 12 years she has been hosting morning tea events.
- (3) Acknowledges that Kay's hard work and dedication to raise funds for the Cancer Council is in memory of her sister Jan.
- (4) Notes that Kay Sidman is a wonderful ambassador to the local community and an example of how one person can make a difference and extends its best wishes to Kay in her future fundraising activities.

AUSTRALIAN GOANNAS BASKETBALL TEAM AND SAM CARTLEDGE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Australian Goannas Basketball team on its third place at the 2012 Asia Pacific Deaf Games.
- (2) Acknowledges Sam Cartledge, of Camden, as a member of the Goannas team.
- (3) Notes that Sam is a wonderful role model within the community, setting an example that deafness does not limit his achievements.
- (4) Notes the result at the Asian Pacific Deaf Games has secured the team a place in the 2013 Deaf Olympics to be held in Bulgaria.
- (5) Extends its best wishes to Sam and the Australian Goannas Basketball team in their future endeavours.

CAMDEN ROTARY PIONEER MURAL

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Camden Rotary Pioneer Mural is 50 years old.
- (2) Thanks Camden Council Parks and Gardens Department and Funnells Electrical Contracting for their part in the refurbishment and maintenance of the Pioneer Mural.
- (3) Notes the wonderful work that Rotary do within and for our community.
- (4) Thanks John Saunderson, outgoing president of Camden Rotary, for his dedication and commitment to serving the community and congratulates Kevin Moore, the incoming president, for his wonderful speech.

CINDY FUDA AND JAYNE BAHAMONDEZ WEIGHT LOSS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Cindy Fuda and Jayne Bahamondez on their weight loss and being chosen to feature in Michelle Bridges 12 week body transformation book.
- (2) Notes that Cindy and Jayne are fantastic role models to the community for how healthy eating and exercise can transform your life.
- (3) Extends its best wishes to Cindy and Jayne in their future goals.

AFRICAN AIDS FOUNDATION

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Dr John Schwarz and wife, Rosalie, on founding the African Aids Foundation.
- (2) Acknowledges that the African Aids Foundation has raised more than \$1 million since its beginning.
- (3) Notes the African Aids Foundation's efforts to alleviate those suffering from Aids and to reduce the spread of the virus.
- (4) Notes the African Aids Foundation's "host an African Braai or barbecue" upcoming fundraising drive.
- (5) Encourages Dr Schwarz, Mrs Schwarz and the board of directors to continue to inspire our community to help those in need.

NSW ALL SCHOOLS SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS CAMDEN COMPETITORS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the achievements of Brooke Dagg (Mount Annan High School) Karlee Franek, Taylor Nasko, Brittany Stoker, Daniel Taiba (Elderslie High School) Andrew Lam (Elizabeth Macarthur High School) and Will Ritchard (Picton High School) on their qualification for the NSW All Schools Swimming Carnival.
- (2) Acknowledges that relay teams from Camden High School and Elderslie High School will compete in the girls 200m medley and Elderslie will also compete in the 15-16 years 200m freestyle relay.
- (3) Notes that the students selected to compete in the championships are wonderful role models for their schools and the community.
- (4) Wishes all the swimmers well for the championships and their competitive careers.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT PHILIP MCCARROLL

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Philip McCarroll on his appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia.
- (2) Acknowledges the wonderful work Philip has done within the community, especially for his work with Mater Dei School in Cobbitty.
- (3) Notes that Philip McCarroll founded the Mater Dei's fundraising committee in 2000 and since then the committee has raised over \$2 million.
- (4) Thanks Philip McCarroll for his dedication and commitment to Mater Dei and notes that he sets a wonderful example within the community of how to use business success to help others less fortunate.

1ST CARLINGFORD SCOUTS

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Joey Scouts Dallas Owen, Dylan Chung and Joshua Verco for receiving awards for their hard work in the Carlingford Scouts.
- (2) Recognises the 1st Carlingford Scouts for its 90 years of dedication and commitment to scouting and the community.

CASTLE HILL HIGH SCHOOL MOTHERS DAY CLASSIC FUN RUN

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Castle Hill High School for fielding the largest school team at the annual Mothers Day Classic fun run and walk held at Parramatta Park in May 2012.
- (2) Recognises all 5,500 participants in the Mothers Day Classic, Australia's largest breast cancer fund-raiser with all funds raised going to breast cancer research.

KATIE COLLINS AND TERESA BALODIS AUSTRALIAN GIRLS CHOIR SELECTION

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulate Katie Collins and Teresa Balodis on being selected to sing in the Australian Girls Choir.
- (2) Extends its best wishes to the Australian Girls Choir as it sings, dances and performs through its tour of Queensland.

CASTLE HILL WOMEN'S BOWLING CLUB

Mr Dominic Perrottet—That this House congratulates the Castle Hill Women's Bowling Club for winning flags in grades 1 and 3 in the Mitchell District Pennants competition.

WILLIAM CLARKE COLLEGE CROSS-COUNTRY SQUAD

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the William Clarke College boys under 15's squad for winning gold at the recent Combined Independent Schools Cross Country Carnival at Eastern Creek.
- (2) Wishes the squad of Matthew Rofe, Carl Jackson, Darryl Chiu and Kieran O'Do more sporting success in the future.

MISS WORLD AUSTRALIA 2012 JESSICA KAHAWATY

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Castle Hill student, Jessica Kahawaty, on being named Miss World Australia 2012 at a ceremony in the Northern Territory.
- (2) Extends its best wishes to Jessica at the Miss World pageant to be held in Mongolia during August.

CASTLE HILL HIGH SCHOOL 15As SOCCER SQUAD

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House congratulates the Castle Hill High School 15A soccer squad on advancing to the regional final of the Bill Turner Cup, through a penalty shoot out, and extends its best wishes to the team for the regional final.

ISOBEL ANDERSON AWARD RECIPIENT HARRISON LEE

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House congratulates 13 year old Harrison Lee, of Castle Hill, for being awarded the prestigious Isobel Anderson Award at the Royal Academy of Dance competition in Sydney recently and extends its best wishes to Harrison in his future career.

VOLUNTEER EMILY McCAMMON

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House recognises Emily McCammon, from Crestwood High School, who has been collecting food and blankets for the homeless and working in the Jesus Cares Ministry to assist those who are homeless.

SIR JOSEPH BANKS RSL DAY CARE CLUB THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Sir Joseph Banks RSL Day Club on its 30th anniversary.
- (2) Thanks Margaret Martin-Henry, Frederick Booth and Marjorie Smydzuk for their 30 years of volunteer work with the club, serving local senior citizens in the Caringbah area.

MARRICKVILLE ELECTORATE YMCA YOUTH PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATIVE TINA ZHOU

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Ms Tina Zhou represented the Marrickville electorate in the YMCA Youth Parliament 2012.
- (2) Commends Ms Zhou on her excellent work in the Youth Parliament as Shadow Minister for Justice, Juvenile Justice and Police and Youth Manager of Opposition Business.
- (3) Congratulates Ms Zhou and all other Youth Parliament participants for their active involvement in the political process and advocacy on behalf of their communities.

CRANBROOK SCHOOL HEADMASTER NICHOLAS SAMPSON

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Cranbrook School community inducted Mr Nicholas Sampson as the new headmaster on 22 July 2012.
- (2) Welcomes Mr Sampson and his family to the Vaucluse electorate and congratulates him on his appointment.

BONDI AND DISTRICTS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON—That this House:

- (1) Notes the important work that the Bondi and Districts Chamber of Commerce does to assist and promote small businesses of the local area.
- (2) Congratulates President Adam Treharne, Vice President Mary Anne Cronin and the board members on their strong and dedicated leadership of the Chamber's activities.

KANGAROO VALLEY ENVIRONMENT GROUP

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Peter Stanton, President of Kangaroo Valley Environment Group, on receiving \$204,372 for its project to repair riparian habitats along the Kangaroo River system.
- (2) Acknowledges the volunteering efforts of Greg Thompson, Rosemary Stanton, John Skidmore, Barbara Woodney, Keith Learn, Slim Ward, Frank Bradley, David Brinson, Belinda Watson, Andrew Fitzsimons, Liz Cunningham and Sam Cullen.

SHOALHAVEN ARTS BOARD OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENT MAX CROOT

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Max Croot, a Sydney Conservatorium of Music graduate, on receiving the 2012 Shoalhaven Arts Board Outstanding Achievement Award.
- (2) Acknowledges that Mr Croot has built a reputation as one of the best brass instrument teachers in the State over a period of almost 50 years.
- (3) Notes Mr Croot's long and distinguished career with the Nowra Town Band and outstanding contribution to the arts in the Shoalhaven.

SURF BEACH HOLIDAY PARK

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Surf Beach Holiday Park managers Tony and Leonie Loiterton on recently being awarded Best South Coast Holiday Park in the 3.5-4 stars, less than 100 sites category.
- (2) Acknowledges that it is the Holiday Park's natural beauty, impeccable customer service standards and dedicated staff members which have led to this recognition.
- (3) Notes that the Holiday Park has accommodated 35,845 visitors in the last financial year.

GOLD SHOALHAVEN MEDALLIST JOHN BENNETT

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates John Bennett on being awarded the 2012 Gold Shoalhaven Medal.
- (2) Acknowledges Mr Bennett's participation and chairing roles on a number of local community groups including the Shoalhaven Workplace Learning Programme, Shoalhaven Hospital Fundraising Advisory Committee and the Nowra Show Society.
- (3) Notes Mr Bennett's ongoing role within the Show Society at local, regional and state levels where he is a Councillor of the Royal Agricultural Society and Assistant Ringmaster at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

RIVERINA REGION QUALITY TEACHING AWARD RECIPIENT MEREDITH MACKENZIE

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Meredith Mackenzie, a teacher at Corowa High School, on receiving the Riverina Region Quality Teaching Award during Education Week.
- (2) Recognises her dedication and outstanding contribution to teaching.

RIVERINA REGION QUALITY TEACHING AWARD RECIPIENT CRISTY JACKA

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Cristy Jacka, a teacher at Howlong Public School, on receiving the Riverina Region Quality Teaching Award during Education Week.
- (2) Recognises her dedication and outstanding contribution to teaching.

BORDER MEDICAL ONCOLOGY UNIT

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Border Medical Oncology Unit on winning the Premier's Award for innovation in cancer clinical trials.
- (2) Recognises the outstanding contribution to cancer research made by Dr Craig Underhill, Clinical Director, and the dedicated oncology unit team.

TELSTRA NSW BUSINESS AWARDS WINNER EVOLVE ORTHODONTICS

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House congratulates John Brabant, founder of Evolve Orthodontics in Albury, on winning the Regional Start-Up Award in the 2012 Telstra NSW Business Awards.

TELSTRA NSW BUSINESS AWARDS WINNER HUME BUILDING SOCIETY

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House congratulates Hume Building Society, and Chief Executive Andrew Saxby, on being named the Telstra Regional Award winner in the 2012 Telstra NSW Business Awards.

TRIBUTE TO KEN SUTCLIFFE

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the work of Ken Sutcliffe as a presenter during the 2012 London Olympic Games.
- (2) Notes that Mr Sutcliffe started his media career at Mudgee radio station 2MG and is a strong advocate for the town.
- (3) Congratulates Mr Sutcliffe on being chosen for a job that is a career highlight for a television sports anchorman.

DARREN SNYDER JOURNALISM AWARD

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Notes Mudgee Guardian journalist Darren Snyder received the 2012 Sir Harry Budd Memorial Award for Country Journalism.
- (2) Notes the award recognises outstanding journalism and is open to all journalists employed by Fairfax Media regional and agricultural non-daily newspapers throughout Australia.
- (3) Notes the award recognises Darren's story announcing the closure of the Kandos cement works.
- (4) Congratulates Mr Snyder on this great achievement three years after graduating from Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, where he studied sports journalism.

NSW HAY AND SILAGE AWARD WINNERS HAMISH AND SALLY DRURY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Gulgong primary producers Hamish and Sally Drury of "Talinga Pastoral" have been recognised as producers of the highest quality lucerne hay.
- (2) Notes that Talinga Pastoral took out the award for the Best Lucerne Hay at the NSW Hay and Silage Awards for the second year in a row.
- (3) Congratulates Mr and Mrs Drury for producing what was described as the highest quality lucerne in the history of the competition.

AIMY THORNE AUTISM AWARENESS FUNDRAISING WALK

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Recognises that Molong mother, Aimy Thorne, and a group of supporters walked more than 800 kilometres through western New South Wales to create awareness of autism.
- (2) Notes that in addition to raising awareness of autism Ms Thorne and her supporters raised approximately \$7,000 for autism research.
- (3) Congratulates Ms Thorne for both organising and undertaking the walk.

ORANGE SPORTING HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE JADE WARRENDER

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Orange hockey player, Jade Warrender, on being admitted to the Orange Hall of Fame.
- (2) Notes that injury prevented Jade from taking her place in the Australian women's hockey team for the London Olympics.
- (3) Acknowledges her dedication to the sport, representing Australia and her inclusion in the Olympic Games squad until injury forced her withdrawal.

MAKE-A-WISH SOUTHERN SYDNEY BRANCH

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Make-A-Wish Southern Sydney Branch on its recent Annual Gala Dinner.
- (2) Commends the branch on raising over \$42,000 for sick children and their families.
- (3) Acknowledges the dedication of the branch's 14 volunteers who work to bring hope, strength and joy to children with life threatening medical conditions through the granting of their wishes.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE FAMILY SERVICES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Sutherland Shire Family Services on the official opening of its newly renovated and expanded premises in Jannali.
- (2) Commends Sutherland Shire Family Services for its work in domestic violence support and prevention in Sutherland Shire.
- (3) Acknowledges the hard work and dedication of Manager Kath Jones and the staff at Sutherland Shire Family Services.

CASINO CUP

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Casino Racing Club on the successful staging of the Casino Cup race day on 12 August 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the commitment and dedication of the secretary/manager of the club, Dianne Stanley; president, Bede Pratt; and members of the board.
- (3) Acknowledges the major sponsor of the Casino Cup, the Richmond River Express Examiner and other race sponsors: South Casino Pharmacy; the Charcoal Inn; Trackside Photography; Casino RSM Club; Cross Miller Wilkinson Accountants; and Sky Racing NSW.

CLARENCE VALLEY DRAGONS ABREAST

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Clarence Valley Dragons Abreast on celebrating seven years of paddling on 12 August 2012.
- (2) Thanks the group for its efforts in promoting breast cancer awareness in the community.
- (3) Acknowledges the contribution made by its members including co-ordinator and founding member, Cindy Hewitt; publicity officer, Roz Jones; treasurer, Jill Goddard; and secretary, Karen Marsden.

CASINO VILLAGE RV RESORT

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Casino Village RV Resort on winning the "Best NSW Residential Park" award at the Caravan and Camping Awards of Excellence held in July 2012.
- (2) Notes this is the third consecutive year the resort has won this award.
- (3) Acknowledges the commitment and dedication of general manager, Julie James, in promoting the village as another option for retirement living and for her success in setting a benchmark for the industry.

RSL MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL RECIPIENT JOHN MAY, OAM

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates John May, OAM, of Casino, on being presented with the Meritorious Service Medal, the highest honour of the Returned and Services League of Australia.
- (2) Commends Mr May on his commitment, dedication and service to the RSL movement over more than 50 years, including the positions of president of the Casino RSL Sub-branch for seven years; pension and welfare officer for 20 years; as well as chairman of Casino Legacy.

GRAFTON MINIMART FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Grafton's Minimart on its 40th anniversary on 31 July 2012.
- (2) Commends its volunteers on their commitment and dedication in supplying the infants of Grafton with knitwear and dolls since 1972, with proceeds going to worthy charities such as the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter, community transport, palliative care and cancer research.
- (3) Acknowledges its three life members, Val Wood, Kelvin March and Anne March, all of whom have been involved with Minimart since its inception.

CORAKI HOCKEY CLUB

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Coraki Hockey Club's junior members: Lucas Brown; Britney Gwynne; Jackson Gwynne; Hayden Scurr; Bailey Powell; Tom Brown; and, Aleesha Marks, on their selection in the New South Wales representative teams.
- (2) Congratulates senior members, David Brown and Peter Ryan, on selection in the Australian squad to travel to England to participate in the Hockey World Cup.
- (3) Acknowledges the remarkable achievement by a club from a small rural village and wishes all the very best to the players in their respective hockey competitions.

MACLEAN COMMUNITY SOUP KITCHEN

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Pays tribute to Lower Clarence resident David Lorenzo for his vision in establishing a community soup kitchen in Maclean.
- (2) Acknowledges and thanks the team of volunteers for their generosity to assist in preparing meals for the less fortunate in the community.
- (3) Acknowledges and thanks local businesses, Maclean Hot Bread, Causley Fresh Wholesale and Espresso Botero for donating food, tea and coffee to the soup kitchen.

KIDS OF MACARTHUR HEALTH FOUNDATION

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Denise McGrath, Chief Executive of Kids of Macarthur, for her outstanding effort in supporting families.
- (2) Acknowledges all builders, tradespeople, businesses and locals who have all contributed their time, money and effort to the building of the house being auctioned.
- (3) Notes that the house that is to be auctioned will raise over \$620,000 for improvements to wards at Campbelltown Hospital.

WOLLONDILLY EMERGENCY CONTROL CENTRE

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service which officially opened the support brigade operations building and upgrades for the Wollondilly Emergency Control Centre in Picton.
- (2) Acknowledges all the hard working volunteers of both the State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service who provide their time to protecting the Wollondilly community.

TAHMOOR K9 MEMORIAL

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the K9 Memorial committee for its success in launching the new memorial in Tahmoor.
- (2) Acknowledges the entire committee for its hard work and dedication to the honouring of the K9 Police dogs who have passed away in the line of duty.
- (3) Notes that two of the police dogs that were fatally stabbed in 2004 and 2007 were dogs that had been bred by Mrs Anderson of Tahmoor.

PICTON AND WOLLONDILLY NORTH ROTARY CLUBS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the new presidents of the Wollondilly North Rotary Club, Mr Peter Cleaver and the Picton Rotary Club, Mr Kyle Chamberlain, respectively.
- (2) Acknowledges the great work that the rotary clubs of Wollondilly do for the community in helping and supporting so many young and elderly people throughout the region.

TRIBUTE TO JULIE HEADLEY

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Julie Headley, canteen manager, for more than 20 years of service to Albion Park High School.
- (2) Acknowledges that Mrs Headley has been a local unsung hero in Albion Park for raising money for disadvantaged and disabled youth over many years.

LANE COVE ELECTORATE YMCA YOUTH PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATIVE SOPHIE LARA WATSON

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Ms Sophie Lara Watson, of Riverside Girls High, on her recent participation in the 2012 New South Wales Youth Parliament, representing the Lane Cove electorate.
- (2) Notes that Ms Lara Watson and her fellow Youth Parliamentarians debated many important and contentious issues that face our community and in doing so proved themselves to be terrific role models for young people.
- (3) Notes that the Youth Parliament provides young people and schools with the chance to learn more about the Westminster system and its importance to democracy.

MOOCOBOOLA FESTIVAL

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Moocooboola Festival Committee on a successful Moocooboola, Hunters Hill Festivals, for 2012.
- (2) Notes that Moocooboola, the Hunters Hill Festival, has been bringing the community together in celebration since 1980.
- (3) Notes that it is the aim of Hunters Hill Council to make Moocooboola one of the most sustainable events in Sydney by working in partnership with stallholders and festival goers in reducing the environmental impact of the festival.

COUNCILLOR SUE HOOPMANN CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Councillor Sue Hoopmann on her long period of civic service, having served for over 18 years as a councillor on Hunters Hill Council, including 10 years as Mayor.
- (2) Notes that Councillor Hoopmann was the first popularly elected mayor of Hunters Hill.
- (3) Notes that Councillor Hoopmann has been an excellent role model for women through her outstanding service to the community through involvement with local government.

RETIREMENT OF LANE COVE COUNCIL GENERAL MANAGER PETER BROWN

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Peter Brown, the general manager of Lane Cove Council, on his retirement.
- (2) Acknowledges the 17 years of service Mr Brown has given to the community, noting that he started with Lane Cove Council in 1995.
- (3) Congratulates Mr Craig Wrightson on his appointment as the new general manager of Lane Cove Council.

COUNCILLOR IAN LONGBOTTOM CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Councillor Ian Longbottom on his long period of civic service to the community of Lane Cove since his election to Lane Cove Council in 1991, including serving as mayor of Lane Cove from 2004 to 2009.
- (2) Notes that during Councillor Longbottom's time on Lane Cove Council the community witnessed the building of the new and much acclaimed Lane Cove Library as well as the redevelopment of the Market Square shopping precinct.

AUSTRALIAN MEN'S WATER POLO TEAM

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Australian Men's Olympic Water Polo Team in achieving seventh place at the London Olympic Games.
- (2) Congratulates Aidan Roach, of East Ryde and son of rugby league legend Steven "Blocker" Roach, on being a member of the Australian Men's Olympic Water Polo Squad.
- (3) Congratulates retiring captain Sam McGregor for his contribution to the results of the Australian men's water polo team.

GIANT STEPS SYDNEY AND AILEEN LUI

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Ms Aileen Liu, of Lane Cove, for her outstanding fundraising efforts for Giant Steps Sydney.
- (2) Notes that Ms Liu is a working mother with two children, one of whom is autistic.
- (3) Congratulates Giant Steps Sydney for its extraordinary work in helping children with autism.
- (4) Notes that through her participation in the City2Surf, Ms Liu raised \$42,000 in 2011 and \$34,000 in 2012 to help children to develop their motor skills and to learn to cope physically and emotionally with their disability.

OLYMPIC GAMES VOLUNTEERS LAURIE AND BARBARA SMITH

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the outstanding contribution of Laurie and Barbara Smith, of Port Macquarie, as volunteers at the last four Olympic Games.
- (2) Congratulates and thanks all volunteers who gave their time and hearts to support the Australian Olympic team in London 2012.

PORT MACQUARIE NSW TRAINING AWARDS FINALISTS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS—That this House congratulates the Port Macquarie finalists in the NSW Government Training Awards: Ryan Ford, of Westport High School finalist in the School Based Apprentice of the Year; Megan Edwards, finalist in the Vocational Student of the Year; and Andrew Penson, finalist in the Apprentice of the Year Award.

ROTARY PAUL HARRIS FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT JEANETTE CAMPBELL

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jeanette Campbell, of Coolamon, on receiving a Rotary Paul Harris Fellowship.
- (2) Recognises Mrs Campbell's work for her community and the manner in which that work has been undertaken.
- (3) Congratulates Mrs Campbell for her work with: the Girl Guides; the Keep Australia Beautiful and Tidy Towns Committee; the Coolamon Heritage and Advancement Society; the Coolamon Shire Promotion and Development Committee; the Up to Date Store; Kindra State Forest; the bowling club; the Coolamon News; and the organisation of community events such as the Canola Festival and Christmas in the Park.
- (4) Notes the importance of the work of local community volunteers such as Mrs Campbell.

BLAZE AID

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the work of the many volunteers working for BlazeAid and thanks the 131 volunteers who were resident in the Narrandera area for three months following the March 2012 floods.
- (2) Notes the volunteers have cleared and rebuilt 225 kilometres of fencing on 43 farms and allowed the farmers to get back to their primary production work.

ROTARY PAUL HARRIS FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT HENK HULSMAN

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI— That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Henk Hulsmann, of Coolamon, on receiving a Rotary Paul Harris Fellowship.
- (2) Congratulates Mr Hulsmann for his work for his local Rotary Club, including being an active participant in Group Study Exchange, Youth Exchange, Model United Nation Assemblies and other Rotary activities.
- (3) Recognises Mr Hulsmann's work for his community, including with the local bowling club and the sport and recreation club where he has given freely of his time.

WEST WYALONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Support schools that are encouraging students to become volunteers in their communities under the Premier's Student Volunteering Awards program.
- (2) Recognises the work of West Wyalong High School student volunteers Andrew Kelleher, Nakisha Coggan, Michael Mrowka, Amy Rowatt, Nicholas Morreau and Danielle Steel who have each performed more than 150 hours of voluntary work.
- (3) Calls on members to support the program and encourage youth to become good citizens for their communities.

HUNTER MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Hunter Medical Research Institution (HMRI) Director, Michael Nilsson, and the team of researchers on their continued perseverance and move into the new \$90 million HMRI building at Newcastle's John Hunter Hospital Campus.
- (2) Notes that the state-of-the-art facility will eventually have 340 staff, working in areas such as mental health, pregnancy and reproduction, asthma and vaccines.

HUNTER NETBALL UMPIRES

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates up-and-coming Hunter netball umpires, Kirani Sourris, Grace Eldrige and Claudia Smith on their success in the Hunter Academy of Sport netball umpire program.
- (2) Notes the three girls have reached the level of a C grade badge through their respective club ranks.
- (3) Wishes the trio all the best with their B grade badges and future umpiring endeavours.

NEWCASTLE CITY LOCAL AREA COMMAND SUPERINTENDENT JOHN GRALTON

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Superintendent John Gralton on his appointment as the Newcastle City local area Police Commander.
- (2) Recognises the achievements of Superintendent Gralton throughout his career and particularly over the last twelve months in his capacity as acting local area Police Commander, including a significant reduction in the incidences of violent crime and absenteeism.

CALVARY MATER NEWCASTLE AUXILIARY

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the vital importance of volunteer work at the Calvary Mater Newcastle.
- (2) Commends 30 volunteers, known as the auxiliary, on their continued efforts to ensure patients with cancer at the Mater are comfortable and cared for.
- (3) Congratulates 94-year-old Auxiliary President, Glad Dent, on her tremendous leadership that has raised a staggering \$445,684 for cancer patients.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE CHAMBER CHOIR

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the University of Newcastle Chamber Choir for its impressive performance at the World Choir Games where they achieved a world choral ranking of six.
- (2) Congratulates local choir members Ben Lambert and Grace Leonard on receiving silver medals at the championships.

DR NIKOLA BOWDEN MELANOMA RESEARCH

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the vital importance of continued medical research.
- (2) Congratulates the researchers at the Hunter Medical Research Institute, including Dr Nikola Bowden and her colleagues, for their promising research into melanoma.
- (3) Applauds Dr Bowden for going above and beyond the call of duty, by pursuing unfinanced work to help relieve the suffering of cancer patients.

SHOOTING CHAMPION STUART FOATE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Pays special tribute to Stuart Foate, of New Lambton, on qualifying first at the National shooting titles held in Perth this year.
- (2) Congratulates Stuart on winning the light section of the Australian Shooting Championships as well as the prestigious light and heavy bench rest combined classes.
- (3) Wishes Stuart all the best for the World Championships to be held in Sydney in 2013.

SUTHERLAND LOCAL AREA COMMAND

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Superintendent Julian Griffiths has been appointed as the local area commander for the Sutherland Local Area Command.
- (2) Acknowledges the work of former Superintendent David Donohue and wishes him well in his new position at St George Local Area Command.
- (3) Commends the work of the Sutherland local area command and welcomes Superintendent Griffiths to his new position.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE AWARDS

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the NSW Rural Fire Service Association Scholarships Awards were announced on 22 June 2012.
- (2) Congratulates Elise Tasker, Division 4, Illawong Rural Fire Brigade, on being awarded a President's Scholarship, which will assist her to study at Charles Sturt University.
- (3) Notes that Ms Tasker was also named the 2011 Rural Fire Service Association Young Member of the Year.
- (4) Commends the work of the NSW Rural Fire Service and its volunteers.

AIDS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Notes that a new education program aimed at reducing the impact of mental distress in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and Intersex (GLBTI) community has been launched in Newcastle.
- (2) Commends ACON, in partnership with the Mental Health Co-ordinating Council and in collaboration with the National GLBTI Health Alliance and Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria on developing the program.
- (3) Congratulates Geoff Honnor, the chief executive officer of ACON on his continued commitment to the success of the program.

Question put and resolved in the affirmative.

Community recognition notices agreed to.

NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [11.12 a.m.]: I move that this House:

- (1) applauds Newcastle City Council for its opposition to the Industrial Relations Amendment (Public Sector Conditions of Employment) Bill 2011; and
- (2) notes that the council, at its meeting on 5 July 2011, declared its support for Newcastle public sector workers, recorded its concern about the impact of the legislation on services to Newcastle residents and recognised the outstanding contributions made by public sector workers.

In a little more than 18 months under the O'Farrell Government, workers' rights have deteriorated rapidly: Police officers lost access to adequate death and disability pensions and all employees, with the exception of emergency workers, ceased being covered under workers compensation for trips to and from their place of employment. If that were not enough, media reports suggest employers may no longer provide annual leave entitlements to employees for the period that they are off work due to sickness or injury. The question is: Why is the O'Farrell Government so hell-bent on eradicating the rights of workers who, ironically, supported them at the last election? Legislation implemented in June last year specifically targeted public sector workers with enforcement of a 2.5 per cent wage cap. The workers affected include teachers, nurses, bus drivers, park rangers, office workers and countless others who ensure that the State services operate efficiently. It appears that those opposite see workers' rights as privileges rather than fundamental entitlements.

Thankfully there are those with sense, including the councillors on Newcastle City Council, who declared their support for public sector workers on 5 July 2011. Premier Barry O'Farrell amended legislation that required the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission to make decisions regarding public sector wage claims with reference to certain aspects of Government policy. As a result, if an award or order of the commission does not fall into line with the Government's declared policy it is considered void. The heart of the Industrial Relations Amendment Act centres on requiring any increase to employee related expenses above a 2.5 per cent cap to be offset by employee-related cost savings. This renders the commission hamstrung—unable to make any decision that goes over the 2.5 per cent cap unless that decision involves a reduction in the conditions of employment. Jeff Lawrence the former secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions was not wrong when he said:

The O'Farrell Government Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2011 is not a wages policy, it is an attack on rights at work dressed up as a wages policy.

The Labor councillors on Newcastle City Council—Nuatali Nelmes, Sharon Claydon and Tim Crakanthorp—submitted a motion calling on the council to support public sector workers. They were opposed by a coalition of independents and a liberal councillor. Their motion was carried. It urged council to write to the Premier, the Minister for the Hunter and Hunter members of Parliament, including me, on behalf of those in the public sector whose rights at work have been attacked by the O'Farrell Government. Their motion stated:

The New South Wales Government has introduced laws that are worse than WorkChoices and will cut the wages and conditions of thousands of public sector workers. The proposal represents the most radical change to workplace laws in more than a century.

It is clear that these amendments have struck a chord. Councillor Nelmes added:

The Council is concerned about the impact of this legislation on services for our community. We are already hit hard with cost-shifting from the State Government. This is another slap in the face for the Hunter from a conservative Government with no care for the average family in Newcastle.

Families have struggled under these changes. The cost-of-living rises associated with escalating electricity prices and diminishing housing affordability has led public sector workers to struggle. The 2.5 per cent cap certainly does not cover the O'Farrell Government's electricity dividend revenue, which will batter struggling households with an extra \$120 on top of their existing bills. A 2.5 per cent cap will not cover the O'Farrell Government's application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to increase water and electricity prices. This Government made two secret submissions to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal appealing for Sydney Water prices to increase further than the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's draft recommendation of 7.6 per cent over four years. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal approved electricity price increases by 18 per cent from 1 July 2012, though the tribunal has said this increase could be halved if the O'Farrell Government—

Mr Chris Spence: Point of order: The member's motion has nothing to do with Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal and nothing to do with electricity price rises. The motion concerns a council wasting its time and not dealing with council issues, but attempting to implement Labor's policies.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The motion is wide-ranging and the member is within the leave of the motion. There is no point of order.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Will you grant me an extension of a minute as a result of the interruption?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member will have the opportunity to speak further in reply.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Fortunately, there are those who continue to challenge the O'Farrell Government's heinous attacks on workers' rights. The New South Wales Public Service Association has been forced to challenge the 2.5 per cent pay cap in the High Court due to the O'Farrell Government's ability to overrule the industrial court. The Industrial Relations Amendment (Public Sector Conditions of Employment) Act appears unconstitutional and allows the Government to direct pay rates according to their own political whim. It is clear these industrial relations amendments have negatively impacted public sector employees. Introducing a pay cap may be somewhat more acceptable if the cost of living and rate of inflation remained steady. However, skyrocketing electricity prices, soaring rental costs and a diminished amount of disposable income means that the pay cap will place an— [*Time expired.*]

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [11.19 a.m.]: I commend the member for Wallsend for raising this important issue. At the nub of this argument are two competing factors: what is council's core business and hypocrisy. I turn first to hypocrisy: the 2.5 per cent wages policy is Labor's policy that we are implementing. Second, local government employees are not affected by this policy. What were councillors doing on 5 July debating this issue?

Ms Noreen Hay: How dare they have freedom of speech.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Wollongong. I will enlighten her about what they were up to that evening. On the evening that they moved this motion and Labor councillors were crying crocodile tears over State public servants they resolved to adopt a 4.2 per cent wage increase for themselves. Item 83 in the minutes for that night—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members will come to order so that I can hear the comments of the member for Charlestown.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: Item 83 of the minutes for that night state that councillors resolved to give themselves a 4.2 per cent wage increase. They are quite entitled to do that, but the 2011-12 operational plan provided for a 2.15 per cent annual increase in councillor fees. The adoption of this 4.2 per cent wage increase cost council an extra \$7,500. After the council meeting these councillors would have gone strolling down Darby Street to have a large latte, crying crocodile tears about their State colleagues after voting themselves a 4.2 per cent wage increase. This is the absolute hypocrisy of these people. Other items of business on that day were only minor issues—

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance on the basis that paragraph (2) of the motion states:

notes that the council at its meeting on 5 July declared its support for Newcastle public sector workers.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Ms Noreen Hay: My point of order is that the response being given at the moment is not relevant to the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Wollongong will resume her seat.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: The nub of the argument is what councillors should have been doing that evening. Members should look at the other items on the business paper. This council has wasted time and money: there is the small matter of the Laman Street master plan where council wasted \$1 million dealing with four trees and councillors have wasted time moving the useless-type motions referred to by the member for Wallsend. Basically this is part of the hereditary peerage process within Labor in the Hunter: they serve on council, measure the drapes for the State and Federal member and then take over that role.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The hereditary peerage has nothing to do with the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member's comments relate to Newcastle City Council, and therefore are within the leave of the motion. There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: They certainly are about Newcastle City Council. The nub of the argument is hypocrisy and what councillors should have been doing on that night. As part of the process they regularly bring in people they think have talent and try to move them into State and Federal electorates. There is nothing wrong with that, but they cannot then pretend that they are holier than thou. I quote the mayoral candidate in Lake Macquarie who, when criticising one of our council candidates, said:

"If a councillor is elected to the Commonwealth Parliament they will have to resign from council which would trigger a by-election", Ms Harrison said—

that is not correct, but I will not split hairs—

"Given this you would have to seriously question their commitment towards representing residents on a local level."

If they cannot walk and chew gum at the same time that is a matter for them, but if the mayoral candidate for Newcastle and all the Labor candidates regard this as an issue, will they rule out running for any other tier of government between now and the election in September 2016? They must answer that question. They cannot be holier than thou on these issues and expect to get away with it. The nub of the motion is about hypocrisy and the 2.5 per cent wage cap—Labor's policy—a policy that we have implemented but that Labor could not implement. What is the current annual inflation rate in Australia?

Mr Tim Owen: It is 1.2 per cent.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: The member for Newcastle is correct, it is 1.2 per cent; I am glad he is across his figures. In fact, over the past 12 months there has been a real wage increase of 1.3 per cent. I think many private sector workers would be very happy to receive a real wage increase of that magnitude. It all comes back to hypocrisy and what councillors should have been debating that night. They were crying crocodile tears over a 2.5 per cent cap while giving themselves 4.2 per cent wage rise over what council had identified as being reasonable—2.15 per cent—costing council \$7,500. That is hypocrisy in the extreme and they need to answer those questions. I oppose the motion but applaud the member for Wallsend for raising the issue.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [11.26 a.m.]: The drivelling nonsense—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Cessnock will be heard in silence.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Drivelling nonsense comes from the mouth of the member for Charlestown—it is basically like a sewerage outlet in this Chamber. The electorate of Cessnock stretches across four different local government areas and Newcastle is one of the local government areas affected. To that end I feel I am well entitled to speak on this issue because some of my constituents are also constituents of the local government area. I am talking about people who are struggling with the cost of living, and increases in fees and charges right across the board, whether it is their insurance or their electricity and water rates. They are public sector workers. It is right, fair and just for the councillors on Newcastle City Council to speak up on behalf of those public sector workers.

I commend the member for Charlestown for introducing the word "hypocrisy" into the debate. He then spoke for several minutes about whether the councillors should be talking about the issue. How many times have we in this Chamber talked about Federal issues introduced by members opposite. Only yesterday we discussed the Gonski report that has not yet received a response, but the Minister for Education supposes he has a response to the response. It is ridiculous. I commend Newcastle city Labor councillors Nuatali Nelmes, Sharon Claydon and Tim Crakanthorp for their motion. I commend also Mayor Tate, Councillors Boyd, Connell and Osborne for supporting it. However, I can only surmise that the other five councillors—Aaron Burman, Bob Cook, Brad Luke, Mike King and Scott Sharpe—who voted against the motion, do not work for the public sector nor do their family, friends or constituents; if they did they would have supported the motion. Newcastle City Council was right to declare its concern about the effect of the wage freeze.

The member for Charlestown declared a 1.2 per cent increase in the cost of living, but at the time that the motion was moved and certainly over the past three years the average increase in the cost of living has been

closer to 3.3 per cent. Those opposite give a little snapshot to justify a debate today, but they fail to see the bigger picture, which is typical of this Government. At the same time as Newcastle City Council debated this issue, council talked also about a rate rise above the standard 3 per cent. It is only fair that the people they were talking about slugging with a rate rise of 7 per cent or 10 per cent be given an opportunity to afford their rates. The 2.5 per cent cap effectively means that people must make decisions about things they must now go without. We know that electricity has risen in the order of 40 per cent over the past 18 months to two years, water rates are increasing and so, too, are insurance premiums.

People will have to make a decision on what essential services they will go without and the question then must be asked: What impact will this have on the State? Maybe it will be car insurance or health insurance. If people cannot afford private health insurance it will place more strain on the New South Wales health system—a system that is struggling to cope already. Currently approximately 50 per cent of people have private health insurance, but that number will diminish if people have to make choices. Increasing bus services to areas such as West Wallsend and Singleton would be a useful contribution, but this Government seems more occupied with cutting wages to public sector workers instead of getting on with improving—*[Time expired.]*

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [11.30 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support my colleague the member for Charlestown and to speak about what we should be debating. We are implementing and we have implemented—and we have talked about it ad nauseam et delirium—a Labor policy that has stood since the days of Premier Iemma: a 2.5 per cent wage increase. If employees want an increase of more than 2.5 per cent they have to deliver efficiency gains or justify that they need more than 2.5 per cent. Once those efficiency gains are delivered workers can basically ask for the world and they will get it. It is a Labor policy—we all know that.

The trouble is that the former Government never held the unions' behinds to the fire to require the delivery of efficiency gains before workers got an increase above 2.5 per cent. The nub of this issue is that it is a State wage policy and all we are doing is implementing Labor's policy. Turning to the wonderful, efficient and effective Newcastle City councillors who are now commenting on State issues when the rates, the roads and the rubbish of Newcastle are not attended to: as my good colleague articulated previously, on the night that the council decided that this was a very, very important motion to put forward they effectively gave themselves a 4.2 per cent wage rise.

Mr Nick Lalich: The commission ruled that.

Mr TIM OWEN: They gave themselves a wage rise. They were supposed to be debating the Laman Street fig trees and the Laman Street redevelopment plan. They have wasted hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars on legal debate back and forth between themselves. I think they had 16 or 17 resolutions not to do anything about the Laman Street figs while they spent time, money and effort talking about State issues that, frankly, have got nothing to do with them whatsoever. I find it amazing that the member for Wallsend would even bother talking to this motion. The issue is history, it is past and it is over and done with. People have come to the table and they agree that the 2.5 per cent that we are currently delivering to people is twice the current inflation rate. They know that they can get an increase above 2.5 per cent if they deliver efficiency gains. It is the way we are doing business and it is what Labor articulated as a government policy, but it never followed it through.

Essentially, it was a useless motion from the Newcastle City Council, which does not do particularly good work on a whole bunch of local issues. I reinforce what the member for Charlestown said: This is all about small Labor politics. It is about the councillors making a profile, getting a name for themselves and making big calls on issues that have nothing to do with them so that they can stand up and say, "Look, I have an opinion. I can now run for the State or Federal government". It is small Labor politics. It is wedge politics that does nothing for the ratepayers of Newcastle. The council continues to ignore the key issues. Ask anyone in the Newcastle area what they think of their council and they will give a fair and reasonable view on it. It is an absolutely ridiculous motion.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.34 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Charlestown, the member for Cessnock and the member for Newcastle for their contributions to this debate. The member for Charlestown said that local government councillors should not be talking about the substance of this motion because they are not affected by the industrial relations amendment. Yet those local government councillors in their daily lives represent the community and deal with public sector workers who are poorly affected by this wage cap. Good Labor councillors should raise this issue that they feel so strongly about.

The member for Charlestown mentioned hereditary peerage of the Labor councillors. I was a Labor councillor and I am the daughter of a truck driver and a school cleaner. Believe me, there is no hereditary peerage in the Hornery household except as working class people and blue-collar workers. The member for Charlestown also spoke about the wage cap and wage increases. I point out to the member for Charlestown that electricity prices, approved by his Government this June, increased by 18 per cent, yet the wage cap is 2.5 per cent. The member for Cessnock said that we all have constituents—local, State and Federal governments—who are struggling with the cost of living, particularly public sector workers. As Labor members we should support people who are struggling: it is part of our job. Labor members, whether councillors or State members of Parliament, raise these issues because we care. That is what we do. We care that if a person's wage increase is capped at 2.5 per cent but their electricity bill, their gas bill and their rent all increase they are going to struggle and they need help. Our job is to support those people.

The member for Newcastle described this motion as ridiculous. There would not be one public sector worker in New South Wales who would think that what Labor members are talking about is ridiculous. Every public sector worker in New South Wales today will acknowledge that we Labor members support people being entitled to and deserving justified wage increases. The people opposite try to justify a 2.5 per cent wage increase when all other living costs have blown out exponentially. The member for Newcastle also spoke a lot about the Laman Street figs, which, sadly, has nothing to do with this motion. He claimed that my motion was history. This wage cap is not history to public sector workers in New South Wales. I urge the House to support the motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

FERRY SERVICES

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.39 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that ferries are an important and popular transport choice for the residents of the Vaucluse electorate; and
- (2) congratulates the Government on its strong commitment to delivering improved and expanded ferry services.

Good public transport that is both reliable and efficient is important to residents across New South Wales and, of course, to the residents of the electorate of Vaucluse, which I am proud to represent. In the recent community survey I conducted, to which I received more than 800 responses, residents highlighted how important public transport is to the people of New South Wales, particularly in Vaucluse. In fact, respondents to the survey rated public transport as the second most important local issue. Sometimes we forget that transport is just about getting people to the destinations that are important to them; it is a means to an end—to go to work, meet friends, get to school, and get home to our family at night. We really should not have to think about the journey, just the destination.

Providing public transport choices that are reliable and efficient to help address the congestion on our roads is a priority of the O'Farrell Government. It is particularly important in the eastern suburbs of Sydney because those suburbs are densely populated. It is even more important to residents in the Vaucluse electorate because the land mass is a peninsula. There are only three main arterial roads in and out of the electorate, as there have been for many years.

Being a peninsula makes the Vaucluse electorate unique: people have to want to go there; it is not on the way to anywhere else. Vaucluse is diverse, full of natural beauty and rich in character and history. Its 15 square kilometres are jam-packed with good stuff, from the international tourist destination of Bondi Beach to the tiny, secluded harbour-side beach at Camp Cove, which only has land access by foot, and from the forbidding South Head cliffs facing the Pacific Ocean to the soft, white sand and gentle harbour-side swells at Nielsen Park. The electorate also contains the beautiful 1834 Lindesay residence in Darling Point, which was home to many colourful historical characters, as well as contemporary homes designed by internationally acclaimed architects. I could wax lyrical about the electorate I represent but let me return to the motion before the House.

I believe that residents of Vaucluse and the rest of New South Wales will leave their cars at home if they know there is reliable and efficient public transport available to get them where they need to be. Travelling

by ferry is a unique public transport option available to residents in the Vaucluse electorate. I know that many of those residents are particularly keen to see additional local ferry services. In addition to the responses I received to my recent local survey, residents regularly talk to me about our ferry services and the need for improved and additional services. Specific issues they raise include the need for more frequent services on existing routes, better connections between different modes of transport and, as I mentioned, the introduction of new ferry routes. I welcome those views. They help better inform my work for them on this important issue. I will continue to work hard to try to secure those improvements and additional services in and out of my electorate.

I will continue to work closely with the Minister for Transport, Gladys Berejiklian, on the issue of additional commuter ferry services in the electorate. The Minister and her office are aware of the level of interest expressed to me for those additional commuter services over the last 18 months since I became the local member. Residents of my electorate have asked for: additional commuter services from Rose Bay to Circular Quay, Rose Bay being the major ferry hub in the Vaucluse electorate; return services in the evenings on existing routes so that residents can travel by ferry when they go to the theatre and other events in the city and support the economy; and, most importantly, a commuter ferry from Watsons Bay to Circular Quay. Currently the services from Watsons Bay run outside commuter hours and primarily cater for tourists. Services should be provided so that tourists can visit Watsons Bay, but equally the residents of that area and adjacent Vaucluse should have a commuter service.

In recognition of the importance of ferry services to the electorate the Minister announced a \$6.3 million wharf upgrade at Rose Bay. The new wharf, which I watch work on with great interest, will shortly open and includes a larger sheltered area for passengers, more seating, glass weather screens and improved access for people with a disability. It will provide passengers with greater standards of safety, access and improved comfort. I am proud that the Government has been able to deliver such a facility to the electorate in recognition of the importance of ferry transport to its residents. As I said, additional commuter ferry services are an important way to help reduce congestion on our local roads and will also provide more public transport options for commuters in my electorate. I will continue to advocate strongly to Minister Berejiklian for improvements to those ferry services.

Our Government is committed to improving and expanding our ferry network so that we can finally have the world-class ferry services we deserve. We have already restored 140 ferry services scrapped by the Labor Government and provided an additional 25 weekly services along the Parramatta River. On 28 July 2012 the new private operator, Harbour City Ferries, began running Sydney Ferries five months ahead of schedule. Harbour City Ferries is a joint partnership between leading professional transport operators Transfield Services and Veolia Transdev Australia. As part of the seven-year franchise contract the Government will retain ownership of the existing Sydney Ferries vessels and the Balmain shipyard, and maintain control over fares and service levels. The service will also keep the iconic name Sydney Ferries.

The Government has made it clear that it wants the new operator to get on with the job of running the ferries effectively and making sure there is a smooth transition for the millions of passenger trips each year. I will soon meet with representatives of Harbour City Ferries to inform them of the strong and consistent level of interest in my electorate for additional local ferry services, especially a Watsons Bay commuter service. I look forward to further serving the residents in my electorate through my continued strong advocacy to improve our ferry services. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.46 a.m.]: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the motion moved by the member for Vaucluse. I congratulate the member on taking such a strong stand on behalf of the Vaucluse battlers. I must say it is interesting to look at the date that notice of this motion was first given, 6 September 2011. So much has happened with ferries since then! In fact, nothing has happened. A *Sydney Morning Herald* article headed, "Promise of extra ferries sunk as operators back out" is a reminder to the House of the sorry saga of Gladys Berejiklian's ferry fire sale. In November last year the Minister promised additional ferry services—

Mr Nathan Rees: None up the Georges River.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: No, certainly not up Georges River. I do not think we will get much for the Georges River unless the member for East Hills can build it himself. In November last year the Minister promised additional ferry services to Kirribilli, Rose Bay, Balmain, Woolwich, Pyrmont, Greenwich Point and Birchgrove. These services would be operated by the company Sydney Fast Ferries. At the time the Minister said, "This is great news for ferry passengers, who will now have more services and an expanded range of routes from which to choose." She then proclaimed that this would be the next stage of ferry reform.

Mr John Sidoti: Not the tooth fairy.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: The tooth fairy could probably deliver more than Gladys Berejiklian in relation to ferries, then she made this wonderful statement that it was an opportunity to offer the private sector a chance to demonstrate what can be achieved. How Gladys Berejiklian must regret those statements. But it is good to see the member for Vacluse jumping up for her constituents. There is no doubt that we need to deliver more public transport options for the people of Vacluse. Sydney Fast Ferries faced some difficulties. It unfortunately was not able to come through and the Government has been left empty handed. The Government is apparently looking for another operator to take over these routes. I understand it is yet to find one.

Added ticket cost is another difficulty the Government faces by letting the private sector provide services. Minister Berejiklian was quick to remind constituents that having the private sector operate services involves no cost to the taxpayer. The problem is that the cost is instead passed on to the commuter. Let us look at the cost of one of the new routes taken up by a private operator. Commuters travelling to Manly from Darling Harbour now have to pay \$14.50. That compares to the cost of a MyFerry ticket for that trip under a Labor Government initiative was \$7. Commuters are now paying more than double. I am sure the Treasurer's mates in Manly would have no difficulty forking out the extra \$7. The problem is that Manly is a tourist destination and a popular spot for those not as affluent—that is everybody else in Sydney and throughout New South Wales—to visit. This is a perfect example of the inherent problem with this Government's transport program.

New South Wales public transport does not run on a cost-recovery basis. If it did, it would be so expensive few of us could afford to use it for travel. I understand that RailCorp, for example, recovers approximately 30 percent of its operating costs from fares. This is a difficulty, as I said. Ferries tend to service more affluent areas; there is no doubt about that. If you live near a wharf you are probably doing quite well. But the Government has a responsibility to ensure that these services are not only for the wealthy. Furthermore, the Government has been quick to trumpet the credentials of its new operators.

However, one of the operators, Transfield, which also runs part of Adelaide's bus system, has recently been criticised by the South Australian Government and fined \$120,000 for under-performance. In April the South Australian Minister for Transport said that Transfield had the worst performance of all the State's buses companies. Of course, the member for Vacluse is blessed to have ferry services to her electorate and a large variety of other transport options, including buses, for her constituents. However, not all electorates are similarly blessed. I take this opportunity to raise the concerns of my electorate and the neighbouring electorate of East Hills. I refer to the Easy Access Program. Both Yagoona train station and Panania train station—

Mr Guy Zangari: And Chester Hill.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: —and Chester Hill, have missed out on Gladys Berejiklian's easy access upgrades that she suggested would be offered all across New South Wales. It is interesting that at Panania—I love to raise what happens in the East Hills electorate—there was a really lovely media opportunity for the Minister with the member for East Hills smiling at each other on a seat at Panania train station. It was a lovely photo in the newspaper that appeared about 18 months ago. The then Coalition candidate said that if he was elected as the member for East Hills he undoubtedly would deliver an easy access upgrade to Panania train station. Of course, 18 months down the track nothing has happened. He is now very quiet on why there is still no easy access upgrade at Panania station.

I do not want to take the mickey out of the member for Vacluse, because she is obviously doing her job to deliver as best as she can for constituents of Vacluse, but I take the opportunity to remind people how little this Government continues to deliver viable public transport options particularly for south-western and western Sydney. As another example, for 18 months the member for East Hills has been trying to get the Minister for Transport to amend a Bankstown central business district free bus route to include Bankstown hospital. The Minister did not even respond to his letters on that. I am now taking that up for the poor constituents of East Hills and Bankstown who would like that change to the route. I have raised the issue on notice to the Minister for Transport. I again say that public transport should be for all. It is not just about Vacluse, Eastern Sydney and North Sydney; it is also about western Sydney as well.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [11.53 a.m.]: I commend the member for Vacluse for the motion. I acknowledge that ferries are an important and popular transport mode for residents of Vacluse and my electorate of Drummoyne. I congratulate the Government on its strong commitment in delivering an improved, reliable and expanded ferry service. I was surprised to see the member for Bankstown bag the Government on public transport, particularly in East Hills, which was Labor Forever. Labor did nothing in its term of

government yet the member for Bankstown bags the member for Vacluse because that electorate is getting a good level of service and reliability in public transport. Everyone knows what happened in Drummoyne with 49 years of Labor: it got rid of ferry services in Birkenhead Point. Yet the member for Bankstown has the sheer audacity to stand up in this place and bag a Government that has been there for five minutes. Shame on her.

I am pleased to speak in support of this motion today because, as with the electorate of Vacluse, many residents of my electorate of Drummoyne enjoy the convenience of travelling to the city and Parramatta by ferry. It was a key platform of this Government's election policies that ferry services would be restored and protected for all parts of the city. I remind the House that my first question in this Parliament was to ask the Minister what the Government was doing to fix the ferries. Not long after, new services and a timetable were announced for Drummoyne. In October last year—just six months after the election—I was pleased to welcome the Premier and the Minister for Transport to the Drummoyne electorate to announce new RiverCat services and a new ferry timetable for my electorate. They reinstated the previous services and an additional five services per day. That was 25 extra ferry services per week.

The new timetable saw a new weekday service from Rydalmere to Darling Harbour to include stops at Cabarita—which has the fastest growing usage on the network—Abbotsford, Chiswick and Drummoyne. It also included a new service from Circular Quay to Meadowbank via Cabarita to fill a previous two-hour gap in services left by the previous Government. The announcement at Cabarita wharf gave the residents a guarantee that the Government was delivering on its election promises. I have always argued that ferry services are an ideal form of transport in this great city. They get traffic off the road, they reduce congestion on other forms of public transport and are a natural fit with the magnificent waterways we have on offer in Sydney.

The delivery of better ferry services has been a priority for this Government and in May this year the transport Minister announced that by the end of July a partnership between Veolia Transdev and Transfield Services would run Sydney Ferries under a franchise agreement, which we all know about now. The seven-year contract requires the new operator to meet a number of performance benchmarks in key areas such as safety, reliability and customer service. This can only be good news for Sydney ferry users. Since coming to government we have reinstated 140 ferry services that had been cut by the Labor Government, which members opposite conveniently forget. In Drummoyne services have been increased and are being very well utilised. I too congratulate the Government on its strong commitment to delivering improved and expanded ferry services. I am happy to support the motion and look forward to continued support for more ferry services to the Drummoyne electorate.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.57 a.m.]: I welcome the fact that the member for Vacluse has brought this motion to the House. There are many similarities in the geography of Vacluse and Balmain: a significant proportion of my electorate is a peninsula which is serviced by only three roads. There are no train stations in the electorate; it relies predominantly on buses and wharves. Particular issues have arisen with bus connectivity and the way the ferry system works on the peninsula, which includes Balmain, Birchgrove, East Balmain and Rozelle. I raised many of these issues in a private member's statement on 30 May 2011. When looking at ferry services and public transport provision the Government needs to take into account a number of issues relating to ferries as a whole, not just the issues raised by the member for Vacluse.

The first is consultation. One of the great problems we have had in the past is very poor consultation with local government and other stakeholders. A classic example was the removal of Balmain East from the Balmain to Woolwich service, which reduced services in peak periods. This meant that connectivity, in particular between the 441, the 442 and the 445 bus services, was lost. Currently the focus in my electorate is on services between Balmain and the central business district and Darling Harbour. In my view this does not take account of the broad and diverse nature of the community and the physical and social context. Had there been adequate consultation—there is a very high population of people living in social housing—the reduction in services to Elliott Street and Thames Street could have been better dealt with. On the Balmain peninsula there are several social housing blocks, especially around the Mort Bay area, and a significant number of aged, disabled and low-income residents rely on public transport to access essential facilities and services in Balmain and Leichhardt.

Residents depend solely on ferries via wharves at Balmain West and Balmain. While the transfer of Balmain East from the Balmain to Woolwich service to a direct Darling Harbour service has improved accessibility for many central business district commuters, it has compromised accessibility for a number of the most vulnerable residents due to the resultant loss of access to buses from East Balmain wharf. Many residents in the Elliott Street and Thames Street areas are isolated from Balmain by steep street gradients—and I mean steep—that prevent pedestrian access. This necessitates the use of ferries to connect with bus services on Darling Street.

The previous Balmain to Woolwich ferry service gave residents access to the 442, 444 and 445 bus services at Balmain East wharf. These buses permitted them to travel to various facilities in the local area. The discontinuation of these services has undermined connectivity between Balmain East and the rest of the community.

That is just a vignette to demonstrate to the Minister for Transport and the department that there are issues around evening peak services, integration, night safety, poor timetabling and morning peak services. I encourage the House to consider strongly the important role that ferries play in public transport and encourage the Minister and the department to contact local councils or members of Parliament to ensure that optimal results are achieved. I conclude by acknowledging the great work of the men and women at the Balmain shipyards in my electorate. I recognise their excellent contribution to our community. Members know that I was not in favour of the privatisation of Sydney Ferries, but I encourage members to seek to improve and augment the process and the organisation of ferries in our community.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber. Hansard is having difficulty hearing the member with the call.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.01 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Bankstown, the member for Drummoyne and the member for Balmain for their contributions to the debate. It was interesting to hear from the members for Drummoyne and for Balmain about the work in their electorates and how important the ferry services are for their constituents. I was disappointed that the Opposition was able to muster only one speaker, the member for Bankstown—this is not a criticism of her—who does not have ferries in her electorate. The Opposition should have fronted somebody who knew what they were talking about, somebody who could speak of their constituents' personal experiences of ferry services in their electorate.

Instead we heard another diatribe about the battlers of Vaucluse—there they go again! It is just like Federal Labor. Class warfare is so passé. It reveals a lack of knowledge on the part of Labor members. They should come to Bondi Beach and look at the social housing there and get an idea of the sorts of people who visit my office. It does not help anyone in New South Wales to keep stereotyping people in the electorate of Vaucluse, which I represent in this place. That is exactly what brought down the last Labor Government. It governed for what it called the "battlers". The battlers do not exist anymore. They brought down the previous Government. The electors of New South Wales smashed Labor out of office after 16 years of engaging in class warfare. Enough is enough. Members should come to the electorate of Vaucluse and see some of the battlers there. The Minister made the point that this Government governs for all the people of New South Wales.

Mr Nick Lalich: Except for workers.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: All the people of New South Wales. Everybody is a worker. The member for Fairfield is a worker; I am worker. There are people in the electorate of Vaucluse who are workers. Everybody is a worker in New South Wales, and this side of politics is governing for all of them. On the other side of politics, the member for Bankstown has a selective memory. Does she remember the ferry services that her Government got rid of? What about the Birkenhead Point service to which the member for Drummoyne referred and the downgrades to the Bayview Park services? Have those opposite forgotten all that? That is what happened under Labor's leadership. In contrast, since we came to government an extra 25 ferry services have commenced along the Parramatta River. My colleague the member for Drummoyne spoke about how those services benefit his constituents. Members opposite do not realise that this Government is about different transport options for different parts of Sydney.

In the electorate of Vaucluse and other electorates around the State that have rivers or a harbour it makes perfect sense to take advantage of ferries as an additional form of public transport. Coalition governments do a bit of strategic planning. That does no harm. It does not hurt to sit back and say, "The electorate of Vaucluse has the benefit of the harbour, which allows another transport point through which residents can travel to the city to work, come home to the family or see their friends." In forming Transport for NSW the Minister for Transport has taken a strategic approach and established a body that will consider policy and strategy across all transport networks in New South Wales. It will integrate those networks, provide choice, and play to natural geographic advantages to make public transport work in different parts of New South Wales. I welcome this opportunity to speak on this motion. I will continue to advocate strongly for the residents of Vaucluse, who do need my advocacy. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.05 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the New South Wales Labor Party has a strong and proud history of improving working conditions for men and women living in this State;
- (2) notes the introduction of the Industrial Relations Act 1996 by the late Honourable Jeff Shaw;
- (3) notes that, until recently amended, the Industrial Relations Act 1996 included fair protections for workers' wages and conditions; and
- (4) notes that New South Wales Labor is continuing to lead the fight against the recent amendments to the Act.

This is the second motion I have moved about working conditions, the attack on existing workforce protections and the long struggle to improve working conditions down through the ages. Members will note that the first paragraph of my motion is the same as that in the motion I moved last week in relation to 1944 legislation. That motion referred to the importance of annual holidays to an efficient workforce. In that debate I used the Government's retail trading hours policy as an example of its attack on wages and conditions. This motion relates to the introduction of the Industrial Relations Act in 1996 by the late Hon. Jeff Shaw, and recognises the proud history of the labour movement—not just the Labor Party but the trade union movement and the workers who supported it down through the years.

I gave notice of this motion on 8 September last year. Then, as now, we were struggling to protect the right of employees to access an independent umpire to resolve industrial disputes and pay claims. During debate this morning on a motion moved by the member for Wallsend the member for Newcastle told us to get over it. He said it is all over; it is in the past. That is what Coalition members would like to think will happen. But we are sending a signal to the Government that industrial relations, working conditions and so on, will be on the agenda every day of every week of every month until the next election. We will make sure that these issues, like WorkChoices, do not go away. During a debate last year in the other place the Hon. Sophie Cotsis quoted Justice Boland, the President of the Industrial Relations Commission, who said of the 1996 legislation:

It provides an unparalleled framework for the conduct of industrial relations that is fair and just. It was drafted following extensive consultation with employers and unions.

That is interesting—there was extensive consultation with employers and unions. Would it not be good if the current Government thought that was the way to formulate industrial relations laws? Interestingly, during the Legislative Council debate, when Ms Cotsis was warning of the impacts and implications of the Government's amendments to the bill, the Minister, the Hon. Greg Pearce, thought it was a great joke. One of his interjections, which was recorded, is worth quoting in this House. He said:

How many puppies will die?

That is how light-heartedly he regarded opposition to the industrial relations bill, which was the subject of extensive debate in the Legislative Council. Only today the member for Newcastle and the member for Charlestown said that the thrust of the Government's industrial relations agenda is about implementing Labor policy. I want to respond to what has been said by them and by other Government members. The Government tries to hide behind its industrial relations policies by saying that it is just implementing what the Labor Party had as its policy. The fact is that the Labor Party never had as the basis of any legislation it introduced, and certainly not in any proposition it has put since, any policy that would bypass the Industrial Relations Commission as the independent umpire to settle disputes between an employer and an employee. It is a falsehood for any Government member to suggest that the wages policies or industrial relations reforms being adopted by the Coalition Government are policies or practices to which the Labor Party adhered. Those assertions are absolute nonsense.

The first part of the motion, like my motion of last week, notes the New South Wales Labor Party's strong and proud history of improving working conditions. During that debate I highlighted many reforms leading up to the Annual Holidays Act of 1944. I would like to add a few more, to give examples of where all the conditions that we now take for granted came from; and why, as paragraph (4) of the motion says, we will continue to fight the actions of this Government against the workforce of this State. As mentioned last week, the

two weeks legislated annual holidays were increased by another Labor Government in 1958 to three weeks. In that same year, New South Wales became the first Australian State to legislate for equal pay for male and female workers.

The need for the Arbitration Commission to be the independent umpire was shown during the Coalition years, and during the Whitlam Government progress was made on equal pay and a further increase in annual holidays. The year 1977—just after the election of the Wran Government—was that reformist Government's first full year in office, when laws banning discrimination in employment on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, and later disability and so on, were adopted. In 1980, again under the Wran Government, paid maternity leave became law. In 1981 there were more protections for apprentices and in 1982 minimum redundancy entitlements were introduced. In 1985, again under Premier Wran, long service entitlements increased to two months leave after 10 years of service.

So I signal to the Government that the issues are still being debated in the other House, and there are still campaigns being waged in the workplace by trade unions around the State. Issues around changing workplace laws in this State will not be going away. The Government might get its legislation through the upper House as a consequence of a deal with the crossbenchers, but these debates in the community will not go away. In closing, I ask all members to pause and ask themselves: Do people now really know where these working conditions, some of which I have just mentioned, really came from? The answer, of course, is in the wording of the motion: They came from Labor governments, Federal and State, backed by the campaigns of the union movement. Motions such as this will continue to be debated in this House as we continue to remind the Government and the public of the actions of this Government to take away entitlements that were hard won and fought for over many generations, to make sure the working conditions of our workforce remain strong.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [12.13 p.m.]: I oppose the motion. The motion raises not only recent amendments to industrial relations laws in New South Wales but a fundamental difference between the Government side of politics, the Liberals and The Nationals, and Labor on the other side. I do not doubt for one moment that there are on the Labor benches, many sincere members, who believe genuinely and passionately that their party fights to improve working conditions for men and women in this State. However, the broad vista of history tells us that it is conservative governments, Liberal and Nationals governments, taking the yoke off business, allowing businesses to prosper and to employ people and improve people's wages and conditions that have delivered prosperity and benefits for working people in New South Wales and Australia.

The motion is really about a placebo effect. Those on the other side believe that regulation, law-making and rules deliver benefits to workers in this State and nationally. But we know from the history of Australia and overseas that what delivers prosperity, what delivers benefits for workers, is the ability of private enterprise to prosper and make profits that enables them to generate jobs and improve working conditions. For example, reference was made to the Annual Holidays Act of 1944 and other benefits for workers. We could not have afforded those benefits unless we had a prosperous economy. Those benefits have not been sustained because of political battles; they have been sustained because we have an economy that can afford them. No declaration of rights and no regulation will deliver higher wages and better working conditions unless businesses prosper. It is our philosophy of encouraging business, particularly small business, that leads to prosperity.

Real wages increased at record rates under the Howard Government. Those on the Opposition benches portray the Howard Government as some sort of bogey, but real wages increased by 12 per cent under that Government. That is to be contrasted with the static real wage position under the Rudd and Gillard governments. It is those on our side who are the true friends of workers. Labor members who are now on the Opposition benches would portray themselves as champions of the working class; but they are not. It is those like John Howard in Canberra, and now Barry O'Farrell in New South Wales, who are improving wages and conditions for workers.

Let us get it straight about the class warfare that our friends on the Opposition benches engage in. Unions represent fewer and fewer people in the workforce and a smaller and smaller percentage of the working population. They do not represent class interests; they represent vested interests. What our friends on the Opposition benches forget is that workers are not just workers; they are also taxpayers and consumers. The member for Mount Druitt talked about the history of the New South Wales Labor Party. He needs to look at what that history has meant for taxpayers and consumers. He needs to look at the tax-and-spend approach of Labor governments for generations—the Whitlam Government, and now the Rudd and Gillard governments—attacking workers in this country and New South Wales by raising their taxes and treating them as second rate when it comes to their role as consumers.

The working standards of workers in this State are affected not only by the nominal amount they receive in their pay packets but also by the quality of their public service—the quality of their teachers, their hospital services, and law and order. It is our Government that has brought under control wage explosions in the public sector, to make sure we have as much money as we can to improve those services. It is a matter of good public policy. Let us not fall for the fallacy that somehow we have attacked nominal wages in the public sector. We have not. The 2.5 per cent wage figure is a floor, not a ceiling; and it has delivered real wage increases for public sector workers in the past 12 months. The consumer price index to June 2012, according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, is 1.2 per cent for eight cities and 1.3 per cent for Sydney. So a 2.5 per cent floor actually delivers increases in real wages.

On top of that, public sector workers are entitled to negotiate—through the Industrial Relations Commission if necessary, because it retains that role—for higher wages if they can demonstrate productivity gains. At the end of the day, the vast majority of improvements in workers' conditions over the past century in Australia have been made through increases in productivity. All the union campaigns and all the Labor regulation in the world could not deliver that massive increase in prosperity unless we had dramatically improved productivity. Government and Opposition members need to focus continually on improvements in productivity. The focus should be not on whether someone gets 10 minutes or 15 minutes for a smoko break, but on what is the best way to empower our students, who will be our future workers, and give them the intellectual capital to compete in an increasingly competitive world.

We must make sure that we have a top-flight education system that will equip our students to compete against Asian countries in the years to come; and make sure that the two million businesses in Australia—of which 800,000 are employers, employing about 12 million—can prosper and grow. It is those on our side of the House who have set the parameters and groundwork for that growth and prosperity. It is those on our side of the House who have the strong and proud history of improving working conditions for men and women in this State. There may be a placebo effect for the Opposition that gives them a warm inner glow. I am sure that Opposition members sincerely and genuinely believe what they say but it is conservative governments that have delivered real change and prosperity for workers in New South Wales and Australia.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [12.20 p.m.]: I congratulate my colleague the member for Mount Druitt on moving this motion, which appropriately notes the New South Wales Labor Party's strong and unwavering commitment to workers' rights and our proud history of improving pay and conditions for working men and women in this State. The Industrial Relations Act 1996 was introduced by the late Hon. Jeff Shaw, one of the finest Attorney Generals this State has ever had—and a gentleman as well. It is in the DNA of every member who sits on this side of the House, and represents New South Wales Labor in this hallowed Chamber, to stand up for workers and their rights. New South Wales Labor believes in fair pay, proper and safe working conditions, equal rights and the continual improvement of both the workforce and the workplace. This is in stark contrast to those who sit on the other side, the O'Farrell Government.

Labor stands for "Your rights at work" while the Coalition want to impose WorkChoices. Never could a contrast be more apparent between the Coalition and Labor than in the field of industrial relations in New South Wales—and as we all know this Premier has proven himself to be no friend of the worker. There was no louder vote of no confidence in Mr O'Farrell's leadership than when an estimated 40,000 public sector workers marched on Parliament House in August last year. They took to the streets of Sydney, to Macquarie Street, to voice their anger and disgust over "Barry's" unfair industrial changes and to stand up for their rights and the rights of their families.

I take members back to the 1820s in England when the Masters and Servants Act 1828 permitted employers to prosecute any employee who refused to work. The maximum penalty for that crime was six months imprisonment. I would not be surprised if the O'Farrell Government attempted to reinstate that legislation. Workers' rights have come a long way since then. The trade union movement has done much to provide the worker with adequate protections and a strong voice in the workplace. The union movement in New South Wales commenced in the 1860s and the Trades and Labor Council of Sydney was formed on 25 May 1871. In the approximately 130 years since its foundation, the union movement and the New South Wales Labor Party have worked hand in hand for the good of the workers and their families.

More recent Labor Party successes include the establishment in February 2006 in the Secure Employment Test Case in the NSW Industrial Relations Commission of a right for casuals to convert to permanent employment after a period of six months. In 2006 the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues found that the Howard Government's WorkChoices legislation should be repealed. Failing its

repeal, the committee called on the New South Wales Government to take action to lessen its effects. In 2007 Federal Labor came to power with a promise to rid this country of WorkChoices and to look after properly the interests of working families. That is just a tiny snippet of industrial relations history in this State; a proud history that Labor has contributed to.

Unfortunately, the O'Farrell Government appears to have no ambition to continue Labor's good work. The O'Farrell Government has taken away police death and disability entitlements and made cuts to workers compensation, such as not covering people on their way to and from work. Those are just some of the changes and so-called "reforms" made by the Coalition Government that have done nothing but hurt the workers. The New South Wales Labor Opposition is proud of its history and track record in protecting workers' rights. Once again, I congratulate my colleague the member for Mt Druitt, Richard Amery, on moving the motion before the House.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [12.24 p.m.]: Those who are watching Parliament on television or who read *Hansard* will recognise the beating of chests, the gnashing of teeth and the hysteria generated by the member for Cabramatta about the Government's terrible legislation. The community will be wondering what terrible piece of legislation has been enacted by Parliament. I will tell the people what terrible legislation the Opposition and the member for Cabramatta are upset about: It is exactly the same as Labor's own wages policy. That is what the House is debating. It was introduced in this House by the Labor Government of the day. Those great friends of the worker have in their ranks members of the Health Services Union who, as reported in the papers, have been pilfering union members' money to fund unseemly activities.

I do not doubt the sincerity of the motion moved by the member for Mount Druitt. I do not doubt his aims and objectives. The member for Mount Druitt has made a significant and material contribution to this House over many years. But the reality is very different. This Government inherited an economic basket case. It also inherited a \$5.2 billion black hole. When the Coalition was elected to govern last year it found that the \$5.2 billion black hole was worse than expected because the previous administration had asked Treasury to move forward the payback of rail grants to cover the black hole. That is the deceit that occurred in this State, with a dishonest government hiding the extent of its deficit. That deceit hurts the very people whom those opposite are pretending to protect. This Government has to get the State's finances back on track and turn New South Wales around. If the Government is to deliver for working people in this State by building the infrastructure that they have missed out on for so long it needs to ensure that there is a sound financial base from which to launch those projects.

[Interruption]

The member for Wollongong says she is concerned about jobs, and I am sure she is concerned about her daughter's job in the office of the member for Shellharbour.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. That comment has nothing to do with the motion being debated.

Mr MATT KEAN: To the point of order: I am talking about jobs and the State's finances. If the Government is going to deliver for workers and build infrastructure then I know, as a chartered accountant, that the books must be balanced. The Government's reform agenda is seeking to deliver for people. The Government is delivering wage rises to public servants. Public servants work hard. My father and my sister are both public servants; I care deeply about public servants. The Government must deliver for all taxpayers by building roads and providing better education and hospital services— *[Time expired.]*

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.28 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the motion moved by the member for Mount Druitt. I will correct a comment by the previous speaker, the member for Hornsby. Labor has never had a policy that bypassed the Industrial Relations Commission; the member needs to get that into his head. I speak to this motion in support of my good friend the member for Mount Druitt and in support of the Industrial Relations Act 1996. I congratulate the member for Mount Druitt on bringing this motion before the House. The New South Wales Labor Party has a strong and proud history of improving the working conditions of people in this State. Unfortunately, the O'Farrell Government does not share the same values. It is unfortunate that the people of New South Wales have to suffer the consequences of this untrustworthy, uncaring Government.

The people of New South Wales expressed concerns over the uncaring O'Farrell Government's actions in relation to workplace rights and conditions through several rallies held throughout last year and this year. It

was unprecedented that thousands of people held a rally outside Parliament House in Macquarie Street protesting about the Government's industrial relations policies. The Government must stop ignoring the people of New South Wales and turning a blind eye to their needs, particularly the needs of public sector workers. It is evident that the O'Farrell Government does not appreciate the meaning of fair workplace rights and conditions. This has been established already by the cries of more than 40,000 hardworking New South Wales public sector employees, especially local police, firefighters, teachers and nurses; the list goes on and on.

The Industrial Relations Act was introduced by the late the Hon. Jeff Shaw and until it was amended recently it had provided protection for New South Wales workers in relation to wages and conditions. It is a fact that New South Wales Labor will always fight to maintain the rights of workers in the workplace, unlike those opposite. This is clear through the implementation of the Federal Labor Government's Fair Work Act 2009, which repealed the Workplace Relations Act 1996. This Act has been significant in ensuring quality of life for workers and their families in New South Wales. This included new unfair dismissal laws, new national agencies, new enterprise agreement options, good-faith bargaining requirements, transfer of business laws and new union right of entry laws.

The principal object of the Industrial Relations Act 1996 is to provide a framework for cooperative workplace relations that promotes the economic prosperity and welfare of the people of New South Wales. Unfortunately yet again we have been let down by the O'Farrell Government, which has failed to encourage the pursuit of high employment; failed to provide an economically sustainable safety net of minimum wages and conditions for those whose employment is regulated by this Act; failed to ensure compliance with minimum standards, industrial instruments and bargaining processes by providing effective means for the investigation and enforcement of employee entitlements; failed the rights and obligations of employers and employees; and failed to protect the competitive position of young people in the labour market.

Mr Nick Lalich: It's a shame.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I can assure the member for Cabramatta that I could go on to list more failures, but time does not permit. New South Wales workers and their families deserve to be protected by the Government and legislation that protects the rights and entitlements of New South Wales employees. Only a Labor Government has the best interests of the worker at heart. I support the motion moved by the member for Mount Druitt.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [12.32 p.m.]: There is no doubt that this is a perfect opportunity for Opposition members to forget what happened in the past. I was sitting in this House when the Hon. Michael Costa delivered his budget, which stated that the Labor Government of the day would cap public sector wages at 2.5 per cent—not one member of the his Labor Government made a comment. Labor members sat nodding their heads; they thought it was a pretty good move by their Treasurer to introduce such a good policy—and it certainly was good policy. When this Government decided to continue that policy, all of a sudden they raised their voices and we heard them. They suddenly came out of the woodwork. But when Labor Treasurer Costa announced it in his budget they did not say a word.

For a couple of years members of the Labor Government sat mute; there was not a squeak from them, but as soon as this Government introduced the same measure as part of its budget, the world was suddenly caving in. The Leader of the Opposition said, "This is going to be the fight of the century; your Government will never forget it." They even pulled a stunt with a protest outside Parliament. However, when those opposite did some polling to find out what the electorate thought of the Leader of the Opposition and they realised that he was regarded as a union thug, the Leader of the Opposition decided he had better change tack. All of a sudden he forgot about the 2.5 per cent; it was no longer on the agenda.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: The behaviour of the member for Murray-Darling is unparliamentary. To refer to the Leader of the Opposition as a "union thug" is completely unacceptable. The fact that he hates all unions and unionists does not justify the member for Murray-Darling using the term "thug". He should be ashamed of himself. He has nothing to say and what he is saying is rubbish.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Murray-Darling has the call.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: I thank the member for Wollongong for that point of order, but the interesting thing is that they are not my words. She should look at the document the Leader of the Opposition received as a result of some polling—that is exactly what it says.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: I was only repeating what has been printed. These are not new words. The member for Wollongong said that I hate unions. She must have been in a different union to the ones that we have in Broken Hill—we have real unions. We started the union movement in Australia. We did not import union leaders. The union movement was started by people who really wanted to look after the rights of workers. They did not seek to muddy the water, talk about Labor policy adopted by an incoming government or make it sound like it is a whole new concept. Labor's only chance of survival as a government was the Hon. Michael Costa, yet Labor did not want to listen to him. Indeed, it found a way to get rid of him. Labor members still did not mention the 2.5 per cent cap that the Hon. Michael Costa put on public sector wages.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.36 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions of the members for Cronulla, Hornsby and Murray-Darling and I thank the members for Cabramatta and Fairfield for their positive contributions to the debate. I do not know what I can say about the last contribution. We always know when the Coalition has a bit of trouble carrying a debate—it only wants to bag individuals and throw insults around. I shall deal with the points that some Coalition members attempted to raise. The member for Cronulla, who is generally a serious member in this House, commenced with a serious dissertation about the Liberals' philosophy on industrial relations, that is, that none of the benefits outlined by Labor could be introduced unless the economy was strong enough to afford them. That is the philosophical position of the Liberals and conservatives in general.

If we accept that argument we must accept that it is by coincidence that the economy was strong enough to introduce all those improvements to workers benefits that we mentioned down through the years. For some reason the economy was never strong enough to introduce equal pay, annual holidays and long service leave when the Coalition was occupying the Treasury benches. It is just a coincidence that the economies were strong enough when Labor governments were in office and the benefits were introduced. I need to say nothing more on that subject; the member for Cronulla has condemned himself with his own comments. I do not know whether he was just baiting Labor members or whether it was tongue in cheek when he said that the best industrial relations reforms and wage rates occurred under the really strong advocate of the worker, John Howard. I think he was referring to John Howard the Prime Minister and not John Howard the television actor.

If we assume he was talking about John Howard the Prime Minister, I remind members that it was the same John Howard who sent security guards and dogs on to the wharf to throw wharf workers out of their jobs. And those opposite are suggesting that he was a great friend? Need I say more? After the dogs and security guards were driven back off the wharf he then came up with WorkChoices and we know what happened to WorkChoices: it prevented the Coalition from winning the 2007 election and it cost John Howard not only his government but his own seat in Parliament. That was how the workers judged John Howard as the workers' friend. I thank the member for Cabramatta for his little bit of history about legislation in 1824 to send people to jail for not doing as they were told. In response to an interjection from the Opposition, I did not protest against that bill when it was introduced in England. I thank him also for making a positive comment about Jeff Shaw, a former Attorney General, who introduced the Industrial Relations Act 1996.

I agree with the member for Cabramatta that he was one of the finest Attorneys General we have ever had. The member for Hornsby did not say much other than to repeat the words of the member for Murray-Darling that the policy we are arguing about is Labor policy. That argument has been debunked by the member for Cabramatta and the member for Fairfield because the 2.5 per cent was not a condition of any changes to work practices; wage increases were always more than 2.5 per cent because—the key point—we did not remove the Industrial Relations Commission. Even John Howard's WorkChoices did not remove an independent umpire. The comments by the Hon. Sophie Cotsis in the other place that these bills are even worse than WorkChoices have some validity. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

EAST RICHMOND RAILWAY STATION LEVEL CROSSING

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [12.41 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) welcomes the announcement that community consultations commenced in August 2011 with stakeholders preparing plans to upgrade the level crossing at East Richmond Railway Station; and
- (2) notes the works to upgrade the crossing will be completed during the 2012-13 financial year.

I welcomed the announcement last year about the upgrade of the level crossing at East Richmond. I congratulate the Minister for Transport on again supporting upgrades to public transport. It is interesting that the new Government has had to get on with the job of fixing the basics on the Richmond line and showing commuters that we are improving their lot in life when they use that line. I acknowledge the member for Riverstone in the Chamber, whose constituents also use the Richmond line. When this Government came to power in March 2011 I was immediately contacted by a vision-impaired gentleman from Richmond. He had spoken to the former State member over a long period of time subsequent to his unfortunate fall between the train and the platform at Richmond Railway Station. He had been lobbying for the installation of tactile tiles on the station platform. Unfortunately, his lobbying fell on deaf ears: apparently the former Labor Government did not believe it was important. Tactile tiles are the coloured dots that one sees on footpaths. Those opposite probably think it is street art—it is not. They are tiles that vision-impaired people feel and consequently can avoid a dangerous situation.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Fairfield will come to order.

Mr BART BASSETT: We have installed tactile tiles on the platform at Richmond Railway Station and I am pleased to say that the gentleman in question was very quick to contact my office to thank us for doing so. That platform is now safe for people who are vision-impaired and I congratulate the Minister who, on hearing about this dangerous situation, contacted the department, which put the works program in place last year. At East Richmond Railway Station we are doing exactly the same thing. We are upgrading the level crossing to address safety concerns, we are replacing the lights and the boom gates, and we are installing pedestrian crossings not just on Bourke Street where the railway station is located—where we are also improving the pedestrian crossing from the commuter car park across to the platform—but also one street along on Moray Street.

Moray Street is a very important street because it is a dead-end at the railway line. It will now have pedestrian access across the railway line through new gates, which will directly lead to Richmond Primary School and St Monica's Primary School so that people from both sides of the Richmond township can gain safe access to both of those primary schools. I note that the plans are currently being formulated and that construction will take place in the 2013-14 financial year. Well done to RailCorp and the Minister for ensuring that happens. Earlier this morning we heard about Newcastle City Council sticking its nose into other tiers of government business—industrial relations—instead of doing what councils have a responsibility to do. I congratulate Hawkesbury City Council—Liberal councillors—on its very strong leadership and on getting on with its work.

Right next door to the East Richmond Railway Station is the Richmond Golf Club. I spoke last week in this place about the great history of that club. Next to the club are facilities for the girl guides, the scouts and a paddock called Pound Paddock, a sports field that is no longer used because it is not large enough and it has a busy road running alongside it. The council went through a community consultation phase to build a community facility on that site in partnership with a not-for-profit provider. I congratulate not only the council but also North West Disability Services on providing this facility. The Minister for Disability Services is in the Chamber and I thank him for his interest in ensuring that good facilities like North West Disability Services are provided in the north-west. I look forward to seeing what is built on Pound Paddock, in consultation with the girl guides and the scouts, to provide a fantastic facility adjacent to East Richmond Railway Station.

We have been presented with a unique opportunity. Over the next 12 to 18 months we will upgrade East Richmond Railway Station to improve safety and provide better facilities for commuters, and we will provide a fantastic facility on the Pound Paddock for disability services. In between those two locations, near the Richmond Golf Club, is the Endeavour Energy substation. Endeavour Energy has just built a new facility about half a kilometre away from the substation to allow the decommissioning of the substation in Bourke Street between the East Richmond Railway Station and Pound Paddock. The decommissioning of that facility will enable the whole precinct to be improved, and I call on the Chief Executive Officer of Endeavour Energy to ask his staff to immediately find out the time frame for the decommissioning.

The decommissioning of that facility will allow a roundabout to be installed at the intersection of March Street and Bourke Street—right near the railway station and right near where the new community facility will be built—so that access to the station, the golf club and the facility will be safe and coordinated. It will also reduce the traffic snarls in that precinct right near the level crossing. All those works could be done at the same time. It is not often in a lifetime that such an opportunity comes along. An electricity substation is a significant piece of infrastructure, rarely moved and generally upgraded on site. This is a great opportunity for the Government and an electricity authority to work together to improve community facilities.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.48 p.m.]: We are very happy to support the motion moved by the member for Londonderry welcoming the announcement of community consultation for the level crossing at the East Richmond Railway Station, and note that it will be completed in the current financial year. In relation to the comment from the member for Londonderry about fixing the basics of the Richmond line, whilst the level crossing is very important for the Richmond line, I point out that during my term as member for Riverstone the work to upgrade that line was a big issue in the 1980s and the Government at that time, the Wran and Unsworth Government, finished the reconstruction of the wooden bridges on that line and brought in some concrete bridges to support heavier gauge electric trains.

Barrie Unsworth came to Riverstone as transport Minister and announced the electrification of the rail line between Riverstone and Richmond. The stanchions were up but, unfortunately, the election of the Greiner Government saw that project stopped. I highlight that the Hawke Federal Government at the time provided tied money to New South Wales to finish the project. The motion to have the level crossing improved is important. I am familiar with the Richmond, East Richmond and Windsor areas. Providing safe facilities for children attending Richmond Public School and other schools in the area is to be commended. I am sure both sides of politics in the local council and the State Government will welcome any facility to improve the safety of children crossing railway lines.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [12.50 p.m.]: I support the motion of the member for Londonderry. I welcome progress on upgrading any facility along the railway line that serves the people of our region. The example at East Richmond station is but one of a number of improvements occurring on our network, particularly along the Richmond line. I fully support that improvement to the intersection so that people using the Richmond rail line feel safer when accessing the station. This comes on top of welcomed improvements that have been made recently to Windsor railway station. Easy access provisions have been put in place so that people with a disability can safely use the station at Windsor without the need for temporary assistance from staff providing ramps and so on.

The platform height has been adjusted and access to the platform has been improved. Facilities for staff and customers at the station have also been improved. This financial year Riverstone station has also been improved to make public transport access safer and easier for disabled people. As the member for Riverstone I cannot talk about level crossings without commenting on Garfield Road at Riverstone—the level crossing that time forgot. Barrie Unsworth probably did announce that it was going to be replaced, but Barrie has been gone for some time and the level crossing is still there. In fact, Labor candidates at four successive elections promised that an overpass would be provided to replace the level crossing at Riverstone.

It has fallen to this Government and Minister Berejiklian and Minister Gay to resolve this matter. A scoping study is being undertaken and it is due to report back in the not too distant future. That study will indicate the way forward so that a permanent solution to the level crossing at Garfield Road can be established and implemented. I welcome the action taken so far by the O'Farrell Government to address the real issues on the Richmond line and to upgrade the services for commuters at the various stations along that line. I look forward to the results of the scoping study in relation to the problem at Garfield Road, Riverstone. The long-running saga left behind by the Labor Government will be resolved by the O'Farrell Government, which is getting on with the job of improving services for the people of New South Wales.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [12.53 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Riverstone and Mount Druitt for their contributions. The member for Riverstone highlighted the ongoing issues regarding promised infrastructure upgrades that did not occur, such as the level crossing at Riverstone. Believe me, the same can be said about air-conditioned and heated trains on the Richmond line. Over the many years that the member for Riverstone and the member for Hawkesbury and I have campaigned along that line, air-conditioned trains in summer and heated trains in winter are the main things that people have asked for. Rather than just hollow promises, I have approached the Minister many times over the past 12 months and she is very much aware of the need for that to happen sooner rather than later. That part of Sydney has extreme temperatures. In winter the temperature can drop below zero degrees and it rises into the 30s and 40s in summer. It is not unreasonable that the community wants to see Waratah trains rolled out onto that line as soon as possible. I have been given an assurance that that will take place.

In regard to councils and government working together, I mentioned the level crossing at East Richmond station. We also have a level crossing at Clarendon. When I contacted the council yesterday I was informed that Racecourse Road will be upgraded next financial year from the level crossing down to Rickaby Street. Access into the racecourse and the showground will be rehabilitated, which occurred from Rickaby Street

through to Richmond Road some years ago through a grant from the Howard Federal Government. That enabled the council to upgrade that part of Racecourse Road from a gravel road to a sealed road, providing better access to the race club and the showground. Better access has been provided for the famous Hawkesbury Show, which is held every year, with the creation of two entry points off Richmond Road and off the main road coming through Windsor. A lot of good work is going on in partnership between the State Government and councils. I also acknowledge the good work that was done by the Howard Government when it provided road grants to local governments which enabled the improvements at Clarendon station.

The subject of this motion is East Richmond station. Again I highlight the good work that has been done by North West Disability Services, and by Endeavour Energy becoming involved to decommission the substation at East Richmond. Next week I will contact the Chief Executive Officer of Endeavour Energy to make sure we can coordinate the work at the railway crossing, the Pound Paddock construction and also the decommissioning of the substation to allow the council to work with the organisation that will be chosen to do the East Richmond level crossing to construct a roundabout at Bourke Street into the car park of the Richmond Golf Club. Once again I congratulate the Minister on getting on with the job of fixing up our public transport infrastructure. Commuters will see the difference and will appreciate that we are focused on delivering better quality public transport. I look forward to air-conditioned and heated trains arriving on the Richmond line. On that day the commuters will say, "Labor failed us and the Liberal-Nationals Coalition gave us what we asked for".

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

Motion agreed to.

CRIME COMMISSION BILL 2012

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

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

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! It being close to 1.00 p.m. and with the consent of the House, committee reports will now be proceeded with.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE NSW WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Report: New South Wales Workers Compensation Scheme

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

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [12.58 p.m.]: As Deputy Chair of the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Workers Compensation Scheme I am pleased to speak to the committee's report, which was tabled in this House on 13 June 2012. The committee was established on 2 May 2012 to inquire into and report on the workers compensation scheme. Our terms of reference required us to have particular regard to the performance of the scheme in meeting its key objectives of promoting better health outcomes and return to work outcomes for injured workers, the financial sustainability of the scheme and its impact on the New South Wales economy, and the functions and operations of the WorkCover Authority.

In undertaking the inquiry the committee considered an issues paper released by the Minister for Finance and Services on 23 April 2012. The issues paper detailed numerous concerns with the workers compensation scheme and included reform options to address these concerns. The committee received 353 submissions. During public hearings the committee heard from 79 witnesses, a broad cross-section. They included representatives from 32 organisations from every side of the debate. They included 10 individuals who shared their personal experiences of workplace injury and the workers compensation scheme. The committee made 28 recommendations, most of which were taken up in subsequent legislation enacted in June. The committee saw a WorkCover scheme in crisis. As at 31 December it had a \$4.1 billion deficit and it probably has had a much larger deficit since then. At the inquiry there was no serious challenge to the actuarial evidence about this deficit. PricewaterhouseCoopers calculations and methodology were reviewed by Ernst and Young and the New South Wales Auditor-General gave his imprimatur to the methodology.

It was clear to the committee that immediate reform was required. Apart from the restructuring of benefits, nowhere in the evidence did we hear where anyone would immediately find cost savings to deal with

the crisis of a large and increasing deficit. In particular, remuneration of scheme agents was already in line with every other jurisdiction around Australia. One alternative was to increase premiums but to get the system into the black within five years premiums would have had to have been increased by 28 per cent, yet premiums were already 20 per cent to 60 per cent higher than in Victoria and Queensland. That further increase would throw over 12,000 people out of work. The only way to solve this crisis was to take immediate action and to restructure benefits. But the committee's recommendations were not just about solving a financial crisis; they sought also to restructure benefits in a way that was fair and reasonable and that gave people incentives to return to work.

The uncontested evidence before the committee was that the longer people stay out of work the less likely it is that they will return. They reach a stage where they just will not return to work. The recommendations were aimed, in part, at increasing incentives to return to work. The recommendations drew heavily on what has already been occurring for some time in Victoria and Queensland, including under Labor governments. As the report notes, given the understandably urgent time frame that the committee was given, the committee's recommendations concentrated on reversing the scheme's poor financial position by recommending changes to the scheme for which it was possible to forecast a quantifiable effect, albeit indicatively and not precisely. Cost savings could well be possible and return to work performance improved by changes to WorkCover's general operations, including guidelines, claims handling, scheme agent structure and the like. However, most of the evidence which the committee received on those topics, which often was passionate and forceful, was impressionistic, unquantified, unquantifiable and often disputed.

The serious concerns expressed in these areas warrant further review and investigation but the committee had no confidence that changes in those areas would produce the major cost savings needed in order to avoid the need to restructure benefits. As the report notes, restructuring of benefits is not a matter of blaming workers for the scheme's financial predicament; rather, it is a function of the scheme having to live within its means. I thank all inquiry participants and all my fellow committee members for their contributions. In particular, I thank the committee secretariat for its diligent and tireless efforts in managing the inquiry process and preparing the report with urgent deadlines.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [1.03 p.m.]: Given the reduced time that is available in debates such as this, I will make a short contribution in debate on the take-note debate on the report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Workers Compensation Scheme entitled "New South Wales Workers Compensation Scheme." I was one of the Opposition members who served on that committee. As the member for Cronulla said, the committee secretariat did an excellent job in producing this report. The committee secretariat was forced by the majority of members to produce one of the sorriest reports that will ever come from this Parliament and one of the worst pieces of legislation that will ever be enacted by any parliament in this nation. I challenge anyone who might listen to or read this speech at any time in the future to find a piece of legislation anywhere across our great nation that was designed and that is so capable of hurting people incisively to the extent that this awful piece of legislation, which emanated from this terrible report, has done. I challenge anyone to come forward and to identify similar legislation. I believe that this legislation is the worst statute on the books anywhere in Australia.

The report that was produced by this committee, which was a sham and a whitewash, was rushed through with inordinate speed by a Minister who does not seem to care about people. It is all about dollars for this Minister and his awful Government. The committee was stacked with Government members and its draft report was more indicative of the evidence that was put before it. The main thrust of the draft report was that the time frame was impossibly short, much of the evidence that was given to the committee was unquantifiable, and that a joint standing committee ought to be formed to conduct a serious review of the workers compensation scheme and the WorkCover scheme in New South Wales. However, that draft report was smashed by the Government majority on the committee, aided and abetted by the Shooters and Fishers Party.

The report was predicated on a lie—that premiums would have to rise by 28 per cent to address the shortfall or the deficit in the scheme. PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Government's actuarial advisers, said that we could raise premiums in the short term by 28 per cent—that is, in five years—and do nothing else to bring the scheme back into balance. The Government's actuarial advisers also said that if we did nothing else over 10 years we could raise premiums by a mere 8 per cent to bring the scheme back into balance. A 10-year 8 per cent premium rise would have been reasonable in the circumstances but instead this Government went for the five-year scaremongering option and rammed the report through.

One of the salient things I learned on this committee and that I will never forget—I was not aware of it before—was how seriously mentally debilitating an injury in the workplace can be for those who cannot get

back to work. Earlier the member for Cronulla said that injured people reached a point where they would not return to work, almost as though people who are injured at work, through no fault of their own, are happy to sit at home and bludge for the rest of their lives. After listening to the evidence that was given to the committee I can state categorically that that statement is not sustainable. It says a lot about the attitude of this Government to injured persons. This is a sham.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD [1.07 p.m.]: I wish to make a short contribution to this take-note debate on the report of the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Workers Compensation Scheme. Anyone listening to this debate or reading these speeches in *Hansard* might think that the member for Maroubra's attack on the work of the committee and the Government must have some credibility on this subject. But, as this House knows, the member for Maroubra has no credibility whatsoever when it comes to WorkCover. Earlier this year, Greg McCarthy, Chief Executive Officer of WorkCover, said that on many occasions he had tried in vain to raise with the Labor Government the problems that were being experienced by WorkCover. No-one would listen to him when he said that WorkCover was going backwards and that it was unsustainable. Greg McCarthy referred to the member for Maroubra as being negligent.

Greg McCarthy also referred to the fact that nobody in the Labor Government had their hands on the levers, which is why the Liberal-Nationals Government inherited an unfunded debt of \$4.1 billion. Members are aware that we have to have funds in order to pay our bills. Under Labor, New South Wales was unable to pay its bills. The member for Maroubra attacked this committee, which I believe has done a fine job. I commend the member for Cronulla, deputy chair of the committee, for the work that he has done. The committee had to find a way to make this program sustainable for the workers of New South Wales. If it did nothing New South Wales would not have a scheme for workers. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition, which represents the workers in this State, had to find an answer. This committee has gone a long way towards doing that.

The Coalition is filling the void; it is looking after the workers. We have not wiped out the whole scheme; we have introduced measures to retain payments for injured workers, to introduce incentives for rehabilitation—incentives to return to work. That is what any responsible government would do and what any committee would recommend. I congratulate the committee on the work that it has done but agree that more work needs to be done. This Government is looking forward to doing more work in this area. I commend the committee for its report.

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

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 22/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.10 p.m.]: As chair of the Legislation Review Committee, I take this opportunity to comment on the recent Legislation Review Digest tabled on 21 August 2012. This is the twenty-second digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. In that sense, it is the twenty-second report delivered by the committee, once again reinforcing the fact that it is the hardest-working committee in this Parliament. It does a great job for the benefit of all members of Parliament. Members would be aware that the role of the committee is to identify issues in proposed legislation and regulations as outlined in sections 8A and 9 of the Legislation Review Act. Our sole responsibility is to act in accordance with those two sections, and not to go further than that other than to report to the House.

The twenty-second digest examined eight bills introduced in the sitting week commencing 13 August 2012. The bills the committee considered were the Crime Commission Bill 2012, the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, the Fines Amendment Bill 2012, the Interpretation Amendment (International Human Rights Obligations) Bill 2012, the New South Wales Jobs Commission Bill 2012, the State Senate Bill 2012 and the Succession Amendment (International Wills) Bill 2012. The Crime Commission Bill 2012 implements a number of the recommendations outlined in the Patten report and re-enacts the New South Wales Crime Commission Act 1985 to modernise the legislation.

The committee identified issues relating to legal representation, rules of evidence, self-incrimination, arrest and imprisonment without charge, privacy, freedom of speech, search warrant powers and commencement by proclamation. The Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 amends a number of Acts to improve the efficiency and operation of the State's criminal laws as part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program. The bill also contains provisions to repeal certain legislation. Areas of amendment relate to kidnapping, sensitive evidence, guardianship, the signing of certificates, serious sex offences, young offenders and sporting venues. The committee noted issues relating to the right to silence and retrospectivity with respect to this bill.

The purpose of the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 is to make miscellaneous amendments to legislation affecting the operation of the courts of New South Wales and other legislation administered by the Attorney General. The bill is part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program and will amend a number of Acts to improve the efficiency and operation of the courts and the operation of agencies within the Department of Attorney General and Justice. The committee has included comments in relation to access to information, privacy, retrospectivity and commencement by proclamation in relation to this bill. The Fines Amendment Bill 2012 seeks to improve the administration and enforcement of fines. It amends the Fines Act 1996 to provide the State Debt Recovery Office with greater power to obtain information to identify fine defaulters. Currently, information that the State Debt Recovery Office can obtain from government agencies is limited to criminal record, address and assets of a fine defaulter.

The bill also seeks to clarify the time limits relating to options available to penalty notice recipients and adopts consistent wording for the refund provisions under the Fines Act 1996 to ensure that, in the event an amount needs to be repaid, it is repaid to the person who paid the penalty notice. The committee noted a privacy issue in relation to this bill. The object of the Interpretation Amendment (International Human Rights Obligations) Bill 2012 is to amend the Interpretation Act 1987 to provide that in the interpretation of a provision of an Act, statutory rule or other instrument, consideration may, in certain circumstances, be given to Australia's obligations under the international human rights treaties to which Australia is a party. The committee commented on the transfer of legislative power to the judiciary in relation to this bill.

The object of the New South Wales Jobs Commission Bill 2012 is to establish a New South Wales Jobs Commission to inquire into and advise on matters affecting jobs growth and retention, in particular, in relation to regional areas. The committee made no comment in relation to this bill. The object of the State Senate Bill 2012 is to authorise the use of the terms "State Senate" as a reference to the Legislative Council and "State Senator" as a reference to a member of the Legislative Council. The committee made no comment in relation to this bill. Those two pieces of legislation demonstrate that if no new issues are raised under sections 8A and 9 the committee makes no comment. I am sure some members wished to make a comment but no comment was made because that legislation did not fall under the sections to which I referred earlier.

The object of the Succession Amendment (International Wills) Bill 2012 is to amend the Succession Act 2006 to adopt into New South Wales law the uniform law contained in the UNIDROIT Convention providing a Uniform Law on the Form of an International Will 1973. The committee noted that this legislation, if passed, would commence by proclamation. The committee prepares the digest to assist members in their consideration of bills. I thank the members of the committee, namely, the member for Swansea, the member for Rockdale, the member for Bankstown, the member for Parramatta and our colleagues in the other place, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps and Mr David Shoebridge, who consider the bills and issues relevant to the committee. I also thank the staff for their hard work and diligence and for turning out this digest in such a short period.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.16 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 22/55" and acknowledge my fellow members of the committee—the members representing the electorates of Myall Lakes, Parramatta, Rockdale and Swansea and our colleagues in the other place, Mr David Shoebridge, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps. I also acknowledge our hardworking committee staff. This week's digest made for a much more interesting read than last week's digest. Of course, this is not a comment about the staff members who prepared the digest; I am referring to the Government which introduced the bills. This week's digest, unlike last week's digest, reviews legislation that is presently before the House. The meeting this week was interesting as several amendments were moved. I think the committee achieved a record; it finally hit double digits—30 minutes—in the time spent reviewing legislation, which was a big achievement. The meeting that was held last week went

for only two minutes. A number of amendments were moved this week. Mr David Shoebridge proposed an amendment relating to the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which was supported by the Opposition and the Government, this amendment read as follows:

The Committee refers to Parliament whether removing the statutory requirement that an application for probate or administration is to be published in a newspaper and enable publication to be made by other means inappropriately delegates legislative power.

Yesterday, in my contribution to debate on the second reading of the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, I asked the Attorney General to address that issue. I look forward to his reply. The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps also moved an amendment to the digest relating to a private member's bill—the shadow Attorney General's Interpretation Amendment (International Human Rights Obligations) Bill 2012. As his amendment was quite lengthy I will not read it out, but its effect was to note concerns granting inappropriate legislative power to the judiciary. Opposition members, along with Mr David Shoebridge, opposed that amendment. I am sure that when the bill comes to the Chamber it will result in an interesting debate.

The digest also reviewed the Crime Commission Bill 2012. The committee noted concerns regarding the bill potentially denying an individual choice on legal representation in some circumstances. However, given the reasonable grounds and good faith aspects of the legislation, and the fact that it relates to ongoing investigations, the committee made no further comment in regard to this issue. The committee also noted that provisions within the bill to require the production of a document may result in self-incrimination, and referred to Parliament whether subclause 24 (6) and clause 39 are reasonable. The committee also noted that the bill may raise issues relating to freedom of speech. However, it was noted that this provision limited only the spread of information regarding ongoing Crime Commission investigations and so made no further comment regarding this issue.

The digest also reviewed the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The committee referred to Parliament issues regarding the right to silence contained within the bill. In particular, the committee noted that abolishing the existing common law rule that persons cannot be found guilty of an offence for failing to disclose a crime committed by their wife or partner might be a violation of the right to silence. The committee also noted issues relating to retrospectivity resulting from this legislation. The digest considered eight bills in total and highlighted some interesting provisions contained within those bills. I again commend the staff for preparing the digest on time, given that we once again had back-to-back sitting weeks. I urge all members to review the digest and use it in their deliberations on legislation. I commend the digest to the House.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [1.20 p.m.]: I comment briefly on the Legislation Review Committee's report. I note that the committee meets every sitting week and works very hard every sitting week to consider a large number of bills and regulations in order to identify certain issues, and whether certain provisions may impinge upon a person's liberties or offend against fairness and justice. This week has obviously demonstrated how the committee works. Consideration of the material is done by all members in their own time so when the committee members meet they are really only looking over that material; it is not a time to read the material, but a time to make decisions.

I would like to commend the chair of the Legislation Review Committee, the member for Myall Lakes, on the role he plays in the efficient functioning of that committee, understanding that we are all very busy people and the work should be done in our own time rather than in the committee room. This week is a fantastic demonstration that, when required, a rigorous and robust debate can occur within the committee, headed by the chair. I would like to put on record my appreciation of the efficient running of the committee by the member for Myall Lakes, making allowances when necessary to have a debate. My special thanks go to the committee staff for their hard work and diligence in producing their reports very quickly in back-to-back sitting weeks.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.22 p.m.]: I would like to make a few comments about Legislation Review Digest No. 22/55, dated 21 August 2012. The theme of those comments is perhaps similar to the theme of the comments I have made a number of times in this House. Before doing so, I would like to echo the complimentary comments of former speakers about the chair of the Legislation Review Committee. Anything I say about the committee certainly is no reflection on him. However, I must highlight to the Parliament that this particular digest once again shows how very thin is the legislative program of the Coalition, which had been in opposition for 16 years but has been in government for the past 17 months.

I note that this particular digest dealt with a number of Government bills, one Opposition bill and a bill proposed by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile in the other place regarding the naming of the Legislative Council.

The point I make is that generally the legislation put before this Parliament—not all of it—has been administrative in nature. One would have thought that the Coalition, after being in opposition for so long, would have put forward what I would call groundbreaking or reformist legislation. Obviously, the Government has done that in some areas, and as a consequence has drawn a lot of criticism, as occurred with its industrial relations legislation and the like. For instance, "Part One—Bills" of the Legislation Review Digest notes that the purpose of the Crime Commission Bill 2012 is to "re-enact (in modernised form) the New South Wales Crime Commission Act". It goes on to say that it implements a number of recommendations in the Patten report. The bill is important, certainly, but the amendments are administrative in nature; they amend or expand existing laws to varying degrees.

The Legislation Review Digest notes that objects of the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill are to make various amendments to the Crimes Act 1900, including the creation of a new offence. The amendments are substantial, but again result from recommendations regarding practices within our courts. As with the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which I spoke on yesterday, the less said about that bill the better. Regarding the Fines Amendment Bill 2012, the Legislation Review Digest notes that the object of that bill is:

to reframe the time limits applying to elections to have a penalty notice matter dealt with by a court so that they are directly referable to whether or not a penalty reminder notice has been issued.

That could hardly be called a major legislative reform; it is more to do with interpretation, definitions, extending time limits and the like. The Opposition bill before the Parliament is the Jobs Commission Bill. This is a reformist bill; it seeks to set up a whole new commission with roles regarding employment and so on. Even the bill put forward by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile—without making any comment in support of or in opposition to it—is a call for a change in name of the Legislative Council. One could call that a major reform.

My criticism of this report—and it is only a reflection of the Government's program—is that its legislative program is not reformist, other than when it is attacking working conditions and so on. About 90 per cent of the legislative program of this Government is administrative in nature, and that legislation sees quite a number of speakers taking up an inordinate amount of time to deal with matters that should be regarded as procedural. This digest is documentary evidence of the Coalition Government's very light program. We can only hope that when the next session starts this Parliament will have before it some groundbreaking and reformist pieces of legislation.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [1.26 p.m.]: I make a very brief contribution to this debate. It is amazing how those opposite use the tools of spin and bluster to seek to rewrite history. The figures do not lie. In the first 12 months of the Fifty-fourth Parliament, Labor put through 419 pieces of legislation and regulation; in the first 12 months of this, the Fifty-fifth Parliament, we have 459 pieces of legislation and regulation. This is a Government that is hard at work; it is a reformist Government. Not only is it getting through more legislation; it is getting through more important legislation. Its legislation is reformist, and that legislation will make a real difference to the lives of the people of New South Wales.

I congratulate the hardworking committee chair and vice-chair. I am in this House every week it sits and follow the trials and tribulation of this committee with great interest. I know how hard it works. In conclusion, what we saw again from the member for Mount Druitt today was nothing more than spin and bluster—spin and bluster that characterised the whole of the previous Labor regime and continues to this day. I am sorry to see that continue in this Parliament. But I congratulate the members behind me who are making a positive contribution to the legislative agenda of this great State.

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

Report noted.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.28 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I advise the House that during the absence from the Chamber today of the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research will answer questions relating to mental health and healthy lifestyles and the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services will answer questions relating to Western New South Wales.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]

GOVERNMENT BILL PAYMENT POLICY

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier inform the House why, given that the Government promised in its 100 Day Action Plan that the New South Wales Government would pay all its bills within 30 days and then report quarterly on the performance of each agency, more than 500 days later not a single report has been published—leaving the public in the dark about just how many small businesses have been left unpaid?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Government members will come to order while the Premier is speaking.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I will get a detailed answer for the House but members should be under no illusion: unlike those opposite, the Government will pay its bills on time. A government that is continually expressing that point of view has an impact upon bureaucracy in New South Wales. This Government understands the importance of small businesses not acting as de facto bankers to big departments. If bills are not paid within three months and allowed to extend to nine months or never, then small businesses go to the wall. The Government's policy to pay all its bills within 30 days is being implemented. I will obtain a detailed answer for the House.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The question from the Leader of the Opposition bears an uncanny resemblance to a question asked yesterday about unproclaimed legislation. I heard the member for Sussex Street, the Labor Council member, say on radio yesterday, "No government has ever left legislation unproclaimed for this long." The member said it time and time again.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was about the 100 Day Action Plan and paying bills within 30 days.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question asked.

Dr Andrew McDonald: But the Premier is about to move on to something that is not relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has answered the question. The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I reiterate, as I said yesterday, that there has been no political advertising by this Government in the 16 or 17 months that we have been in office. We are fulfilling the guidelines. As I understand it, the Auditor-General is reviewing those guidelines and I wait for that work to be done. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said it was unprecedented, unheard of, that legislation would sit for so long whilst we were waiting for the regulations to be drafted before it was proclaimed.

[Interruption]

The member for Canterbury starts to fidget and feel nervous. She will blush next.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: She will get louder; she will take points of order because for what area, if any, would one never delay proclaiming legislation? Would that be the protection of children? I cannot imagine, for one instant, a government passing legislation designed to protect children and not proclaiming it—not for one year, not for two years, not for three years but for four years. "Hypocrisy [is] the only evil that walks Invisible". The member for Toongabbie may recognise that quote; it is from his favourite book. And the biggest hypocrite in this place is the Leader of the Opposition.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr GARETH WARD: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the New South Wales Government cutting red tape?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Kiama for his question and I welcome his mother and brother to the gallery today to see what a great job he is doing for small businesses in his electorate and across the South Coast more generally. Earlier this year the State and Federal governments took an important initiative to decide that a meeting of the national Business Advisory Forum would precede the meeting of the Council of Australian Governments. In April business leaders, along with first Ministers, met on the eve of the Council of Australian Governments to discuss how together we could make Federation work better. Understandably there was a focus from business, led by the Business Council of Australia, on cutting red tape and reducing the cost of doing business in the States, Territories and across the nation. Their motivation was simple: it was all about jobs, jobs and more jobs.

In an increasingly competitive global marketplace reducing the cost of doing business, including the cutting of red tape, is the only way to maintain and grow Australian jobs, by avoiding the unnecessary costs and regulation that red tape and duplication involves. All governments—Labor, Liberal, Liberal-Nationals, the Liberal Nationals Party and the Country Liberal Party—agree, and most sensible people would agree. Most, but not all. There is no doubt that when we came to office this State was being strangled by red tape and unnecessary regulation and the costs that that imposed under the former Labor Government. It is no wonder that for a decade New South Wales held the unenviable record of having the lowest employment growth and the lowest economic growth across the nation.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: There have been 28,400 jobs created since March last year. All governments around this country, Labor, Liberal, Liberal-Nationals, Country Liberal Party, Liberal Nationals Party—are of the one view. Everyone, that is, except the Labor Opposition in this State. We on this side of the House believe people should be able to go about their business without being burdened by excessive paperwork, excessive regulation and the costs that they incur. We promised a one-on, two-off approach. I thank our shadow Minister in opposition, who put that approach together for us. We have not only succeeded with that; we have gone much further. Last year 152 regulations were scrapped and just 14 were added. To save the member for Canterbury taking her socks off, that means a reduction of 138 regulations, and it demonstrates that we are getting on with the job.

These unnecessary red tape burdens being dumped, it is expected that business, the community and taxpayers will save \$223 million this year. We are on track to save businesses and taxpayers \$750 million by 2015 through the removal of unnecessary regulations. Our Government understands that a strong economy needs businesses to succeed, to grow and to create jobs. It is harder for businesses to do that if they are burdened by the high costs of regulation and drowning in red tape. By removing unnecessary red tape we are making it more attractive for businesses to come to New South Wales. We are making it more attractive and easier for businesses to try to grow themselves, despite the tough economic times.

The regulations we have already cover a wide range of areas. For instance, we have removed the requirement for vets who are already qualified to practise in other States to have to re-register in New South Wales—a completely unnecessary requirement. Trainee electricians can now receive recognition for prior learning and qualify a year earlier, saving business more than \$1.5 million a year in training costs. Our reforms mean that motor vehicle dealers can now register second-hand vehicles online rather than having to send someone down to the motor registry to line up in a queue for this purpose. Workers applying for a construction induction card can now do so online, and business now has the option of online work, health and safety education presentations instead of attending costly seminars. Governments should be making it easier for business, not making it harder. That is the best way to promote jobs. The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals will continue to attack red tape so businesses can continue to grow and create jobs without government agencies constantly looking over their shoulder.

MULLUMBIMBY HOSPITAL

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given recent public comments by the Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast that due to serious concerns he could not support the Minister's decision to replace the overnight emergency doctor at Mullumbimby Hospital with a video link, will the Minister now listen to the community and scrap this idea immediately?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for his question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the wonderful telehealth trial called Connecting Critical Care. I am surprised that the member for Macquarie Fields asks a question about this because it has been in place since he was the Parliamentary Secretary for Health in the previous Government. I thought the Opposition would do its homework and know about the programs that are in place.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind Opposition members and the member for Macquarie Fields that this is not an opportunity for them to argue.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: This is about providing better care for individual patients.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Oh, it's not.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Here is a doctor who thinks it is appropriate to ignore the skills of the senior nurses and others in the local community.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order. I call the member for Canterbury to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I have spoken to the Minister mentioned in the question. I have given him full information about it and he is very happy with my explanation.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: There were ongoing difficulties in rostering a permanent doctor at Mullumbimby, so there was a considerable amount of money being spent on locums. That was not a sensible way to go because Mullumbimby Hospital has, on average, one patient overnight. A locum doctor charges more than \$100,000, but there is an alternative: this program that has been in place through Hunter New England hospitals for a long time. For example, in Macksville—one of the places I visited—the program is very successfully operating there, and it is also operating in southern New South Wales. In fact, I am going to talk to the Australian Capital Territory Chief Minister next week to launch exactly the same program there involving the Labor Party in the Australian Capital Territory and emergency departments in the lower part of this State. It is about using the expert skills of experienced nurses in small emergency departments with telehealth linking them to the bigger hospitals, whether a base hospital or a tertiary hospital. I am stunned that the member for Macquarie Fields did not know about this when he was Parliamentary Secretary, and that a shadow Minister for Health would be so ignorant of the value of telehealth—

Dr Andrew McDonald: I'm still teaching this stuff.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: You taught it?

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Canterbury continue to argue and interject they will be removed from the Chamber.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Here is a man who teaches about the value of technology but does not understand how it is applied not only in New South Wales hospitals and hospitals in other States but also overseas. It is about connecting smaller hospitals with bigger hospitals where the expert clinicians are available so that they can give advice about whether a patient needs to be put in the back of an ambulance, whether a patient can be treated on-site or whether a patient can be referred to a general practitioner—provided, of course, that general practitioners are available. That reminds me: I assume the shadow Minister for Health has been down to Canberra and has spoken to the Commonwealth Government about getting extra general practitioners not only in country New South Wales but in western Sydney, since that is what he said in the media the other day.

We need to ensure that we have sufficient doctors out in those areas, but that we also use the skills of experts such as nurse practitioners and other senior clinical nurse consultants to ensure that they have the capacity to treat the patients that go to their hospital, whether into the emergency department or somewhere else, through the expert use of telehealth to link them with specialists in outlying hospitals, whether district hospitals, base hospitals or tertiary hospitals. This is a marvellous project currently being prepared for trial. It is based on projects that already operate in various parts of the State.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Macquarie Fields that this is not the time for him to argue.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The Prime Minister said in June last year:

Telehealth will transform the way health care is delivered in Australia by removing distance, time and cost as a barrier to accessing care, delivering better health outcomes for patients.

That is what is happening in Mullumbimby and I am surprised the member for Macquarie Fields does not know about it.

CROSS-BORDER COMMISSIONER

Mr JOHN BARILARO: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Cross-Border Commissioner assisting the State's border communities?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Monaro for his question. As he and the member for Albury, the member for Ballina, the member for Barwon, the member for Bega, the member for Lismore, the member for Murray-Darling, the member for Northern Tablelands and the member for Tweed will attest, thousands of New South Wales citizens enjoy the unique lifestyle and benefits of living in the diverse and vibrant cities, towns and communities that share borders with other States and the Australian Capital Territory. But many of these communities face common problems and challenges, including legislative and regulatory differences between States—otherwise known as cross-border anomalies.

That is why in March this year we appointed the State's first Cross-Border Commissioner, Steve Toms. That followed private member's legislation put forward by the member for Ballina, the now Minister for Local Government, when he was in opposition during the term of the former Government—and, incidentally, legislation that was rejected twice by the former Labor Government. Shame on them. This policy was again supported in this term of government by the member for Northern Tablelands—also known as the next Nationals member for New England. Hear, hear!

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: As I have previously reported to the House, Mr Toms has wide experience in dealing with issues affecting rural and regional communities. He is a conduit between government and border communities, highlighting broader policy issues affecting residents' lives while keeping border communities informed on relevant progress. The Cross-Border Commissioner identifies problems affecting the everyday lives of residents of border communities and develops practical solutions by working quickly and effectively with all key stakeholders.

Since his appointment, Mr Toms has proactively visited many cross-border communities, including Queanbeyan, Tweed Heads, Ballina, Lismore, Legume, Tenterfield and Mingoola, Albury, Tocumwal, Moama and Wentworth, and Broken Hill. More than 500 individual issues were raised by border communities across a broad range of areas, including education, health, policing, transport and daylight saving. Processes such as the efforts of the Council of Australian Governments to improve levels of standardisation across Australia will help address some of the issues raised, and the commissioner is actively engaged with the National Reform Unit of the Department of Premier and Cabinet on these and other relevant matters.

Of course, the Government's priority of rebuilding the economy means that all Ministers in this Liberal-Nationals Government are focused on establishing a competitive business environment compared with other States. An excellent example is our reform of the workers compensation scheme—too difficult for those opposite and resisted by them at every turn, but enthusiastically supported by every business in this State, especially those in the cross-border regions. The commissioner is also working within the New South Wales Government towards resolution of a number of issues raised during his consultations that either we have jurisdiction over or we must work with the other States to resolve. For example, the Cross-Border Commissioner has recently negotiated the resolution of a cross-border health and safety licensing issue between WorkCover NSW and its Queensland equivalent to prevent the closure of a Ballina-based concrete company.

Mr Toms has also been working with Transport for NSW to resolve load size restrictions for vehicles coming into New South Wales at the South Australia-New South Wales border which could impact on the cost of affordable housing and the servicing of the mining industry in the far west, particularly around the Broken

Hill area. Unlike the previous Government, this Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to adopting a whole-of-government approach to ensure location-specific disadvantages facing communities at the far borders of our State and surrounding the Australian Capital Territory are dealt with fairly and appropriately.

[Interruption]

In relation to the interjection, I just cannot recall whether the question included related matters. If it did I could reveal the remaining members of the Labor Party's alternative cast for the Addams Family musical.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question did not include unrelated matters.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Mr Tom's interim report will soon be available on his website, with a business plan and priorities for action to follow shortly. I look forward to working with members of this Chamber to address some of the issues faced by cross-border communities. Thank you, Gomez.

MULLUMBIMBY HOSPITAL TELEHEALTH TRIAL

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Minister for the North Coast. Does the Minister stand by his recent comments before a crowd of 350 people at a high school in his electorate in which he said that because of serious concerns he does not support the proposed telehealth trial at Mullumbimby hospital?

Mr DONALD PAGE: I thank the member for his question. As the Minister for Health has indicated, telehealth has been around for some time now and was in fact introduced by the Labor Government. Recently I attended a public meeting in Mullumbimby to hear community concerns about a proposed trial of telehealth between Mullumbimby hospital and Tweed Hospital. This is considered necessary because the hospital is unable to fill the medical roster with a doctor between the hours of 11.00 p.m. and 7.00 a.m. During that meeting a number of concerns were raised by members of the community. The chief executive officer of the health district undertook to work through those issues with clinicians and with nurses. I understand that those discussions are ongoing and I look forward to hearing from the chief executive officer at the conclusion of those discussions.

DOUBLE-DECKER BUS TRIAL

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister inform the House of the latest addition to Sydney's public transport fleet?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for his question and again acknowledge his keen interest in public transport. Today I was pleased to inspect the first of eight double-decker buses that the Government is adding to our bus fleet. I am pleased to say that double-decker buses will return to Sydney starting from Monday to see whether they can play a prominent role in this city's future public transport system. I am confident that will be the case. Members will be pleased to know that the first buses will run on routes servicing Blacktown, Castle Hill, Glenwood, Rouse Hill, Riverstone, The Ponds and Schofields. That is great news for residents in those communities, who will be able to use this service starting from Monday. I am pleased to say that after the trial starts on Monday seven more brand new buses will be delivered next year for the trial, which will run until 2014. As I have said today, if the Government finds that the buses are an overwhelming success and customers like them we will make them permanent well before the end of the trial. There is no doubt that double-decker buses, in the right circumstances and on the right routes, have the potential to reduce congestion as well as provide a better customer experience.

Mr John Robertson: Why have the trial? Why don't you just introduce it if you are so confident?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I cannot help responding to that interjection by the Leader of the Opposition. Labor members should hang their heads in shame. In 2006 and 2008 the previous Government said it was introducing double-decker buses. What happened after five years? Nothing. In fact, when he was Minister for Transport—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Transport he could not even be bothered to look at this issue. He was too busy doing the numbers for the leadership rather

than doing his job regarding public transport. Look at the contrast: Labor announced something in 2006 and by 2008 it had not happened; the Government has announced it today and it starts on Monday. There could be no bigger contrast.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This Government takes its announcements and reform processes in public transport very seriously. We are getting on with the job of doing things Labor could not be bothered doing or did not have the guts to do.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the third time. The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting and shouting at the Minister. The Minister has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition is very touchy about public transport. He does not like it when we put him to shame.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister does not need any assistance from Government members.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: As I have previously mentioned in this House, we have established the Integrated Transport Authority and announced reforms to fix the trains after the mess Labor left us in RailCorp. We have already franchised Sydney Ferries. We are getting the best value for our bus contracts and we are doing the long-term planning that Labor failed to do.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields is on his final warning. If he continues with his disruptive behaviour he will find himself outside the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am pleased to say that we have also reintroduced many of the services Labor cut when it was in government. The Leader of the Opposition cut transport services rather than increasing them. Talking specifically about buses, today's announcement is on top of the 500 additional services we have already introduced in south-west Sydney that will serve the suburbs of Oran Park, Narellan, Campbelltown and Minto. I know that is welcome news to members representing electorates covering those suburbs. We have also delivered 46 new services in the north-west of Sydney, four additional services on the Liverpool to Parramatta T-way, additional NightRide bus services and additional services between Hornsby and Macquarie Park. In regional New South Wales we have introduced new services between Wellington, Dubbo and Narromine, and I know the members representing those towns are very grateful. I am pleased about that announcement. In total we have added a thousand services since coming to government. We continue to improve the customer experience, and that is what today's announcement is all about. Labor members made announcements and they were always "gunna" do something. [*Extension of time granted.*]

They were always "gunna" do this and do that in public transport. We are getting on with the job.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock will cease arguing.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We will continue to work to improve the customer experience, whether it is increasing bus services, ferry services, rail services and NightRide bus services, or whether it is increasing the mobile phone coverage in our tunnels or introducing things such as quiet carriages and Google map applications. Members opposite do not like hearing about the new initiatives. The introduction of double-decker buses shows that this Government is thinking carefully about the public transport challenges that we face and is addressing the problems head on. This initiative will not only provide a better customer experience—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! What is the member's point of order?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Standing Order 59, tedious repetition.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If only I had more time to talk about this Government's great initiatives in public transport. If only I could tell the House about all the projects we are working on and our new measures in relation to electronic ticketing. The list goes on: Labor left us a huge mess and we have a huge job to clean it up. The Government is up to the task.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who continue to disrupt the proceedings will be removed from the Chamber. I remind members of the action I took yesterday in this regard. Members will come to order before I call for the next question.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: My question is to the Deputy Premier and Leader of the Nationals. What is his response to the commitment by Warren Truss that he would redirect the \$2.1 billion from the Parramatta to Epping Rail Link to the much-needed Pacific Highway upgrade?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members should show some interest and listen to the answer to a question asked by an Opposition member. Members who continue to disrupt the proceedings will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I very sincerely thank the member for Lakemba, also known as Breakfast Point, for his question. The House has heard on numerous occasions how the Gillard Labor Government earlier this year in its Federal budget shifted the goalposts when it came to the funding of the Pacific Highway. Despite funding the Pacific Highway while the crew opposite were in government at a ratio of 80:20 or better, the Federal Government suddenly decided, upon the election of a Liberal-Nationals Government, that it would pull the ratio back to 50:50. What has that done for our budget for fixing the Pacific Highway? It has slashed it by \$2.3 billion. I am very surprised that you, Gomez, would raise this question in this House because what you should be doing is getting on the phone to Anthony Albanese and Julia Gillard and saying, "Stop ripping off New South Wales. Fix the Pacific Highway."

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: It is under Standing Order 129. The question was very specific. Does the Deputy Premier have a response to a commitment made by one of his National Party colleagues or not? It is not about what we did; it is what his response to a National Party promise is.

The SPEAKER: I understand the point of order. As I have said on numerous occasions, I cannot direct a Minister to answer a question specifically, only that he be relevant, and he is being relevant.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The other issue that has been raised by the member for Lakemba is the Prime Minister's left field brain bubble promise in relation to a Parramatta to Epping rail link. The Premier earlier in this term of Government suggested to the Federal Government that this money would be better spent on the much-needed North West Rail Link. In fact, we have asked for that money to be transferred across to the North West Rail Link on several occasions but once again the Federal Government is dudding New South Wales by refusing to do that. This Government was elected with a massive mandate on a commitment to build the North West Rail Link.

Mr Robert Furolo: Point of order: Once again Standing Order 129 has been breached. The question was very specifically about who—

The SPEAKER: I understand the point of order—it is the same point of order that the member for Maroubra raised. Does the member have a different point of order?

Mr Robert Furolo: He still has not answered the question.

The SPEAKER: I have ruled on that point of order. I cannot direct Ministers to be specific in their answer, only that they be relevant.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The question was about the Pacific Highway and the money allocated for the Parramatta to Epping rail link and I am attempting to answer the question but it seems that those opposite do not want to hear the answer. I have had discussions with the Federal leader of The Nationals, Warren Truss, and put it to him that this money would be a neat fit for the \$2.3 billion that New South Wales has been dudded on the Pacific Highway. I think that is a very good proposition, as does the Premier. So the Government is united in saying this is a very good idea and I am delighted to tell the House that Warren Truss has agreed to consider this proposal. In the very likely event that there will be a change of government in Canberra next week, the people of New South Wales will get what they really want: they will get the North West Rail Link and they will get the Pacific Highway finished once and for all. The question now is for the member for Lakemba to indicate to the people of the North Coast and the entire State of New South Wales whether he supports this proposal. If he does, he ought to get on a plane and fly down to Canberra—and if that is too slow, take a Lamborghini.

SCHOOL STAFFING AGREEMENT

Mr STUART AYRES: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. What is the Government doing to deliver on our commitment to give local schools more say over staffing?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We have awards in New South Wales, industrial awards for teachers, and then we have a staffing agreement. The current staffing agreement expires on day one of term four this year. The staffing agreement contains all the issues around class size policy, how teachers are employed when there is a vacancy, et cetera. A couple of months ago I initiated negotiations with the Teachers Federation over a new staffing agreement. Since that time the Department of Education and Communities has had seven meetings, and I have to say I thought we were pretty close to an agreement. On 9 August a proposed staffing agreement was provided to the Teachers Federation. The letter that we sent said that the federation had until 5.00 p.m. last Thursday 16 August to respond.

Under that staffing agreement we guarantee that class sizes are maintained, as the Government has always said. Incentive transfers not only remain but have been given greater priority. This is great news for many schools in western New South Wales, particularly those four, six and eight point incentive schools. Nominated compassionate and service transfers remain and permanent teachers maintain their tenure—all of the commitments that this Government has made as we embark on the reforms that we have been undertaking in education. Our commitment to Aboriginal employment and retention remains and the opportunity for schools to secure outstanding new graduates has also been enhanced as part of this negotiation.

Once incentive transfers and Aboriginal employment applicants are placed in schools, schools will be able to fill at least every second vacancy by local choice—another key factor of the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms. We entered into these negotiations in good faith and they were constructive negotiations but we could not wait forever for the union to sign an agreement. We recognise that there are some differences of opinion about some of the matters contained in that agreement but we need to give school teachers, schools, students and their families certainty about some of these matters contained in a staffing agreement. That is why we gave the union until last Thursday to sign the agreement; otherwise it becomes policy. It is not an agreement; it becomes policy.

[*Interruption*]

That might be the union on the phone right now, but it is too late. It was given a deadline last Thursday. We did not hear a thing from it until about 4.30 p.m. that afternoon. It asked for an extension and, being the gracious Minister that I am, I gave it until 5.00 p.m. yesterday. Then there was a meeting at about 12.00 p.m. where the union started to raise some issues. The union has had plenty of time to consider this agreement and raise concerns. It raised them at the last minute and, therefore, because the agreement was not signed yesterday, it is now not an agreement but education policy in New South Wales.

Teachers need to have certainty about how staffing procedures are going to work. Teachers in incentive schools in the seat of Murray-Darling need to know that their incentive classification gives them priority when they seek to be employed at a different school. Teachers want to know that permanency will be maintained. Parents and schools want to know that class-size policies remain. We have it all in writing. It is now on the Department of Education and Communities website as education policy. The agreement is here for anybody who wants to look at it. It is a document I am proud of. It reflects the changes we propose under Local Schools, Local Decisions.

I have to point out a couple of lies told by the union. A letter it sent us yesterday stated that the union had no prior knowledge or warning that the department intended to act in this way—as in make it policy and impose such an unreasonable deadline. It had almost three weeks to consider that. It is very difficult to deal with the union when there is such a lack of trust. The union's press release today says that without a formal staffing agreement the class-size policy can be changed at any time from term four onwards. That is right. That is why we so cleverly crafted this document— [*Extension of time granted.*]

The union is right, government policy can change at any time. That is why the Department of Education and Communities so cleverly crafted this document with a spot for the union to sign. That is what you call clever drafting! We offered the union, if it signed this, an enforceable agreement with all of those things I have outlined—class-size policies, incentive transfers, nominated transfers, permanency. We gave a guarantee that if it signed that agreement those things would be guaranteed until at least 2016. It is entirely in the union's

hands if it wants to lock in class sizes and other things. As modest and as gracious as I am, the union asked for an agreement that went to 2015, and we have offered to give it until 2016. We have given it an extra year. To remind members for the third time how gracious a Minister I am, that is policy, but if the union still wants to lock that policy into an agreement it still has the opportunity to do so. But it is not changing. We make the decisions about education policy in New South Wales, and not the union. *[Time expired.]*

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Ms CLOVER MOORE: My question is to the Premier. Given that the Tasmanian, South Australian and Australian Capital Territory governments will legislate for same-sex marriage if the Federal Parliament fails to deliver reform, will the Premier give the same undertaking, especially as it is supported by the majority of New South Wales people and the 2011 census shows that this State has the highest number of same-sex couples—and especially as he likes to bring New South Wales in line with other States?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Bitter, bitter, bitter, Clover. The Government has no such intention.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. What has the Government done to strengthen environmental protection?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I thank the member for Port Stephens for the question. He has been a strong advocate for health and wellbeing in his community: his is a neighbouring electorate to mine. When a government comes to office a new Minister is given a folder showing what is going on in the portfolio. We knew what was going on in New South Wales. We knew why people wanted to make a change. We knew the State was broke but we did not know how broke. We knew the Solar Bonus Scheme was a mess but we did not know how much of a mess. And we certainly knew that we had a lot to fix in the environment portfolio. But we did not know that the legacy of a former Liberal-Nationals Government, the Environment Protection Authority, had been completely trashed by the last Government so that industry was free to flout environmental laws and there was an unacceptable lack of transparency, communication and accountability. There was no acknowledgement that industry existed.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will soon find themselves removed from the Chamber if they continue to make those kinds of interjections. I have warned both of them about their behaviour throughout question time.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: That was only the tip of the iceberg. Labor had allowed that for 16 years. We did not know because it did not tell anyone. As part of a reformist government we have redefined the system. We have brought back an Environment Protection Authority. We have made a strong environmental regulator and certainly made sure that the community has confidence in it—long before the select inquiry handed down its recommendations. Nowhere has it been more evident than yesterday at the Barangaroo development excavation site when the Environment Protection Authority acted swiftly to cease the transportation and reuse of the soil following the discovery of bonded asbestos. What happened in that instance that was different? There was an immediate notification once the issue was identified. There was an immediate stop from the Environment Protection Authority. The authority sprang into action. The community had confidence that the systems were in place. The chief executive officer of Lend Lease was on the phone talking to me within hours, giving many assurances that he would work with the Environment Protection Authority to make sure that things were working. That is a vast difference from what existed under the last Government.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber from both sides. The Minister has the call.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: The people of New South Wales now have confidence in the procedures. This Government has brought back the Environment Protection Authority, fixed up the mess of the last Government. It is a different landscape. Industry now has to report pollution incidents immediately rather than as soon as practicable. Penalties for non-compliance have been increased and communication requirements have been improved. I know that the Opposition is upset about this, and it should be. These are the sorts of things that should have existed under the previous Government—measures to ensure there is seamless coordination between agencies when dealing with pollution incidents. There is a new board and a new chair in a responsive Environment Protection Authority. The chair is the advocate for the community. There is increased

communication, engagement and transparency. That is the difference between this Government and the former Government—a government of secrecy, a government that did not tell anyone what was going on in environmental reporting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member Canterbury to remove herself from the Chamber until the end of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 3.06 p.m.]

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Here is the difference between the stakeholder and community engagement of this Government and that of the former Government: 32 stakeholder forums; 29 public information sessions; a new regulatory system; new accountability; and a new standard for the Environment Protection Authority. All of these things could have been done before but there was a revolving door of environment Ministers. Instead, the former Government was busy trashing a decent leadership, putting people through the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The former environment Minister who supervised the Environment Protection Authority is now busy trashing the Solar Bonus Scheme. He was too busy to do anything about requiring industry to report important incidents. In the past 12 months the Environment Protection Authority has issued 1,009 penalty infringement notices, prosecuted 56 cases and secured 108— *[Extension of time granted.]*

I know members opposite do not want to hear this. They do not want to hear the record of this Government because they are so embarrassed. There have been 122 new pollution reduction programs and \$180 million was secured from industry—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: The Government has delivered on the recommendations of the select committee inquiry into the Kooragang Island chemical leak and made the most significant improvements in environmental regulation in almost two decades. The community now has greater access and greater input, and understands what is going on in the local environment. That is the difference with this Government: it has a new Environment Protection Authority website and an expanded register, and people understand what is going on. That contrasts with the former Government, which operated in secrecy and was busy acting in response to leadership changes and union bully tactics. This Government is responding to issues and giving people confidence in the Environment Protection Authority—confidence that was there yesterday with Barangaroo, confidence that should have existed before. I am proud that that legacy is being restored to the Environment Protection Authority—initiated under a previous Government and now restored under the reformist Liberal-Nationals Government.

GOVERNMENT BILL PAYMENT POLICY

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: In response to a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition I advise the House that, as we announced last year, the 30-day bill payment policy formally commenced on 1 January 2012. The first quarterly performance report is currently being finalised for release. However, I advise the House that, as anticipated in my answer, we have seen some positive results: in the first quarter almost 92 per cent of invoices were paid within 30 days. I also advise the House that, consistent with our policy and initiative, 31 small businesses have already been eligible to receive automatic interest charges on overdue accounts.

Question time concluded at 3.10 p.m.

VARIATIONS OF PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2012-2013

The Treasurer tabled, pursuant to section 24 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations of the payments estimates and appropriations for 2012-2013 relating to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Reference: Inquiry into Procurement and Management of Information and Communications Technology Services in the Public Sector

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: I inform the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Public Accounts Committee has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the procurement and management of information and communications technology services in the public sector, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page on the New South Wales Parliament website.

PETITIONS

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

Twofold Bay Wind Farm

Petition requesting the rejection of a development application for a wind farm at Twofold Bay or, alternatively, an assessment of the proposal in accordance with the NSW Wind Farm Guidelines before any determination on the development application, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

Coal Seam Gas Mining

Petition calling for a royal commission into the impacts of coal seam gas mining, a moratorium on coal seam gas mining, and a ban on the extraction technique known as hydraulic fracturing, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

Petition requesting improved bus services for the Walsh Bay precinct, and ferry services for the new wharf at pier 2/3, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Pets on Public Transport

Petition requesting that pets be allowed on public transport, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

Petition requesting the ban of pig-dog hunting in New South Wales, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Pet Shops

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

Container Deposit Levy

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

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I acknowledge the presence in the Speaker's Gallery of Mr Rubens Antonio Barbosa, Ambassador of Brazil.

COURTS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 22 August 2012.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [3.15 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which is before the House, having been introduced by our excellent and dedicated Attorney General, and Minister for Justice. These amendments will tidy up various acts and omissions by previous Labor governments. The amendments relate to areas of responsibility covered by the Attorney General, who is still finding that parts of what he inherited from those opposite need tidying up. It is like cleaning the sloppy teenager's room: You clean part of the room then discover more mess that needs to be cleaned up. So what needs to be tidied up?

Let us start with the Criminal Procedures Act 1986. This Act is being fixed to clarify that certain statutory agencies are not exempt from paying filing fees in respect of prosecutions. Current provisions of the

Act may inadvertently, despite long-established policy, exempt some of those agencies from paying filing fees. The Court Security Act 1995 is being amended to widen the scope of specified objects that cannot be brought into a courthouse. This will enable security officers to require the temporary surrender of such items by people entering the courthouse and improve the safety of others in the courthouse. The Jury Act 1977 will be amended to preserve the integrity of the jury selection process by allowing the Sheriff to obtain information from the Commissioner of Police and the Chief Executive of Roads and Maritimes Services, enabling the Sheriff effectively to carry out criminal record checks.

The Bail Act 1978 will be amended to allow the electronic transfer of bail forfeiture orders to the State Debt Recovery Office for enforcement. This will reduce the administrative burden on courts and the State Debt Recovery Office. The Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1977 amendment will ensure a common definition of "carer" across, and consistent with, all other New South Wales legislation. The District Court Act 1973 and the Local Court Act 2007 are to be amended to clarify that it is only service by the Chief Magistrate as a District Court judge that counts as service towards a judicial pension. Current provisions may allow a Chief Magistrate to include all of his or her time as Chief Magistrate when calculating the entitlement to a District Court pension. This was never the intention.

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 amendment will permit more effective communication and disclosure between the Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner for the purpose of consulting about a privacy-related public interest consideration against disclosure. The Civil Procedures Act 1995 amendment is about the delegation of powers of the senior judicial officer of the court, under any Act, to a registrar or other court official. This amendment removes any uncertainty that exists today. The Land and Environment Court Act 1979 is to be amended to provide that acting commissioners can complete matters that have been heard even if their term of appointment has expired and that matters do not have to be concluded by another commissioner. Another amendment requires the leave of the court for a person to be represented by an agent, thereby affording greater protection to persons appearing before the Land and Environment Court. The Mining Act 1992 amendment clarifies that the Land and Environment Court has jurisdiction over questions or disputes arising from certain decisions made under the Act, thereby clarifying that the Land and Environment Court can hear and determine proceedings relating to decisions about objections to the granting of a mining lease.

The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 is to be amended so that, where one agency is declared to be part of another, the declaration can be restricted to specify agency functions only. Schedule 1 to the bill includes the Office of the Sheriff of New South Wales as a law enforcement agency for the purpose of the Act. By defining the office as a law enforcement agency, that law enforcement exemption will clearly apply. The Probate and Administration Act will be amended to remove the requirement that notices of intended application for probate or administration be advertised in newspapers, and instead provide that they will be advertised "as specified in the court rules". This amendment facilitates the move to mandatory online publication. It also clarifies that rules dealing with probate matters can be made under the Uniform Civil Procedure Rules as well as under the Supreme Court rules. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [3.20 p.m.]: It is always a pleasure to speak when you hold the reins, Madam Speaker. I support the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I will make a brief contribution—heaven forbid I get in the way of the bill's passage through the House. The bill was introduced by the Attorney General following extensive consultation with key stakeholders. It will deliver key improvements in administration for government bodies by simplifying procedures and processes. As the Attorney General has said previously in this House, the purpose of the bill is to make miscellaneous amendments to legislation affecting the operation of the courts of New South Wales and other legislation administered by the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice.

The bill is part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program and will amend a number of Acts to improve the efficiency and operation of our courts and the operation of agencies within the Department of Attorney General and Justice. One I will touch on particularly is the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997. The Act aims to reduce juvenile crime and assist and protect young people who may be at risk. The bill amends the definition of "carer" in section 3 of the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act to match the definition in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. The amendment ensures consistency across the Acts. To avoid any possible confusion, the Government will make these definitions the same. I highlight the important role that carers play in my electorate of Wyong and throughout New South Wales. Another section of the bill relates to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 and includes a regulation-making power to prevent certain agencies being declared part of other agencies. It will allow the legislation to apply in a more practical manner.

For example, it may be appropriate for closely related entities to share complaints handling and internal review functions. This bill includes an amendment to make clear that the declaration is to be made in respect of specified agency functions. The contents of the bill affect many Acts, such as the Bail Act 1978, Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997, Civil Procedure Act 2005, Court Security Act 2005, Criminal Procedure Act 1986, District Court Act 1973, Local Court Act 2007, Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, Jury Act 1977, Land and Environment Court Act 1979, Mining Act 1992, Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998, and the list goes on. While this bill does not have the bells and whistles of other legislation that passes through the House it is important and part of the Government's commitment to reducing red tape, being open and transparent, being a reformist government and making New South Wales number one again. I commend the bill to the House and take this opportunity to commend the hardworking Attorney General, who is part of the ministerial team that is making this State number one again.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [3.23 p.m.]: I support the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The bill will make miscellaneous amendments to courts, related legislation and other legislation within the jurisdiction of the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice portfolio. As the member for Wyong said, the Attorney General is a hardworking member of the ministerial team that is making this State number one. The Attorney General has always been supportive of my electorate. He was in Campbelltown a few months ago speaking to solicitors, judges and law enforcement officers in order to understand the concerns of the community. I commend the Attorney General for taking the time to connect with the community. I look forward to his next visit to the Camden, Wollondilly and Campbelltown electorates. He is most welcome.

The ongoing administration and support of our courts is important to the efficient and professional running of a very complex department. Courts deal with solicitors, criminals, jurors, the media, government departments, police, highly emotional victims and many others. There is no group that the courts deal with exclusively; they see people from all walks of life on a daily basis. Criminals do not all look the same, have the same employment status or act in a certain way. The same can be said of victims and their families. The families of criminals are not monster breeders or enablers. After our emergency services, the courts are the front line of our justice system. The Government, as the servant of the people of New South Wales, must update legislation constantly to ensure the efficient and cost-effective running of our courts. At times legislation requires clarification, and the Government seeks to do that through amendments such as those in this bill.

I turn now to the amendments in the bill. The amendment to the Bail Act 1978 will allow court registrars to transfer electronically bail forfeiture orders to the State Debt Recovery Office for enforcement. It will remove the requirement for documents relating to bail forfeiture orders to be sent manually. The physical documents will be retained on file should they ever be required. The bill will amend the Civil Procedure Act to remove uncertainty in interpretation as to whether a registrar of the court may exercise powers conferred upon them by the Act or any other Act. Justice Pembroke highlighted recently that the Act does not include some functions of the court that are currently delegated to registrars. Although this lack of authority is preserved by the Supreme Court Act 1970, the bill will clarify and remove the need for further interpretation of section 13 delegation powers.

The amendment to section 11 of the Court Security Act 2005 will allow security officers at court to prevent the carriage of other non-restricted items or offensive implements such as any type of knife, and require its temporary surrender. Security officers will not be restricted to weapons defined by the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998, the Firearms Act 1996 or the Court Security Act. I am pleased that the expertise of court security officers will come into play with the implementation of this bill. They will be able to require the temporary surrender of certain items from a specific list that could pose a danger to the safety of any person in the court.

Mr Matt Kean: Well said.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: Thank you. An amendment to the Criminal Procedure Act provides for regulation to clarify the Government's established policy of which government agencies are required to pay filing fees. Historically, this has been government agencies that are not budget dependent. This amendment will have no financial impact because it has been in practice but it will clarify the interpretation of some agencies being exempt despite the longstanding policy of filing fees. The amendment to the District Court Act 1973 and the Local Court Act 2007 clarifies that a Chief Magistrate cannot count time served as Chief Magistrate towards the requirements for a judicial pension. It was suggested that the Courts Legislation Amendment Act 2010 could be interpreted to mean that a Chief Magistrate, if also holding a commission as a District Court judge, would be entitled to count the entire period of service as Chief Magistrate towards a judicial pension. I am glad that matter has been clarified. The Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997 will be amended so the definition of the term "carer" will be consistent across New South Wales legislation.

The bill also amends the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and the Government Information (Information Commissioner) Act 2009 to allow the Information Commissioner to disclose the necessary information to the Privacy Commissioner when consulting on a review of an agency's decision to refuse a person access to information. The Jury Amendment Act 2010 will be amended to ensure that the Sheriff can obtain information about criminal records of potential jurors from the Commissioner of Police and the chief executive of Roads and Maritime Services. The Government wants to ensure that our jury selection system functions well and involves reputable members of our community. The bill will amend the Mining Act 1992 and clarifies that the Land and Environment Court can hear and determine proceedings relating to decisions about objections to the granting of a mining lease.

There are two amendments to the Land and Environment Court Act 1979. The first will allow for acting commissioners to complete matters that have been heard or partly heard and whose term has expired. The second amendment will provide greater protection for consumers who use the Land and Environment Court by requiring that a person being represented by an agent must seek the leave of the court. The bill will amend the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 so that when one agency is declared to be part of another agency, the declaration can be restricted to specified agency functions. Finally, the Probate and Administration Act 1898 will be amended to facilitate the move to mandatory online publication in that notices for an application for probate will be advertised as specified in the court rules. The bill removes the requirement that these notices be advertised in newspapers and clarifies that probate matters can be made under the Uniform Civil Procedures Rules as well as under the Supreme Court Rules.

A considerable amount of work has gone into drafting this bill and to the untrained eye it may seem tedious. However, its impact on the running and efficiency of the courts will bring about real change. I commend the Attorney General for the time and effort that has gone into amending Acts that go as far back as 1898. This Government wants to get things done, and now is the time to do it. The Attorney General would be the first to acknowledge the excellent work of his hardworking staff. In particular, I give special mention to Ed Clapin, Noel McCoy, Agnes Kang and Nick Santucci, and thank them for their wonderful work in assisting the Attorney General with this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [3.33 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak in debate on the exciting and interesting Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 introduced by my friend and colleague the member for Epping, who is doing an incredible job as Attorney General of this State. He is tough but fair and is reforming for the better the way the New South Wales legal system works. I commend his efforts and his thorough work on this bill. It is great to see his dedicated team in the advisers area, led by Nick Santucci, who is very passionate about this bill. Like my colleague the member for Camden, I thank all those in the Attorney General's ministerial office for their contributions to this legislation.

Today we are joined in the public gallery by one of my constituents, Pasquale Vertuli, a well-qualified lawyer who works in the office of legal counsel. He has come to hear debate on this bill, and I welcome him to the Parliament. I am pleased to speak to the bill. We are making amendments to the courts and other legislation administered by the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice as part of a regular legislative review and monitoring program. The objective is to amend a number of Acts to improve the efficiency and operations of our courts and agencies within the Department of the Attorney General and Justice.

I turn now to some of the proposed amendments. My constituents in Hornsby have expressed considerable interest about the bill, and I know the member for Londonderry has also received correspondence about how to make our court system more efficient and effective. No doubt he will refer to those matters in due course. I turn first to the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997. The object of the amendment is to ensure that the definition of "carer" is consistent with that in other New South Wales legislation. The question is whether this amendment will have implications for the definition of "carer" in other Acts that the Parliament has considered. This amendment relates only to the definition of "carer" in the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997. Therefore, it will not affect other Acts of Parliament. The purpose of the legislation is to bring the definition in the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997 into line with another related Act. It is a minor and technical amendment.

I turn next to the Civil Procedure Act 2005. Questions have been raised as to whether the amendment extends the power of senior judicial officers of the Supreme Court to delegate functions to registrars. Section 13 (1) (a) of the Civil Procedure Act 2005 enables the senior judicial officer of the court—for example, the Chief Justice, Chief Judge or Chief Magistrate—to delegate certain powers to a registrar by an instrument in

writing. In the Supreme Court the powers of a registrar are conferred by section 121 of the Supreme Court Act 1970. Section 121 (4) of the Supreme Court Act 1970 preserves the effectiveness of an order or direction of an officer of the court regardless of whether that order or direction is within the power of the officer.

Registrars in the Supreme Court already exercise many powers that are delegated under section 13 of the Civil Procedure Act 2005 and no objection has been raised about their exercise on the basis that they have no power. It was always the intention of the delegation power referred to in section 13 of the Civil Procedure Act to enable the senior judicial officer to delegate functions to officers of the court under the Act. Therefore, this amendment does not, in practice, extend the power of registrars or the senior judicial officer. The amendment is solely for the sake of certainty. It makes it clear that a registrar may exercise any function of the court under any other Act or law in respect of which the court has jurisdiction. That includes rules of court delegated to them under section 13. I note that there has been a change to the Court Security Act 1995 to permit regulations to be made allowing court security officers to require the temporary surrender of specified items upon entry or otherwise when detected in a courthouse.

This will enable court security officers to prevent a wider range of specified objects that may pose a risk to safety from entering courtrooms, following security incidents in recent criminal trials. Hornsby Local Court will be affected by this amendment, which is very important because we want to make our courtrooms safer. We want to ensure that people appearing before the judiciary can feel safe and that there is no threat to any person. This amendment will provide greater security powers to our court officers. I turn to the amendments proposed to the Land and Environment Court Act 1979. The two amendments are, first, to provide that acting commissioners whose term of appointment has expired can complete matters that have been heard or partly heard, which is to avoid the negative finance and resource implications associated with having a part-heard matter concluded by another commissioner. I note that the member for Myall Lakes is in the Chamber. He is an experienced and qualified lawyer, and he is very interested in the amendments in this bill.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Cleaning up the mess.

Mr MATT KEAN: The member for Myall Lakes is correct when says "cleaning up the mess". This amendment has been a long time coming and I know that the member for Myall Lakes will be very interested to speak on this bill.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: I've spoken about it.

Mr MATT KEAN: The member for Myall Lakes takes any opportunity to speak on a bill, especially one as important as this.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: I'm chairman of the Legislation Review Committee as well.

Mr MATT KEAN: I acknowledge that the member for Myall Lakes is the Chairman of the Legislation Review Committee. It is great to have him in the Chamber today to hear this.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Knowing that you were on your feet I had to.

Mr MATT KEAN: The member is very kind but this is turning into a mutual admiration society and when I should address the amendments to the Land and Environment Court Act.

Mr Kevin Conolly: We have a serious bill in front of us.

Mr MATT KEAN: The bill contains very serious amendments. I guess the question that members are asking—I know the member for Riverstone is because he is nodding his head in furious agreement—is: What is wrong with the current situation in the Land and Environment Court? Currently an agent may appear in most Land and Environment Court proceedings if the client gives written authorisation. The exceptions are matters relating to criminal enforcement or appeals when an agent cannot appear, and mining matters when an agent can appear but only with the leave of the court. Agents play an important role in assisting parties to access justice and in assisting specialist courts, as they often have expertise in the particular area.

The problem is that concerns have been raised about the actions of some agents that have been detrimental to the effective administration of justice in this State, including failing to provide clients with copies of directions made by the court, giving misleading advice about their obligations and acting in a way that is

obstructive to justice and detrimental to the interests of their client. I acknowledge the presence of the Attorney General in the Chamber. He is doing a remarkable job of cleaning up the court system in this State and fixing 16 years of Labor's mess. While clearly not all agents act in such a manner, the actions of some can impact not only on their clients but also on the effective functioning of the Land and Environment Court, they can lead to delays in matters being progressed and they can take up valuable court resources. This Government is about making our court system more efficient and effective, and making it work better for people right across this State.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Cleaning up the mess.

Mr MATT KEAN: Cleaning up the mess, as the member for Myall Lakes has said in practically every speech he has made in this House on every piece of legislation.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Sixteen years.

Ms Anna Watson: Give it a rest. You get on our nerves.

Mr MATT KEAN: I note the member for Shellharbour is in the Chamber. She has a keen interest in this legislation. I am delighted to see her enthusiasm for such an important bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [3.44 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Liverpool, the member for Drummoyne, the member for Cabramatta, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Castle Hill, the member for Parramatta, the member for Oatley, the member for Granville, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Orange, the member for Mulgoa, the member for Menai, the member for Bankstown, the member for The Entrance, the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Riverstone, the member for Cronulla, the member for Kiama, the member for Rockdale, the member for Gosford, the member for Wyong, the member for Camden and the member for Hornsby for their contributions to debate on the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012.

I do not think there are any particular issues that I need to address; I think they have been addressed ad nauseam. The bill contains miscellaneous amendments arising from the regular review of courts-related legislation and other legislation administered by the Department of Attorney General and Justice. The amendments will ensure that court procedures continue to be as effective as possible and support the efficient administration of justice in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Greg Smith agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2012-13

Debate resumed from 22 August 2012.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [3.37 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I speak about the 2012-13 budget for New South Wales. I welcome it wholeheartedly because of the benefits it brings to New South Wales and in particular my electorate of Riverstone. The 2012-13 budget commits to building for the future and invests to meet the growing needs of Riverstone. I am especially pleased with the budget outcomes

for the people in my electorate because many projects were delivered. I will enumerate them so that members of the Opposition, and in particular my good friend and colleague the member for Mount Druitt, who have difficulty remembering particular benefits being delivered by this Government can keep pace.

It is great news that in this year's budget the New South Wales Government gave a firm commitment to build a new high school in The Ponds. The funding for the new high school in the stage four development area of The Ponds was confirmed. This follows a long-running campaign by local parents and community groups. It is an election commitment I made in 2011 to fight for this high school. I am very proud to be part of a government that is delivering on its commitments. The new high school will be able to accommodate up to 1,100 students and it is a fabulous new resource for families in The Ponds area. The school will include 52 learning classrooms and support spaces, a library with computer areas, an external covered workshop, an outdoor learning space, administration and staff facilities, and a canteen. The really, really good news is that the high school will open its doors for students from the beginning of the school year in 2015.

The second project I will talk about is The Ponds School for Specific Purposes. I believe Riverstone was the only electorate this year to have two new schools announced within the budget. It is absolutely essential that right across this State we address the needs of students with disabilities. The Ponds School for Specific Purposes, which will accommodate up to 130 students in 16 classes, will provide state-of-the-art teaching and learning facilities for students with moderate to severe disabilities. The school is currently operating on a temporary campus adjoining Riverstone High School in a smaller capacity, but the service new facility provides to so many kids with disabilities across the region will be wonderful.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: So you're cleaning up the mess left by Labor?

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: We are absolutely cleaning up the mess and addressing the shortfall that we inherited from Labor. No. 3 is the upgrade of Richmond Road. A further upgrade of Richmond Road from Townson Road to Grange Avenue costing \$56 million was announced as part of the Building the State package. This is in addition to the stage already announced from Bells Creek and the M7 to Townson Road. Two phases to the upgrade of Richmond Road have been announced in this budget, the first of which will go to tender within a couple of months, with work commencing in 2013 and being completed in 2014. This long-awaited upgrade of Richmond Road—needed since the completion of the M7 to serve people in the north-west growth sector and in the Hawkesbury—will go ahead. Initially the upgrade will be to a four-lane divided road but it will be designed with a wide median section to allow for upgrading to six lanes in the future with minimal disruption. This is an example of both good planning and getting on with the job.

No. 4 is the upgrade and extension of Schofields Road, which serves a growth area. Schofields Road from Railway Terrace to Veron Road, including a section underneath the Richmond railway line, will be extended at a cost of \$35 million as part of the Building the State package. This is in addition to the upgrade already announced for the section between Windsor Road and Tallawong Road. I was delighted to join the Minister for Roads and Ports recently to announce a contract for the upgrading of that two-kilometre section of road. The contract has been awarded to a joint venture of Obrascón Huarte Lain [OHL] and Abergeldie. This part of the upgrade will include the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of Ponds Boulevard, Cudgegong Road and Ridgeline Drive, as well as large retaining walls, earthworks and drainage works. Road building is expected to start late this year and the section is expected to be completed in late 2014. When extended to Richmond Road, Schofields Road will be a major east-west connection that will meet the future transport needs of the north-west and service the recently opened Schofields Railway Station and nearby town centre.

No. 5 is funding for Riverstone Police Station, which was recently approved by the New South Wales Government following a campaign by the local community. Less than two weeks ago I presented to the Clerk a petition with more than 1,500 signatures from local residents calling on the Government to provide the area with this police station. The Government has done so. Funding for the police station was included both in last year's budget for planning and in this year's budget to get on with the project. There is no need for this project to be further delayed. It will be undertaken and a new, much larger and more modern police station will be provided for the Quakers Hill Local Area Command, which is currently struggling to work in cramped and unsatisfactory quarters.

I am really excited about No. 6, construction of the First Ponds Creek wastewater carrier—known to other people as a sewer line. The reason I am so excited about the construction of a sewer line is that it is one of the keys to unlocking development in north-west Sydney. In 2010 the Riverstone and Alex Avenue precincts

were rezoned by the former Labor Government. Landowners have been crying out and wondering why they cannot develop the precinct. The answer is that the infrastructure was not rolled out in time. There was no infrastructure to match the paper rezoning. Land cannot be developed without the availability of sewerage. The wastewater carrier is being funded through the \$481 million Housing Acceleration Fund, accelerating the building of the First Ponds Creek wastewater carrier, which will unlock the precincts and allow them to be developed.

No. 7 is the first home owner grants for new homes. This has particular relevance to a new home building area such as Riverstone. This budget more than doubled the first home owner grant with first home buyers being up to \$19,245 better off when they buy a new home under the new Building the State package to boost housing construction. First home buyers who are eligible under the scheme will receive a \$15,000 grant. No. 8 is the new home grant scheme for buyers who already have a property. Such people will be given a \$5,000 grant when purchasing a new home. If members had not picked it already, a theme is developing here of supporting the housing industry and getting the State economy restarted by enabling new homes to be built.

No. 9 is the increased stamp duty thresholds. Under the Building the State package the upper threshold for stamp duty concessions was increased for first home buyers to \$650,000 in order to reflect the average house price in Sydney. That is again benefitting in the provision of new homes in north-west Sydney and my area in particular. We are up to No. 10, and I think the member for Mount Druitt will be in strife soon. As we heard yesterday in question time, this Government has been rolling out flashing lights at three times the pace of the former Government. I went to the 2011 election promising that five schools in my electorate would get flashing lights. What happened within the first year of this Government? I have delivered to six schools and exceeded my promise already. These schools include Bede Polding College, Marsden Park Public School, Windsor Public School, Glenwood High School, Barnier Public School and Mary Immaculate Primary School. In the next round of the program announced yesterday Rouse Hill Anglican School will also be included.

Now I need more than two hands because I am up to No. 11, which is the railway station upgrades at Windsor and Riverstone. I spoke about this earlier today in relation to a different motion. This Government is being proactive by ensuring that people with disabilities can access public transport safely by modifying stations to provide easier access. I am happy to say that the work has been completed at Windsor and some work is about to commence at Riverstone to ensure access for people with disabilities. Delivery No. 12 is a biggie. The North West Rail Link commitment is rock solid and \$360 million has been committed in this year's budget to the early phases of work on that rail link. This delivers on the most significant expansion of the rail network in decades. Some members of this House may not know that the North West Rail Link will reach my electorate of Riverstone, with the final station being at the Cudgegong Road area in Schofields across the road from The Ponds development. It is one of the fastest-growing regions in the State and it will be served by this new rail link.

No. 13, funding for community transport services, has been increased across the State. Beneficiaries of these increases are Blacktown Community Transport Incorporated and Peppercorn Community Transport in the Hawkesbury. The total for Blacktown Community Transport this year is more than \$1 million and Peppercorn Community Transport will receive \$508,000. These organisations provide a much-needed basic service to people who otherwise would not be able to get around in their own communities. No. 14 is the refurbishment of Nirimba TAFE. An amount of \$599,000 has been allocated by this Government to upgrade facilities at the Nirimba TAFE college so that its student get basic training and gain lots of skills in trades that will enable them to make positive contributions to society in years to come.

No. 15 is new buses and bus routes. This was particularly exciting for people in the Glenwood area and people travelling on heavily congested Windsor Road bus routes from Rouse Hill town centre. New buses have been provided for existing routes, such as the 616X, and new bus routes such as the 607X for residents in the north-west were created. We have new bus services as a result of \$31.7 million in funding to acquire 69 new buses across the Sydney metropolitan area. Obviously, as a centre of growth, Riverstone is a beneficiary of that. I also note the announcement today that the Government will trial the use of double-decker buses on some routes, particularly in the Riverstone area, to determine the benefits of providing that type of bus to carry a larger capacity on longer runs with fewer stops. I believe that trial will commence in my area as early as next Monday.

No. 16—the local government infrastructure renewal scheme—is a wonderful initiative of this Government to address the backlog of infrastructure across New South Wales left to us by the former Labor Government, which had been in power for 16 years. That was a long, dark, hard 16 years during which the

backlog of infrastructure across the State was ignored. Nothing was done by the former Labor Government to assist councils to meet what was obviously a growing problem. Councils across the State knew it. They told Government about it frequently but nothing was done. The Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme provides councils with low interest loans to reduce the backlog of infrastructure that was left by the former Labor Government. In the Hawkesbury council area a number of old wooden bridges are being replaced by modern concrete bridges with longer life spans and lower maintenance costs so that future councils will not have the same burden. I am sure that other projects across the State have been funded this way and are reducing the burden of maintenance and addressing the backlog.

No. 17 is extra nurses, doctors and police being provided right across the State, including in the electorate of Riverstone. There is \$178 million in recurrent funding over four years for more police in New South Wales, \$64 million for 500 more nurses and more than \$4 million for more clinical nurses, midwife educators and specialists. Some of those nurses are already working today in Blacktown hospital, already on the job as a result of this Government delivering on its promises. We are in fact ahead of schedule in the rollout of additional nursing positions to public hospitals across New South Wales. This is a wonderful achievement and something that cannot be ignored. The work has continued in this year's budget as these extra positions are rolled out across New South Wales to provide better front-line services to all of the people we serve.

No. 18 is the replacement of rail carriages without air-conditioning—my colleague the member for Londonderry spoke this morning to his motion and commented on the fact that people travel on the Richmond line to a place that has a reputation for being a little cold in winter. I am not sure what the temperature was overnight—it was probably a little bit warmer than it had been but earlier in the week—but we have had some negatives. Richmond is a cold place in winter and it can be darn hot in summer. It is absolutely true that people travelling up and down the Richmond line through the electorate of Londonderry—my electorate—have been calling out for air-conditioning on trains. This Government has allocated \$94.6 million in this year's to replace 498 old rail carriages that do not have air-conditioning—R, S and L fleet. That benefit will be seen progressively by people who travel on the Richmond line and other lines across the network. But we are certainly happy to deliver that for people in our area.

No. 19, and this is a particular favourite, is an additional \$4 million in this year's budget to continue the project to replace the Windsor Bridge, a project that the Government has announced will proceed because of the unsatisfactory and potentially unsafe state of the 140-year-old Windsor Bridge, which was originally constructed in 1874 and raised in the 1890s. Unfortunately, the bridge is beginning to show its age. A few years ago the Roads and Traffic Authority, now Roads and Maritime Services, concluded that the bridge did not need replacing. We are working with the local community and with relevant Government agencies to prepare the best possible design for a replacement of that bridge. An environmental impact statement will be exhibited relatively soon, certainly before the end of this year, to give the public an opportunity to comment on the proposal—we have already had significant public comment on the proposal. The people of the Hawkesbury, in particular those on the western side, are looking forward to an improved crossing of the river at Windsor. This Government is delivering it.

No. 20 is the continuation of the Community Building Partnership program for the life of the forward estimates. This change was introduced as a one-off program under the former Labor Government and lived from one budget to the other. This Government has guaranteed that the program will continue throughout this term of Parliament. Community groups right across the State will have access to support under this Community Building Partnership program. Groups from my electorate that benefitted this year included a rugby league club at Riverstone, which will benefit from a new fit-out for its canteen. The old canteen was pretty rough and ready, and potentially unsafe. I imagine that it would not have passed modern occupational health and safety requirements. I am delighted that we were about to deliver \$15,000 to upgrade their canteen facilities for the rugby league park at Riverstone. The mezzanine area of the indoor stadium at South Windsor, which is used by the Young Men's Christian Association for gymnastics, is now air-conditioned. The students who use that area will now be able to do so in comfort. I have already explained how hot it can be sometimes. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

This year the benefits of the Community Building Partnership program in my electorate extended to a rugby league team, to children doing gymnastics and to the Filipino Australian Cultural Centre at Schofields, which was able to build a covered outdoor area for gatherings. The Sri Lanka Buddhist Vihara, also at Schofields, which provide lots of services, not only to Sri Lankan Buddhists but also to the wider community from its hub at Schofields, was able to air-condition its meditation room as a result of the program. It is a retreat

and an oasis in a busy world for people who need a place to reflect and rejuvenate. Quakers Hill East Public School was able to improve its outdoor playing courts, Fitzgerald Memorial Aged Care Facility at Windsor was able to improve the pavement areas so that its elderly residents could better access the shops in Windsor.

The program also provided support for a disability group in the Windsor area. It is a wonderful program. Some of the grants are relatively modest in size, but if the grant is targeted to a specific need, it can provide great help for a community in particular need. I am delighted that the life of that program has been extended as a commitment of this Government through the term of this Parliament. No. 21 is funding for the weed harvester in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River. A couple of years ago there was an outbreak of aquatic weed on the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system that rendered the river almost useless for recreational use; certainly you would not have fished or swum in it because of the salvinia weed and other weed that had taken over the surface of the water for miles to see. It was a huge task for local councils and the Hawkesbury River County Council to overcome. At that time there was a Federal Government grant to purchase a weed harvester, a machine that actually collects and mulches the weed so that it can be removed from the river.

But the ongoing cost was a real challenge for the Hawkesbury River County Council. This Government has met half the cost of that ongoing operational fee so that we never again have to fear that the river will be shut down by aquatic weed as it was three or four years ago. No. 22, and this is a big item: We made a commitment to upgrade Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospitals. Before we came to power one of our election commitments was to spend \$150 million upgrading the hospitals, but we have committed \$300 million. We have doubled the commitment and the first contract has been put out for the work to begin on the additional car park area at Blacktown campus and work is being prepared at the Mount Druitt campus as we speak. This is something that Labor members talked about. They talked up how much they cared about people in Western Sydney, how much they were going to do, how well they looked after them, but what did they actually do at Blacktown hospital?

Mr Bart Bassett: Nothing.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: No, they did not do nothing; they reduced the number of beds at Blacktown hospital over the last decade. That is why the former member for Blacktown, Paul Gibson, was so violently angry with his own Government and why he applauded what Minister Jillian Skinner did. He was prepared to support it at the launch because he recognised that we were doing what those opposite should have done all of those years ago while they were talking about it. This is a huge commitment. It shows that this Government addresses need. It does not just talk about need and look after itself like somebody else we might have known, but it actually delivers services and facilities where they are needed, including at Blacktown. It is something the current member for Blacktown might learn from.

The \$300 million upgrade will include a new inpatient building, additional intensive care beds, expanded emergency services, a new comprehensive cancer centre and an in-centre renal dialysis unit. This exceeds the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals election commitment, as well as Labor's commitment and demonstrates that we are getting on with the job. It includes the provision of \$9.7 million for the construction of the Blacktown hospital car park, to be completed in 2014. Construction on the hospital, including the new building, a comprehensive cancer centre and additional inpatient beds, will be completed in 2015, with the remaining service enhancements to be completed progressively during 2016. By 2016 \$300 million will be delivered to Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospitals—not just talked about, not just promised and not just imagined as was the case under the previous Government. It left office without committing a single cent to that project.

All of these are just samples of the benefits that came to Riverstone in the 2012-13 budget. I picked out the key points, and there are quite a number of them. I note that the member for Mount Druitt has entered the Chamber. He has the challenge of reciting off, from 1 to 22, what those points were, all the benefits for the people of my electorate and my region under a Liberal-Nationals Government. This Government is delivering and not just talking. They are real benefits, some very significant indeed in their size and scale, but all of them tailored to meet the needs of people in my region and to benefit the people of New South Wales.

All this has been done in the context of maintaining control of our budget and expenditure so that we maintain the triple-A credit rating, which is so important to New South Wales. I want to explain why it is important. It is not an end in itself. Who cares, in one sense, what rating agencies say? What I care about is the impact on the people of New South Wales. By maintaining our triple-A credit rating we lower borrowing costs

so we do not have to waste precious taxpayer dollars paying interest that should be going into providing services and facilities. The triple-A credit rating is a means to an end of delivering good government to the people of New South Wales, which is what we on this side of the House are all about.

I should point out too that while the Federal Government is contributing less to New South Wales infrastructure this year as its very hasty stimulus package contracts after the global financial crisis, and less money is coming to New South Wales for infrastructure spending, the New South Wales budget increases total spending on infrastructure by 17 per cent over the next four years compared with the past four years. Even though that past four years included Federal stimulus money, the four years starting now will have 17 per cent more spending on infrastructure. That is because this Government is genuine about providing infrastructure. We are meeting our commitments. We are disciplining ourselves financially so we can put money where it is needed, and that makes a real difference to people on the ground. I am excited about the budget, as members may have gathered by now. It has been good for Riverstone. I have given the top 22 items as they affect Riverstone. I look forward to another opportunity to talk about the rest.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [4.07 p.m.]: Yesterday when I was listening to the debate I wondered whether members were talking about the Federal budget or the State budget; whether they were talking about the budget from 16 years ago or the budget that this Government produced. I thought members opposite were a bit confused, especially the member for Fairfield. I tried to work out what he had in his hand. Was it the budget from last year or from three or four years ago under Labor, or this financial year's budget? I have a friend who is a member of the Labor Party. He came to me the other day with a book on the front of which it said, "Sixteen Years of Labor Achievement." I thought that was something good for me to read but when I opened the book the pages were all blank. My friend said that is exactly what Labor has been doing for 16 years. I am pleased today to be able to support a budget delivered by a good Treasurer.

As the people of our State want New South Wales to recover, the O'Farrell Government is taking the hard decisions by directing the New South Wales economy in the right direction. If the member for Shellharbour listened, in time she might learn something about how this Government works. It is important for her to learn that. In 16 years Labor achieved nothing; the book I received was full of blank pages. This is the second budget delivered by the Liberal-Nationals Government, and the people of New South Wales can see the light at the end of the tunnel. This Government acts in the best interests of the people of New South Wales and this budget is a strong foundation for a strong future. The Government has delivered as promised. In the past expenditure was out of control and a bleak, unsustainable financial future was ahead.

Now, with spending under control and the Government undertaking the reform needed, New South Wales will live within its means. This responsible budget addresses the infrastructure needed in order to kick-start housing, contributes over \$55 million to the New South Wales economy and supports over 100,000 jobs. The member for Riverstone highlighted 22 achievements in Riverstone. In the Granville electorate I could probably highlight 122 in the short term of office of this Government. I could highlight what Labor failed to deliver, especially in the Granville area. The area was under Labor control for many years. This is the first time in history the Coalition is controlling this area. We will hold onto it, because we are delivering to the people.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Shellharbour will come to order.

Mr TONY ISSA: This budget delivers more housing with the most generous first home buyer scheme in the nation, whereby buyers will be up to \$19,245 better off, not to mention the \$5,000 for people who are buying new housing stock to support the building industry. This Government will release up to 76,000 new properties across New South Wales. It is simple maths—more houses, more jobs and a growing economy. That is what the Government is all about—supporting the economy, supporting businesspeople and supporting the community. The budget also highlights our commitment to health, with \$1.16 billion in capital works, 540 extra nurses and six new hospitals.

The member for Riverstone highlighted how long Labor double dipped funding for Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospitals. I have a lot of family who from time to time attend hospital and I am a regular visitor to hospital. I have seen that everyone is impressed with this Government providing more funding. The Granville electorate will also benefit from the \$35 million allocated for Westmead Hospital. I share these health services with the member for Parramatta and we are both working hard to make sure we deliver health services to the people of western Sydney. The O'Farrell Government has invested \$67 million for the Royal Prince Alfred

Hospital mental health unit following the establishment on 1 July of the Mental Health Commission, which will ensure greater accountability. It probably needs to send some people to those opposite to see how they can be treated.

Our commitment to education is assured with an investment in the future of our generation with six new schools across the State, a \$466 million increase in the education budget for major works and the allocation of additional funding for school education. I am pleased to advise that the meat trade facility at Granville TAFE will have an allocation for much-needed works. Never before has the funding for Granville Public School been controlled by the principal and the parents and friends committee. This Government will allow them to spend the money where it is needed. The Government is providing a rescue package to the meat trade section at Granville TAFE to provide better facilities for the people in my area.

Law and order is also important for my electorate, especially since Granville has been highlighted due to the shooting activity in the area. This budget will increase police numbers and provide more resources to further crack down on crime. In the past three months crime in the Granville electorate has reduced by 30 per cent. Everyone has acknowledged the hard work by the police in my electorate and the contribution by this Government in cracking down on crime. Labor did not do that. I am pleased to report that crime in my electorate has reduced. I publicly thank and commend the police from Granville and Merrylands for their hard work. I meet regularly with police officers. From speaking to people in the street I know they support and appreciate what this government is doing.

The 2012–13 budget includes \$13 million to boost local government infrastructure. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition recognised the increasing infrastructure backlog and its policy centred on providing an interest rate subsidy for local councils borrowing money to reduce the infrastructure backlog. Parramatta City Council, which I proudly served on for 25 years, was one of the 69 councils that benefitted from that scheme. I was pleased to learn that the Premier announced in his State address at Rose Hill last week that the Government is injecting \$1 billion to safeguard heritage property in Granville. When I was the Lord Mayor of the city I had a meeting with the then Minister for Lands, Joe Tripodi, not in his office but in a waiting room downstairs. I asked the Government to return the old King's school to the council because \$9 million was needed to renovate and rescue this heritage item. The former Government did not do that; it listed the site for sale on the market. It sold half and half was left. Now this Government is trying to rescue the remainder by injecting \$1 billion for the heritage assets of the city.

I was surprised on Friday 29 July 2011 when I read a press release from the former Premier, the member for Toongabbie, Nathan Rees, who condemned the Government for not providing a rescue package for the heritage precinct in Parramatta. Why did the former Premier for New South Wales, who was the member for a nearby electorate and who knows the Parramatta area well, not rescue the heritage area when he was in office? Why does he rely on this Government? His Government could not deliver; he wants us to deliver. Labor members are thanking us for doing the right thing. Last week our Premier injected \$1 billion into the area. This Government is delivering what the people of this State deserve. We are delivering what the Labor Party failed to do for the past 16 years.

Mr Paul Toole: To the whole of the State.

Mr TONY ISSA: Exactly. There is a big hole in the State. The Liberal-Nationals Government has delivered what it promised. Turning to road funding, I am pleased that the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Ports came to my electorate and rescued the exit of the Cumberland Highway to the Great Western Highway by injecting \$16 million into the project, which will greatly benefit my area. I thank the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Ports for coming to my electorate and helping me find a solution for the project. The community is pleased with the Government's contribution to solving the problem. I again thank the hardworking Minister for Transport.

I committed to deliver a community car park for Granville, and I did. Labor made a pre-election promise to put \$16 million aside for the project but it did not. We have contributed \$14 million for the community car park. The Minister for Transport visited my area to announce work on the community car park that had been promised for so many years. Residents believe this Government will deliver and were happy to hear the announcement that \$14 million has been set aside for the project. The Labor Government could not deliver. David Borger, the former member for the area, said he would build the car park. He presented a petition calling on this House for support for the project. He was the Minister for Roads and he could not deliver. We did what we had to do. The people of my electorate are excited and pleased, and appreciate this Government's commitment to deliver a well-needed car park for the area.

The Granville electorate will benefit from the \$86 million for the Lidcombe to Granville corridor upgrade. Having been an assistant railway station master for many years, I understand that it is necessary to have safe tracks for trains to run on. This Government has contributed \$86 million to upgrade the line between Lidcombe and Granville to ensure we do not have another train disaster. That is important for this Government: we can never forget the Granville train disaster.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will direct his comments through the Chair. The member for Shellharbour will come to order.

Mr TONY ISSA: I welcome this budget. It will promote better roads throughout western Sydney. This Government is delivering. This is a very difficult time, especially with the Federal Labor Government contributing less for the infrastructure of New South Wales. We have heard about the lesser contribution from the Labor Government for major roads. We have to find the funding ourselves to deliver services for the community. This budget has increased infrastructure spending by 17 per cent for the next four years compared with the past four years under the Labor Government. To build a strong State, we have to have a strong economy. To do so, we need to get our budget under control and deliver real budget surpluses. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Our aim is to end wasteful spending, reduce debt, and reduce cost of living pressures to help families get ahead. I hear the crying of a child from the gallery. I know that families are suffering because of the increased cost of living due to the carbon tax that Labor introduced in this country. People know that this Government is delivering in this State a budget that serves the people of New South Wales. I thank the person in the gallery for bringing the child along; perhaps it will learn how this Government is performing better in the delivery of services to the community.

Mr John Sidoti: The member is a man of the people.

Mr TONY ISSA: I am a man of the people, exactly. The 2012-13 budget is putting mental health first, fixing public hospitals and providing better public transport and better public schools. What could be more important than this Government investing in our future generation? Students are our future generation; and we are investing in schools because the students will carry the flag of this State and nation into the future. They have to be looked after; we have to provide them with a better environment, and we have to provide them with an even better education. This Government is investing in education and schools. That is why it is building new schools and spending millions more on education, schools and TAFE. I am very pleased to say that New South Wales is on the right track and that the Liberal-Nationals Government is making New South Wales number one again. I commend the budget.

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

REDFERN RAILWAY STATION LIFT ACCESS

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [4.30 p.m.]: The residents of Darlington, Redfern, Waterloo, Chippendale and Alexandria have signed a petition of 10,000 signatures calling on the Government to take overdue action in relation to a lift to allow people access to Redfern station. Redfern station is a major hub of the CityRail network. Every metropolitan railway line other than the airport line passes through Redfern station, making it one of the busiest stations on the network and the second most important station for changing trains. Responses to my 2010 question on notice reveal that the station is the seventh busiest in the CityRail network, with almost 42,000 trips to and from the station each weekday.

The station services the University of Sydney, the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, the Australian Technology Park, the Carriageworks, the Redfern Community Centre and several Redfern-based community services including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services. It also serves as an area of major projected residential and business population growth through urban renewal projects. Yet despite the station's significance there are no lifts to its platform, making access difficult, if not impossible, for people with disabilities, for older people, for parents of young children, for pregnant women and for people who are less mobile due to illness or injury. People with luggage or carrying large items also find it a challenge.

In the twenty-first century in Sydney, Australia's global city, all major stations should be accessible, and this needs to be urgently addressed. Public transport is essential to reducing traffic congestion, air pollution

and greenhouse gas emissions. People will not use public transport if it is not convenient. If they are unable to do basic things like change platform, they will revert instead to private motor vehicles. It is unfair for people with a mobility problem who do not have cars and who rely on trains for transport. I have heard stories of people in wheelchairs having to travel past their station to another, just so that they can access a line that takes them back to their station on the right platform.

With so many train lines using Redfern, the station should be a priority for an accessibility upgrade. If it were fully accessible it would provide relief to other busy stations. Various Government Ministers have responded to my questions in Parliament, acknowledging that plans are being developed for the upgrade of Redfern station, but they have failed to provide a timeline or a start date. A key focus of the 2006 Redfern Waterloo Built Environment Plan was an upgrade for the station, but plans, timetables and funds were never delivered. The community has been promised an upgrade for more than 20 years, under both Coalition and Labor governments. The community does not want this debate to turn into a blame game between the major parties. What the community wants is action.

Responses to my calls to the Minister this year indicate that Redfern station is being considered as part of a review for future upgrades. I understand that funds have been allocated to upgrade 35 stations to make them accessible as part of the Transport Access Program. The need for equitable access to Redfern station is urgent. It should be included in the first round of upgrades under the Transport Access Program. I am really pleased the Minister is in the House to speak on this issue today. The community has launched Lift Redfern, a campaign to get lifts installed at Redfern station as a priority. The campaign is supported by a wide range of resident, business, arts, political and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, community groups, community services and local elected representatives.

The petition before the House forms part of this campaign, with teams of volunteers collecting signatures at Redfern station and nearby access points and at other stations on the CityRail network. Lift Redfern suggests that the Government prioritise platforms 11 and 12, on the Eastern Suburbs line, while it commences plans for a full station upgrade. These platforms were built in the 1970s; they are completely underground and separate to other platforms. They have lift possibilities and would be easily upgraded separately to the rest of the station. The City of Sydney has endorsed the Lift Redfern campaign; and tonight, together with the Lift Redfern campaign, I call on the Government to immediately upgrade the Redfern station with lifts, starting with platforms 11 and 12, so that everyone can equitably use this busy and important inner-city station. I conclude by paying tribute to all those who have organised this petition. I hope that its aims will come to fruition.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Minister for Transport) [4.35 p.m.]: I acknowledge the contribution made by the member for Sydney. I do not disagree with anything the member has said. I was at Redfern station this morning as I was catching a train to meet a commitment, and I was reminded of the easy access challenges that exist at that station. I want to acknowledge, as the member for Sydney did, each of the 10,000 people who put their names to the petition. That is why we have petitions—so that the message reaches this Parliament on a matter that the community feels strongly about. I thank them all for the contributions that they have made to bring the debate to the Parliament today.

There is no doubt that when we assumed government the challenge for us in relation to what was originally called the easy access program was huge. Unfortunately, of the 307 stations on the network only 131 are accessible. When we came to government in March last year about two-thirds of all our stations did not have easy access. As Minister for Transport, I am acutely aware of the challenge that exists, and that is why one of the first actions I took when I became Minister for Transport was to look at what funding was available for that program and what other programs were available to upgrade our stations. We looked at all the different pots of money that existed, pulled them all together and released the Transport Access Program.

As shadow Minister for Transport I was very critical of the pace of the then Government on easy access, because on average only two stations a year were being upgraded. If we kept to that pace, it would have taken us at least 90 years to make all the stations accessible. Just to demonstrate to the community how strongly I feel about this issue, when I was first elected to Parliament about nine years ago I felt very strongly—I still do—that one of my local stations did not have easy access. I took the issue to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. I thought, "Why should one part of the community be excluded from using the station?" Unfortunately, my case was dismissed. But I wanted to use that example to demonstrate that it is a matter that I feel very strongly about. That is why, when we came to government, in this year's budget we gave an extra \$40 million boost to the program that provides accessibility to our stations.

I was very pleased to announce earlier in the year, as was outlined by the member for Sydney, that 35 stations will be getting upgrades. We are able to upgrade more stations with the money we have available and the boost we have provided; the previous Government's policy to upgrade each station for easy access was what we call gold plating. Every station it upgraded was provided with the gamut of easy access facilities—that is, a lift, a ramp, stairs, escalators and so on. I would prefer it if more stations were provided with a ramp, a lift or an escalator rather than nothing. We must increase accessibility as quickly as possible at a large number of stations rather than at just two or three a year. That is why the Government has announced that 35 stations will be upgraded this year. Unfortunately, Redfern station was not one of the stations included on that list because it has specific issues, which I will address.

Initial research indicates some complex issues at Redfern station, but that is not an excuse to do nothing. As the member for Sydney said, Redfern is in reality a city circle station although it is not classified as such. The number of people who use it means that its upgrade is much more complex than that required at an average suburban station. Obviously it requires more extensive work, which will be more costly. Museum station, which is a city circle station, needs lifts and we face huge challenges at Wynyard station and Town Hall station. The Government is ready to address those challenges. I reiterate that this Government is committed to increasing the number of stations with easy access facilities, especially those that have high usage. The Government feels strongly about this issue and that is why it has committed to act.

Opposition members will undoubtedly say how terrible the Government is for not doing anything. However, in 2007 the then member for Heffron, Kristina Keneally, announced that Redfern station would be upgraded. She went on to be the Premier of New South Wales, and the member for Marrickville, who is about to make a contribution to this debate, was the Deputy Premier. They had a great deal of time in which to address this issue, but unfortunately they did nothing. It is therefore a bit rich of them to organise photo opportunities now. The shadow Minister for Transport was the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport when members opposite were in government. I did not want to politicise this issue, but unfortunately it has been politicised by people who had a great deal of time to do something but who did nothing. The Coalition's record in government demonstrates that it takes seriously easy access to stations. This Government has already delivered 35 station upgrades. We appreciate the challenges that must be addressed at Redfern and I acknowledge that people are experiencing difficulty accessing it. However, the Government is reviewing that situation and I look forward to making further comments about accessibility at our railway stations.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [4.40 p.m.]: I support this petition organised by the residents of Darlington, Redfern, Waterloo, Chippendale and Alexandria calling for lifts to be installed at Redfern station to improve access. I thank all the people who worked so hard to collect the signatures, many of whom are in the gallery today. I particularly acknowledge the work of Lift Redfern, which has brought together resident, community, Aboriginal and business groups and politicians. It has actively campaigned to ensure that improvements are made to Redfern station. Geoff Turnbull, Linda Scott, Robyn Fortescue and others have worked very hard on this campaign. Geoff and Linda, who are in the gallery, have played a major part.

Redfern station is at the junction of three electorates—Heffron, Marrickville and Sydney. This petition was tabled by Kristina Keneally, the former member for Heffron and former Premier. I pay tribute to her advocacy on behalf of her electorate. She was passionate about the people of Heffron and improving services and infrastructure in her electorate. She wholeheartedly supported this petition and the campaign to upgrade Redfern station by installing lifts. Ron Hoenig, who is the Labor candidate for Heffron and who is also in the gallery, shares that passion. I know that he will be a great member for Heffron after he is elected on Saturday. Campaigners collected more than 10,000 signatures on this petition in a little more than one month. That is a demonstration of the significant community support for this issue. The campaign for the upgrade of the station was launched in November last year at a community barbeque.

While many individuals have been involved in the campaign—and I have named some of them—its genesis was the desire to carry forward the late Trevor Davies' vision for Redfern. As many members know, Trevor was a long-time inner-city Labor activist who was tireless in his advocacy for the communities of the Redfern-Waterloo area. His work in the local community preceded the formation of Lift Redfern and was about much more than simply upgrading the station. Nonetheless, Trevor saw the upgrade of the station as critical because it is the gateway to the area and an important part of any broader improvements. It is sad that Trevor is no longer with us and cannot witness this debate. Of course, this issue is not only about Redfern and surrounding communities; it is also about Sydney. Redfern station with its 12 platforms is a key station on the railway network because almost every line runs through it. I am pleased that the Minister is in the Chamber this afternoon and I welcome her assurance that she is examining this issue. However, I must point out that it is she who has politicised the issue, and that is a shame.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the longest-serving Mayor of Botany Bay, Ron Hoenig.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [4.43 p.m.]: I congratulate the petitioners and volunteers who worked so hard on this petition containing more than 10,000 signatures that calls for the installation of lifts at Redfern station. I also congratulate the Government on allowing the petition to be tabled so that it can be debated. We all want the same thing; we all want every railway station in this State to have easy access. I have just returned from South Korea and I was very impressed by the facilities provided at subway and railway stations in that country. Governments must consider the resources they have at their disposal and determine priorities accordingly. This was never an urgent issue for the former Labor Government—it was not an issue for its transport Ministers or for the local member, Kristina Keneally. It was not an issue when she was the Minister for Redfern Waterloo, nor was it an issue when she was Premier. It was never on the radar and the Labor Government did nothing.

This Government is now being asked to do something in a little over 18 months that had not been done during the 16 years that members opposite were in government. I am not suggesting that the Government is not capable of responding to the challenge. However, we must take into account equity and fairness across the network. We have limited resources, and priorities must be established to achieve maximum benefit for the people of New South Wales. My only lament is that the Labor Government spent \$500 million on a failed metro project, another \$100 million was wasted on the failed Tcard project and \$176 million was spent on an unnecessary bridge close to where I live. That wasted money amounts to more than the \$700 million that this Government has allocated to improve access at our railway stations.

If the former Government had not flushed that money down the toilet it could have been spent at Redfern station and Flemington station. Many people travel to Flemington on the weekend to buy produce at the market and I often see people struggling up and down the station stairs with their purchases. The money could also have been spent on the station at Croydon, which has an ageing population. The same could be said about stations across the network. I am delighted that the Government has allocated a significant sum to address this issue. The Minister is working on a fair and equitable program that will maximise the effect for train travellers, and I commend her for that. If anyone should offer an apology it is the former member for Heffron—she should apologise to the petitioners for not having done something sooner.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.46 p.m.], by leave: I congratulate and thank those residents and members of local communities who campaign not only on this issue but also on disability and access issues in general. I am proud to see in the public gallery members of the community of Sydney, and the inner west in particular, who have been working on this issue. I thank the residents of Redfern, activists, businesspeople and community members who have supported this petition. It is important that this petition is before the House. Accessibility is an issue at train stations and, in my electorate, ferry wharves. It has been talked about for a long time. I am pleased to see that the Minister for Transport is in the Chamber to speak to the House and the community about the issue.

The issue was raised emphatically by residents in my electorate. I acknowledge Irene Doutney from the City of Sydney and Mehreen Faruqi, the fantastic Greens candidate contesting the seat of Heffron. She has been working tirelessly on this matter. Ms Faruqi will take up the fight against inaction, whether with Labor or the Coalition, to make sure the job gets done in our community. I put it to the House that the community needs a timetable. The community understands and accepts that there are limited resources, a range of challenges that need to be met on the network, and limited funds. I respect the fact that the Minister has come to the House to address the issue. Some Ministers do not come to the House when petitions are discussed; I acknowledge that the Minister for Transport does.

It is important for the petitioners and the broader community to understand the Government's time frame. The Minister has said that she will look into the matter in the future, but it would be appreciated if the Government could set out a time frame so that there is context. I do not intend to politicise the issue by bashing the former Government but it made commitments on which it did not deliver. It is understandable that a community that has experienced disappointment under a former Premier is concerned that the present Government may squib on the promise as well. The community looks to the Government to deliver.

Mr Daryl Maguire: This Government delivers.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I acknowledge the interjection by the Government Whip that this Government delivers. Let us look at a time line. Will it be this year, next year, or the year after? The community needs an assurance that there will be progress on the matter. I thank the residents and members of the community who have fought so hard for this issue.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I thank visitors in the public gallery for their attendance this afternoon. Discussion on petitions allows members of the public to bring forward ideas and to have them heard in your Parliament.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LIVERPOOL BP SERVICE STATION GAS CYLINDER EXPLOSION

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.51 p.m.]: An extraordinarily serious incident occurred in my electorate of Liverpool last Monday. Thankfully no-one was killed in this incident, although that is as much a matter of luck as anything else.

[Interruption]

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I will remove visitors from the public gallery if they continue to interrupt proceedings by calling out.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: I refer specifically to the explosion of gas storage cylinders at a BP service station in Hoxton Park Road, Liverpool. This was extremely disruptive for the local area and potentially very dangerous. Hoxton Park Road was closed for a considerable period, which in turn caused considerable traffic chaos in other parts of Liverpool, including the Liverpool central business district. I witnessed much of it. The explosion also caused significant damage to the building adjacent to the service station. This building is a two-storey building containing various business and upstairs residences. The business closest to the service station is a restaurant called Acqua Cotta, run by chef Abi Toufaily. The consequences of this incident for that business have been catastrophic.

When I last spoke to Mr Toufaily he was awaiting advice as to whether structural damage had been occasioned to the wall of the building. The business will be shut for at least six weeks on the estimates I have received. There has been massive smoke, fire and water damage to the interior of the restaurant and power is not available. Fire has gone through the air-conditioning system, the ducting and the wiring. The storage shed and its contents have been completely destroyed. The cool room and motor have been destroyed. The damage is obviously very serious but it could have been much worse. The restaurant was not open at the time of the explosion. If it had been, the consequences could have been most dire. Mr Toufaily, his wife and children happened to drive by to check on the restaurant at the time of the incident. They could easily have been injured. As it is, his children were traumatised by what they saw.

This is a distressing story. A hardworking restaurateur has been put out of business for a substantial time and physical harm was only narrowly avoided. The story is so much worse because it all could have been avoided. It only happened because of the greed and arrogance of the petrol station proprietor and the myopic and stupid decisions of a majority of Liverpool councillors, who rejected the advice of both professional planners and the independent hearing and assessment panel at Liverpool council. I spoke against the development approval twice in this place. The tanks should never have been allowed to be where they were and there should not have been as many. This incident was completely and absolutely avoidable. The councillors responsible for the approval should hang their heads in shame.

Residents are entitled to a proper explanation from the councillors who supported the application as to why they did so. They have been waiting for this explanation for more than a year and it has not been forthcoming. The gas bottles that exploded were gas storage cylinders located on the western boundary of the service station. The cylinders are used to refuel domestic gas bottles similar to the ones that operate gas barbecues. There were originally two storage cylinders on the site located further to the east than the current location. A new owner purchased the station and increased the number of bottles from two to seven. He moved the position of the cylinders much closer to the restaurant. This was all done without development consent and in breach of the existing consent. That was resolved by the myopic decision of a majority of councillors to retrospectively authorise this unauthorised development.

There was some opposition to this stupidity and I particularly acknowledge the rescission motion moved by councillors Waller, Stanley and Gillani, who tried to fix the problem. Unfortunately, they were not

successful. There was a related dispute about the hours of opening. The owner told residents that after all the money he had spent he would operate this service station 24 hours a day, seven days a week, regardless of what residents, council or anyone else thought. The development consent for the cylinders is not the only concern. On 9 May last year I spoke in this place against the development. I pointed to a number of problems presented to me: the location and positioning of the storage cylinders do not comply with relevant Australian standards; the filling of cylinders is usually carried out by the employee staffing the cash register who has no formal training to carry out this task; and employees try to fill more than one bottle at a time, and seem to struggle to do so. I concluded my comments on that occasion by stating:

I invite WorkCover to have a closer look at this to see whether there is some way of resolving what seems to be a reasonably serious problem.

Regrettably, WorkCover did not have a closer look and we had the explosion and near tragedy of last Monday as a result. Any one of the points I noted could have been a factor in Monday's explosion. What I, Mr Toufaily and other residents feel so angry about is that this incident was so avoidable. All these concerns were ventilated before council consent was given. But the majority of councillors and WorkCover ignored the problem for whatever reason—be it money, lack of interest, inadequate resources or whatever. To make the problem even worse, the service station proprietor—determined to maximise his profits at the expense of neighbouring businesses and residents—wants to put the tanks back exactly where they were. That is outrageous. In a sane and sensible society that would not be allowed to occur. WorkCover should stop this from happening. This is an appalling story. Concerns raised consistently by me, residents, the restaurateur, the minority councillors and the planning professionals have been ignored. Those responsible for gaining the development consent should hang their heads in shame—especially the strongest advocates, councillors Mannoun and Hadchiti.

TRIBUTE TO PETER SHMIGEL

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [4.56 p.m.]: I am honoured to have the opportunity to say a few words about Mr Peter Shmigel, who joined me as chief of staff following the election victory in March 2011. I first met Peter in August 2008, while he was working as chief of staff for the now Premier and the Liberal Party was looking for a candidate for Ryde. Peter and I worked together on my campaign to achieve what at that point was probably the greatest by-election swing in Australian political history. I understand that one of the first things Pete did on becoming a fiercely proud Australian citizen in 1993 was also to become a member of the Liberal Party. He started his political career in the Federal electorate of Lowe in the inner west as both a field officer and electorate officer before joining Chris Hartcher, with whom he served in various roles and ultimately became Minister Hartcher's then chief of staff. During this period he was seconded to the office of Premier John Fahey, where he served as press secretary and in policy roles.

Peter had the honour of serving then Leader of the Opposition, Barry O'Farrell, as chief of staff, where he contributed to the development of our Government's policy priorities and election strategy. Pete needed to leave that role for family reasons—which is true to form. Peter also played an instrumental role in the 2011 transition team, working for the then Leader of the Opposition before taking up the role as chief of staff in my office. In addition to his 11 years of formal political experience, he also served in many Liberal Party roles, contributed to countless policies for various shadow Ministers, as they then were, had one very creative candidacy that set some new standards, and leaves behind an incredible legacy.

Peter has made a tremendous contribution to my portfolio since we came to office 18 months ago. He has guided a new approach to multiculturalism that has focused on substantive respect, economic value and inter-community unity, and has driven economic advancement in Aboriginal Affairs policy. Peter played a major role in developing the inaugural Volunteering Strategy and the Multicultural Advantage Action Plan. Peter's work in the creation of the Multicultural Business Advisory Panel and the ministerial consultative committees has been invaluable and has already shown great efficacy.

Peter has worked with me on initiatives to build youth engagement in south-west Sydney and has guided the development of the new youth opportunities model, which is aimed at greater mentoring and youth leadership. There are many aspects of his work of which Peter Shmigel can be extremely proud and these are only a few examples of the immense contribution he has made. There are many people that are saddened by the departure of "Shmigs", as he is widely known to his long-standing Liberal friends, and that is testament to the invaluable work he has done and relationships he has formed over nearly 20 years of jobs and campaigns. He

has been a role model and mentor for many people in his political career and will be missed by all. I understand Peter wants to better meet family priorities, including overseas, and that he may undertake more flexible work back in the sustainability arena where he also has wide experience outside politics.

Peter is the perfect paradox; a rarely gifted individual who is an unswerving team player. I have seen firsthand how this extraordinary individual has capacity to mentor junior staff. He has been integral to the creation of a team spirit in my ministerial office, a spirit of which I am very much proud. He is a man with utmost integrity and heartfelt loyalty, abundantly demonstrated by his ongoing devotion to the Newtown Jets, a devotion which is also a demonstration of his ingrained optimism. I particularly admire Peter's compassion and charity, much of which is beneath the radar. Peter has been an outstanding servant of the people of New South Wales. Whilst he will be missed, his legacy will not be forgotten and will endure. I wish Peter all the very best in his personal and future professional life. He is someone that will succeed at anything he chooses, and he leaves my office with the utmost respect and admiration from everyone with whom he has worked.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): I acknowledge Peter Shmigel, who is in the gallery. I echo the comments of the Minister for Citizenship and Communities. I am sure that Peter will be missed by every member of the House who has worked with him. I wish him all the very best for what I am sure will be a bright future.

HEARING AWARENESS WEEK

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [5.02 p.m.]: Hearing Awareness Week is a wonderful initiative happening in the Port Macquarie electorate that I want to highlight. Auslan is the language of the deaf and hearing impaired community of Australia, and I am proud to say it is active in the Port Macquarie-Hastings region. Thanks to two local people, it is growing as a resource for people in our community who need it most. For the past six years Allyson Costanzo from a local people builders program has taught people sign language. In August last year local resident Natalie Brondsema and Allyson hosted a forum for businesses within the Port Macquarie area to raise awareness about the deaf community and the lack of access it has to businesses that do not have Auslan users. The forum was able to go ahead only following representations to my wonderful colleague Andrew Constance, the Minister for Disability Services, who provided a grant of \$3,500 for the project. I was lucky enough to attend the forum with my staff member Tracy Ayrton, along with 50 representatives from 13 local businesses.

Following the forum four businesses took up the challenge to send some staff to learn Auslan. They were Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, Holiday Coast Credit Union, Aces and Tracy from my office. Since the forum Port Macquarie Community College has sent a person to learn Auslan. From my office point of view, I am proud that Tracy continues to attend the weekly classes, and we have had many laughs in the office as she tries to teach the rest of us key words and phrases. I am happy to say that my office would be one of the few electorate offices in New South Wales to have a sign language proficient staff member who is always willing and able to help members of our community who are deaf or hearing impaired. I can only recommend that other parliamentary staff members consider learning Auslan.

The communication between hearing and deaf people usually takes a long time if it has to be written down. With sign language people can have a fluent conversation. There are approximately 40 deaf people within Port Macquarie but many more living in the surrounding areas of Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, Lismore and Taree. Over the past six years, 61 local people aged between seven and 70 have been taught Auslan. Within the basic course students learn how to develop basic hand shapes to communicate with the deaf. This includes finger spelling, numbers and day-to-day uses of signs. These range from "slow, me learning", "again please" to the time. This course provides 966 signs over 10 weeks and touches on guiding and communicating with people who have multiple disabilities of both deafness and blindness.

The advanced course is where students put into practice sentences from the signs learned in both basic and intermediate courses, as well as finger spelling read back exercises. It is quite an extensive course. Next month will be a first for Port Macquarie's Glasshouse Entertainment and Conference Centre when comedian Judith Lucy does her stand up comedy show which will be simultaneously signed by an interpreter. At last deaf and hearing impaired people will be able to laugh out loud at stand up comedy. Congratulations to both Judith Lucy and the Glasshouse team for having the vision to undertake this initiative. Hearing Awareness Week is an ideal time to make people aware of the difficulties that deaf or hearing impaired people have communicating with those of us lucky enough to have full hearing. If Auslan can help to break down any barriers to allow for greater communication it has my full support. I congratulate all the people involved in providing this wonderful service to my local community, and I especially thank Allyson Costanzo for her great work.

CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIPS

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [5.05 p.m.]: On Friday 10 August 2012 the Churchill Fellows Association of New South Wales held an annual dinner at Parliament House when we welcomed new fellows. One of my constituents, Louise Halsey, a past fellow, played a lead role in organising the event. The New South Wales association is chaired by Mrs Elizabeth Comino. The Churchill Trust was established in 1965 to honour the memory of Sir Winston Churchill by awarding memorial fellowships known as Churchill Fellowships. The aim of the Churchill Trust is to give opportunity, by the provision of financial support, to Australians from all walks of life who, having exhausted opportunities in Australia, desire to further their search for excellence overseas. Since its inception the Churchill Trust has awarded Churchill Fellowships to more than 3,600 Australians who, like Churchill, are innovative, filled with a spirit of determination, and who possess a strong desire to benefit their community.

A Churchill Fellowship is a remarkable opportunity to travel overseas and to study a topic or an issue about which a person is passionate. It is for anyone who feels they have exhausted opportunities within Australia and would like to see what overseas has to offer. Providing a benefit to the Australian community is evident and anyone can be considered for a fellowship. The Churchill Fellowships are open to any Australian citizen over the age of 18 years. The upper age limit is not restricted but generally awards will be made to those whose major contribution in their field lies before them. Applicants do not need any prescribed qualifications, academic or otherwise, to be considered for the award of a Churchill Fellowship. Merit is the primary test, based on people's past achievements and/or demonstrated ability to provide future benefit within their chosen field and to the broader Australian community.

I will highlight a few of the amazing individuals who attended the dinner. Dr James Brazill-Boast, Conservation Biologist with the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage, who will utilise the knowledge and experience of a world-leading biodiversity conservation research group to inform the model for managing threatened species in New South Wales, will travel to the United Kingdom. Associate Professor Josephine Chow, Manager, Clinical and Business Service, South Western Sydney Local Area Health District, will investigate strategies for overcoming poor perception and improving the uptake of home-based dialysis therapies and travel to Hong Kong and Canada.

Station officer Morgan Cook, firefighter and fire research officer with Fire and Rescue NSW, will explore the development of improved fire investigation tools by incorporating the latest developments in fire research. She will travel to China, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, Sweden, the United States of America and Canada. Mr Dean Dudley, Lecturer of Health and Physical Education, Charles Sturt University, will examine the role of physical education in improving the health of Australian schoolchildren. He will travel to the United States of America, France and Poland. Miss Gemma Dyer, Clinical Nurse Consultant, New South Wales Blood and Marrow Transplant Network, will investigate models of care employed in well-established blood and marrow transplant long-term follow-up and survivorship programs in the United States of America.

Dr Natalie Nagalingum, Systemic Botanist, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, has the Australian Biological Research Study Churchill Fellowship to study genomic and biodiversity of the endangered cycads of Australia and Asia. She will travel to the United States of America. Mr Corey Payne, who is a professional rugby league athlete with the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs Rugby League Football Club, will research culturally diverse ambition and aspiration building programs that inspire youth from low socio-economic status or disadvantaged backgrounds to continue their studies. He will go to South Africa, the United Kingdom, Spain and Brazil. Mr Jason Prince will study facial recognition. Currently he works for the Australian Federal Police. Many people received awards; in fact, there were 27 recipients of the Churchill Fellowship. Sadly, time does not permit me to run through all their backgrounds. However, they are Australians worthy of these awards and their studies will bring great benefits to Australian citizens in the many years ahead and I wish them well. I congratulate the Churchill Fellowship Association on the great work it does for Australia.

CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [5.10 p.m.]: Today I praise Canterbury City Council on the great work it is doing in my electorate to support the community. For the information of members, the electorate of Canterbury incorporates four councils areas—those being small pockets of Marrickville, Burwood and Ashfield councils and the largest local government area in my electorate, being Canterbury City Council. The member for Lakemba, Robert Furolo, whose electorate also incorporates much of the Canterbury City Council local government area, was its previous mayor—a position now held by Councillor Brian Robson. It would be remiss

of me not to acknowledge the Hon. Kayee Griffin, a former member of the upper House, who became mayor of Canterbury—its first woman mayor—and held this position from 1995 to 2003. Members may be interested to know my predecessor, Kevin Moss, was also mayor of Canterbury from 1980 to 1984.

The population of the local government area is around 150,000 people, many of whom are from a diverse range of ever-changing cultural backgrounds, which makes this region a colourful and challenging mix—a task Canterbury City Council fulfils effectively. To meet the challenges facing them, in the past few months council has conducted the following projects: hosted a free exhibition to celebrate the 2012 National Trust Heritage Festival at Campsie Library; provided free car immobilisers as part of Operation Bounce Back valued at \$220; continued with Project SABRE, which is the smoke alarm battery replacement for the elderly program. Of note is that since this project commenced in 2003 council has successfully installed more than 1,000 smoke alarms and replaced over 680 batteries in the homes of people with a disability and the frail aged. On the environment front, council conducted working bees to fight the invasion of weeds, planted native vegetation and removed trees to regenerate and maintain the salt marsh in Gough Whitlam Park, Undercliffe.

Together with the Salvation Army, council is providing new free legal information, which provides advice and referral service on a range of matters. This week, in collaboration with the Canterbury Library and Canterbury Youth Council as part of the National Year of Reading, council is conducting its inaugural Canterbury Youth Short Film Award where young people from 12 years to 18 years are invited to enter the competition by producing a short two-minute film on a theme of books or reading. As member for Canterbury since 2003, I have had extensive contact with Canterbury City Council on a regular basis. I formally acknowledge and thank all councillors and council officers for their courtesy and timely response to my inquiries. In particular, I thank General Manager Jim Montague for his strong and effective leadership for many years.

As we are now entering the caretaker stage prior to the forthcoming local government elections to be held on 8 September, I thank all current councillors for their efforts. I wish all the Canterbury Labor candidates—Brian Robson, Esta Paschalidis-Chilas, Sam Pambris, George Bousamra, Mark Adler, Fadwa Kebbe, Karl Saleh and Pierre Azzi—all the very best. I recognise also the outgoing councillor, Bill Kritharas, for the many years he has served on council and for his wonderful leadership. I wish the councillors success in their bid to serve the people of Canterbury and I look forward to seeing them over the next few weeks on the campaign trail. Canterbury City Council has on all its signs, "Canterbury Council—City of Diversity". Within the local government area approximately 150 languages are spoken, which is remarkable.

We often speak in glowing terms about diversity and the importance of multiculturalism but I see it and experience it every day as the member for Canterbury. I witness it on my wonderful visits to my local schools where every culture is respected and supported. Certainly the view is not held that they must change into something else because they have moved to Australia. In fact, the depth and breadth of their culture and history makes Australia what it is today. In my view the electorate of Canterbury is very much a reflection of who we are as a nation and those who are part of Canterbury City Council can hold their heads high for many reasons, including on cultural diversity.

COFFS HARBOUR BOAT RAMP

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.15 p.m.]: I speak again in this House on an issue related to the Coffs Harbour jetty foreshore area but this time the boat ramp. I compliment President Ian Finn, Vice President Bill Mabey and the directors of the Coffs Harbour Deep Sea Fishing Club on the great job they have done over many years in maintaining the club and interest in the various fishing competitions that on numerous occasions attract huge numbers of out-of-town people to Coffs Harbour. Each year the club runs the Easter Fishing Classic, which brings thousands of visitors to the area. These are usually mums and dads, who tend to stay in the budget-type accommodation and cheaper motels but who spend money at the local restaurants and corner shops, helping to boost our local economy. The economic benefit to the Coffs Harbour local government area is huge.

The Coffs Harbour Deep Sea Fishing Club is doing it tough at the moment. After representations from Coffs Harbour City Council and me the rent the club has paid in the past for the Crown land on which the club is situated has been drastically reduced. Previously I have suggested in the House that clubs such as the fishing club and yacht club should pay only peppercorn rent because the yachties and the fishermen provide a community service. Indeed, often governments and communities do not recognise the great asset these clubs are to our communities.

There is an ongoing issue with the boat ramp at Coffs Harbour. It is not a bad boat ramp; in fact, many other coastal towns would love to have a boat ramp as good as the Coffs Harbour boat ramp. However, it does have a huge surge problem created by the build-up of sand in the harbour. When the Coalition was last in government on a regular basis a dredge would visit coastal estuaries and harbours along the North Coast in an effort to keep the sand to a minimum. However, over the years the sand in Coffs Harbour has increased to an unbelievable extent. When members of the service clubs constructed the barbecue and picnic facilities along the foreshore areas, we put the fence line and vegetation at the king tide mark. These days the king tide reaches nowhere near that mark because of the build-up of sand within the harbour.

Now this build-up of sand within the boat ramp is causing difficulty and danger to boat owners. The surge means that many boat owners who are trying to load or unload from their boats are in danger of being seriously injured, and so are their passengers. As a result President Ian Finn and Vice President Bill Mabey of the Coffs Harbour Deep Sea Fishing Club have called a public meeting for next Tuesday night. They have invited members of council and me to attend, as well as the General Manager of the Office of Boating Safety and Marine Affairs, Transport for NSW. I encourage everyone who utilises the boat ramp to attend this meeting. It is imperative that some action is taken on this matter. Recently the Federal Government gave council somewhere in the vicinity of \$1 million or \$2 million to fix up the barbecue facilities and amenities in the foreshore area that the Apex, Rotary and Lions clubs had constructed originally.

Whilst the barbecue and foreshore facilities were in need of repair, perhaps consideration should have been given to spending the \$1 million, which it is estimated to cost, on upgrading the boat ramp. I note that the council has made application for funding under the Better Boating Program to improve the boat ramp, and I hope it is successful. I have made, and I will continue to make, representations to the Minister and the department to assist the council and the boaties. But the reality is that the funding is not huge and we need to look at ways of raising funds not only to improve the boat ramp but also to ensure that it is maintained. This will make sure that those who visit Coffs Harbour for holidays, to participate in fishing competitions or to just launch a boat for a weekend's pleasure on the harbour or out to sea, can do so safely and council will not have to be concerned about future liability problems. I urge all to attend the meeting and I ask the Government to look favourably on the council's application for funding.

OUR LADY OF LEBANON COLLEGE

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [5.20 p.m.]: I inform members about the achievements of Our Lady of Lebanon College, Harris Park. Last week I was delighted to visit Our Lady of Lebanon College, which is run by the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family. Sister Marlene Chedid, the Principal, and her management team of Sister Margaret, the Deputy Principal for Secondary, Ms Rupa Bala, the college business manager, and Ms Rita Pangallo, the Executive Officer for Primary, discussed the need to demolish an existing building and replace it with a passive recreation area. The growth of the college over the past decade has seen its student population swell to more than 1,200 students from kindergarten to year 12. Recent building initiatives have provided the college with a new primary building, which houses a multipurpose hall, library, information technology room and year 6 classrooms equipped with smart boards thanks to the Building the Education Revolution grant. This is testament to the outstanding achievements and local community support of the college.

The college offers support for cultural identity through kindergarten to year 12 Arabic lessons, literacy and numeracy work, and special needs support, and vocational education and training courses, including hospitality and construction. The college has an active student representative council led by year 11 leaders and coordinated by Ms Shilpa Kumar, Mr Marcel Abboud and Ms Saroja Dass, social justice groups coordinated by Mr Ron Hassarati, and St Vincent de Paul group coordinated by Ms Cathy Saad and Mr Dory Zaouk. The parents association, led by Mrs Rita Saade, has been very active and, as a result, the popularity of the second-hand book and uniform shop has increased. The association has also purchased secondary ovens for the hospitality room, woodwork machinery, laboratory equipment and sporting gear. It has also raised almost \$20,000 towards purchasing smart boards so that every primary classroom will benefit from this technology. The college also has an outstanding extracurricular record.

In July, the Minister for Sport and I had the privilege to watch Our Lady of Lebanon College win the premiership of the Hills Cup Rugby League junior and intermediate competitions at Parramatta Stadium. The junior boys, captained by Eddie Fakhri, won their grand final against Pacific Hills High School 16-10. I congratulate John Kazzi on being awarded man of the match. The intermediate boys, captained by Charbel Sukkar, won their grand final against Seven Hills High School 24-18. I congratulate Charbel Anjol on being awarded man of the match. The under-15 girls went through the Australian Football League regional

competition undefeated in and advanced to the next round where they represented the western Sydney region in Canberra. They competed in the Giants Cup zone final, where they achieved an excellent overall fourth ranking.

At the 2012 Western Sydney Regional Training Awards, Anthony Bazouni of year 12 was chosen as the regional winner of the School Based Apprentice-Trainee of the Year Award in the vocation of Automotive Mechanical Technology (Light Vehicle) Certificate III. Anthony will now progress to the national level competition. Yvonne Moussa of year 9 came first in the Legacy public speaking competition. She competed against students from Our Lady of Mercy College, and Tara and Model Farms schools. The adjudicator could not find fault with her prepared and impromptu speeches. Yvonne will now compete against finalists from all regions. Finally, John Bou Antoun of year 12 competed in the High Flyer program at the Radisson Blu Hotel against nine would-be chefs, which involved three days of training and one gala dinner night. John came first, winning a scholarship to Kenvale College and employment at the Radisson Blu. I commend Our Lady of Lebanon College as it continues to nourish the spiritual, academic and sporting achievements of its Maronite students of Australian-Lebanese background.

HILLS DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [5.25 p.m.]: The Hills district has a proud, and frankly sensational, history as one of Australia's earliest colonial settlements, as my colleagues the member for Parramatta, the member for Hawkesbury and the member for Riverstone, who are present in the Chamber, will attest. Few districts can lay claim to as colourful a history as the Hills. Most notably, this early convict heritage includes Australia's first armed uprising and battle: the 1804 Castle Hill Rebellion and Battle of Vinegar Hill between the British soldiers and the Irish Catholics—and, as a Scottish Protestant married to an Irish Catholic, the odd rebellion takes place in Castle Hill each Friday night. It is a real privilege to represent a district with such a unique and genuinely remarkable history.

Given this heritage, it is hardly surprising that Hills residents have a great deal of affection for our local history. Since its establishment in 1967, the Hills District Historical Society has been a strong advocate for the preservation of our local heritage. The Hills District Historical Society has played an integral role in facilitating community awareness of the district's history. Happily, due to the efforts of the historical society, interest in our local Hills history is at an unprecedented high and on the rise. The society conducts a wide range of activities, all focused on the conservation of local historical knowledge and artefacts. It runs its own museum and archives, regularly hosts guest speakers, arranges educational displays around the shire and facilitates tours of historical sites. It would be remiss of me not to mention the high calibre of the society's museum in the Balcombe Heights Estate, Baulkham Hills. I encourage all members to visit the museum on either the first or third Saturday of each month.

The Hills district is also home to a number of other historical sites, including Bella Vista Farm, the Mean Fiddler and Rouse Hill House. As a matter of public importance few things are as significant as understanding and remembering our past, especially at the local level. As a graduate of history I understand that local history gives us an invaluable insight into what life was like for our forbears. Indeed, it is local history that has had the greatest impact on who we are today. Far too often local history is overlooked in Australia, which is rather sad when you compare this apathy with the enthusiasm local history receives abroad. The Hills District Historical Society, and all like it around Australia, should be commended for its commitment to the conservation of Australian local history. I firmly believe the Hills District Historical Society provides an excellent model to be emulated throughout New South Wales.

This week the member for Castle Hill and I attended the Hills District Historical Society's annual general meeting. I congratulate Julie Graham on her unanimous re-election as president of the society. I am certain that under her leadership the society will continue to go from strength to strength as an advocate for local history in the hills. It was particularly interesting to note the unanimous consensus of the historical society's members that the Castle Hill Showground should be conserved during the construction of the North West Rail Link. This is a legitimate concern of the historical society and the member for Castle Hill and I—and I am sure also the member for Hawkesbury—fully support the Premier's commitment when he reassured the community in March this year during his visit that the historic showground would not be disrupted. Once again, it is with great pleasure that I congratulate the Hills District Historical Society and wish it every success in promoting the history of the Hills into the future.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN ORR**TRIBUTE TO DOREEN MITCHELL**

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.30 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to advise the House of the sad passing recently of two unique individuals, John Orr and Doreen Mitchell, who contributed greatly to the district of Hawkesbury. I was privileged to attend the memorial service for John Orr held on Saturday 21 July. John described himself as an ordinary bloke. He loved the land and he worked the land. He was one of the old tractor operators in the district who used to plough the many citrus orchards that adorned the Hawkesbury area. John moved to Galston in 1937 and witnessed several changes, but he loved the area regardless. He used to say we should not live in the past, but he had a very vivid memory and he loved to discuss history.

John was an active member of the Liberal Party and a true conservative. He had a great mind and was committed to seeing good governance by Liberal governments in this country, and he supported them actively. He was extremely pleased to see the election of the O'Farrell Government after such a long time in the wilderness in State politics. He used to say that we all have something to contribute; it does not matter if a bloke is only digging post holes, we all have something to contribute to this great country—and John certainly did contribute to this country. John once drove his tractor to a Liberal branch meeting in Dural—something members still recite with great fondness to this day. It goes to show the dedication and commitment of great members of the Liberal Party. He was a good bloke and I will miss him dearly.

Sadly, I attended the funeral of Doreen Mitchell, who passed away on 25 June 2012. She was what I would describe as the greatest community volunteer, perhaps ever, in this country. In 1938 Doreen joined the Voluntary Aid Division, which later became the Red Cross. As a young girl she used to catch the train to Mulgrave and spend the weekend with her boyfriend, Merv Mitchell. Merv used to pick her up in a horse and cart, which she dearly loved, and drive her back to Pebblyhill Road, Cattai, where, after they were married, they spent the rest of their adult lives.

Doreen was a foundation member and lifetime member of the Hawkesbury Meals on Wheels, which she served for 44 years. She was president of the Hawkesbury District Tennis Association, the first lady elder of Ebenezer Church and also a life member of the Country Women's Association [CWA]. It was at her insistence that my wife, Wendy, joined the Windsor Country Women's Association, which was an effort in itself. The association promoted my wife to president—a position she still holds. When Doreen asked me years ago, "What sort of a lady are you married to? Is she any good?" I said, "Well, she's not too bad". Doreen said, "We had better get her into the CWA", and that is exactly what Doreen did, and I credit her with that. Doreen was a lifetime member of the Cattai School parents and citizens association, having joined in 1951. She received the Citizen of the Year award in 1999.

Doreen saw great change around the world: 21 prime ministers, four monarchs and the Great Depression. She used to tell the story of going to Sydney airport and standing alongside the runway to watch Amy Johnson land after her first solo England-to-Australia flight in 1930. Doreen goes back a long way. Doreen spent the last part of her life with her daughter, Pauline, and Pauline's husband, Brian. She passed away just before 10.30 a.m. on Monday 25 July, with Pauline holding her hand. She was 93 years old and had had a wonderful life. Doreen received a Centenary Medal for Community Service in 2003. The Centenary Medal commemorates 100 years of Federation and acknowledges the challenges of the new century by recognising citizens and other people who make a contribution to Australian society or government. No-one in the Hawkesbury area has ever made a greater commitment or had greater dedication to our area than Doreen Mitchell. It was a great pleasure to know her and she was a great supporter.

Doreen was years and years ahead of her time. She was a fantastic networker. When I first put my hand up to run for the electorate of Hawkesbury, Doreen asked if I would pay her a visit. I knocked on her door about four o'clock one afternoon and when she came to the door she said, "Yes? What can I do for you?" I said, "I'm Ray Williams. I'm the candidate here for the Liberal Party". She said, "My God, praise the Lord and pass the ammunition. Come on in, son, we'd better have a cup of tea." We had a couple of cups of tea and enjoyed some great home cooking. From that moment on she promoted me throughout the district. It did not matter where we went the moment I walked in the door she would introduce me to someone and then kick me in the pants and say, "Go on, get out there and talk to those people. Don't waste time talking to me". She knew politics back to front but was never involved in politics. She was actively involved in our community and, by God, she dedicated her life to it. We are grateful for the many, many hours she contributed to the Hawkesbury district. Vale Doreen Mitchell and Vale John Orr—two great and unique people.

KBT URBAN FOOD FOREST

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [5.35 p.m.]: In late July I welcomed the opportunity to visit a community garden known as the KBT Urban Food Forest. KBT is a common reference for the social housing precinct encompassing Killarney Vale, Bateau Bay and Tumbi Umbi. The community garden project is impressive. Walking through the garden beds, the great care and pride in the project was clear to see, with a wide variety of herbs, fruits and vegetables planted and established. It is a collaborative project between three job service providers—BreakThru People Solutions, Jobfind Centre Australia and the Salvation Army Employment Plus—together with Housing NSW, Samaritans, Tuggerah Lakes Community College and Youth Connections and its success has far surpassed expectations.

The canvas was a sloped block of land wedged between Debra Anne Drive, Mitchell Drive and Shane Close, Bateau Bay. The land was provided by Housing NSW together with a nominal grant to fund materials. While creating weaving pathways and open community spaces, the gardens were built to be self-sustaining and were carefully planned to include appropriate drainage and water supply to the gardens and prevent run-off. The entire project, while not yet completed, has been affectionately built by clients of the job service providers who come from the KBT precinct. The participants are mostly long-term unemployed and de-motivated, yet given the opportunity to participate in a Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management with the garden as their classroom, they rise to the challenge and successfully complete their course.

So far, four 13-week programs have been completed, each with between 15 and 20 participants. Their attendance averages 90 per cent and their successful completion rates are nearly double the national average for accredited training. The community garden provided a hands-on education, with a certificate of qualification and a demonstrated skills set to show for it at the end of the program. For the participants, getting the certificate at the end is wonderful but there is a sense of achievement, of a job well done, of physically seeing the fruits of their labour and, perhaps most of all, realising they have gifts, skills and abilities that can give them a hope, a purpose and a future.

The day I visited I met two young men who were past participants in the program and have since continued developing their skills as supervisors. They have undertaken gainful employment in supervisory roles. Past participants and local residents continue to volunteer alongside trainer and environmentalist Ian Sutton to keep the garden thriving season after season. The Entrance Lions Club supplies assistance for lunch for the participants during each program. This meaningful gesture encourages the participants to stay on to see out the remainder of the day, but it also fosters time for relationships to build and it breaks down social barriers.

The community garden may be the tangible evidence of the collaborative work of community stakeholders, but ultimately it is evidence that a disadvantaged community can thrive and change through a project made for them, by their own hands. Local police recognise this project has reduced antisocial behaviour and criminal activities and that it has had an overall positive influence. In an area where graffiti is a problem, the respect shown by the community in not defacing and vandalising the garden is a testament to the pride they have in their project. This garden is a great testament to positive community spirit. It is a great success and I look forward to seeing the garden, come spring.

VARDYS ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS CHILDCARE CENTRE

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [5.39 p.m.]: I am delighted to follow the Chamber's great romantic, Ray "not-too-bad" Williams. I commend him for his comments. This afternoon I alert the Chamber to the good work at Vardys Road Public School out of school hours centre, otherwise known as OOSH. Peggy Taiarol is the director of the OOSH centre. The centre was established on 24 August 2004 and therefore it is celebrating its eighth birthday tomorrow. The OOSH centre provides child care for the students of Vardys Road Public School, which is on the border of Seven Hills and Kings Langley in my electorate. It also provides before and after school care and vacation care. The centre is always trying something new and innovative, and the vibe in the centre is extraordinary. The centre is staffed by experienced staff ranging from certificate qualifications through to diploma training.

When the centre started eight short years ago it had 30 children. That number has now grown to an impressive 85 children. Obviously that number fluctuates but 85 children enjoy the benefits of the training and commitment of Peggy and her staff, as well as the input of mums and dads and supporters of the centre who help out five days a week. The centre provides holiday care services for the community from 7 o'clock in the morning until 6 o'clock in the evening on weekdays and caters for children from the ages of five through to

12, with about 85 children a day. The school holiday program is filled with activities and excursions for the kids to enjoy. They include yearly excursions to the Royal Easter Show. Anyone who has tried to herd 65 children around the Easter Show knows what a challenge that can be, but Peggy and the team do it brilliantly.

A trip to Jamberoo Action Park—where no doubt they control the action—occurs every January. There are craft lessons and the centre even put on an Olympics sports session last week for the budding athletes. The service that Peggy and her team provide to the community is essential for working parents, knowing that their children will be safe while they continue to toil at their place of work. Child care that is available locally is important, and knowing that one's child is safe and well cared for by qualified staff in a safe and nurturing environment is equally important for the peace of mind of mums and dads. I approached Peggy about six months ago—perhaps a bit earlier—and asked her, "How are you going? How are things going with the centre? Is there anything I can do for you?" She said, "Yes, we need some money."

The mums and dads at the centre undertook some fundraising—indeed, they raised tens of thousands of dollars. I told Peggy that the Government had a grants program that commenced a few years ago under then Premier Rees. It is a popular grants program, which I know is supported by many in the Government today. I said that I would be happy to recommend the centre for funding under the Community Building Partnership grants program. As things turned out, the centre received \$60,000, which brought forward its planning by some years and it has been able, effectively, to double the centre's size. Peggy said:

Obtaining this Grant has been a blessing. The centre will now double in size, giving the children the space they need ...

The deposit for the extension has been paid and the building is in the manufacturing stage.

I am proud to be director of Vardys Rd OOSH for the last 8 years. We are a caring, dedicated centre looking out for the needs of the community.

I am also proud to say that for the last 5 years Vardys Rd OOSH has been finalist in both the True Local Business Awards and Blacktown City Business Awards.

To Peggy and her team: I salute you, and I know the mums and dads of Seven Hills and Kings Langley do as well.

NORTHERN BEACHES SMASH REPAIR INDUSTRY

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.43 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about a number of concerns raised with me by members of the smash repair industry in Pittwater. There are a number of great local smash repairers in my community, including Sam Femia Smash Repairs in Mona Vale and David and Colin from Polo Smash Repairs also in Mona Vale. Another example is Tony and Rose Papalia of Warriewood Smash Repairs in north Narrabeen. They and other smash repairers have raised a number of concerns about practices by insurers that are exacerbating the contraction of the industry and potentially forcing reputable businesses to close. The northern beaches smash repair industry has contracted by a third over recent years, from 60 businesses to 40. This is a real problem for young people trying to get an apprenticeship in this industry locally.

Of course, the insurance industry points to research, such as that conducted by IBIS World in its 2011 report "Smash Repairing in Australia", that there are too many repair shops for too few motor vehicles, and that the exit of inefficient small owner-operators will improve the profitability of the industry. Insurers point to the fact that over the past decade the motor vehicle industry has become far more complex, with only six manufacturers operating in Australia in 1990—more than 40 are operating today—making repairs more complicated. This is all true, but it does not mean that all smaller smash repairers should be forced out of business or that centralisation of repairs will improve outcomes for claimants. Insurers need to ensure that a drive for efficiency does not come at the cost of quality service and choice. The issue of choice raises a real problem, which has been explained to me, with insurer adherence to the Code of Conduct for Smash Repairs.

A concerning example of this surrounds the choice of repairer provisions, where customers involved in motor vehicle accidents can source their own repairer. Like most consumer decisions, this involves approaching businesses that may be known to the customer, have a good community reputation, are well accredited or offer attractive customer services. However, I understand that some insurance companies, while claiming to offer their customers their own choice of repairer, make the process much more difficult and time consuming than it should be, and go to significant lengths to steer their customers towards repairers willing to undercut prices significantly. This is particularly dangerous and undermines all the efforts of reputable smash repairers to provide quality repair work and uphold vital safety standards.

One alarming example I have been told about is that of a local repairer who had a lady in his office who was trying to lodge a claim with her repairer over the phone and was being actively persuaded to search around for other repairers who may do the work cheaper. Despite telling the insurance assessor repeatedly—on five occasions—that she had chosen her smash repairer due to the business locality and good reputation, the coercion that was applied to her to go bargain hunting on the assessor's behalf was completely over the top. This is despite her policy stating that she had a choice of her own repairer. This example points to plain dishonest activity by the insurance company. Unfortunately, I have received far too many examples of this happening. Luckily, on this occasion the lady was savvy enough to hold firm on the fact that she wanted a local, reputable repairer to do her repairs and did not want to go hunting around for lower prices.

Choice of repairer should mean choice of repairer—that is what reputable smash repairers are screaming out for—to ensure that quality standards within the industry are upheld. Unfortunately, almost all smash repairers are able to recount examples of horror repair jobs they have seen or heard about, where cars had been repaired inadequately and costs had clearly been cut. While the repairer may have received the money and the insurer is happy with the money that was saved, the whole episode is to the detriment of the vehicle and the safety of its passengers. Fortunately, the industry is lucky to have enough reputable and honest smash repairers, including those in my community, who are doing the right thing and sticking up for their customers and the safety of all drivers on our roads.

Others matters of concern in the motor insurance industry have also been raised with me, including the difficulties and concerns associated with online tendering, where the cheapest quote wins the work. Not only does this present uncertainty to customers surrounding where their vehicles are to be repaired and a sense of loss of control over the issue; I understand it has also led to concerns amongst repairers about some operators significantly reducing costs to win tendering work and then inflating quotes on other work in order to recoup any profits lost on the jobs for which they have tendered. For repairers throughout Pittwater who operate honestly and try to develop strong relationships with their customers and generate good reputations, the whole process surrounding tendering can clearly be disheartening.

The clear message from reputable repairers to their customers is: Do your homework when signing up to an insurance policy. They believe there are plenty of insurers who value quality work and help uphold high standards in the industry and that these are the ones to support. It is in absolutely no-one's interest for customers to be coerced into hunting for the cheapest quote for their vehicle repairs. There is too much risk involved. Vehicle repairs are one area where lowest price should not be the determining factor. I admire all the reputable smash repairers in Pittwater for doing the right thing, sticking up for their customers, upholding quality standards and opposing cowboy insurance companies entering the market simply to maximise their profits.

BEXLEY NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.48 p.m.]: Today I recognise the wonderful activities held at Bexley North Public School on Thursday 2 August 2012 during Education Week. While our Australian Olympians were winning gold in London, the energetic pupils at Bexley North Public School were displaying the values enshrined in the Olympic spirit by hosting their 2012 Olympathon. Before I continue I acknowledge the Principal of Bexley North Public School, Karen Shehata, for her ongoing dedication to the school community. It is no secret that the backbone of our schools is the principal and the teachers who are passionate about the personal and educational outcomes of their students. In events such as this one, it is particularly important to recognise some of the extremely dedicated staff members at Bexley North Public School, including Ellie Charlton and Rosa Fisher.

It is my pleasure this afternoon to talk about one of the many successful activities hosted by Bexley North Public School and the 2012 Olympathon. No doubt the event is envied around the local school area. Since 1992 Bexley North Public School has hosted its Olympathon, or mini-Olympics, every four years. This event is successful not only because it enriches the school community, brings together parents, teachers and students—or athletes as I should refer to them—but also because it is a testament to Vivienne Rogers, Glenys Howard and Rosa Fisher who started the event 20 years ago. I am pleased to say that Rosa remains at Bexley North Public School and is assisted by Ellie Charlton in the ongoing success of this event every four years.

From the opening ceremony to the closing ceremony, Bexley North Public School represents the Olympics in careful detail. The opening ceremony is even announced in French by Rosa Fisher. To that I say "tres bon". Just like in the opening ceremony, Greece marches first and the host country last. The doves of peace attached to helium balloons are released by the kindergarten students. For the students of Bexley North Public

School the detail adds to the fun. All students from kindergarten to year 6 play an active role in the Olympathon, with each class forming a country and designing a torch, flag and national costume. Creatively, each class merges the name of the teacher and the name of their chosen country to form their Olympathon country. For example, the United Kingdom becomes "United Saringdom" and Russia becomes "Hussia". The school newsletter, the "Bexley North Buzz" shows how much effort the staff and students have gone to designing the flags and costumes.

The parents no doubt are very proud of their children. Activities held throughout the the Olympathon include the opening ceremony march, Big Ben Bounce, Buckingham Palace Ball, Kensington Kick, Piccadilly Para-Sport Pentathlon, Hyde Park Handball, Trafalgar Square Skipping, Mayfair Marathon, Westminster Wriggle and the Camden Clean-up. This is a truly remarkable reflection on the school, staff and students. Similar to in the Olympics, students are awarded gold, silver and bronze medals for their participation. In a symbolic gesture of the continuation of this excellent event the year 6 class hands over the Olympic flag to the kindergarten class. As a former teacher and having been to many local schools in my time as local member and previously as Mayor of Rockdale, I have seen many events over the years. I believe this will continue to be truly a standout event. Events such as this further showcase that Bexley North Public School is not only a champion school but also a school of champions.

CENTRAL COAST BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [5.52 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to highlight the Central Coast Business Excellence Awards—the most prestigious and recognisable awards on the Central Coast. They have clearly raised the bar and are truly indicative of the quality and exceptional standards that Central Coast businesses are achieving. Now conducted annually, the awards honour the Central Coast industry leaders through the acknowledgement of innovative business processes, product development, enterprise, sustainability and overall business success. Premier Barry O'Farrell was the special guest of honour at the inaugural Central Coast Business Excellence Awards held last year.

On Saturday 18 August this year I was privileged to attend the 2012 gala awards presentation night held at the Mingara Recreation Club, Tumby Umbi, along with my parliamentary colleagues the Minister for the Central Coast and member for Terrigal, Chris Hartcher, and the member for Gosford, Chris Holstein. I congratulate and commend Mr Edgar Adams and Mr Kerry Ruffels from the *Central Coast Business Review*, who have been the driving force behind the success of these awards. This year saw a new alliance partner with the Central Coast branch of the New South Wales Business Chamber coming on board. Now the regional winners are automatically entered into the State-level awards. Many sponsors and people were involved in making this night the huge success it was but it is important to mention the key platinum sponsor, Coast Star Motors from Gosford.

I do not frequent Coast Star Motors—I humbly drive a Holden, not a Mercedes—but from its clients I hear that its customer service is second to none. The entertainment also was outstanding, thanks to the expertise of the first couple of Australian country music, Rod McCormack and Gina Jeffreys, who are also Central Coast residents. The awards showcase strength, innovation, skill and enterprise. The actual award is outstanding: the trophy has been entered in a worldwide excellence competition. I am pleased to record the outstanding winners from all over the Central Coast. Excellence in E-Business was awarded to Treehouse. Creative Excellence in Sustainability was awarded to Baltimore Aircoil Australia. Excellence in Micro (Home-based) Business was awarded to Close Financial Group. Future Business Leaders Award was awarded to Naomi Taylor from Mingara-Indigo Bar.

I was proud that Central Coast Chamber of the Year was awarded to Wyong Regional Chamber of Commerce. Excellence in Manufacturing was awarded to Independent Portable Buildings. Excellence in Innovation was awarded to E-Bisprint Pty Limited. For the second year in a row Excellence in Marketing was awarded to Lake Haven Shopping Centre, also in the Wyong electorate. Excellence in Small Business was awarded to Independent Portable Buildings. Excellence in Medium Business was awarded to Trehy Ingold Neate. Excellence in Service was awarded to Bub's Customs. Employer of Choice was awarded to ING Direct.

Business Leaders Award was awarded to Jason van Genderen. Excellence in Business Ethics was awarded to Webstuff.biz. The major award, Business of the Year, was awarded to Independent Portable Buildings. Again, I offer my congratulations to the *Central Coast Business Review* on showcasing Central Coast business excellence. I also congratulate all the finalists. I wish the winners the best of luck at the State awards. Finally, I thank all businesses on the Central Coast for the contribution they make to our community. Small business is the backbone of the New South Wales economy. The O'Farrell Government understands and appreciates this and will continue to support small business across the State.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [5.56 p.m.]: There is a pressing need to increase organ donation in New South Wales. I was distressed to find in the health Minister's recently released Government plan, "Increasing organ donation in NSW" that only 77 people donated an organ last year in New South Wales. This figure is made more stark when it is compared with the 1,596 Australians who are currently on the transplant waiting list. The Minister is correct when she says that donating tissues and organs saves lives. Increasing Australia's rates of organ donation will go a long way towards improving public health outcomes throughout New South Wales. Currently one in six people on the transplant waiting list will die before receiving the organ that is required. This demonstrates that there is significant room for improvement in our public health system following 16 years of inaction from the Labor Government.

When speaking with doctors and health professionals within my electorate it becomes clear just what is needed to increase the rate of organ donation in New South Wales. A significant reason behind the low rates of donation relates to the complexity of donating an organ. Whilst a significant proportion of the population register through the Roads and Maritime Services that they wish to make an organ donation, relatively few will pass away in a scenario where organ donation is feasible. Beyond this, in approximately half of all potential donation scenarios family refusal occurs. A small number of family refusals also occur each year even when the person has given his or her explicit consent. The need of organ donors will only continue to increase in years to come as the population ages. This makes it imperative that we find practical and efficient mechanisms to increase organ donation in the future.

I applaud the Government's proactive plan for increasing organ donation in New South Wales, which currently has the lowest rate of donation in the country. The low organ donor rate is partly due to New South Wales being the only State in Australia to maintain a State-based organ donor system. The road forward to increasing rates of donation will encompass the transferral of existing donors from the Roads and Maritime Service through to a national Australian organ donation register. A national register will make the process of becoming a donor easier. It will also provide a mechanism to make a more informed and detailed decision. A register will allow people to provide detailed information about the circumstances in which a donation may or may not be made. A register by itself can only be so effective.

To get the outcomes we need, awareness about the organ donation process needs to be increased. Far-reaching community education initiatives are required to foster discussion within the community about becoming a donor. The role of families is of critical importance in this regard, as the family is the first point of call in discussing the possibility of becoming an organ donor. The community awareness program will also extend to cultural communities in our State. This is vital because, of the 1,756 donations in Australia in the seven years since 2005, 92 per cent came from traditional British and European ethnic backgrounds. A tailored message must be sent to people from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. As a responsible and forward-thinking Government, we have a duty to improve our health system in every way possible. I applaud the Minister for Health for her work in the area of organ donation. It is an issue that was long overlooked by the previous Government but I am thankful that it will not be overlooked any longer.

BELLEVUE HILL PUBLIC SCHOOL SECURITY FENCE

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.00 p.m.]: Earlier this month I was delighted to visit the Bellevue Hill Public School in my electorate of Vaucluse to announce significant Government funding to install a new security fence at the school. Bellevue Hill Public School is located on a hill adjacent to Bellevue Park, overlooking Rose Bay and Sydney Harbour to the north and Bondi Beach and the Pacific Ocean to the east. The school is housed in a double-storey brick building, which was built in 1924 and opened in 1925. There is a strong family tradition: Many of the students have parents and/or grandparents who attended the school. The school is unique in many respects: It offers Russian and Hebrew language classes to the children and during the year 2,000 parents, students and staff marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the school with a huge community celebration. For the past four years the school has been tireless in its efforts to obtain government funding to help build a new security fence—one that adequately protects the school, the staff and, most importantly, the 530 students. The school faces on to a busy intersection and Bellevue Park is at the rear of the school.

I first visited the school before I was elected as the member for Vaucluse. Members of the school's parents and citizens association and the school principal showed me a very dilapidated fence at the rear of the school. The fence had sections missing, allowing the children to pass through it easily into Bellevue Park. The

fence at the front of the school was too low to sufficiently protect the children, their balls and other toys, from easily passing out of the school onto the busy intersection. One could easily imagine a young child climbing over the fence and onto the road in hot pursuit of a ball with which they had been playing. I had the opportunity to join parents, staff and students at the recent Education Week assembly to announce that the school would finally receive the fully funded security fence it needed and deserved. The project will be fully funded under the Government's capital works program.

The school leadership have worked long and hard to achieve this outcome, and I pay tribute to their untiring efforts. It has been a pleasure to work with them since this matter was brought to my attention—before I was elected as the member for Vacluse. The local newspaper ran an article highlighting the issue with the headline: "Upton Promises Fencing". Promise I did; and deliver I did—with the help of the school community. I emphasise that it was a team effort every step of the way. We worked together to ensure that the needs of the school were communicated at the highest levels. There have been countless emails, letters and hours spent on the phone, working with one another and with the Department of Education and Communities. I commend that department for its assistance. A school petition was organised and signed by over 500 people. It was presented to Parliament in March this year. I thank the principal, Ms Sue Bennett, and the parents and citizens treasurer, Ms Vicki Gesouras, for their leadership and unwavering commitment in seeing this project through to a successful outcome, ensuring the safety of the whole school community.

The new security fence will provide safety for the 530 students attending the school and will enclose and enhance the learning environment within its perimeter. After several years of letter writing, petition signing and hard work to obtain this funding the school community could not be happier with the outcome. As Ms Gesouras has said to me many times, the funding for the new fence has brought smiles to the faces of the children and a large sigh of relief from the staff and parents. This was evident to me as I made the announcement about the security fence during Education Week. Preliminary work on the fencing is already underway and I look forward to its completion in the near future. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

PORT KEMBLA PRIVATISATION

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [6.05 p.m.]: Today I speak about an upcoming rally in Port Kembla. This rally is one of a number of rallies that have been held to allow the community to display its opposition to the Government's proposed sell-off of the port. The notice of motion I lodged on 11 September was due to be debated today but, due to time constraints, was postponed until the next sitting week. I want to place on record some background information. People who attend the rally should be aware that I have been pursuing this issue since before the last election. The Liberal-Nationals gave commitments that, should they win the election, the port would not be privatised.

It was intended that the Port Kembla car import plan would provide: 1,000 direct or indirect jobs; an extra 250 ship visits, bringing 240,000 cars and 30,000 containers through the port annually; expansion of the facility, enabling the port to handle 14,000 vehicles at one time—as opposed to Glebe Island's 5,000-car capacity—40 years of certainty to the vehicle import industry; and a \$200 million boost to the region's economy. That project was fast-tracked by four years and was expected to be completed in 2008. When we speak of an anticipated annual boost to the region's economy of \$200 million it shows what a pittance the Government is offering when it talks about investing \$100 million in the entire region of the Illawarra in return for selling off the port. It is selling the port for a measly \$500 million when it should be retained in public ownership. I quote from the *Illawarra Mercury*, dated 5 October 2007:

An exciting new era in Port Kembla's history is set to begin this week, as the refurbished port emerges as the car import capital of Australia.

The Port Kembla Port Corporation yesterday assumed ownership of all rail infrastructure in the area, and today, the first cargo will be off-loaded at the new car import berth.

A further article from the *Illawarra Mercury*, dated 4 June 2008, stated:

After already spending \$167 million to establish Port Kembla's car import industry, the State Government yesterday allocated \$11.1 million, largely to complete berth extensions and improve port security.

In 2008-09 the Government will spend \$12 million to buy outer harbour land, which is expected to be completed next year.

There is a further \$1.6 million for continued work on a balloon loop bridge, \$4.6 million for the construction of an administration building and \$1.2 million to either replace or refurbish pilot vessels.

The new administration building is magnificent. Under the Labor Government we received new pilot vessels and the port corporation's brand-new administration building. Hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars have been invested in the port. The port is one of the most profitable in Australia, if not the most profitable. The Liberal-Nationals made commitments in the run-up to the election that, should they win government, they had no intention of privatising the port. It is another example of a backflip—a broken promise—by those who now sit opposite and claim to be speaking on behalf of the community. Another article from the *Illawarra Mercury*, on 2 June 2009, states:

Car-handling facilities at Port Kembla will double in size as part of an expansion project that will create more than 150 jobs for the region ... which will increase the car handling area by 100,000 square metres and allow room for 10,000 vehicles to be parked on the berth.

Jobs moving cars have increased: mature-age workers were able to obtain work in that area. Investment in the local economy is essential to the welfare of our region. The community of Port Kembla is outraged at this proposal. I call on the Government to reconsider and retain the port in public ownership.

LEICHHARDT MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [6.10 p.m.]: Today I speak about the work of Leichhardt Municipal Council, which covers the majority of my electorate. For the past 13 years I have been privileged to represent my local community as mayor, deputy mayor and councillor on Leichhardt council. Many people ask: What would a Greens government look like? What would The Greens do if they had control of the purse strings? Although The Greens had only six members out of the 12 on council, we provided the leadership, the direction and the stability on the council. In the previous four years there was a coalition between Labor, Liberals and Independents: a Labor representative was mayor for one year, then a Liberal was mayor for one year and then an Independent, all voting with each other to try to keep The Greens out.

What did the current council do compared with the last council when it came to critical matters of key infrastructure? This council spent \$5.5 million on footpaths; the former council, \$4 million. This council spent \$7 million on roads; the former council, \$5.1 million. This Greens-led council spent on seawall projects \$837,000 as opposed to \$500,000 by the former. This council invested \$2.4 million in stormwater management as opposed to \$514,000—basic infrastructure is the commitment of that council. Spending on wharves increased from \$220,000 to \$430,000, and a whole range of our public toilets that had not been upgraded in decades had \$174,000 spent on them.

When it comes to key building projects the former council could only manage one miserable \$2 million project. This council delivered a new Balmain library, costing in excess of \$3 million; a full upgrade of Leichhardt Aquatic Centre, costing in excess of \$6 million; an upgrade to the Hannaford Centre of more than \$1.2 million; a new service centre for the community, costing \$4 million; as well as a Living Streets project, a new nursery at Annandale and a whole range of major projects—over \$15 million in projects, when the former council could manage just over \$2 million. There was a lack of direction, a lack of leadership and a lack of focus from the Labor-led council.

The current council also supported local business chambers, doubling the direct financial investment that the council had entered into with our business chambers. The former council used to fund them at around \$120,000; this council, \$180,000. The Greens-led council has prioritised the delivery of infrastructure and services to support young families in our area as well. The previous council invested a measly \$350,000 in our playgrounds. The current council invested \$1.6 million, delivering 17 new or improved playgrounds. The council has also committed an unprecedented \$10 million to new childcare services and has already supported the delivery of over 340 public and private childcare places.

For the first time, the council has an affordable housing policy—a way to manage affordable housing. We have managed to get a contribution of \$850,000 as seed funding for affordable housing. Sporting fields have also been a major commitment. Over 26 years no new sporting fields were built under the former Labor and Liberal council. The present council has built four new sporting fields, at a cost of just under \$2 million. By the end of this year the council will be carbon neutral. Under The Greens the council has rolled out photovoltaics across buildings and cogeneration facilities and has managed to reduce carbon emissions significantly. When it comes to development applications there are some important statistics. In 2008, when the new council was elected, it found the number of development applications that had been sitting in the system for more than 240 days was 33 per cent.

Today there is not one development application waiting in excess of 240 day. Under the old council processing times were, on average, 138 days; under this council it is 89 days. Also, the present council has been exceeding new housing numbers. The 2036 metro strategy set targets and this council will exceed them by almost 20 per cent. It is doing the heavy lifting on development. When it comes to transparency, the council abolished fees for freedom of information inquiries, encouraging transparency, and abolished the free provision of alcohol to councillors before council meetings, something that was long overdue. Parking is a critical issue in my community. I am glad I moved, and council supported, for the trial of 30-minute free parking so we can measure the impact on local shops and businesses. Free wi-fi has been introduced to our libraries and is now being rolled out through our parks and the high street for the local community.

All of this was funded responsibly. The debt-service ratio has halved under this council from 4.4 per cent to 2 per cent. Rate rises have been more than half those of the former Labor council—lower rates, lower debt-service ratio, improved services; focus, delivering and planning. I thank all the people in the community who have worked so hard, because the social justice aspect was also important. It now costs \$1 for concession card holders to get into our pool. I thank the mayor and the community I work with as a State member. I thank all the dedicated councillors from all parties, in particular my Greens colleagues on the council—Mayor Rochelle Porteous, Deputy Mayor Michelle McKenzie, and councillors Daniel Kogoy, Alan Cinis and Cassi Plate. I look forward to their vision and commitment in the coming years.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.14 p.m. until
Tuesday 4 September 2012 at 12.00 noon.**
