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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 15 August 2013

## ABSENCE OF THE SPEAKER

**The Clerk** announced the absence of the Speaker.

**The Deputy-Speaker (Mr Thomas George)** took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

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

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of Motions

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

### HUNTER ARMED ROBBERIES

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [10.02 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that in 2012 the number of armed robberies in the Hunter reached the highest for a decade;
- (2) notes that Councillor Jason Dunn presented a motion to Newcastle City Council recently on the need for a police station in the western suburbs of Newcastle; and
- (3) calls on the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to ensure adequate increased police resources to curtail endemic social misbehaviour and to reduce apprehension in the community.

At 8.45 p.m. on Friday 21 June a man armed with a knife entered the Henny Penny outlet in Wallsend. He threatened staff, demanded money and fled on foot. Not long after that incident three men forced their way into a bowling club in Jesmond shortly after it closed. More frightening still, in January this year a gunman held up a service station in West Wallsend. These are just three examples of an ongoing wave of armed robberies that have reached epidemic proportions. In 2011, there were 100 armed robberies in the Hunter. Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research figures indicate that in 2012 that number jumped by almost 80 per cent to 179 reported incidents.

By September of last year police in the Hunter were flat out dealing with violent crimes at a rate of one incident every 2½ days. The robberies were spread across a variety of businesses, including takeaway shops, service stations, newsagents and licensed premises. Most of the perpetrators wielded knives or screwdrivers, but the number of offenders carrying firearms quadrupled from two in 2011 to eight in 2012. This sharp rise in the incidence of armed robberies is truly staggering and deeply troubling. The fact that the use of guns in robberies is becoming more common must worry everyone.

My electorate straddles two police local area commands—Newcastle City Local Area Command and Lake Macquarie Local Area Command. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research reports that the rate of armed robberies in Lake Macquarie has nearly doubled. The *Newcastle Herald* reported more than 100 armed robberies by September last year, 17 of which happened in Lake Macquarie. That number is troubling enough, but it pales in comparison to the 42 robberies that occurred in the area covered by the Newcastle City Local Area Command. Newcastle City Crime Manager Detective Inspector Graeme Parker was interviewed by the *Newcastle Herald* and stated that he believes part of this trend relates to the removal of stigma attached to the crime. That is interesting. He stated:

It just appears that it's become more acceptable ... It used to be the bastion of a good crook and now it's something anyone's willing to do.

He characterises the typical armed robber in the Hunter as being a young man in his teens or early twenties. I spoke on the phone with a Wallsend business operator earlier this morning who is concerned about a gang of schoolchildren who have been lurking around the Wallsend canal over the past few weeks. This gang—which comprises about 10 children under the age of 15—has been accosting people on their way to Nelson Street and Council Street, Wallsend. They went overboard last Friday and harassed a local small business. The manager of the business had to barricade himself in his office while members of the gang threw rocks on the roof. Unfortunately, the police response was unavoidably delayed because of resourcing issues, and that is happening more and more frequently in Wallsend.

The establishment of Strike Force Colwell resulted in the arrest and charging of 11 people aged between 18 and 23. The strike force, which was established to investigate 12 robberies that occurred in the Hunter over a two-month period, has since been disbanded. The only arrest made that did not fit Detective Inspector Parker's description involved a 28-year-old man arrested on drug charges. Apart from many other issues, we must ask why men under the age of 20 in the Wallsend and Hunter areas are committing these horrendous crimes. This is not simply a policing problem; it is a community and social problem that we must address.

Superintendent John Gralton credits a series of task forces with a decline in the number of robberies after spikes in February, March and August last year. I am sure that Superintendent Gralton and his officers are doing the best they can with the limited resources that have been allocated to them. However, we must not split hairs: combating an 80 per cent spike demands more resources and more officers. Despite this stunning increase in robberies, there is still not one police station within my electorate. This Government reneged on its election promise to open a police station in Wallsend and it is yet to take action on the petition signed by thousands of my constituents asking it to reopen the Wallsend police station. This inaction and backflipping has left the people of my electorate living on the periphery of two local area commands without a local police station or a consistent police presence.

The officers of the Lake Macquarie and Newcastle local area commands do their best. It is our responsibility to supply the manpower and resources they need to keep the people of the Hunter safe. I call on the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for the Hunter to increase police numbers and resources in the Hunter. It is not only police on the beat that we need to keep our streets safe. Thanks to a conservative-dominated council, youth services in Newcastle are being slashed, leaving fewer places for bored young men to go at night. This is not a problem with only one solution. It is incumbent upon us to consider all the options and to develop strategies that balance rehabilitation and deterrence with punishment and protection.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.09 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I remind the House, particularly the many newer members—if I can call those elected in 2011 new—that I have always been greatly supportive of the work of police, particularly in my electorate and community. In 1999 the Carr Government made an election commitment to rebuild Raymond Terrace police station, and John Bartlett ran his election campaign with that commitment. In 2003 the former Government again made the commitment, and in 2007 it made the same commitment. Unfortunately for the Labor Party, I won the seat. When I fronted the police Minister, David Campbell, about honouring the commitment he said, "No, the previous police Minister, John Watkins, made that commitment". That is the way the Labor Party operates.

In 2007 the former Government also promised the establishment of a Port Stephens local area command. In those days the Lower Hunter command was based in Maitland and covered an area from Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens out to about Wollombi. It generally had one car on the road overnight and it was completely inadequate. Again, then police Minister David Campbell said that Port Stephens did not need a local area command, but Assistant Commissioner Lee Shearer, the local commander in Newcastle, had a different view and established the Port Stephens Local Area Command. Recently this Government's Minister for Police and Emergency Services opened the new Raymond Terrace police station.

The Labor Party talks about policing but when in government it did not do a very good job in that area. Members were invited to participate in the Parsons review of the NSW Police Force. The member for Newcastle, the member for Charlestown, the member for Swansea and I made submissions to the review. Why did the member for Wallsend not make a submission to the review? She obviously was not interested. It is one thing for members to come in the House and make speeches, it is another for them to do the right thing and properly represent their electorate.

I will put some facts on the record. The police are working hard to prevent armed robberies in the Hunter and to put those responsible for such offences behind bars. The Newcastle City Local Area Command has commenced two operations to drive down armed robberies: Operation Blade and Operation Latitude. Operation Blade involves designated detectives being rostered on afternoon shifts to provide a rapid response to robberies as they occur. Police also conduct daily briefings, monitored by the local area command's crime manager, to ensure investigation outcomes are followed up. Police also conduct intelligence-based tasking of hotspots. Operation Latitude targets robbery offences and antisocial behaviour. The Newcastle Local Area Command Crime Manager is Detective Chief Inspector Wayne Humphrey. We were fortunate to have him stationed in Port Stephens before he was transferred to Newcastle. I encourage the member for Wallsend to introduce herself to Wayne Humphrey. He is a very professional police officer and I am sure he will be able to assist her in relation to the matters she has raised.

Operation Latitude also targets offenders with outstanding revocation or parole warrants. Operation Latitude proactively and systematically targets suspected robbery offenders through the Newcastle City Local Area Command Suspect Target Management Plan. These high-risk robbery offenders are also targeted using the modern consorting offence under section 93X of the Crimes Act, which was introduced by the Liberal-Nationals Government. Police also are conducting compliance checks of offenders on curfew and conditional bail to ensure strict compliance with those conditions. During high-risk times of the day police are maintaining a highly visible presence in high-risk areas. Police are being seen and interacting with persons in those areas. Even the crooks know that the police are watching.

When required, police conduct weapon searches and issue move-on directions to persons suspected of being in an area to commit offences or participating in antisocial behaviour. Lake Macquarie Local Area Command also has been actively participating in Operation Latitude. Police are conducting safety audits and recommending crime prevention measures at business premises, and they are working with the community through forums such as liquor accord meetings, awareness training and educational seminars on robbery. The Northern Region Local Area Command has instituted a collection plan on armed robberies in an effort to link the modus operandi of robbery incidents in order to identify repeat offenders. This smart, intelligence-led policing will get results and drive down crime.

This Government is increasing police resources to help fight crime. Police numbers are at a record high, with the authorised strength to reach 16,665 in August 2015. In relation to long-term trends, some crime categories in New South Wales are now at their lowest recorded levels in over 20 years. From 1990 to 2012 robbery with a weapon not a firearm is down 29 per cent and robbery with a firearm is down 71 per cent. I congratulate the NSW Police Force on all it is doing to reduce armed robberies in the Hunter. Clearly, our police are working hard and smart, and I suspect it will not be too long before we see a further reduction in these incidents.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR** (Cessnock) [10.15 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak about the great work being done across the State by the NSW Police Force. I acknowledge, as is noted in the motion moved by the member for Wallsend, that in order for our hardworking police to properly carry out their duties it sometimes comes down to resourcing. I draw to the attention of the House a recent article in the *Newcastle Herald*, which noted the postcodes of the most violent areas in the Hunter region. The motion primarily refers to the Hunter and the member for Wallsend also talked about the western suburbs of Lake Macquarie and Newcastle. According to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, one of the most violent areas is the Wallsend-Minmi area, postcode 2287. It is also the fastest growing area in the western Lake Macquarie and western Newcastle region. More than 4,000 new home sites have been planned for that area, in addition to the 2,000 new home sites that have been built in the past five years. The growth in this area has been happening for some time and will continue for some time into the future, and as a result there is a need for greater police resourcing.

The former Labor Government closed Wallsend police station. The plan was to build a super police station at Glendale. The Glendale super station would have significant resources and would be able to provide policing north, south, east and west from that central point. However, this new Coalition Government—I call it new even though it has been in Government for 2½ years now—has moved away from that plan, which was developed with the NSW Police Force. What is the current plan for the western suburbs of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie? There is no plan to establish a police station. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services was asked a question on this issue during budget estimates yesterday and revealed that there is no plan. The Government has no plan for policing in the western areas of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie—areas that I proudly represent in this House.

I specifically want to talk about juvenile crime, which the member for Wallsend referred to. The figures on juvenile crime in the Hunter are alarming. Recent reports show that juvenile crime in the Hunter has jumped by 20 per cent. That figure alone is alarming. But even more alarming are the figures for specific areas which show a bigger increase. In Singleton there has been a 72 per cent increase in juvenile crime, including crimes of alcohol abuse, domestic violence and school truancy. In the Great Lakes area there has been a 61 per cent jump in juvenile crime; in Lake Macquarie a 37 per cent jump and in Maitland a 26 per cent jump. They are alarming figures the House should be aware of. We can blame the Labor Government for closing the Wallsend police station, but at least it had a plan to do something. The king of plans and reviews on the other side of the Chamber may laugh but I put to him: What have you got? Nothing. His Government has no plans, takes no action, provides no money, it just neglects.

**Mr GARRY EDWARDS** (Swansea) [10.19 a.m.]: I make a contribution to the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. I support the comments of my colleague the member for Port Stephens, who has spoken about the outstanding work being done by local police in the Newcastle City Local Area Command to reduce armed robberies. I note his comments in relation to submissions to the Parsons review. I reiterate that I as the member for Swansea, the member for Newcastle, the member for Port Stephens and the member for Charlestown—who is not in the Chamber—made submissions to the Parsons review. Unfortunately, the member for Wallsend did not.

I am pleased to advise the House that other local area commands in the Hunter are also implementing solid strategies that will drive down armed robberies. Police in the local area command of Lake Macquarie are engaging with local business owners and participating in Operation Latitude, as mentioned by the member for Port Stephens. Lake Macquarie Local Area Command is also undertaking other measures and, under the great leadership of the recently appointed Superintendent Brett Greentree, it has sent a mail-out to all licensed premises within the local area advising them of the need to review their security, closed-circuit television and cash-handling procedures.

In October last year the Crime Prevention Officer and licensing officers conducted a robbery awareness and target-hardening seminar with the local liquor accord. I am advised that about 70 members of the accord attended the meeting. Lake Macquarie Local Area Command is also undertaking daily intelligence-based tasking and conducting patrols of licensed premises identified as at risk, particularly those licensed premises in isolated locations. The Crime Prevention Officer has also conducted security assessments of various licensed premises within the Lake Macquarie area and, as a result of the assessment, venues have been provided with valuable advice on improving the security of their premises.

The Central Hunter Local Area Command has provided crime prevention advice for local clubs and other businesses on target hardening their premises. Greater use of closed-circuit television was promoted and WorkCover NSW was engaged to reinforce safe work practices at possible target businesses. I am pleased to say that the use of closed-circuit television is going extremely well in my electorate of Swansea. The Central Local Area Command Armed Robbery Unit also undertook patrols around known soft targets and repeat victims and locations. The unit targeted known robbery offenders and undertook proactive searches of persons and vehicles during the early hours of the morning.

I repeat a comment that I made in the House earlier this year in response to an issue raised, once again, by the member for Wallsend. It was the former Government—those sitting on the opposite side, now in Opposition—who closed and sold Swansea police station, Mayfield police station and Wallsend police station. Those members on the other side reigned for 16 years, during which time there was the greatest corruption in New South Wales since the Rum Corps. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr TIM OWEN** (Newcastle) [10.23 a.m.]: I make a short contribution to this motion. It is interesting to note that if this is such a major issue, why have only two members of the Opposition spoken to it?

**Mr David Elliott:** They don't care.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Newcastle does not need assistance from Government members.

**Mr TIM OWEN:** This morning my colleagues spoke about the key operations being run by the Newcastle Local Area Command. I spend a fair bit of time with the police and I can give some figures to the House in relation to those key issues. When one speaks to the police about armed robbery—and I have done that

over the last couple of days in the light of this motion—they report that it is below State levels and is on the decline. In relation to assaults—non-domestic violence as well as alcohol-related violence—Newcastle has its lowest figures since 2008 and they are trending down. As to the third issue raised by the member for Wallsend, malicious damage and petty crime, again, the police report that we have the lowest figures since 2009 and they are continuing to decline.

When all those figures are rolled together, I suggest that the police are doing an extremely good job in Newcastle. The Government has provided significant funding to police and by 2015 we will have another 829 police officers, funded through the upcoming budgets, to bring us up to a constrained establishment of 16,665 police officers in New South Wales—the highest number of police this State has ever had. In relation to the motion of Newcastle councillor Jason Dunn, four kilometres down the road from Wallsend is a huge police station, Waratah police station. Those who understand police operations know it is not about having police stations dotted all over the countryside, it is about developing and delivering a better operational impact.

The reinstatement of a police station at Wallsend would just duplicate resources. The key issues in relation to policing are: more police numbers—tick, we have done that; better deployment capability—tick, we have done that; and smarter policing. The member for Wallsend said that Superintendent John Gralton and his team are doing very good work with those additional police and that it is about smarter policing, better time management and getting the police out there. Having a police station another four kilometres up the road will do nothing to reduce crime in the three categories we have spoken about. I believe the Government is doing an extremely good job.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will cease interjecting.

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [10.27 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Port Stephens, the member for Cessnock, the member for Swansea and the member for Newcastle for their contributions. I can assure members opposite that I do not give up. They will be pleased to know that there will be regular notices of motions on this issue. As a member who puts representation first, I am not afraid to stand up to any government when it comes to protecting the safety and security of the people of Wallsend. That comes first, not spin.

I agree with the member for Port Stephens and other members who expressed their passionate support for police and acknowledged the work of our police across New South Wales. There is no question that our police work very hard, but that is not the issue. The member for Port Stephens and the member for Swansea gave us an ancient history lesson; the Government is good at that. We can agree on the inadequacies of the former Labor Government. I will stick up my hand and acknowledge them publicly. But that is not what we are talking about today. We are talking about making life better for the people in the Hunter, not what happened 16 years ago. The Labor Government committed to a police station in Raymond Terrace and it is wonderful news that it was recently built.

Unfortunately, the member for Port Stephens and his colleagues on the opposite side of the House made no attempt to address this motion, which is about ensuring increased police resources to curtail endemic social misbehaviour in the Hunter. They skirted around the issue. Perhaps they are afraid to deal with the issue or the spin doctors who wrote their speeches did not know how to deal with it. I agree with the member for Cessnock. We all acknowledge the great work of the Police Force across the State. The member made a valid point: We know the police are doing a great job but if resources are limited and there are insufficient staff, police can only solve crimes when they have the resources to do so. The member also said that Wallsend 2287 is one of the most violent postcodes in the region. So it beats me why the then Labor Government closed the Wallsend police station, although it had committed to building the Glendale police station—a promise on which the Coalition Government reneged.

The member for Cessnock also made the point that the western suburbs are growing. Recently Cowen Allied sold a big chunk of land, and 4,000 new dwellings are being constructed near Minmi. The worry for the residents in that area is that they are beyond the fringes of the Lake Macquarie and Newcastle local area commands. What will happen when there is a violent crime in that area? We hope that does not occur. What plans does the Government have to accommodate the more than 4,000 new residents in that area? The Government is not building any roads or schools in the area. It will be interesting to see whether the Government will consider providing more police resources in the area. That is important.

The member for Cessnock said that juvenile crime in the Hunter has increased, and I mentioned some of those issues today. The member for Swansea talked about the installation of closed-circuit television cameras

in Swansea. That is terrific. Unfortunately, he spent most of his time giving an ancient history lesson. I am the ancient history teacher in this place and I do not spend my time talking about what happened 16 years ago; I want to talk about what is happening now. I wind up by saying this: You fellows can expect more motions about armed crime if the situation does not improve because I do not give up on my community. And I do not interrupt you guys when you are speaking.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Wallsend will direct her remarks through the Chair.

**Ms SONIA HORNER:** Mr Deputy-Speaker, I would appreciate it if you would ask members opposite not to interrupt me.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member directed her remarks across the Chamber and not through the Chair.

**Ms SONIA HORNER:** Yes, and they called out.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I remind the member for Wallsend that she should direct her comments through the Chair and that interjections are disorderly at all times.

**Ms SONIA HORNER:** I am not afraid to stand up for my community. I will always put my community first. I do not get up in Parliament to read spin, and I never will.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **AUSTRALIAN SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [10.32 a.m.]:** I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes 25 August 2013 as Australian South Sea Islander Recognition Day, marking 150 years since about 50,000 people on 62,000 indenture contracts from around 80 Pacific Islands were recruited or kidnapped to work in sugar cane fields where they were exploited;
- (2) notes the Australian South Sea Islanders suffered inhumane treatment, the highest mortality rates of any immigrant group to Australia and mass deportations when the White Australia Policy was introduced;
- (3) notes many of the 40,000 Australian South Sea Islander descendants who live in Australia remain marginalised and disadvantaged;
- (4) notes thousands of Australian South Sea Islanders live in New South Wales but an official number has not been established;
- (5) notes then Premier Carr's memorandum of understanding of 1995 called for adequate programs and services;
- (6) acknowledges the Community Relations Commission's initiatives in relation to South Sea Islanders and requests the Government to liaise with the National Body for Australian South Sea Islanders in preparing a demographic, social and economic community profile; and
- (7) acknowledges the contribution the Australian South Sea Islander community makes to New South Wales and its history in Australia.

I welcome to the Chamber Danny Togo, Shireen Malamoo and Lola Forrester, community leaders of the Australian South Sea Islander community. Today is an historic day for the New South Wales Parliament as we come together to acknowledge the suffering, the exploitation and the role in our history that Australian South Sea Islanders have played. First, I thank the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and his staff for agreeing to meet with the Australian South Sea Islanders and to work with them. I thank also the Government for its support of the motion.

Between 1863 and 1904 about 50,000 people were recruited or kidnapped from about 80 Pacific Islands to work on sugarcane fields in Queensland on 62,000 indenture contracts. Ninety-five per cent were adolescent and young adult males; the rest were women. In the first two decades kidnappings and underhand recruitments were prevalent; and although recruitments became more common in later years, kidnappings



accounted for about 10 per cent to 15 per cent of labourers throughout. I have heard shocking stories of islanders being coerced onto boats, having their canoes sunk and being detained through force. Even recruitment contracts took advantage of islanders, who came from small-scale societies, were paid cheap goods and legally bound in a way that they could not understand.

Islanders were often cruelly exploited. They were beaten, starved and whipped. Rare police inspections were not unannounced. Justice was rare in cases brought to the courts. In the 1870s the Reverend J. C. Kirby described seeing a group of islanders walking through Dalby without shoes, accompanied by armed men on horseback, as a scene from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Australian South Sea Islanders see themselves as descendants of slaves. Indeed, many people regard this as Australia's slave trade. Coming from isolated islands, islanders lacked immunity to common diseases, including tuberculosis, pneumonia, bronchitis, dysentery, measles and chicken pox, causing massive mortality rates. Eighty-one out of 1,000 islanders died in their first year in Australia, and overall 74 out of 1,000 died. At the time mortality rates for Australian Europeans of the same age were nine or 10 in 1,000. While official records show that 14,564 islanders died, the true figure is likely to be more than 15,000, given data collection gaps. Yet the Australian Government continued the program for more than 40 years, knowing its impact.

In 1901 the Australian Government passed the Pacific Island Labourers Act as part of its White Australia policy to remove islanders from the country through gradual attrition and forced deportation. Sugar farmers were compensated with an embargo on foreign sugar and subsidies for sugar produced by white labour. There were mass forced deportations between 1906 and 1908. Protests from islanders led to exemptions for those who had lived in Australia for more than 20 years, were aged or infirm, had children in school, owned land, were married to someone not from their island, or could prove safety risks if they returned home. About 2,000 to 2,500 remained and most Australian South Sea Islanders are descendants of this group.

Incentives in the sugar industry to hire white-only labour relegated islanders to menial farm work or subsistence. They lived on the fringes of society and suffered discrimination. This is a shameful chapter in Australia's history. Australian South Sea Islander Recognition Day on 25 August is a time to reflect and move forward for the 40,000 descendants, whose social and economic disadvantage is equivalent to that of Aboriginal Australians. Many descendants live in New South Wales but there are no official figures. If people identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander they cannot also identify as Australian South Sea Islander, despite the widespread amalgamation of islanders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Australian South Sea Islanders can access education, housing, health and legal programs aimed at Indigenous Australians but there are no specific programs for them, despite being defined as a distinct disadvantaged ethnic group.

In 1995 then Premier Carr's memorandum of understanding called for adequate services to target Australian South Sea Islanders. Australian South Sea Islanders want self-determination, and vital to this is acknowledgement of past atrocities and data on the current state of affairs. The State Government should involve the national representative body for Australian South Sea Islanders to prepare a demographic, social and economic community profile and develop a plan of action to remove disadvantage in line with the 1992 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report recommendations. I am grateful that the Minister for Citizenship and Communities has agreed to meet with the national body in response to this motion. The 150th anniversary provides an opportunity to make a formal recognition statement to help build community esteem and a positive future. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr DONALD PAGE** (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [10.39 a.m.]: I am happy to support the amended motion moved by the member for Sydney, and I acknowledge his long involvement with this issue. I note that next week the member for Sydney will be on a panel at Sydney University to discuss this issue. Between 1863 and 1904 more than 60,000 Melanesians were brought to work in fields and farms across Queensland and northern New South Wales. Today marks the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first ship carrying these men, who were coerced and kidnapped. Their conditions were incredibly poor. Those who signed agreements did not understand what they were signing or entering into.

Approximately 30 per cent of the young men, aged from their teens to their early thirties, died because they lacked immunity to many of the diseases common to the European community, while those that survived were treated as second-class citizens. They were worked incredibly hard and received very low rates of pay. One of the first pieces of legislation passed by the new Federal Government was the Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901, which was integral to the White Australia Policy. It allowed workers to be repatriated to their South Sea homes. The workers had often settled in Australia and started families. Many were not even sure where

they had been taken from and were dislocated from their communities. They were repatriated having no idea where their relatives were. A few were allowed to stay on humanitarian grounds, but trade unions made it impossible for them work and they were left on the fringes of society in Queensland and northern New South Wales.

In the Tweed the first South Sea Islander workers arrived to work in the cane fields in the Brunswick Valley in the 1880s. By 1891, 105 South Sea Islanders were recorded as living in and around Cudgen and Tumbulgum. The Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901 had led to the deportation of many islanders but some were still working in the Cudgen area. The Act was amended to include a £100 fine for employing "unregistered kanakas". There were also large numbers of South Sea Islanders at Tumbulgum, including the father of remarkable Australian human rights activist Faith Bandler, one of the major forces behind the success of the 1967 referendum recognising Aboriginal rights in this country. The peoples of the South Seas are integral to the history of the North Coast. For instance, the name of Wategos Beach at Byron Bay is named after a prominent islander family. Many South Sea Islander people still live on the North Coast, and their contribution has been better recognised more recently. They were integral in the development of the sugar, banana and timber industries and to clearing land for the dairy industry.

I am happy to say that there have been some positive initiatives in relation to the South Sea Islander community and other communities on the North Coast. The New South Wales Migration Heritage Centre worked on a research partnership with Tweed Shire Council to produce a book about this issue. The Tweed River Regional Museum staged an exhibition that received an award in the prestigious National Trust Heritage Award in the Cultural Heritage, Community Groups category. The story of the banana-growing and sugarcane industries along the Tweed River, including the labour history of South Sea Islanders, is featured in the online exhibition, "Objects Through Time", which is a migration history timeline hosted on the Migration Heritage Centre's website, [migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au](http://migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au). It is popular with teachers and students and is a very good resource. A DVD, *Sweet Harvests*, has also been produced and is on the website. Fortunately, today we live in a different world from that which prevailed in the late 1800s. Today multiculturalism in New South Wales is enshrined in the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act, which recognises the different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds of individuals and the basic right of all people in New South Wales to practise and maintain their heritage.

I was pleased that the member for Sydney acknowledged the contribution of the Minister for Citizenship and Communities in this area and his preparedness to work cooperatively with the member for Sydney to bring the plight of South Sea Islanders to the fore, and give people a better understanding of this dark chapter in our history when the islanders were not treated properly. I have no doubt that there has been insufficient recognition of the plight and circumstances of South Sea Islanders in Australia, and I am pleased that the member for Sydney has recognised them in this motion. I commend him for acknowledging after all this time that things happened in the past that we are not proud of. We must do all we can to make sure that our South Sea Islander friends and neighbours get a better deal than they received years ago.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [10.45 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Sydney that seeks recognition of the contribution by the South Sea Islander community, past and present, in New South Wales and in Australia. South Sea Islanders have been a part of the Australian story since before Australia was a country—it was still a concept yet to be realised through Federation. However, it is a story that many Australians will not be familiar with. Like many other stories, it has remained largely untold. However, it is a narrative that should not be lost or forgotten by Australians because it reveals a sinister side of our country's early history. South Sea Islanders began to arrive in the 1860s with the opening up of northern Australia. Many were brought to work the cotton and sugar plantations in Queensland. Reports of their migration to Australia were dreadful. Many were kidnapped against their will or arrived in Australia via illegal means. The majority were exploited, with historical records revealing that they were paid a fraction of the wage of non-South Sea Islander migrants.

During the early twentieth century, when the Commonwealth of Australia was in its infancy, South Sea Islanders were targeted by the introduction of legislation limiting the entry of non-British or Europeans into Australia. Records indicate that from 1904 to 1908 a total of 7,068 islanders were deported from Australia. That is terrible: The community that provided the labour upon which the early sugar industry was founded and that allowed it to flourish was denied all recognition. Discrimination against the Australian South Sea Islander community continued well into the twentieth century. At times, their fight for recognition mirrored and went hand-in-hand with the struggle of Indigenous Australians. On 25 August 2013, Australian South Sea Islander Recognition Day, I urge the Australian South Sea Islander community and the community of New South Wales

as a whole to learn from our past and to look towards a better future. Contemporary reports suggest that the South Sea Islander community still faces significant disadvantages. But the South Sea Islander community is no longer alone, and we will face those issues together. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE** (Campbelltown) [10.49 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Sydney that highlights Australia's shared migrant history, which involves people from the South Sea Islands and from throughout the Pacific—Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Maori communities. I welcome the news that the Minister for Citizenship and Communities will meet with the national body of South Sea Islanders. I am honoured to be the inaugural chair of the Ministerial Multicultural Committee for Maori and Pacific Communities that was established by the Minister for Citizenship and Communities. I was proud to host the first and only Maori haka gifting that was conducted in the forecourt of Parliament House, when Te Kete Kahurangi presented the Minister with a very valuable piece of Maori and Samoan artwork. That was witnessed by the New Zealand Consul-General, Martin Welsh. The committee has had numerous discussions with Housing NSW on the subject of relationships, respect and the housing needs of Pacific Islanders. I am very concerned about diabetes amongst Pacific Islanders, which is a huge health issue, and I am in the process of planning a forum with the Australian Diabetes Council. That forum will be held later this year at Campbelltown specifically to address diabetes and its impact on people from the Pacific.

Members from the multicultural liaison group have also attended the Premier's multicultural dinner and the Multicultural Media Awards. I am pleased also that people from the Pacific are participating in Anzac commemoration services because they, too, have a long and proud history of protecting our nation. People from the Pacific bring many great things to Australia—love of God, family and community; a village approach; the great gift of hospitality; and wonderful community singing. They are attributes that the community should embrace. I am proud to be patron of the Australian Pacific and Maori Community Services group at Campbelltown. This group has participated in, and contributed greatly to, the life of Campbelltown—that great opal of the south-west and the very best part of the Macarthur. The elders bring some of those Pacific values to a volunteer patrol at Macarthur Square on Thursday nights that has greatly assisted in reducing crime and violence and improving social amenity.

Campbelltown also has a number of great Pacific community garden initiatives. I highlight the Airds-Bradbury Men's Shed and the community garden at Menangle, which was featured on the ABC *Gardening Australia* show with host Costa Georgiadis. Last month I arranged for my good friend Ta'ane Tupola to attend the Macarthur Centre for Sustainable Living, where we will establish another Polynesian community garden. These Polynesian gardens help to develop community, friendship, fitness, healthy eating and tradition. I am pleased that my good friend Ta'ane Tupola has been awarded a Premier's community service award for his efforts. In Campbelltown the contribution of people from the Pacific is recognised each year at an annual Pacific awards night, where we recognise the achievements of Australians of Pacific heritage in education, the arts, community and sports. I was proud to represent the Minister at The Cube, Campbelltown Catholic Club. I commend the motion to the House. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [10.52 a.m.]: On behalf of The Greens I support this motion marking 150 years since approximately 50,000 people from about 80 Pacific Islands were recruited or kidnapped to work in the sugarcane fields. On 25 August last year I learnt a lot more about this issue when I attended a South Sea Islanders function at St Johns in Glebe. In particular, I was introduced to a word that has come to signify the great shame of this period: "blackbirding". We heard also about Faith Bandler, the daughter of a South Sea Islander who was blackbirded into the Queensland cane fields. It was a sad and shameful period in our history, and today's motion goes some way towards addressing it. I recognise the presence of representatives of the Australian South Sea Islander community in the Speaker's gallery. Their dedication and commitment to highlighting the difficult history of Australian South Sea Islanders is most important, and we thank them for taking the time to be here.

This motion is important because it recognises that, as a community, we must look to our shared history and acknowledge when great injustice has occurred. We do this for a number of reasons. We do it to learn from our past and to make a shared commitment to strive never to let injustice occur again. We also do it to honour the lives of those upon whom these injustices were visited as well as those who continue to live with that legacy today. I am particularly grateful to those who have made the effort to come to the Parliament today to support this work, as they and their many colleagues live with the legacy of what occurred. We need to work to address that injustice. I have met a number of times with representatives of the Australian South Sea Islander community, including those who attended the twentieth anniversary of the national body for Australian South Sea Islanders. I especially acknowledge Emelda Davis for her fantastic work, particularly in my electorate, on this issue.

As Australians we must recognise the history of Australian South Sea Islanders. This recognition will play an important part in healing the past and addressing present challenges. Importantly, this motion acknowledges the scale of exploitation of Australian South Sea Islanders—50,000 people on 62,000 indentured contracts from around 80 Pacific Islands. Those 50,000 people were either recruited or blackbirded, or kidnapped, and became indentured slaves working in the sugarcane fields. These people suffered incredibly inhumane treatment and mortality rates were high. Many islanders did not have immunity to common diseases and 81 out of 1,000 died in their first year in Australia. South Sea Islanders were taken from their homes and it is important to remember not merely the impact this had on them but also the great cultural loss this represents—the potential of each of those 81 young men to build families and communities was stolen from those islands. We must acknowledge that their culture was also stolen.

What is the living legacy of this dark history? Some 40,000 descendants of those affected are living in Australia, and a significant number of them reside in New South Wales. Many of these people suffer social and economic disadvantage but there are no specific programs aimed at addressing disadvantage in this community. Although they have access to programs aimed at Aboriginal Australians, this is not good enough. As we have learned, the key to addressing entrenched disadvantage is recognising the unique attributes of each community. The memorandum of understanding by Bob Carr was a useful first step, but it is important that the Government liaise and work on a long-term path to achieving justice and equality in line with the 1992 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report. I urge the Government to support the report. I commend the member for Sydney and hope that this important motion is the start of a path towards real social justice and recognition.

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER** (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [10.57 a.m.]: The Government supports the motion, which is the product of consultation between the Minister for Citizenship and Communities and the mover, the member for Sydney. It is important that Australians know the story of South Sea Islanders in this country. Two sections of the Australian Constitution are particularly relevant in this debate. They came about because people were brought to Australia from the Pacific Islands via the practice of blackbirding. Originally, section 51 (xxvi) stated that Parliament shall have the power to make laws with respect to:

... the people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.

The people for whom it was "deemed necessary to make special laws" were the Pacific Islander people. The Constitution then went on to give the Commonwealth further power, referring to "the relations of the Commonwealth with the islands of the Pacific". Those two sections were incorporated as part of the Constitutional Convention deliberations in the 1890s. The trade union movement—what is now the Australian Workers Union, which in those days was the dominant union for rural industries in Queensland, where the sugar industry was based—was determined to ensure that islanders were returned to the Pacific Islands and not allowed to stay in Australia.

Among the first bills passed by the new Commonwealth Parliament after its inauguration in 1901 was legislation removing Pacific Islanders from Australia and transporting them back to the islands of the Pacific. It is important to put this in historical context. The legislation was introduced and passed at the insistence of the Australian trade union movement, which was determined to prevent Pacific Islanders—whom it regarded as a source of cheap labour—from competing with European labourers. The history of the Australian Labor Party is built upon that story. While Australian Labor Party members happily support the motion today they tend to gloss over the history of their own political party. The trade union movement now endorses these principles but once again they gloss over the history of their actions. There is a famous quotation by the philosopher Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." We should never forget the past. The purpose of this motion by the member for Sydney is to inform us of the past and the true story about how badly the South Sea Islanders were treated. There needs to be an understanding of the origins of the story because glossing over the past and pretending it never existed is an injustice to these people.

It would be an injustice not to place upon the record the true story of what did happen. I acknowledge that the South Sea Islander people were wrongfully treated. I support this motion and the Government supports this motion and acknowledges that in the past a wrong was done to the South Sea Islander people and it should be redressed. But we cannot redress a wrong unless we know the origins of that wrong. The origins of that wrong stem very much from a section of the political community that insisted on this course of action at the constitutional debates. If you read the debates which established the constitutional convention and determined many sections of the constitution you will see what Labor Party representatives supported. The Labor Party was founded in 1891 and was represented at the constitutional convention. See also what the trade union representatives had to say about the Pacific Islander community working and operating in Australia.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [11.01 a.m.], by leave: I will speak to this debate and begin by recognising the three outstanding visitors to the House today: Auntie Shireen Malimoo, who I have known for 35-years, Lola Forrester, who I have known for approximately the same length of time and Danny Togo, who I have met today. It is an honour to have you in the House. It brings legitimacy and reality to this discussion. You are the descendants of this story: Thank you for attending. I thank the Minister for Resources and Energy for the history lesson. It is important that we recognise the truth and understand the genesis of stories that are part—bad or good—of this country. It is a shame that the former Prime Minister was not able to do that with an apology to the Stolen Generation.

Today's debate carries several messages and one of those is the importance to Aboriginal, South Sea Islander and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have their story acknowledged and legitimised and to have the identities of generations of South Sea Islanders recognised in the narrative of this nation. That is what this motion does: It provides a long overdue acknowledgment of the story of South Sea Islanders in this country. I remember clearly as a student in New South Wales with an Aboriginal background the shock I felt when I first came to understand that there was a system of slavery in this country; we have to call it what it was. The idea that I studied Australian modern history in school but was not told of this story is a travesty.

The Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast stated that this story needs to be highlighted but it has an awfully long way to go. It should be a prominent part of the school curriculum in New South Wales and I am not sure that is the case at present. I welcome the move to have the health and housing needs of South Sea Islander people recognised through the Australian census so we can be informed of the number of South Sea Islanders living in Australia. I cannot imagine what it must feel like as an Islander to not know how many South Sea Islander people are living in this country today. I pay my respects to old friends and new.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [11.05 a.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contribution made by the Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast and the Government's commitment to recognition of the South Sea Islander people. I acknowledge the member for Fairfield's contribution to the debate and for pointing out that he, like so many others, was not aware of this part of Australia's history. It is something that has been glossed over but it is important today that this House is recognising the role of South Sea Islanders in Australia's history. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Campbelltown.

The member for Balmain applauded the South Sea Islander community for not giving up the fight for recognition. It is a fight I will support them in for the long term. I thank the Minister for Resources and Energy, for his contribution to the debate and especially the member for Canterbury, who highlighted how important identity and "the story" is to South Sea Islanders, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in the Australian community. Those communities share a great but often harsh history in Australia. I thank Danny Togo, Shireen Malamoo and Lola Forrester for being present for the debate today and for working with members to show them the importance of this debate.

Australia began bringing Pacific Islanders to this country to work in cane fields in Queensland 150 years ago and it is a program that lasted for over 40 years. Islanders were kidnapped, coerced and subject to contracts they could not have understood and which were used to keep them in servitude. Arriving here with a lack of immunity to common diseases meant many died, resulting in massive mortality rates that were exceptionally higher than those for the European community. Governments were well aware of the mortality rates but neglectfully continued the program for over 40 years. So many people in the prime of their life died as a result of the program. At the time Queensland law required that wages of deceased islanders were returned to their families but only 15 per cent of those wages were used to purchase goods for relatives.

Islanders were not treated well by their employers. The White Australia Policy—a shameful time in Australia's history—led to devastating widespread mass deportations that legitimised racism and prejudice in the community. The plight of Pacific Islanders on indentured contracts is not well known by Australians. It is a shameful part of our history that needs to be publicly acknowledged. The Government must take action to reduce disadvantage among South Sea Islander descendants. I echo the call by the member for Canterbury to include this part of our history in the school curriculum. On virtually all levels Australian South Sea Islanders remain disadvantaged. But this disadvantage in health, income, housing and education can be turned around with specifically targeted programs and services. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

In 1995, then Premier Carr's memorandum of understanding called for adequate services to target South Sea Islanders, but no specific programs have been developed. We also need to increase historical and cultural

awareness in the wider community and to collect data to establish a community profile. I hope the Minister will go beyond offering support for the motion and work with the national representative body for Australian South Sea Islanders to achieve that.

There is no question that Australia has profited from having South Sea Islanders here and it is only fair that they share in our economic and social wealth. It also enhances our current relationship with the Pacific Islands, to which New South Wales exports \$380 million worth of merchandise every year and from where 277 students have enrolled in New South Wales educational institutions. I welcome the support that members have offered this motion and the House's formal acknowledgment of past atrocities. The 150th anniversary of the arrival of indentured South Sea Islanders provides us with an opportunity to help them build community esteem and a positive future. I thank the national representative body for Australian South Sea Islanders for working with me and my staff on this motion. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **KIAMA DOWNS RIDING FOR THE DISABLED**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [11.11 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) thanks the Minister for Disability Services and Ageing for visiting the electorate of Kiama;
- (2) congratulates Riding for the Disabled, Kiama Downs, on its work and support for people with disabilities; and
- (3) commends the Minister on the grant to Riding for the Disabled to upgrade its facilities.

I acknowledge my friends Colin Booth, Melissa Booth, Guillemette Boissier, Aymeric Boissard and Jenny Wilson from Kiama Scouts who are in the gallery today. They are accompanied by a number of exchange students and I thank them for visiting the Parliament of New South Wales. Colin bid at a Kiama Scouts auction for the opportunity to visit this place.

On 14 February 2013 I was pleased to join with my good friend the former Minister for Ageing and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Andrew Constance, to present a cheque for \$11,000 to Carmen Netherclift, the coordinator of the Illawarra Riding for the Disabled (NSW) Illawarra Centre in Kiama. A visit was arranged to allow us to inspect upgraded facilities and, having seen the facilities both before and after the upgrade, I can assure members that it was money well spent. On Monday 27 May this year I was delighted to revisit the centre to present another cheque for \$6,640 for the replacement of the maintenance equipment shed. That grant was made available through the Community Building Partnership Program and I am pleased that it was provided for such a good cause.

Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW) is a volunteer organisation that provides equine-assisted activities for people with disabilities to enable them to develop and enhance their abilities. Carmen Netherclift and her large team of volunteers provide a tremendous service for the disabled people who attend the riding classes each week. Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW) Illawarra was established with the support of Kiama Municipal Council on 27 November 1981 and about 15 members. With no venue of their own, they used the local pony club grounds and borrowed horses. Classes were offered one day a week and there were six riders. However, only one week later 50 or 60 riders turned up and, as they say, the rest is history.

The association has had its own grounds covering 27 acres since 1987 and leases more than 100 acres. It now offers classes four days a week and its riders range from primary school students through to adults. The Illawarra covers the area between Helensburgh and Gerroa and west to Picton. The association has expanded and its name has changed to reflect that expansion. It was originally Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW) Kiama, it then became Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW) Kiama and Illawarra and it is now Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW) Illawarra. Volunteers, who are always needed, are not required to have a knowledge of horses or training because both are provided. There are also many jobs for those who do not like or feel comfortable around horses, such as helping in the kitchen or in the gardens and paddocks.

I acknowledge the following people involved with the club: the vivacious and effervescent Carmen Netherclift, the club secretary and coach; Alicia, Kirsten, Jamie and Noni Parker; Justine Proksch; Rachel

Sandersen—who is training to be a coach; Denise Tozer, the vice-president, and her husband Garry Tozer; Norm Power and his daughter Rita, who have been involved in the association for 22 years; Sue Pratt, the club treasurer and also a coach who takes the Tuesday class each week; volunteers Samantha and Jennifer Plum; Ashleigh Crompton; Linda Pullen, the president, and her son Justin Pullen, who is training to be a coach; Karin Haubruck; Kylie Harding; Nicola Sheedy, who is doing her community service with the association for a Duke of Edinburgh Award; Alex Stone, a Saturday morning volunteer who helps with the classes; Kerry Southwell, a new volunteer; Sarah McIlveen, a young volunteer and local Warilla High School student; and other volunteers Bridie Dorans, Sharon Cooper and Kima Currie.

I encourage members who have a Riding for the Disabled facility in their electorate to visit it, to get to know the members and to familiarise themselves with the fantastic work it does. Prior to becoming a member of Parliament I was not aware of the work done by Riding for the Disabled. That situation was rectified when I attended a fundraising function at which a video was presented. The delight on the faces of the people in the video who had the benefit of participating in classes was obvious and I realised that it was definitely worthy of support. I acknowledge the great support that the former member for Shellharbour, Lylea McMahon, offered to Riding for the Disabled. The association still has a letter she wrote following a function she attended.

**Mr John Williams:** She is another victim of Noreen.

**Ms Anna Watson:** The member for Murray-Darling should be quiet.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** The member for Shellharbour should take her own advice. The Illawarra is a diverse place and it has a fantastic Riding for the Disabled facility. My great friend the Parliamentary Secretary and member for Hawkesbury is also a great supporter. All members support people with disabilities and I was pleased to note the bipartisan support offered to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which will support and encourage people with disabilities. The Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW) Illawarra facility does exactly that: it gives people with disabilities the opportunity to enjoy something they otherwise would not be able to enjoy. It provides a unique experience and, as such, it deserves our support.

Minister Constance indicated his support for Riding for the Disabled when he was Minister for Disability Services and I will be following up on that with regard to Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW) Illawarra. It wants to upgrade its facilities so that they match those in Ryde, which have benefited from significant grants for the construction of undercover areas from both the State Government and the Federal Government. This is a great initiative and I strongly support it, having seen the great work that is being done. I commend the volunteers who spend hours assisting people with disabilities, training and maintaining the grounds and the animals. I thank members for considering this motion and I commend it to the House.

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [11.17 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Kiama and thank him for moving it. Riding for the Disabled gives people with a disability the opportunity to ride horses. Horseriding is a unique form of exercise and rehabilitation. For some, the complex movement involved in horseriding helps to improve their coordination, balance and muscular development and enhances their fitness. It also improves their self-confidence, self-esteem, communication and leadership skills and trust, which are all important.

For some people with a disability whose behaviour can be challenging, horseriding offers a powerful medium by which to restore a sense of personal control and thereby improve their interaction with their family, teachers and friends. As the member for Kiama said, volunteers deserve special mention because they are the backbone of our communities. They cannot be underestimated and they certainly never will be while we are in this place. I will relate to the House a testimonial about Naomi. Naomi's mum said:

Naomi first began riding when she was five years old. However, having Spina bifida and not being able to weight bear; she soon became too heavy for us to put her on ponies. Then we heard about RDA.

For someone who is unable to stand or walk, the freedom of being able to be placed on the back of a horse and then go where everybody else can, is so precious.

I will tell you Martin's story. Martin has cerebral palsy and has been going to Riding for the Disabled every week for the past eight years to ride his horse and to help stretch and develop his muscles and work on his communication skills. These are all things that the rest of us take for granted. A volunteer at the centre said of Martin:

The team love hanging around Martin because we get to watch the joy on his face when he succeeds at accomplishing a task; to listen to his laughter when he doesn't quite make it; to listen to his hopes and dreams; to hear his thanks and appreciation of those who help him ... and to be able to share in the highs and lows that he faces daily with his disability.

Again, I thank the member for Kiama for moving this very important and worthwhile motion.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.21 a.m.]: I make a contribution to this important debate on the very worthwhile organisation, Riding for the Disabled Association. First of all, I commend the member for Kiama for bringing this motion forward. I also congratulate the former Minister for Ageing and Disability Services, who I rate as one of the quiet achievers of the O'Farrell Government, and who made such a difference for people with disabilities right across New South Wales. The member for Kiama mentioned the Riding for the Disabled Association in his backyard. In my area the former Minister made a difference to another wonderful organisation that works on behalf of children with a hearing impairment. I take the opportunity to commend him for his performance in his former role.

Hopefully, through his personalised, individualised policy, which is now being formulated by our Government, more people with disabilities will be able to embrace the opportunities to avail themselves of the therapeutical benefits of riding horses. It is quite extraordinary, when you go to a Riding for the Disabled Association centre, to see the benefits that some severely disabled people get from riding on horseback. It is not dissimilar to seeing young children having their first pony ride. I have grown up with horses. I was riding around my district on ponies long before I could walk so it would come as no surprise to the House that I am an ardent advocate for the Riding for the Disabled Association.

I have one of their facilities, Tall Timbers at Box Hill, in my backyard. I was recently able to reward them, through the Community Building Partnership, with some money—around \$25,000 to \$35,000 for an improvement to one of their facilities. That facility has taken Riding for the Disabled to a new level—even for disabled people who cannot mount a horse. They have a horse and cart set up at their facilities at Box Hill. They can put people, in their wheelchairs, onto the cart and drive them around the facility. It is just one extension of some of the extraordinary work that they do on behalf of disabled people.

I think it is worth noting—I know I have raised this before in the House—where the Riding for the Disabled Association started in this country. It was formed by Pearl Batchelor OAM and Nan Everingham, who has sadly passed away. It commenced in 1972 after Pearl Batchelor had visited Riding for the Disabled in England. I think it grew because people became aware of a particular person at the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games. Madame Liz Hartel was a Danish polio victim who had been confined to a wheelchair for years. She left her chair for her horse's back and then went on to receive a silver medal for her display in the dressage event at that Olympics. That received an enormous amount of attention in the press at the time and it focused attention, for the first time, on a person's ability as opposed to their disability. It really showed that, regardless of a person's disability, there was ability and things that could be achieved.

People can be greatly benefitted by riding and their love of equine pets. I take the opportunity to place on the record people like Kerry Souter from Tall Timbers Centre, who has been awarded a life membership of Riding for the Disabled Association. Riding for the Disabled Association is a wonderful institution. I commend it, as the member for Kiama did, to every member of Parliament. Get in touch with your local Riding for the Disabled Association; it is wonderful.

**Mr RYAN PARK** (Keira) [11.25 a.m.]: I support this motion and echo the thoughts that many members in this place today have talked about. I acknowledge the member for Kiama for bringing this important motion before the House. The member for Shellharbour and the member for Kiama also articulated, very importantly, that these Riding for the Disabled Association centres present more than just an opportunity to spend some time with horses; they present an opportunity for people to benefit educationally, physically, psychologically and socially. People with a disability are behind in a lot of areas—not simply physically, if it is physical issue; not simply cognitively, if it is a cognitive issue. Often people feel great degrees of isolation and loneliness, and that causes psychological issues. Riding for the Disabled gives people the opportunity not only to engage in physical activity but to engage socially and to improve their mental health and psychological capacity.

This is a wonderful program supported by a wonderful group of volunteers doing wonderful things in our local community. As legislators, members in this place need to continue to become familiar with this organisation. As the member for Kiama and others have said, it needs our support when it comes to accessing funding, promoting the work it does and encouraging others to be involved as participants and as volunteers. One of the beautiful things about the Riding for the Disabled Association is that you do not necessarily have to be into equestrian activities or be a lover of horses to be involved. There are many jobs that people can undertake assisting participants, assisting around the horses or assisting in the organisation and administration of the association. It is an area where the community can be involved. They can get some real benefits, themselves, seeing what a massive impact this type of activity has on the lives of people with a disability.



The member for Kiama said that he had seen some video footage. The impact that this type of interaction has on people with a disability is simply transformative. It is more than simply riding horses. It is more than getting out into the natural environment. This is an opportunity for disabled people to feel a great degree of spirit and social inclusion. It is an opportunity for them to enhance their cognitive and social skills and to enhance their physical wellbeing. All of us in this place represent people who have disabilities or who are caring for people with disabilities so we need to understand and respect these things.

It is always good to be involved in these types of debates and discussions in this place because they bring about the bipartisanship that should always exist around the disability sector. All of us would do well to make contact with our local Riding for the Disabled Association to make sure that, where necessary, they are getting our support, so that they can raise issues. Most importantly, we need to continue to promote the work of the Riding for the Disabled Association within our respective communities and we need to make sure that those in our communities who are looking to access something like this are pointed in the right direction. I commend this motion and I thank the House for the opportunity to speak on it today.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga) [11.29 a.m.]: I could not let the opportunity pass to join the debate and commend the member for Kiama for bringing this important issue before the House. I speak today as a patron of Riding for the Disabled. I have been a patron ever since I was elected to Parliament some 14 years ago. Riding for the Disabled provides a wonderful service to young people with disabilities, but there are lots of challenges that Riding for the Disabled has had to overcome, particularly funding. It is a constant problem for organisations to raise funds but, thankfully, Riding for the Disabled has a small army of volunteers—many of them aged and retired—who give up their time daily to either instruct participants or to raise funds by way of catering or carrying out community services.

I would like members to note—and I encourage members to assist the organisation in this if they can—that one of the challenges that the organisation has is transporting students with disabilities from their school to their local Riding for the Disabled centre. Transport is not covered by the allowances that are available to support children with disabilities. In Wagga Wagga the Riding for the Disabled centre is located at Lake Albert, which is quite a few kilometres from the central business district, the residential areas and the schools. In order to lift the number of students participating in the service, Riding for the Disabled raised funds to buy a bus. Bev Amery, president of Riding for the Disabled and also a member of the New South Wales executive, led the fundraising campaign.

With the aid of sponsors, the local credit union and the local Toyota dealer, the community purchased a bus. That bus will now enable those students to be brought to the centre, whereas previously, unless they had a family member who could transport them or some kind of funding for transport, they were denied the opportunity to participate. Many members will remember Jackie Armstrong, who worked very closely with me. She worked for me for about 18 months and she always had her guide dog with her. She is very involved in and a passionate supporter of Riding for the Disabled and she has helped me understand the challenges faced by people with a disability—such as Jackie, who is legally blind—in accessing facilities and, importantly, in experiencing the enjoyment and gaining the skills that Riding for the Disabled gives to young people.

Many newly elected members may not be aware of the good work of Riding for the Disabled. I encourage members to go, with their staff, to see the wonderful work that the organisation is carrying out. Marvellous improvements have been made in Wagga Wagga and in the Riverina region with the support of many charitable organisations—Rotary, Lions clubs and others—and they all give to Riding for the Disabled because they understand the enjoyment and the skills the organisation provides to children or young people with a disability. There is a whole range of championships they can participate in and strings of medals to be won to recognise the skills that are brought out in children who previously did not have such an opportunity. I commend the member for Kiama for bringing this important debate to the House and I encourage all members, including the young people in the gallery, to get out there and see the wonderful work Riding for the Disabled is doing. I urge people to support the organisation and, importantly, volunteer time to help them.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [11.33 a.m.]: I concur with and support most of what has been said about Riding for the Disabled, as I support any program that helps people with disabilities. I will investigate whether we have a Riding for the Disabled centre in my electorate or close by and I will try to make contact. I congratulate the member for Kiama on bringing this motion forward today. The one thing we all agree on is that we need to do more to assist and, in a bipartisan way, improve funding for projects such as Riding for the Disabled. As the member for Kiama said, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which has been jointly supported, will be another great move forward to assist people with disabilities. As the member for Wollongong, I place on record my support for Riding for the Disabled. I congratulate the organisation and concur with the comments made by members earlier.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [11.35 a.m.], in reply: I also acknowledge in the gallery Vanessa and Ros Vause, who are here from my electorate today. They were successful in winning a lunch at a fundraiser for a Christian radio station, Pulse 94.1. I welcome them and the Kiama Scouts Group. I also acknowledge in the gallery students from St Johns school in my area and one of their teachers Rachael Tagg, whom I know very well. I welcome them to the Parliament of New South Wales. Today we are debating a motion on Riding for the Disabled, a program in my electorate that gives people with disabilities the opportunity to enjoy equine facilities and pursuits. We are acknowledging the work that has been done through the volunteers to support that particular organisation. What the visitors in the gallery are seeing in the Parliament today is something they will not often see in the media: the bipartisanship that often exists in relation to issues that are important.

**Mr Ray Williams:** It's about to end.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I am advised by the member for Hawkesbury that it is about to end. I am sure if he remains in the Chamber that will certainly be the case. I was heartened by all of the speakers in this debate and I particularly thank the member for Shellharbour, the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Keira, the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Wollongong. The member for Wollongong mentioned that she will seek out a Riding for the Disabled facility in her electorate. Of course, the facility that we have in the electorate of Kiama will be better than anything that could possibly be on offer in Wollongong, but nevertheless I encourage her to seek out a facility in her electorate.

The community should offer these types of opportunities to people with disabilities to give them a new experience. It is a wonderful respite opportunity for their carers, but the carers can also get involved. I agree with the member for Shellharbour; having seen the faces of people who have the opportunity to experience something different drives me forward to continue to seek out more funds for this type of charity which does such good work. I thank my good friend the former Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. I congratulate the new Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, and I take this opportunity to not just request but demand that the Minister visits my electorate to see these facilities in the near future. I hope the Minister reads this in *Hansard* and gets a bit of a chuckle as well. I also acknowledge his appointment as Minister for the Illawarra. I have no doubt that the Hon. John Ajaka will be as supportive as the former Minister was in supporting this charity.

Something that has been echoed by all speakers on this motion is the volunteer effort that is required to run these facilities. The volunteers have done a great job. I was particularly delighted to hear of the work the community did in Wagga Wagga in order to provide transport so that people with disabilities could access this facility. I am sure that the story related by the member for Wagga Wagga will inspire many other members to do similar things in their electorates. I thank members for their contributions and for the comments made about the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I am sure that everyone agrees that the individualised funding model, on which both sides of politics now agree, will mean that people with special needs will have packages tailored to their needs. Rather than being asked to fit within a bureaucratic requirement they will now have the opportunity to get the funding they need, which will mean that projects like Riding for the Disabled will receive greater support and funding.

Long may disability issues that come before this Parliament receive the bipartisanship that we have seen in this place today. People with special needs are the sorts of vulnerable people that should never be subject to partisan politics and I am delighted that we have seen cooperation and continual goodwill between both sides to ensure that we look after a vulnerable group of people who deserve the support of this House. I congratulate Riding for the Disabled and all members who participated in this debate today.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [11.39 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) calls on the Premier and the Minister for the Environment to immediately rule out allowing amateur hunters into national parks during the school holidays;
- (2) notes with disdain that the commencement of amateur hunting in national parks has been flagged for the upcoming school holidays;

- (3) acknowledges that despite the Government's own risk assessment warning of the high risk of someone being seriously injured or killed the Government will proceed with the plan;
- (4) strongly opposes the plans to allow recreational hunting in national parks; and
- (5) calls on the Premier to immediately reverse the decision to allow recreational hunting in national parks.

Since I gave notice of this motion on 21 February 2013 some changes have occurred in relation to recreational hunting in national parks. However, I move the motion of which I gave notice. The Government delayed the starting date and recreational hunting did not commence during the school holidays. Nevertheless, I place on record my absolute disdain at the suggestion that shooting in national parks will be allowed during school holidays. Indeed, I am opposed to the idea of shooting in national parks by amateurs generally. Since day one I have objected to the O'Farrell Government's proposal to allow amateur and recreational hunting in our pristine national parks. I cannot believe that members opposite supported the proposal. My objection is no secret. From the get-go I have been loud and proud in my opposition to the Government's absurd bill to allow recreational hunting in national parks, particularly during school holidays. While the Government may have been forced to back-pedal on hunting in school holidays because it drew such a public outcry, the members opposite were prepared to support it. We cannot allow them to get off the hook because the Government may again try to slip the legislation through—as it has been known to do.

**Mr John Williams:** Here we go; the old mantra.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** I am cautious when the member for Murray-Darling changes his mind because, as we know, he can change it back again shortly. Have members heard anything more ridiculous than allowing amateur shooting in national parks?

**Mr John Williams:** Your phone is ringing.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Eddie's ringing.

**Mr Ray Williams:** Maybe it's Rob Borsak.

**Mr John Williams:** It's the shooters in your electorate ringing you. It's the shooters association.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** Bear in mind the saying, "Ask not for whom the bell tolls".

**Mr Gareth Ward:** It tolls for thee.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** It tolls for thee. Does the Government propose that we suit our children in bulletproof vests and high-visibility gear before taking them on a bushwalk? The South Australian Government recently pulled the pin on a similar program following the death of a person who was killed by an amateur shooter during a goat cull. Although the New South Wales Government had given an undertaking, I understand it has chosen to ignore the findings in its own risk assessment report. The report raised a number of concerns regarding safety and the community's access to national parks, giving the risk rating of injury or death from projectiles as high, confrontation incidents as high or medium, the likelihood of hunter-related confrontations as possible and public authorised officer conflicts as likely.

It is a disgrace that the New South Wales Government has not considered the safety of rangers and members of the public as paramount when reviewing the proposed new laws. Rangers in national parks should feel safe from harm and injury in their work environment, as should families and the general public enjoying our pristine national parks. Imagine being a ranger when amateur shooters are wandering around. Would one like to have that job? Those poor individuals! The next thing we know, rangers' hours will be cut and their conditions will be reduced, and people will be bandying about with guns in national parks. It is ridiculous to expect rangers and other members of the community to wear high-visibility clothing, let alone feel safe in it, if inexperienced and unsupervised hunters are permitted to hunt in our national parks.

According to statistics provided by the National Parks Association of New South Wales, a survey of 1,174 residents conducted in April this year revealed that only 22.8 per cent of residents supported the introduction of recreational hunting in national parks. I am a bit concerned about that 22.8 per cent. The National Parks Association also stated that it disputes the Government's claims that the supplementary pest control program is designed to achieve conservation objectives, and noted that it had found no scientific evidence that showed that recreational hunting on public land in New South Wales has been effective in

controlling any pest animal species. Another real concern with the legislation is that it states that children as young as 12 years old will be able to shoot pest animals in our national parks. That is outrageous and an accident waiting to happen. It is disappointing that the Government was considering restricting visitor access to large areas of national parks. It is public land and people have every right to enjoy it. An even more outrageous suggestion was the use of silencers on guns, which turns the whole notion of hunting in national parks into an even greater farce. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [11.46 a.m.]: I oppose this motion. It is interesting that the member for Wollongong has moved this motion because she has not ventured outside the range of the town hall clock to see what happens on the other side of the Blue Mountains. She should educate herself about what happens. This motion is not based on facts. There will be no shooting in national parks during school holidays. So that wrecks the member's motion. This motion is about creating hysteria. The member for Wollongong would have us believe that there will be shooters in all national parks in New South Wales. New South Wales has 865 national parks, and shooting is allowed in 76 of them.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** There shouldn't be any.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** There should be none.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The member for Fairfield will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate and the member for Wollongong will have an opportunity to reply to it.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** In 2011 and 2012 the National Parks and Wildlife Service removed more than 54,000 feral animals, including pigs, foxes, deer and goats, from our national parks and reserves. If the member for Wollongong visited western New South Wales and looked at the impact of feral animals on adjoining pastoral country she would find that people are dealing with a major problem that is coming out of national parks. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has difficulty containing feral animals. We are engaging in a process of using licensed firearms owners—I think there are 180,000 in New South Wales. Even if members do not like the hobby of shooting, they should consider the people who hold those licenses. Not all recreational shooters are rednecks. It is a hobby and an interest; the last thing they want to do is wreck the recreation for themselves.

I can assure members that recreational shooters will not walk into a national park and shoot willy-nilly because they will be controlled by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The culture of the national parks administration is that it will not allow rednecks into their parks to go shooting. This motion is a beat-up. Currently, the Government is going through a process of devising strict conditions on shooting. State Forests allows shooters into New South Wales forests. Has anyone heard of an accident in the State forests by shooters? It has not happened. This Government is allowing recreational shooters in 75 national parks, which is not much different to what already occurs in our State forests.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** They haven't found the bodies yet.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The member for Cabramatta will remain silent. He will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** The member for Wollongong and others who are causing hysteria have not taken the time to consider the real world. I refer to people who live in the metropolitan area, like the member for Fairfield. He has not moved outside the range of the local town hall clock. He loves being in Fairfield and would not go out west into a national park. He has never been in a national park because he might get his car dirty. The Government is not rushing into this proposal and will run a trial to ensure it works. Recreational shooters are allowed in State forests and a trial will be held in national parks. I can assure members that owners of property adjoining national parks are very pleased that something will be done in relation to feral animals. Unfortunately, feral animals breed easily in national parks because the National Parks and Wildlife Service does not have the facility to patrol such vast areas. Currently, most of the shooting of feral animals in national parks is done by shooters from an aircraft. That raises occupational health and safety issues, so it is not a perfect world.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** What about shooting by a 12-year-old out the side of a helicopter?

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** The only time the member for Wollongong has previously spoken about shooters was when she came out of the woodwork to speak on the ammunition bill. Her motion today and her

misquoting of people are aimed at creating hysteria. This campaign of the member for Wollongong is driven primarily by The Greens who are vehemently opposed to this proposal. I invited the member for Balmain, a member of The Greens, to the southern Riverina to look at the red gum forests. His bosses said he could not go down there because he might hear the truth. They said, "You don't want the truth. We can't work with the truth."

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order: The member for Murray-Darling is being completely irrelevant.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! What is the member's point of order?

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Relevance.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! To which standing order is the member referring?

**Ms Noreen Hay:** I cannot remember. The member for Murray-Darling is talking about The Greens and red gum forests. This motion is in relation to shooting in national parks.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** The member for Wollongong will not let the truth prevail. She just wants to keep the issue rolling along. It is a very good scare campaign which the people of New South Wales are buying. This issue continually makes headlines and they are getting a lot of mileage out of it. They are scaring young kids. There will be no shooting in school holidays. The member for Wollongong has not even had the decency to visit one of the 75 national parks where shooting will be allowed to find out first-hand how this proposal will work.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.53 a.m.]:** I support the motion moved by the member for Wollongong. I refer particularly to paragraphs (3), (4) and (5) of the motion, which state:

- (3) acknowledges that despite the Government's own risk assessment warning of the high risk of someone being seriously injured or killed the Government will proceed with the plan;
- (4) strongly opposes the plans to allow recreational hunting in national parks;
- (5) calls on the Premier to immediately reverse the decision to allow recreational hunting in national parks.

The O'Farrell Government, in all its wisdom, has gone against its own risk assessments and what one would normally consider common sense. It has opened the doors to hunters, both young and old, to roam free within our national parks with dangerous and lethal projectile weaponry. The weaponry I speak of is guns and bows, which will be allowed into our national parks so that these individuals may go hunting. This Government has proposed to allow individuals into our pristine national parks with weapons. These weapons will not be in the hands of trained professionals, who have a range of safety checks in place, but in the hands of amateur hunters and even children as young as 12. We should be celebrating diversity of culture, not gun culture.

Despite the backlash from members of our community and the valid and legitimate concerns of concerned families, the Government has decided to allow recreational shooters into our national parks. The Premier claimed in April 2011, "There will not be a decision to turn our national parks into hunting reserves", and the Minister for the Environment said slowly and with no ambiguity, "Hunting in national parks is not and will not be permitted." Despite all their promises and claims, those opposite may as well put their names down for the 2016 Olympics because their backflips are absolutely amazing.

It is deplorable that the O'Farrell Government does not care what people think or want. It does not care about the danger in which they place the people of this State. It does not care that it will force families away from visiting our national parks. I remind the House that the Government made the ridiculous decision to open up shooting in national parks during school days. The decision to hunt in national parks generally is ridiculous. I call on members of this House to put a stop to hunting in our national parks and to put the safety of the residents of New South Wales before their own agenda.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.57 a.m.]:** I oppose the motion moved by the member for Wollongong. I state from the outset and emphasise once again that the Government is undertaking a trial over three years to allow recreational shooters in 12 national parks. Shooters will not have

silencers on their weapons and children will not be allowed to hunt—shooters must be over the age of 18 years. We have heard a lot of mistruths and lies from the Opposition in relation to this motion. I want to set the record straight and state the true facts. As the member for Wollongong appears to misunderstand the purpose of the proposed program, I will explain why the Government is implementing this new initiative.

The Government is introducing the use of appropriately skilled and licensed community members to assist in the task of controlling feral animals in the 12 national parks in which the trial is being conducted. Just like the rest of the landscape, our national parks suffer from the serious impacts of pests and feral animals. These pests cause great damage to the native species in our national parks, just as they similarly affect our farmers in rural areas.

Over the past two years the National Parks and Wildlife Service has removed more than 100,000 feral animals, including pigs, foxes, deer and goats, from our national parks and reserves. This is in addition to approximately 250,000 poison baits laid targeting foxes and wild dogs. This extensive work uses many techniques, including shooting by National Parks and Wildlife Service staff and contractors. I understand that the preferred management technique of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is to shoot feral animals as opposed to baiting them. This is done in close collaboration with park neighbours and other stakeholders.

The Government has asked the National Parks and Wildlife Service to develop a robust program to involve appropriately skilled and licensed volunteers to help boost the existing National Parks and Wildlife Service pest programs in selected locations. The Minister for the Environment announced on 4 July 2013 that this program will be trialled initially in 12 parks and will be scientifically evaluated to determine its efficacy in supplementing other pest control activities. Under no circumstances will this program operate in any metropolitan area, wilderness or World Heritage area. As I have said before, the trial will be undertaken in only 12 national parks, hundreds and hundreds of kilometres away from the central business district and the Sydney metropolitan area.

The Government has conducted an extensive and thorough risk assessment of this new initiative. This risk assessment and the advice we received about it have informed the Government's recent decisions. The program will operate under the strictest controls in this country. For example, no volunteer shooters can be in a national park unless they are participating in a planned pest control program coordinated by National Parks and Wildlife Service. Furthermore, no person under 18 will be allowed to participate in the program and only firearms that are currently used in National Parks and Wildlife Service operations will be permitted. This excludes the use of bows and black powder muskets. I am happy to dispel the myths, fear, innuendoes and lies being perpetuated by the Opposition.

The supplementary pest control program will be closely regulated and managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. To participate, volunteers will need to have the equivalent skill, experience and accreditation of our professional National Parks and Wildlife Service staff and contractors. All pest control activities will be scheduled and carefully managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. All pest control activities will be announced in advance. The National Parks and Wildlife Service will provide notification four weeks in advance and final confirmation to park neighbours and the public a minimum of 48 hours ahead of any activities. Areas will be closed to visitors on the days of these pest control activities, with appropriate signage and road closures in place.

The program will not be run during school holidays and, as previously announced, it will not take place in metropolitan parks and wilderness or World Heritage areas. The program is not about laissez-faire recreational hunting. It is a serious, targeted program. The motion before the House is based on a misunderstanding. It misquotes and misinterprets what the Government has said. It is no longer relevant, as the Dunn review has been completed and the National Parks and Wildlife Service will imminently finalise its risk assessment. Therefore, the Government strenuously opposes the motion.

**Mr RYAN PARK (Keira)** [12.03 p.m.]: I join my colleague the member for Wollongong in supporting the motion and thank her for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. We are fortunate to have in the Illawarra the State's oldest national park, the Royal National Park, which thousands and thousands of people visit each week. Fortunately, at this stage—

**Mr Ray Williams:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. It has been pointed out that there will be no shooting in the Royal National Park. We indicated clearly where the program will be run. It will not take place in the Royal National Park.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Wollongong, who moved the motion, has conceded that point.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I concede that point as well. I am simply saying that today we have talked about facts and about not misleading this place. For the benefit of members opposite, I will place some facts on the record. On 2 August 2011 the following exchange occurred in this place. I asked the Minister for the Environment the following question:

... what assurances can the Minister give that hunting in national parks—

I did not specify which national parks—

will not be reconsidered in return for the support of the Shooters and Fishers Party for her Government's legislative agenda?

The answer—these are the facts—was:

For the benefit of those opposite [us] I repeat that the policy of the New South Wales Government is clear: Hunting in national parks is not and will not be permitted.

That is what the Minister for the Environment said on 2 August 2011. Let us talk about the facts. Twelve months later Government members come into this place and do a little dance, a shake and a move, and we have a change in policy. Government members have been very critical of the member for Wollongong and other Opposition members who have challenged this policy but, when challenged about what the Minister said, they find it difficult to confront the facts. The facts are simple. The Minister made it very clear at the time that shooting in national parks was not compatible with the large number of tourists who visit the parks. That policy has been changed. It is appropriate for an effective opposition to hold the government of the day to account when it changes its policy. That is what the member for Wollongong is doing today: She is holding the Government to account and making it explain why one thing was said one day in this place and another thing was said the next. It is reasonable to ask for an explanation. It is something those opposite did for 16 years when they were in opposition.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga) [12.05 p.m.]: I cannot let this opportunity pass without making a few relevant points. First, this is an extension of the Labor Party's former policy. There is nothing different except for the fact that we have found this is an effective method of removing feral animals from the environment. Secondly, there is support for the policy. I understand that there has been a lot of dialogue with National Parks and Wildlife Service staff and the Australia Workers Union supports the policy. Importantly, the National Parks Association, which is involved in various aspects of national park management, has endorsed the policy.

Previous speakers have canvassed how the policy will work. They have stated repeatedly that national parks will be excluded from the program and that there will be a pilot. I am sick and tired of members who do not represent rural and regional electorates trying to determine policy for those people who live west of the divide. They are the ones who must suffer the consequences. Just a couple of weeks ago the member for Sydney initiated debate in this place about ducks and duck hunting. The member for Sydney has never inspected a rice paddy and seen the devastation caused by millions of ducks. Another example is the cluster of members from inner-city electorates who ran the debate to stop logging in red gum forests. They did not have to live with the consequences. That is the reality of these kinds of debates and policies that are pursued by members who are not affected by them. I suggest that none of those members have seen the devastation that is caused to Australian wildlife by introduced species and feral animals. They must be controlled.

It was suggested that 50,000-odd feral animals have been removed. But millions of feral animals are devastating the environment. They are killing native birds and causing other environmental devastation yet members oppose the tools that the Government is using to try to eradicate those pests. You do not have to go too far to see the effects of feral animals. If members opposite come to Wagga Wagga I will take them to the national parks. I will take them to the rural areas. Whether it be in western New South Wales or in the Murray-Darling—I will take them anywhere they like—I will show members the kinds of problems that landholders whose properties adjoin national parks have to put up with. They are building electric fences because they cannot keep out the feral animals—the wild dogs, the pigs—that are killing stock and destroying

their livelihood. It really upsets me. Members of Parliament receive a weekly salary courtesy of the taxpayer. Landowners earn their living from stock management and other pastoral activities. Their lives are being affected by feral animals and those opposite refuse to do anything about it.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [12.09 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions of the member for Murray-Darling, the member for Fairfield, the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Keira and the member for Wagga Wagga to the debate. I am slightly upset at the suggestion by the member for Wagga Wagga that recreational shooting in national parks does not affect members like me who do not represent rural electorates. We are all affected when the lives of innocent people are put at risk. The member for Murray-Darling came into this place and argued against the installation of easy access lifts at Unanderra station. He does not have a clue about that issue—he does not even know where Unanderra is. Since the day of my election to this place I have spoken about the hazards of guns. I have experienced tragedy in my life. It is like saying that the shootings in Western Sydney have nothing to do with anyone except the residents of Western Sydney and those who represent them.

**Mr Ray Williams:** Point of order: I am loath to raise the matter of relevance once again, but the member for Wollongong has strayed well beyond the leave of the motion. We do not want to hear about the problems in Western Sydney—which were largely left to us by our predecessors. We are debating this motion and the untruths that have been told by the member for Wollongong. I ask that you bring her back to the leave of the motion.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I remind the member for Wollongong that the motion is about hunting in national parks. It is not about gun crime in Western Sydney.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** I am talking about shooting in national parks and explaining why members like me are affected by this policy. The member for Hawkesbury is taking spurious points of order. I notice that he was not asked to which Standing Order his point of order referred.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The member for Wollongong is canvassing my ruling. She referred to gun crime in Western Sydney, which is not part of the motion. The member will return to the leave of the motion. If she continues to canvass my rulings I will direct her to resume her seat.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** I raised that matter because I was told that members such as me are not affected by issues such as shooting in national parks. The member for Fairfield, who opposes recreational hunting in national parks, made a positive contribution to the debate. The member for Keira put the facts on the record. The Minister said that hunting in national parks would not be permitted and then changed her position 12 months later. The member for Murray-Darling talked about town clocks. Some of us do not live in a town with a single clock in the middle of it; there are many clocks in my electorate. But do not assume that Opposition members do not travel around the State. The member for Murray-Darling said that only 76 parks will allow shooting and the member for Hawkesbury said that only 12 parks will have the trial. It should not be happening at all. Recreational hunters should not be allowed to shoot in our national parks. The Government's own report says that it will not be effective or deliver the outcomes it claims, but the rest of us are expected just to cop it sweet. That is not good enough and I will never accept it.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 19**

Mr Barr  
Ms Burney  
Mr Daley  
Mr Furolo  
Mr Greenwich  
Ms Hay  
Mr Hoenig

Ms Hornery  
Mr Lynch  
Dr McDonald  
Ms Mihailuk  
Mr Park  
Mrs Perry  
Mr Piper

Mr Robertson  
Ms Watson  
Mr Zangari  
*Tellers,*  
Mr Amery  
Mr Lalich



**Noes, 61**

Mr Anderson	Mr George	Mr Rohan
Mr Aplin	Ms Gibbons	Mr Rowell
Mr Ayres	Ms Goward	Mrs Sage
Mr Baird	Mr Grant	Mr Sidoti
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mrs Skinner
Mr Bassett	Mr Hartcher	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mr Hazzard	Mr Souris
Ms Berejiklian	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Speakman
Mr Brookes	Mr Holstein	Mr Spence
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Humphries	Mr Stokes
Mr Conolly	Mr Issa	Mr Stoner
Mr Constance	Mr Kean	Mr Toole
Mr Cornwell	Mr Marshall	Ms Upton
Mr Coure	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Ward
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mr Webber
Mr Doyle	Mr Owen	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Edwards	Mr Page	Mrs Williams
Mr Elliott	Ms Parker	
Mr Evans	Mr Patterson	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Flowers	Mr Perrottet	Mr Maguire
Mr Gee	Mr Roberts	Mr J. D. Williams

**Pairs**

Ms Burton	Mr Bromhead
Mr Rees	Mrs Davies
Ms Tebbutt	Mr Provest

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

**KIAMA HARBOUR NORTHERN WHARF**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [12.28 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) thanks the Minister for Roads and Ports for visiting the electorate of Kiama;
- (2) commends the Minister for his grant to Kiama Municipal Council to construct the northern wharf at Kiama Harbour;
- (3) commends the Kiama Harbour Boat Owners Association and Councillor Mark Way for their consistent advocacy on this issue; and
- (4) sincerely thanks the Mayor of Kiama and Kiama councillors for their partnership in this important project.

I gave notice of this motion in February at a time when there was a great deal of excitement in our community because fishing and boating is an important part of living on the south coast. For many years this was a project that had been left wanting. I received strong representations from the Kiama Harbour Boat Owners Association and in particular my friend Councillor Mark Way, who was passionate about this issue. On 21 January 2013 I joined the Minister for Roads and Ports, who knows the Kiama electorate well, to announce \$212,500 of funding to help expand and upgrade Kiama Harbour. The harbour is a great spot to go boating. The Kiama boat ramp wharf is busy during any time of the year and it is frustrating when there is no room to moor boats. Hopefully, this particular upgrade will assist in resolving that problem. Funding from the Better Boating Program will allow a 40-metre extension of the wharf, which will provide deeper water berthing access for larger boats, improve temporary tie-up facilities for trailer boats and increase the wharf's capacity during tourism events. The project also will help the local charter industry by providing easier access to its vessels. Police and Marine Rescue vessels also will use the extended wharf in helping to make the harbour much safer.

I am pleased that the Kiama wharf extension has the support of the Kiama Game Fishing Club, the Kiama Boat Owners Association and Tourism Kiama, all community organisations that will benefit directly. Indeed, they made direct representations to me as their local member of Parliament. The New South Wales Government's Better Boating Program funding will provide Kiama Municipal Council with 50 per cent of the estimated \$425,000 cost; council will contribute the remainder. As I stated earlier, boating and fishing communities are incredibly important. The Kiama boat harbour is an underutilised asset and I trust this funding will generate future investments into this community jewel. As I mentioned earlier, representatives from Kiama Scouts are in the gallery and their beautiful facility is collocated at Kiama harbour.

I acknowledge the strident and relentless advocacy of Councillor Mark Way, who is well known as the President of Kiama Game Fishing Club. I enjoyed working with Councillor Way in his active campaign to secure this funding from the Minister. Last night I was delighted to host a group of Kiama councillors, my friends and colleagues, the Mayor of Kiama, Brian Petschler, and his wife, Sue; the deputy mayor, Warren Steel, and his wife, Sandra, and Councillor Dennis Seage and his wife, Denise. We discussed this project over dinner. When I made the announcement the mayor said:

This is an important addition to Kiama Harbour Wharf, one which has been in the planning for some time. It will significantly improve the commercial, tourist and emergency service infrastructure available in our area.

He continued:

We have worked closely with local boating organisations and a number of Government agencies in designing and costing this facility. Council thanks the Minister and the member for Kiama for their strong support they have shown towards this grant.

Other projects in Wollongong and Shellharbour that will receive funding under the program include stage one of the upgrade to Berkeley Boat Harbour, the dredging of material next to the boat ramp at Deakin Reserve, and an investigation study for a new jetty or pontoon at the Shellharbour boat harbour boat ramp. I acknowledge and commend the strident advocacy of Shellharbour councillor Kellie Marsh, a great councillor who represents her community exceptionally well and is a hardworking advocate for the Shellharbour community, particularly the Shellharbour boating community. Another project receiving funding is an upgrade of the Ski Way Park boat ramp. Combined with the Kiama wharf extension, these projects mean that the New South Wales Government is investing \$400,500 on boating infrastructure on the South Coast.

For members interested in more information on the Better Boating Program, I encourage them to visit the website [www.maritime.nsw.gov.au/mpd.infra\\_grants](http://www.maritime.nsw.gov.au/mpd.infra_grants). No doubt governments of many persuasions have encouraged boating and fishing in our communities, but Kiama in particular has a close association with boating and fishing. Work on this exciting opportunity at Kiama harbour is now underway. Not only will this generate jobs locally throughout construction, but also it will mean an improvement to this South Coast jewel. One experiences something special driving down Manning Street and looking out across Kiama harbour or up Terralong Street to see this beautiful jewel. My good friend the member for Heathcote agrees with me; I appreciate his support today in the Chamber. Ensuring people can access these facilities and providing the opportunity for boaties to enjoy these facilities is important.

The existing wharf facilities were becoming crowded and cramped. These new facilities will provide the required expansion for locals, tourists and those who enjoy our waterways. I was pleased to take up this issue. I appreciate the hard work Kiama council put into this project. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the hardworking Kiama council staff, particularly its General Manager, Michael Forsyth, and head of infrastructure, Bryan Whittaker, who were integral in putting together this application to convince the Government that it was the best place to allocate funds. We constantly talk in this place about the many priorities of government. On behalf of a grateful community I thank Minister Gay, who is a friend as well as a great Minister, very much for that grant. Minister Gay visits our region frequently to look at the highway upgrade he assisted in delivering and which was an election commitment from me, as well as other projects such as the Kiama wharf extension. Obviously, members of Parliament make election commitments, but for much of the time we fight also for funding for our communities. I campaigned for the Kiama wharf project and this Government delivered. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [12.35 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the debate on this contentious motion of the member for Kiama. I take the opportunity also to pay tribute to Councillor Mark Way, who has campaigned for some 15 years at hundreds of meetings to get wharves on both sides of the Kiama boat ramp. Initially, he had half a win and needed to campaign for a ramp on the other side. Councillor Mark Way took a major campaign to the local member for Kiama trying to persuade him to support the council's position. In fact, councillor Way drafted letters for people to send to the member for Kiama telling them that it was only

the cost of a stamp. Of course, the member for Kiama responded and made representations to the Hon. Duncan Gay, who provided a grant for half the amount. Investment in boating facilities, particularly on the South Coast of New South Wales, is important. In fact, the entire South Coast of New South Wales, including the far South Coast, has some of the most magnificent territory in the world.

Only recently a major funding allocation was announced to establish a wharf for cruise ships in Eden, which is probably one of the prettiest South Coast places in the world. The entire magnificence of the South Coast is undiscovered, travelling from Kiama through to Batemans Bay and all the way to Tathra and Eden. It has remained undiscovered with underinvestment and underutilisation. The New South Wales Government should invest in all of those areas not just for boating but also for tourism because they need investment in jobs and tourist-type activities. I am pleased about this particular investment and also that Kiama council will support it and pay more than \$200,000 towards extending the wharf—more than half the total cost. I question why the council needed to make that contribution bearing in mind that the wharf will be utilised by police and other State facilities. I know the general manager of Kiama council, although I probably have not seen him for more than a decade.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** He used to be your general manager.

**Mr RON HOENIG:** He was never my general manager, but he is an enormously capable planner. I remind the House that only on Monday this week the Minister for Local Government told the budget estimates committee of the other place about his concern for the financial viability of councils. Accordingly, he commissioned all the reviews. Of course, this year Kiama council had to seek a 9.74 per cent rate increase above the rate pegging level from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] to provide for some infrastructure investment. The general manager is capable and would not have requested an increase in rates from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal if he did not have good reason to do so. However, bearing in mind that the Government has just sold the assets of Port Botany and Port Kembla for about \$4 billion, surely it could invest \$200,000 in Kiama. It is small change. Why should such a small council be required to invest that much in a wharf? Upgrading the wharf was the right decision and the local member did well to extract the State's share of funds through the Commonwealth Grants Scheme. However, he should take that further and help the council to obtain the extra \$200,000 that it needs from the State Government because it should bear the burden. That is only fair given the money that it has raised by selling Port Kembla.

**Mr LEE EVANS** (Heathcote) [12.42 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to make a contribution to this debate on the Kiama Harbour northern wharf. The member for Kiama is the most effective member in the Illawarra region because he gets the attention of Ministers and attracts money for projects in his electorate. He has done something extraordinary in bringing together such a diverse group of people. The work on the Kiama Harbour northern wharf is an investment in the future. It will create tourism, employment, fishing and leisure opportunities. The member did not achieve that goal by himself. I commend the Kiama Harbour Boat Owners Association and Councillor Mark Way for their consistent advocacy on this issue and on the fantastic job they did in attracting \$424,000 for the new northern wharf facilities.

I also thank the Minister for Roads and Ports for taking an interest in this project and for providing a grant for the construction of the wharf. Kiama Harbour is an integral part of the local area. Those who have visited it would understand that it is the heart of Kiama. As the member for Kiama said, it is a jewel and a tourism honeypot with attractions such as the blowhole. I also sincerely thank the Mayor of Kiama and Kiama Municipal Council for their work in ensuring the completion of this important project. Without that effort and the work of the member for Kiama, the project would not have come to fruition. He has a skill in bringing together people who normally would not work together to ensure the common good. This is one of a long list of his achievements and I commend him for his work in delivering the Kiama Harbour northern wharf. I hope that the member for Wollongong and I can achieve the same in our electorates.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [12.44 p.m.], by leave: I, too, acknowledge the terrific work done by the member for Kiama. It has taken him only two years to ensure the completion of the Kiama Harbour northern wharf. I also congratulate Kiama Municipal Council and the Minister for Roads and Ports on supporting the community. The fact that it has taken 15 years to achieve this goal is a disgrace.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [12.44 p.m.], in reply: What a shame that after reflecting on councils the member for Heffron has scurried out of the Chamber before I have had a chance to respond. I cannot let his reflections pass unchallenged. The member for Heffron, who was the mayor of Botany Bay, lectured Kiama

Municipal Council about fiscal responsibility. His five budgets as mayor were deficit budgets and the last one he handed down prior to entering this place after the by-election following Kristina Keneally's resignation projected a \$5 million deficit. I take exception to his comments about Kiama Municipal Council. Under his stewardship it took Botany Bay City Council an average of 136 days to approve a development application. For him to lecture Kiama council about how it should spend money is like the Greeks lecturing this Government about fiscal responsibility. I will not accept that from the member for Heffron.

Kiama Municipal Council was excited by the opportunity the grant offered. Successive governments have encouraged partnership funding, and I hope it continues. Members who understand business and the community know that money must come from somewhere. If it is not provided by the State Government, what can councils do? Do they increase taxes or reduce services? We must cut the cloth to suit the garment. I am sorry the member for Heffron poured cold water on this exciting announcement. His contribution was in complete contrast to the positive contribution made by the member for Heathcote.

*[Interruption]*

I did not catch what the member for Wollongong said, but I am sure I would not have understood it even if I had. I strongly support investing money in local communities such as Kiama because I have seen the positive impact first-hand. This year's budget allocated \$60 billion and to see just a little of that at work in our communities is wonderful. I have seen the enthusiasm of the Kiama Harbour Boat Owners Association about the extension of the wharf. I have also seen the excitement of councillors Mark Way, Brian Petschler, Warren Steel and others who witnessed the announcement. Members should embrace this project. I hope that we continue the tradition of partnered funding and partnership arrangements, particularly with regard to boating. I commend the Minister for Roads and Ports for his contribution and thank him for allowing me to make the representations that secured those funds.

I make absolutely no apologies to the member for Heffron or anyone else for ensuring that the Illawarra is given the funds it needs to get on with projects such as the upgrade of Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital, Wollongong Hospital and the Princes Highway. We are finally seeing real investment and real work after 16 years of neglect by the Labor Government. I am delighted about the progress we are making. I am also delighted that the member for Heffron made a contribution to the debate, but I am even more delighted that my friend the member for Heathcote made a contribution. Of course, I am always delighted that the member for Wollongong is on the Opposition benches—long may she stay there.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## **EDUCATION FUNDING**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [12.48 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) condemns the Premier and the Minister for Education for the \$1.7 billion cuts to the education budget, which are now directly impacting on students and parents;
- (2) notes with concern that students are being asked to provide reams of paper, tissues, whiteboard markers and other consumables to their school to get them through the year;
- (3) calls on the Minister to rule out parents having to clean their children's school as a result of the reduction in school cleaners' hours; and
- (4) demands the Government stop penny pinching and provide school children with the appropriate resources to help them with their education.

I state my condemnation for the \$1.7 billion cuts to the education budget by the O'Farrell Government. I was moved to bring this motion because of the far-reaching effect that such a massive cut is having on teachers, staff, students and parents. Some schools have asked students to supply basic items such as reams of paper and tissues to help make ends meet. In September 2012 the O'Farrell Government announced cuts of \$1.7 billion to the education and training portfolio with 1,000 jobs to go from the schools portfolio, including \$201 million to be cut in 2013.

The impact of these funding cuts include cuts to staff in State and regional education offices. The Government has proposed cutting 361 education experts from 54 locations, including south-west, Western Sydney, Hunter, Central Coast, Illawarra and regional New South Wales. Teachers support resources were cut, including in the drug and alcohol prevention unit, curriculum support and school sports unit. Special needs funding was cut at 272 schools as part of the Every Student, Every School reforms from the beginning of term 3, 2012. The higher school certificate advice line was scrapped and cleaning hours were cut back in 601 schools. There has been a budget cut of \$8.7 million from the Board of Studies; \$14.3 million from the 2012-13 school infrastructure budget, and by \$266 million in 2011-12.

The program to replace school demountable buildings has been axed. The program to replace unflued gas heaters in schools has been scaled back. For the first time in more than a decade, school recurrent funding has gone backwards in real terms. Eight hundred TAFE teachers and staff are to be sacked. TAFE fees have increased by 9.5 per cent, and subsidies have been eliminated for many courses. Concession fees for TAFE courses have almost doubled from \$53 to \$100. Commercial fees charged for fine arts courses were \$1,432 but are now \$7,700 to \$10,500. The joint group training scheme that helps to secure jobs and training for 8,000 apprentices has been axed.

**Ms Gabrielle Upton:** Point of order: This motion is about school funding. It is not about vocational training funding in the broader educational sector.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** It is about the cuts.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro):** Order! The member for Wollongong is being relevant to the motion before the House.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** Thank you. The scheme helps to secure jobs and training for 8,000 apprentices and trainees at a cost of \$1.7 million a year. Smart and skilled reforms commencing in 2014 risk decimating TAFE, particularly in regional New South Wales. More TAFE cuts have been foreshadowed to fund the Gonski reforms, but the details are yet to be announced. Preschool hours have been cut to 15 hours a week at public preschools and fees have been introduced for the first time. Yesterday's estimates hearing revealed that the 1,800 job cuts from school support offices and TAFE previously announced in September 2012 are still proceeding. Some school support office jobs were supposed to be spared following the Gonski agreement, but those jobs are still being cut.

The school support jobs already cut include more than 200 jobs from State and regional office support with a further 259 jobs to be lost from regional offices in 2013. This will have a significant effect on the support and resources available to principals and teachers in the Illawarra. The Government admitted it broke its election commitment to provide an additional 900 literacy and numeracy teachers. Instead, it will provide 900 full-time equivalent resources, which will provide less than 700 teachers if rolled out in the same way as it is currently being rolled out. The Illawarra was promised 60 additional literacy and numeracy teachers. So far it has been allocated only 7.5 full-time equivalent positions and we do not know if they are teachers or resources. The Government has included Campbelltown as part of the Illawarra.

Areas such as curriculum support have been cut to the bone with only one curriculum consultant per subject for the whole of New South Wales, and this is with a new national curriculum being introduced next year. The Government has admitted its school capital works/infrastructure budget is inadequate. If we compare the New South Wales contribution to capital works with schools to the Labor Government's contribution, we see the O'Farrell Government cut the budget by 42 per cent in its first year from \$623 million to \$357 million and it has not increased it since then. The New South Wales budget contribution does not include money from the Commonwealth or money from the Bureau of Education and Research. As a result, things such as unflued gas heaters and demountable buildings are replaced slowly or not at all. School security fences are not being built. Labor's figures show that in its last four years of office 89 fences per year were installed. The O'Farrell Government has installed only 13 security fences in 15 months between April 2011 and 30 June 2012. Yesterday we were informed they would install only 59 fences this year, which is a massive reduction. However, I was pleased to hear that the Better Schools Plan, or Gonski school funding agreement, was agreed on 23 April 2013. The Labor Opposition has supported the school funding reform since day one. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON** (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.55 p.m.]: I strongly oppose the motion before the House and address my comments to the school system, which is the focus of the motion before the House. First and foremost, it is important to debunk the myths that we are having meted out today.

The Government has undertaken a major spending program for the New South Wales education system, and there is no penny-pinching in our schools, which is what the member for Wollongong would have us believe. It is not only about the spend, which is something that the Labor Government is really good at. It is about reform to the education system, to get good educational outcomes for our kids.

Labor does not have a good track record for execution, but this Government is doing both. There is the spend and then the spend behind the policies that will make a difference to our kids in the schools. First and foremost, as the Minister for Education has made clear when he announces any reforms, it is about the children. It is not about the teachers, only to the extent that teachers provide great education for our children in the schools. It is not about the unions, it is not about the bureaucrats. The reform of this Government is about the children and what is best for them.

I remind the member for Wollongong that some of our work is about catching up on the backlog caused by years of neglect by those now in opposition. The Labor Government failed our children. Let us look at the facts on the education spend. A record \$13.83 billion was invested in education in this State in the 2012-13 State budget. That is an increase of \$383 million from the 2011-12 State budget under the previous Government. Over four years, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government will invest more than \$53 billion in education compared to \$46 billion invested in the last four years under Labor.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** You are a joke.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro):** Order! The member for Wollongong will come to order. The member for Vacluse will be heard in silence.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** The allocation for education training in early childhood has increased by \$524 million on last year's revised expenditure under this Government. In 2013-14, capital expenditure is estimated at \$530 million. It will include five new schools for this State: Spring Farm, The Ponds, Strathfield, Crows Nest and Sydney's lower north shore. Regarding the upgrade or refurbishment of schools, \$205 million is available for 47 continuing major capital works projects and \$221 million for minor capital works projects in schools and TAFEs. Unless the member has been asleep for a little while, of course, she would know there has also been the recognition in our budget for the signing of the National Education Reform Agreement with the current Government. That is going to deliver—

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. My motion sets out quite clearly—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro):** Order! The member for Vacluse is being relevant to the motion before the House. The member for Wollongong will resume her seat.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** What is the National Education Reform Agreement, which we signed up to this year, going to do for our education system, particularly the school system in New South Wales? There will be \$5 billion of additional school investment during the 2014 to 2019 period. Reform has been the important focus of this government. Reform is about the great teaching-inspired learning, which we heard the Minister announce this week; Local schools, Local Decisions, and the literacy and numeracy action plan. The Opposition is just wrong when it talks about this, because Local Schools, Local Decisions is empowering all schools to make decisions in the interests—

[*Interruption*]

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro):** Order! The member for Wollongong will have an opportunity to reply to the debate. She will remain silent.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** Local Schools, Local Decisions is addressing what this motion is criticising. It empowers local schools to make their decisions in the interests of their students. It is allowing schools to make decisions about pens, whiteboards and all those things that schools should be making decisions about, for themselves. It will have a direct, positive impact on our students and parents in a way that is best. As for the assertion that parents are having to clean up their children's classrooms, let us get the facts straight. The Opposition has never let the facts get in the way of a good story but the current cleaning contracts, as the member for Wollongong knows, were negotiated by the Opposition when it was in Government, in February 2011.

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

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE****Report: Report on the Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits April 2011-September 2011****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson) [1.00 p.m.]: It is my privilege to present the report entitled "Report on the Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits April 2011-September 2011". This report examines six audits conducted into the effectiveness of cautioning for minor cannabis offences; government expenditure and transport planning in relation to implementing Barangaroo; Two Ways Together—New South Wales Aboriginal Affairs Plan; transport of dangerous goods; improving road safety: speed cameras; and the prequalification scheme: performance and management services.

The purpose of the committee's reviews is to follow up on action taken by agencies in response to recommendations in the Audit Office performance audits. As part of the follow-up the committee questions agencies about their response to the recommendations and, if required, conducts public hearings to examine witnesses. The committee's examination is designed to test action taken on all performance audits in order to maintain a high level of scrutiny of the agencies under review. Concrete outcomes of this process have demonstrated the value of following up on the Auditor-General's report recommendations. With some noted exceptions, the committee is generally satisfied that agencies are meeting their obligations and implementing the Auditor-General's recommendations. This has been partly due to the work and diligence of the committee in pursuing the agencies concerned to elicit further responses on issues of concern.

The committee has made 10 recommendations to New South Wales Government agencies to address ongoing issues. A key theme from the reviews was the monitoring of effectiveness and the collection of data. The committee found that the Cannabis Cautioning Scheme, the Aboriginal Affair Strategy, the use of speed cameras and the prequalification scheme warranted enhanced monitoring and reporting. The committee found that inadequate action was being taken in relation to the mandatory aspects of the Cannabis Cautioning Scheme, when offenders are issued with a second caution and fail to contact the helpline. This review also recommended that all New South Wales police officers receive appropriate training on dealing with juvenile offenders.

I would like to make some further comments on the Cannabis Cautioning Scheme. The scheme saves substantial court and police costs and is often seen as a fairer way of dealing with cannabis misdemeanours. However, under the scheme, counselling is mandatory for repeat marijuana offenders, but only 38 per cent of second-time offenders actually undertake counselling. When they make no apparent effort to seek help there is no government agency follow-up. One may well ask, "Why not?" because there should be. While we do not want a nanny state, and people need to take personal responsibility, as a community we should better help to educate and rehabilitate users. The law on cannabis cautioning should be reasonably enforced, but if we do not want to enforce it then we should change it. Allowing people to ignore the law undermines respect for the whole legal system. To speak bluntly, as it stands the scheme is a farce.

Finally, I record my appreciation for the assistance provided by the Auditor-General and the Audit Office staff. I note that the Auditor-General will be retiring in September. There will be an appropriate occasion hosted in this Parliament to mark his retirement. I put on record that he has been an outstanding Auditor-General. He will continue to serve for another month, and I will make more, full comments in due course at that function. I would also like to thank my fellow committee members and the secretariat staff for their assistance in this inquiry process and the preparation of the report which I have spoken of.

**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. 39/55****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [1.06 p.m.]: I speak on Legislation Review Digest Nos 39/55 and 40/55. I take this opportunity to acknowledge my fellow committee members, the chairman and the member

for Myall Lakes, the member for Parramatta, the member for Rockdale, the member for Swansea and our colleagues from the other House, Mr David Shoebridge, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps. I also commend the hardworking committee staff and thank them for preparing the digests. We have three back-to-back weeks of Parliament and this will certainly be a busy time for the committee staff. , I refer to the last digest before the winter break, which considered several bills, including the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013. I note that the committee raised some reservations regarding the rights, liberties or obligations being unduly dependent upon insufficiently-defined administrative powers, namely a lack of clarity. It stated:

The Committee notes that listing "any other Act that amends this Act" rather than listing the name of each of those amending Acts limits the clarity of the Schedule outlined above. The Committee has a preference for the name of each Act being listed to avoid this lack of clarity. As the list relates to the regulation making power pertaining to provisions of a savings or transitional nature, and recognising that the proposed insertion ensures that the Schedule is comprehensive, the Committee makes no further comment on this issue.

The second bill worth noting from that digest was the Protection of the Environment Operations Amendment (Illegal Waste Disposal) Bill 2013. The committee raised concerns regarding the bill trespassing on personal rights and liberties, in particular the strict liability offence. It noted:

The Committee notes that the maximum penalties for an offence under proposed section 144AB include a monetary penalty of up to \$250,000 for individuals or imprisonment for two years, or both.

**Ms Robyn Parker:** Who illegal dump asbestos and building materials.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK:** I assure the Minister that I support the bill, given that Mr Hanna illegally dumped in my electorate. I continue the quote:

The Committee notes that the proposed offence will only apply to repeat waste offenders. Nevertheless, the Committee considers that a term of imprisonment is a significant penalty for committing a strict liability offence and therefore refers this issue to Parliament for further consideration.

I note that both sides of the House supported that bill. The committee also reviewed the Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children Attending Child Care Facilities) Bill 2013 and found that the bill trespassed on personal rights and liberties in relation to privacy. I quote from the digest:

The Committee notes that the Bill may require the disclosure of sensitive medical information that may interfere with the privacy of the child. However, the Committee is also aware of the broader public health requirements of ensuring maximum vaccination coverage, and ensuring the integrity of any exemptions granted, including exemptions relating to medical contraindications. The Committee makes no further comment.

The Port Assets (Authorised Transactions) Amendment Bill 2013 was reviewed this week. Interestingly that bill was rammed through the Parliament before the winter recess and did not make the Legislation Review Digest at that time. I make the comment that it is always preferable to review legislation before it is rammed through the Parliament. I quote from the digest:

The Committee notes the Principal Act excludes compensation rights, which may impact on the rights and liberties of individuals. The amendment Bill extends the Principal Act to a new port, Port of Newcastle.

*[Time expired.]*

**Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Robyn Parker and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

## **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 40/55**

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

**Pursuant to standing orders debate postponed and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**



**COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES****Report: Outsourcing Community Service Delivery—Interim Report**

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

**Pursuant to standing orders debate postponed and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr John Barilaro) left the chair at 1.15 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

**SENATE VACANCY****Resignation of Senator the Honourable Matt Thistlethwaite**

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** I report the receipt of the following message from Her Excellency the Governor:

MARIE BASHIR  
Governor

Office of the Governor  
Sydney, 14 August 2013

Her Excellency the Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly a copy of a despatch dated 9 August 2013, received from the President of the Senate, notifying that a vacancy has happened in the representation of the State of New South Wales in the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia through the resignation of Senator the Honourable Matt Thistlethwaite which occurred on 9 August 2013.

The Senate  
Canberra  
9 August 2013

Your Excellency

Pursuant to the provisions of section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, I notify Your Excellency that a vacancy has happened in the representation of the State of New South Wales through the resignation of Senator the Honourable Matt Thistlethwaite on 9 August 2013.

Yours sincerely,  
John Hogg  
President of the Senate

**SENATE VACANCY****Joint Sitting****Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard agreed to:**

That:

- (1) the House meet the Legislative Council for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator the Honourable Matt Thistlethwaite; and
- (2) a message be sent informing the Legislative Council of the resolution and requesting the Legislative Council to fix a time and place for the joint sitting.

**Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.**

**QUESTION TIME**

*[Question time commenced at 2.20 p.m.]*

**SYDNEY WATER CONTRACTS**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Premier. Why did the Premier ignore the advice of the Solicitor-General and bypass Cabinet in the awarding of a \$100 million Sydney Water contract to Australian Water Holdings in a decision which ultimately benefited Edward Obeid and Liberal Party donor Nick Di Girolamo?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** When I woke up at 4.30 this morning and listened to the news I knew that today it was on. I knew that today I would finally be asked my first question in question time this session. I never thought that it would be a question in which every statement is incorrect. Every statement is, indeed—if I can use that "f" word in front of Sharon Doyle—false. Let us go to the facts. Back in the 1990s, under a former Government, an agreement was entered into with a corporation then called, I think, the Rouse Hill Infrastructure Corporation—now known as Australian Water Holdings—to provide water infrastructure in the growth area of north-west Sydney.

As I understand it, the dispute that has been going on—a dispute that existed when we came into office, a dispute that was ongoing under those opposite—related to whether or not the agreement to provide that water infrastructure was open-ended. We were approached by Australian Water Holdings, which wanted us to intervene in some way. As I said to the media earlier today, there is no problem in having meetings with people; the problem is the actions that are taken after those meetings. To get a clearer understanding of that, look at the meetings engaged in by Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald whilst they were members of Parliament and the decisions they took as a result.

What goes to the heart of the allegations raised in the Leader of the Opposition's question and the allegations made in the *Daily Telegraph* today is the action we took. We received a copy of a letter that had been sent to the Chairman of Sydney Water, Tom Parry—he was appointed by members opposite and he has done a good job while he has been there—from the then chairman of Australian Water Holdings. Attached was a copy of a letter to the shareholding Ministers of Sydney Water seeking our intervention in the commercial dispute between Sydney Water and Australian Water Holdings. That letter was referred to the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, who then wrote to Australian Water Holdings, referring to the Solicitor General's options and advice. I will table these letters so that the Leader of the Opposition can read them to his heart's content, but he will not find what he is looking for. The director general said, in part:

The decision by Sydney Water as to which of the other options it wishes to take is now a matter for the Board of Sydney Water taking into account the legal advice before it and the neutral evaluation report of the moderator, and having regard also to its obligations to act commercially and to deliver value for money to its customers and the State as its shareholder.

In the circumstances, the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet told Australian Water Holdings:

... it is considered that shareholder intervention—

in other words, intervention by the Minister or the Premier—

in the commercial dispute between Sydney Water and AWH of the kind proposed in your letter is inappropriate and unnecessary.

I have arranged for a copy of the letter to be sent to the Chairman of Sydney Water. So there is no scandal or inappropriate action here. There is nothing here to match what we saw in the Independent Commission Against Corruption reports that were tabled 15 days ago. What we have here is not even news because the fact that I had a meeting with Australian Water Holdings was reported by Fairfax media on 27 February this year. This State has scandal starvation. People got so used to scandals by members opposite that they are always looking for more. We also have the "McClymont effect".

Kate McClymont, last year's New South Wales Journalist of the Year and this year's investigative journalist of the year, has shown that through dint of hard work and by piecing the facts together one can produce splashes and stories. There is no story and no splash here because the homework has not been done. There is no connection between the commercial decision made by Sydney Water and any meeting with the Government. I seek leave to table the letters received by me on 29 August 2011 and the letter sent to Australian Water Holdings on 27 September 2011 by the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Is leave granted?

**Mr Michael Daley:** There is no provision for it but we are happy to receive them.

**Leave granted.**

**Documents tabled.**

## JOBS AND INVESTMENT GROWTH

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN:** My question is directed to the Premier. What are the barriers to jobs and investment growth in New South Wales?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The one-word answer to that is: the Labor Party. Or is that a two-word answer?

**Mr John Robertson:** That's three words. Do your accounts like that, Mike, and you'll be right.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** It is good to see that the Leader of the Opposition agrees that it is the major barrier to infrastructure investment in this country. I will not just stick with one or two words. After all, it is Thursday. I will elaborate on the answer. Yesterday I spoke of the terrific news for this State and our economy which came from the independent forecasters BIS Shrapnel. It reported that construction activity across New South Wales and associated jobs will rise by about 25 per cent by 2017, at a time when every other State is going backwards in civil construction. BIS Shrapnel said that New South Wales will lead the nation when it comes to construction growth, and it cited our decisions to commit to and fund major infrastructure projects, such as the North West Rail Link, WestConnex, Pacific Highway upgrades and Sydney light rail, as the key drivers for this result.

As a former executive director of the Civil Contractors Federation, the member for Baulkham Hills will be delighted, as will former members of the federation. But we cannot simply sit back and rest on our laurels. We need to redouble our efforts and work hard to ensure that these sorts of results continue; we need to continue to grow investment and increase the jobs that investment makes available to people across the State. That is why for the past two years we have sought to push for a cut in so-called green tape. Everyone understands red tape. For the benefit of the people in the gallery, green tape is the duplication of environmental approval processes by Federal and State governments. This duplication by the Federal Government delays project approvals, holds up the start of projects, increases project costs and slows the economic benefits and jobs that flow from these projects. The Business Council of Australia President, Tony Shepherd, said:

... maintaining Australia's current system of environmental assessments and approvals, where duplicated process and multiple agencies exist, will risk the investments that are critical to the strength and resilience of the economy.

To be fair, we initially made progress on this matter with the former Federal Labor Government. In March 2012 at a forum organised with the Business Council of Australia, in conjunction with the Council of Australian Governments, there was a determination to end that duplication and green tape, particularly around major projects. Over the course of last year we worked with Federal officials towards a single assessment and approvals process that, whilst maintaining strict environmental standards, eliminated the costly and time-consuming duplication of distinct Federal and State systems that operated for projects.

Last December I took to a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments a proposal for a single assessment and approvals process operating through accredited New South Wales laws that had the support of Federal officials. I was ready to sign the agreement with the Federal Labor Government when I went to Canberra last December. But instead of an agreement that six months earlier the Federal Labor Government said it wanted, Labor capitulated to The Greens again. We were rebuffed with no real reasons given. The Greens got their way and Labor put political interests ahead of jobs, investment, economic growth and, ultimately, the interests of the nation.

I had renewed hope that we might be able to reach agreement with Kevin Rudd, with all of his talk about kick-starting the economy. I wanted to believe the spin that Kevin Rudd had changed. But what happened when the rubber hit the road? Mr Rudd was no different from his predecessor or from his last incarnation as Prime Minister. As usual with Labor, all that spin was simply false. The interests of the economy and jobs went out the back door while the interests of Labor preferences from The Greens were escorted through the front door. The only side of politics that can be counted on to stand up for jobs and investment are the Liberals and Nationals, not just in this place—as demonstrated by that BIS Shrapnel report yesterday—but also our Federal Liberal and Nationals colleagues in Canberra. [*Extension of time granted.*]

After the Federal election I hope to be dealing with Tony Abbott on tackling green tape.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** How much is he going to give you for the North West Rail Link?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** There is far more love on this side of the House for Tony Abbott than there exists on that side of the House for Kevin Rudd. We know how crook the New South Wales Labor Party is when another general secretary tries to get into the Senate for security. Tony Abbott's commitment to reducing green tape is very clear. In April 2012 the Federal Liberal and National parties announced the creation of a one-stop shop for environmental assessment and approval processes for major projects. I welcome that commitment from Tony Abbott. It is common sense to put jobs and investment first while at the same time protecting the environment. It is a win-win situation. It can deliver jobs and boost the economy and it can ensure that we maintain the highest possible environmental standards across this State.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: Earlier the Premier tabled, by leave, documents which he said were relevant to the first question asked by the Opposition. I note that the Solicitor-General's advice is missing. Why is the Premier hiding the Solicitor-General's advice? Is he going to table the Solicitor-General's advice?

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order.

### SYDNEY WATER CONTRACTS

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Premier. In an earlier answer the Premier said the problem was not the meetings, it was the actions taken afterwards. In light of that statement, will the Premier explain why Sydney Water changed its previous position and awarded a \$100 million contract to Australian Water Holdings within one month of Greg Pearce's mate Richard Fisher and Liberal Party donor Bruce Morgan being appointed to the board of Sydney Water Corporation?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Firstly, as to the slur in the second part of the question, two people on a board does not a majority make. If the Leader of the Opposition is criticising the person he appointed as chairman, Dr Tom Parry, he should say so up-front. This reminds me of the tactic used by the Leader of the Opposition on every issue. A few months ago we raised concerns, which were pursued by the Minister for Fair Trading, about the anti-vaccination lobby. What did the Leader of the Opposition promise? He promised a private member's bill. What did he deliver? Nothing. Last weekend I read that he has promised to introduce legislation about the superannuation of corrupt members of Parliament. What action have we seen from him this week on that matter? Nothing. The Leader of the Opposition is good at throwing out the lines but he is not good at doing the homework to back up those lines or following them through.

**Mr John Williams:** Maybe they told him to shut up.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Murray-Darling to order for the first time.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Premier is not answering the question. He has failed to table the Solicitor-General's advice. He is not entitled to attack the Leader of the Opposition. He should fess up and table it or sit down.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I say again in simple language for those opposite, the commercial dispute that existed when we came into office that had been the subject of discussions on that side of politics, which included some of the most curious individuals ever to sit in a ministry in the history of this State, was about whether—

**Mr John Robertson:** After the meetings with Nick you ended up with two new directors.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked the question. The Premier will be heard in silence.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Do you know how many directors there are on Sydney Water?

**Mr John Robertson:** Yes, I do.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** How many?

**Mr John Robertson:** There are six.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Thank you, once again absolutely exposed. I say again, two directors do not a majority make on the Sydney Water board. I say again in simple language for the Leader of the Opposition, the commercial dispute that we inherited and we allowed Sydney Water to work its way through was around whether the original agreement with what was first called Rouse Hill Infrastructure Corporation and then became Australian Water Holdings was open-ended. In other words, it had no time limit. In settling the dispute, Sydney Water put a time frame on it, as is made clear by the letters tabled.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Where is the advice of the Solicitor-General? Why don't you table that?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I am glad for the assistance of the member for Maroubra. The Solicitor-General's advice he refers to is advice sought by a former Treasurer, Michael Costa.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Correct.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** He is a former chairman of Australian Water Holdings. A document that belongs to the former Government is for you, not me, to release.

**Mr John Robertson:** It hasn't stopped you before.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will listen to the Premier's answer in silence.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: On this issue I do not believe the Premier. He referred to the Solicitor-General's advice. Why will he not table it?

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order. I place the member for Maroubra on three calls to order. The House will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition asked the question. Opposition members should extend the Premier the courtesy of listening to his answer.

**Mr John Robertson:** We would like an answer.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question asked.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The Crown Solicitor's advice was their Crown Solicitor's advice that was requested in 2008 by their State Treasurer. As the letter from the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet makes clear, it identified three options. As the letter from the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet makes clear also, Sydney Water was pursuing one of those options and that was how they resolved the matter.

### **BUSINESS EVENTS INDUSTRY**

**Mr MATT KEAN:** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government growing the State's business events industry?

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** We know about the member's time in the hot pink office and her trips to Cannes. All I can say is: A leopard does not change its spots.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: How is that flat bed in the pointy end of the plane, Andrew?

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order. The Deputy Premier has the call.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The member for Canterbury should watch out if she sees Robert Borsak in the corridor. That is enough jocularity. The Government understands that business events, including exhibitions

and conventions, inject hundreds of millions of dollars into the New South Wales economy and help to grow jobs. That is why the Liberal-Nationals Government is determined to grow this vital industry further. We are getting on with the job of delivering new, world-class convention, exhibition and entertainment facilities at Darling Harbour, known as the International Convention Centre—or ICC Sydney.

The redevelopment of the 20-hectare precinct at Darling Harbour marks the biggest transformation of this area in 25 years, and when complete it will comprise Australia's largest integrated, and best convention, exhibition and entertainment facilities, along with new hotel, residential and public facilities. The new premium hotel is the first major hotel to be built on a greenfield site in the central business district since before the 2000 Olympic Games. Lend Lease recently released the proposed design of the hotel for community feedback. This development was welcomed by industry, with Patricia Forsythe, Executive Director of the Sydney Business Chamber, saying:

A major new hotel is a key part of making sure this project is a success.

Tourism and Transport Forum Chief Executive Ken Morrison said:

As the first major quality hotel in Sydney in over a decade, this will be a significant addition to our tourism offering and will help to generate activity and expenditure in the visitor economy.

In the meantime, we have developed a Sydney-wide solution to ensure that the New South Wales' events industry continues to prosper during the construction of the new facilities, including the delivery of an interim exhibition facility at Glebe Island. Adjacent to the Anzac Bridge at Rozelle, Sydney Exhibition Centre @ Glebe Island will be the home of Sydney's major trade and consumer exhibitions from February 2014 until the end of 2016, when the new state-of-the-art facilities will be opened at Darling Harbour. The facility will offer up to 25,000 square metres of high-quality, fully enclosed and air-conditioned space to house exhibitions, with pop-up cafes and restaurants for visitors. I am pleased to inform the House that early works commence this week to prepare the site for the first event in February next year.

I take this opportunity to thank the industry, particularly the Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia and its chief executive, Joyce diMascio, for working collaboratively with the New South Wales Government to ensure that the best results are delivered during the transition period. Opening up Glebe Island for exhibitions will also give Sydneysiders a rare chance to set foot on a part of the city they have probably never had the opportunity to see. But all this progress has not stopped Labor from resorting to its usual dirty tricks. First, we had the Leader of the Opposition—also known as "Curly"—unsettling exhibitors by talking down the interim facility. Then we had Moe, Labor's Leichhardt lad Darcy Byrne, also talking down the exhibition industry yesterday by claiming that there would be no transport to the site. Wrong, wrong, wrong! Despite his hysterical claims, the Government will be providing transport to Sydney Exhibition Centre @ Glebe Island, with ferry and bus services running on event days.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** Sit down, Larry!

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** You have just identified yourself as the third Stooge, mate. You are Larry.  
[*Extension of time granted.*]

As usual, Labor is talking down industry—and without the facts. Not only will there be transport to the interim facility but also there will be car parking on site, a taxi stand and drop-off zones.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** How good is that? A taxi stand!

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** This bloke said there would be no transport. If you want to defend him then go for your life, Larry. So we have had two of the Three Stooges, Curly and Moe, talking down our events and exhibition industry. We eagerly await Larry's contribution. Meanwhile, this Government is continuing to support our State's business events industry.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CASEWORKER VACANCIES**

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. I refer to the Minister's previous claim that there has never been a freeze on hiring or backfilling caseworker positions on her watch. If this is the case, why did she feel the need to take the extraordinary step of issuing a written direction to her director general on 7 March to fill vacant caseworker positions?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I certainly have not misled the Parliament, and I think the illogicality of the question demonstrates its falsity. I would certainly not be sending written instructions to countermand an original instruction of my own. The point is there was never, ever an instructed freeze on caseworker positions, and I have never misled the Parliament.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. An Opposition member asked the question. Opposition members will listen to the Minister's answer in silence.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** As I said on Tuesday, and I quote from *Hansard*:

I have at all times made clear that caseworker numbers constantly move up and down. In March this year there were, by headcount, 2,182 community services caseworkers .... Headcount has always been the measure used; it was what the former failed Minister used in this place and referred to on many occasions. It is also the measure published in the annual report.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** Transparency drives reform and, until now, I have relied on audited annual figures provided by the department because they are the most reliable. That has always been the case, and my position has been clear. We are reforming the child protection system and it is important the department ensures that all vacancies are filled because we need to make sure that children—

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. We have heard the same answer three times this week. The question was why the Minister issued a direction to the director general.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Why did you do that? It's extraordinary.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** It is called leadership. That is what you do when you are not happy: You issue an instruction. The member for Canterbury should be ashamed. The Opposition has a dodgy deputy leader who shops dodgy point-of-time data and launches opportunistic attacks to undermine the great job that our caseworkers are doing in seeing more children more often. In the process, she misleads the public. I will give the House an example of the dodgy data. The member for Canterbury claimed today that the percentage of children seen in the metro south-west region is approximately 15 per cent. She is wrong. The real number provided by my department yesterday is 20.1 per cent. It gets worse for the former failed Minister.

**Mrs Barbara Perry:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The Minister is not answering the question. I ask that she be brought back to the leave of the question, which was about why she wrote the letter.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I have answered the question. I ordered it because there were vacancies and I wanted—

**Mr John Robertson:** There was a freeze and you had to cover your tracks.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** There was no freeze. The Parliament needs to understand the sort of Opposition we have and the way that Opposition members play with the truth. This is just today's example. The former failed Minister said that 15 per cent of children in the metro south-west region were seen. If we compare her dataset for the metro south-west region with the same dataset she used as Minister for Family and Community Services let us see what happens. In January 2010, under the member's watch, the percentage of reports seen was 5.24 per cent. That is one-third—by her own count—of the number of children that caseworkers are seeing today. So the member can shop her dodgy data all she likes, but in the end she failed—

**Mrs Barbara Perry:** Point of order—

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Has the Minister concluded her answer?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Bankstown to order for the first time. I call the member for Murray-Darling to order for the second time.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH:** I address my question to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister inform the House what the Government is doing to improve access to public transport?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I thank the member for Coogee for his question and for his interest in all matters relating to public transport. Before I became transport Minister I made it clear that making public transport more accessible is a key objective of this Government. Every person should have the right to access public transport. Although it has had a lot of catching up to do, the department is working as hard as it can. This was something the former Government talked about but it only managed two easy access upgrades per year. In contrast, this Government has established a \$770-million public transport access program. As I speak today about 100 projects of varying scale are part of that program, and that is something this Government can be proud of. A number of projects are underway and many have been completed. The Government takes great pride in the progress it has made.

A number of improvements have been undertaken at train stations, and I have announced those stations that will receive upgrades. Stations that have received upgrades include Cardiff, Albion Park, Gerringong, Singleton, Hamilton, Jannali, Ourimbah, Sydenham, Picton, Newtown, Casula, Glenfield, Lurnea, Minto and Sefton. In addition to all these station upgrades, the Government is building new commuter car parks at railway stations, including Granville, Canly Vale, Padstow, Glenbrook and Mount Druitt. I am sure the member for Mount Druitt is appreciative of the new car park. I have an important announcement to make to the House: The Government is beginning work to install a lift at Redfern train station. This will be the first time that trains at Redfern are accessible to people in a wheelchair. A tender is being issued for a concept design to allow lift access to one platform at Redfern that will allow customers to access all trains travelling via Central train station.

The Government accepts that at the moment it is virtually impossible for people in wheelchairs to access any trains at Redfern, and it is extremely difficult for those with prams or mobility issues. This is a good start to ensure that all customers can access the train network at Redfern. It is in stark contrast to the Opposition's record. From 1993 to 2005, when those opposite were in government, there were 25 different studies and reports done on Redfern train station. The former member for Heffron—and former Premier—said in a letter to constituents in 2007 that she was:

... continuing to work with the state government for the upgrade of Redfern train station.

But it never happened. One of my predecessors, Minister Campbell, told the media in 2010 that the then Government had a few options for Redfern train station and it was considering which plan to implement. For 16 years when those opposite were in government there was inaction. Redfern train station is a major hub on the rail network, with 50,000 customers passing through the station every day. Considerable planning is being undertaken regarding the future of this important precinct and the rail corridor. The Government will keep the community involved and informed as the design work progresses. The planning and delivery of these projects stands in stark contrast to the approach of those opposite, who announced a lot of things and did nothing. The former Government promised many things to the vulnerable in our community and delivered nothing.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** Those opposite had 16 years to improve accessibility and they failed. They managed only one or two upgrades per year when they were in government compared with the 100 projects that this Government is running currently. I am proud of the work this Government has done to date to improve accessibility and I thank all members who have made representations about this important issue. I also thank the many stakeholders who write to me on a daily basis about these important matters. I assure them that this Government cares about their issues, of which accessibility is one. [*Time expired.*]

## DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CASEWORKER VACANCIES

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** I direct my question to the Minister for Family and Community Services. I refer to the claim she made during the budget estimates hearings that she had not had a briefing or consultation with Ernst and Young since March. If Ernst and Young was not commissioned to write a report on caseworker vacancies until May, why did the Minister meet with the company in March? And could you do this without screeching?



**Mr Brad Hazzard:** Point of order: That question clearly affronts the standing orders. I ask that the member be directed to restate the question in an appropriate form.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** In that case I expect to be heard in silence.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I ask the member for Canterbury to restate the question, omitting the contentious words. I am sure that the original question would have been answered appropriately.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** I direct my question to the Minister for Family and Community Services. I refer to the claim she made during the budget estimates hearings that she had not had a briefing or consultation with Ernst and Young since March. If Ernst and Young was not commissioned to write a report on caseworker vacancies until May, why did the Minister meet with the company prior to March?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I refer the member to the answers I provided yesterday and on Tuesday. However, I repeat, on 7 March 2013 I wrote to the director general instructing the department to the fill budgeted caseworker vacancies and to develop accurate measurements of frontline capacity that did not rely on dodgy figures and of the effectiveness of that intervention for publication by the end of the year. On 10 May 2013 the department—it was not me—commissioned Ernst and Young to help support the department's work analysing workforce data and implementing my directive to publish caseworker numbers. As I have said, the Ernst and Young report is one of several inputs that the department is using to improve how it manages its staff and delivers that transparent reporting. It is not the only piece of information being used and it has had several iterations. As I have said already, Ernst and Young has confirmed in writing that it has not discussed any details in the draft reports with me or my office.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question referred specifically to meetings between the Minister and Ernst and Young prior to March this year, not post March, and not to the report or who commissioned it.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I have not met with Ernst and Young to discuss this work at any point. I certainly have not commissioned any research or reports from Ernst and Young; that was done by the department and it has been confirmed in writing. Ernst and Young has not consulted directly with me or my office to prepare the report. I was briefed on Ernst and Young's role on 13 August. This question gives me the opportunity to remind the House that, despite the allegations made by members opposite, we are vastly increasing the number of children being seen. Under the former Minister's watch, according to her own numbers, it was five in 100—

**Mr John Robertson:** Tell us why you met and what you discussed with Ernst and Young prior to March.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I did not meet with Ernst and Young before March about this work either.

**Mr John Robertson:** That is not what you said.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I have just said it.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question asked.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** Since the request was made for transparent publication of casework data—not the dodgy stuff that the former failed Minister has been pushing, but real data—

**Mr John Robertson:** It was your data.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** No. That is why on 7 March I instructed the director general to improve the way we collect data and to prepare for the publication of transparent, reliable and rigorous data by the end of the year, and he committed to do that. As part of that process Ernst and Young was commissioned by the

department in May. Decisions about how it publishes transparent data are a matter for the department and I take its advice when it is presented. It is up to the department to decide the approach it will take, to work through the issues and to deal with the complexities. It is certainly not a matter for the Minister or her office to address. I repeat: I did not meet with Ernst and Young before or after March.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Are you sure?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I am absolutely sure.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I direct the member for Canterbury to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 3.05 p.m.]*

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I suspect that this persistent questioning indicates the line the member for Canterbury was running when she was Minister. She probably made deals with people to commission reports.

**Mr John Robertson:** You should be careful.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** Not nearly as careful as the Leader of the Opposition should be. There is no doubt that the Ernst and Young report was commissioned by the department to assist it in producing accurate, rigorous data—which will be published for the first time in this State because members opposite never had the nerve to do so.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Opposition members have pursued this line of questioning all week. If they had been listening they would know that the Minister has answered the questions appropriately.

#### PAROLE SYSTEM REVIEW

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** I direct my question to the Attorney General and Minister for Justice. What has Justice Wood's report regarding a parolee who allegedly assaulted a woman at Hunters Hill in June found?

**Mr GREG SMITH:** I thank the member for her question and her interest in this important issue. As members will remember, in an incident that caused great concern, a man on parole allegedly assaulted a woman at a Hunters Hill bus stop in June. He is now in custody, and will stay there. I took immediate action and commissioned a series of inquiries. I asked Corrective Services NSW to review the supervision of all sex offenders on parole, I asked former Justice James Wood, AO, to inquire into the Hunters Hill case, and I had already commissioned the Law Reform Commission to conduct a thorough review of the parole system. Justice Wood was asked to inquire into the circumstances of the man's release on parole, the history of State Parole Authority reviews and recommendations, the conditions imposed when parole was granted and the enforcement of those conditions.

I can now inform the House that Justice Wood has delivered his report. The report details the man's custodial history, various parole applications and his supervision while on parole. It also includes extensive details of his psychological and medical assessments, which form part of parole applications. At the time of the man's release on parole in August 2012, the State Parole Authority found that it was in the public interest that he be released under supervision before his sentence expired because he would otherwise have been released without supervision. His release was supported by the Serious Offenders Review Council and the Probation and Parole Service based on a range of assessments and reports.

The State Parole Authority heard that he had a good support network, would be living with his parents, had a job, would be attending group counselling and planned to continue his education. Justice Wood found that after his release the man had complied with all the requirements of the parole order and his case management until the date of his alleged offence. He also found that Corrective Services NSW had complied with its policies and procedures for the management of offenders in the community and that his supervision had been at a level appropriate for the assessed risk. Because the parolee is now facing further charges, it could be prejudicial to release Justice Wood's report, which also contains confidential information about his medical history and psychological assessments. It is in nobody's interests for the Government to prejudice any legal proceedings by releasing this report.

However, to be confident that the processes surrounding the granting and revoking of parole in this State are, and continue to be, the best in the country, in March I commissioned the NSW Law Reform Commission to review our parole system. Community safety must be paramount in these decisions, and we will be looking closely at any recommendations made in this review. Since the time the man was granted parole, this Government has introduced legislation allowing for the continued detention or extended supervision of violent offenders. This now gives authorities an option for dealing with offenders who should not be released without supervision at the end of their sentence. It can be applied to offenders six months before their sentence expires. This legislation might now apply to this offender.

As I mentioned, I also instructed Corrective Services to review the supervision of sex offenders on parole, and I have previously released details of this review. In short, it found risk assessments for all offenders had been completed and that case management plans reflected the risk assessments. It also found that the frequency of contact with parolees had increased by at least 16 per cent over the past three months. However, the review also identified the need to increase the verification of information provided by parolees, and to update case plans in a timely manner. I have been assured by the Corrective Services commissioner that these remaining issues are being addressed as a matter of urgency.

### **MINING LEGISLATION**

**Mr GREG PIPER:** My question is to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. Given widespread concern at the proposed amendments to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007, and the short period of two weeks allowed for public submissions, will the Minister reopen consultation to allow the issues to be fully considered by the public?

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his interest in what clearly is a complex and challenging area of public policy. Perhaps, of all members in this place, he would understand the balance. He represents thousands of workers from coalmines in his area. His electorate also contains the intrinsic natural beauty of Lake Macquarie. He should have a good understanding—I think he has a good understanding—of the balance. As I said, this is a complex area. It comes as we consider—

**Mr John Robertson:** Are you saying that you need a hand?

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The Minister does not need assistance answering the question.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** The Leader of the Opposition is interrupting at the moment. Perhaps he should have interrupted Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald a little earlier rather than simply taking the benefits of the high office of leading a group of 20 in the wilderness for the next few years. We have to remember that mining has contributed much to this State. It continues to contribute over \$20 billion a year to the State's economy in production. It continues to provide about 120,000 direct and indirect jobs. Many, as I said, are in the Lake Macquarie region. Mining contributes about \$1.4 billion in royalties. That is the equivalent of 14,000 nurses, for example. So, it is a serious issue for Government to make sure that the policy balance is struck appropriately.

A few weeks ago, on behalf of the Government, I put on exhibition changes to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007. I stress that this does not relate to coal seam gas. It relates to mining. The coal issue is the major issue for us at the moment. The purpose of these legislative amendments is to give greater clarity to decision-makers—chiefly, the Independent Planning Assessment Commission and the Land and Environment Court—about the policy controls and standards the Government believes should be applied to the assessment of coalmining projects in New South Wales. The proposed amendments will introduce a number of what are known as non-discretionary development standards to give clarity and consistency to the regulation of environmental and amenity impacts which, if met, cannot be used to refuse a mining proposal. This gives greater certainty to the community and industry that publicly stated development standards in relation to issues like air quality and noise impacts are consistently applied in the assessment process and that appropriate safeguards are upheld.

In addition, the Government is proposing to amend the legislation to introduce a new requirement that decision-makers must give due consideration to the significance of a mineral resource when weighing up the range of factors that inform the assessment and determination of major mining proposals. Currently, there is no explicit requirement for consent authorities to consider the economic significance of a resource in their

assessment. This has been identified, through decisions of the Planning Assessment Commission and the Land and Environment Court, as a gap in the policy framework that applies to mining. These amendments will ensure that proposals that have major economic benefits are given appropriate consideration against other matters.

However, the policy cuts both ways. For mining proposals considered insignificant, this factor will weigh heavily against the proposal. It is important that the State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007 is only one of several matters that a consent authority must take into consideration under section 79C of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979—which are known as the heads of consideration. It is entirely a matter for the consent authority to determine the weight given to the State environmental planning policy against those other heads of consideration outlined in section 79C, which include the provisions of any environmental planning instrument; the likely impacts of the development on environmental, economic and social grounds; the suitability of the site for development; any submissions made in accordance with the Act or regulations; and the public interest.

Despite what has been erroneously claimed by some in the environment lobby and The Greens, the amendments to the State environmental planning policy do not preclude the consent authority from potentially refusing an application on any of the grounds I have just outlined. This is an important point and reflects the balance the Government has brought to all of the issues in the planning portfolio, and has been fundamental to restoring the confidence that was lost under the Labor Government—with the likes of Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald. The changes to the policy have been on public exhibition. We have received a number of submissions from a range of stakeholder groups and individuals, and I thank them for their interest in this area of public policy. We believe we have the balance right. I assure the member for Lake Macquarie that all of those submissions will be taken into account. At this stage the Government is of the view that once we have been through the submissions we can consider whether it is necessary to have further public exhibitions but we believe there have been quite a number and it should be appropriately dealt with through that process.

### SYNTHETIC DRUGS ACTION

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** My question is to the Minister for Fair Trading. What action is the Government taking to combat the issue of synthetic drugs?

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** I thank the member for Castle Hill for his question and applaud his hard work and strong leadership on this important matter. Synthetic drugs are a scourge on our community. You only need to read reports of drug-fuelled violence in areas such as Newcastle to understand the extent of the problem. In May this year, the parliamentary Legal Affairs Committee, led by the member for Castle Hill, tabled its report on synthetic drugs after some 18 months of deliberation and research. The report's 13 recommendations were a call to arms and signified that there was more—much more—that could be done to protect our community from these dangerous substances.

In an immediate response to those recommendations, the O'Farrell-Stoner Government took decisive action. The day after the report was released Fair Trading investigators were in the field, visiting traders and gathering important intelligence on these deadly products. On 9 June the O'Farrell-Stoner Government imposed an interim product safety ban under section 109 of the Australian Consumer Law. With our intelligence gathering complete and the ban in place, NSW Fair Trading commenced the largest coordinated compliance operation in the agency's history. It was codenamed Operation Salt. Operation Salt was a triumph. It was the first of its kind, using newly developed consumer protection strategies and tactics. New South Wales took the lead and forced the Commonwealth into supporting our action.

Over the four days from 11 June to 14 June this year, more than 100 Fair Trading officers blitzed over 1,000 retailers in various metropolitan and regional locations across New South Wales, advising traders of the product ban. From Bondi to Bourke, 94 per cent were found to be compliant with the ban. Follow-up visits of problematic traders followed through phase two of Operation Salt. I can inform the House that prosecution action is currently being considered against two traders found to be selling banned products following execution of search warrants by Fair Trading. In New South Wales we know that the problem does not exist only over the counter. I can inform the House that New South Wales Fair Trading has taken unprecedented action in this area, causing six internet sites that were selling these dangerous products to be shut down.

The ban is working. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government's action is proving decisive, ground-breaking, leading and successful. The number of cases of traders found to be stocking banned products has dried up. Most significantly, however, we are now seeing reports from police and emergency services personnel of a significant downturn in synthetic drug-related crime and medical cases.

**Mr John Robertson:** Do you wear a mask when you're on your silver horse?

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! This is an important question. The Minister will be heard in silence.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** This is very important. I note the comments of the Leader of the Opposition and I have one thing to say to him: Somewhere out there is a tree tirelessly producing oxygen so he can breathe. He owes it an apology. Throughout the month of June, Newcastle police were facing daily call-outs to people suffering violent and psychotic episodes after consuming synthetic drugs. In July, following the imposition of the ban, police had only two call-outs. The commander of the Newcastle City Local Area Command, Superintendent John Gralton, highlighted the impact that our action is having. He stated:

It is a significant drop and we're no longer being taken away from our core business.

The trend continues in Tamworth, where ambulance paramedics are advising that call-outs to people with synthetic drug-related issues have all but disappeared since we acted. Mr Ray Tait, a paramedic in Tamworth, has stated on the record that since synthetic drugs have been banned instances of abuse have died off. He said that the ban was working to stem cases of injuries or overdoses. The Government acted quickly and decisively to protect the community from these substances and it has been successful. We are now developing a long-term approach to ensure that the successes we have made are maintained. NSW Fair Trading, the NSW Police Force, the Department of Attorney General and Justice and NSW Health are in the process of formulating this approach. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government will strengthen the necessary legislative frameworks. We will soon announce our comprehensive whole-of-government approach to tackling this issue. In the meantime, New South Wales can rest assured that our action and vigilance will continue.

**Question time concluded at 3.21 p.m.**

## **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

### **Report**

**Mr Jonathan O'Dea**, as Chair, tabled the report entitled, "Quadrennial Review of the Audit Office 2013", Report 10/55, dated August 2013.

**Ordered to be printed.**

## **PETITIONS**

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

### **Callan Park**

Petition calling on the Government to implement the Callan Park master plan and establish the Callan Park and Broughton Hall Trust, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

### **Coal Seam Gas Mining**

Petition calling for a royal commission inquiry 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 **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

### **Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002**

Petition opposing amendments to the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

**Pig-dog Hunting Ban**

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

**Duck Hunting**

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

**Inner-city Social Housing**

Petition requesting the retention and proper maintenance of inner-city public housing stock, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

**Container Deposit Levy**

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

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

**Bellinger River District Hospital**

Petition requesting funding for repairs to the Bellinger River District Hospital, received from **Mr Andrew Fraser**.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SENTENCING OF CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT OFFENDERS****Establishment****Motion by Mr BRAD HAZZARD, by leave, agreed to:**

That:

- (1) a joint parliamentary select committee be appointed to inquire into and report on:
  - (a) whether current sentencing options for perpetrators of child sexual assault remain effective; and
  - (b) whether greater consistency in sentencing and improving public confidence in the judicial system could be achieved through alternative sentencing options, including but not limited to minimum mandatory sentencing and anti-androgenic medication.
- (2) in examining this issue the committee should have regard to:
  - (a) the current sentencing patterns for child sexual assault;
  - (b) the operation of the standard minimum non-parole scheme;
  - (c) the experience of other jurisdictions with alternative sentencing options; and
  - (d) the NSW Law Reform Commission's Report 139 on Sentencing.
- (3) the committee is to consist of seven members as follows:
  - (a) four from the Government, three being members of the Legislative Assembly and one a member of the Legislative Council;
  - (b) two from the Opposition, one being a member of the Legislative Assembly and one a member of the Legislative Council; and
  - (c) one crossbench member of the Legislative Council.
- (4) the members shall be nominated in writing to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and Clerk of the Parliaments by the relevant party leaders and the crossbench members respectively by Friday 23 August 2013. In the absence of any agreement concerning the membership of the committee the matter is to be determined by the relevant House.
- (5) that at any meeting of the committee four members shall constitute a quorum, provided that the committee meets as a joint committee at all times.

- (6) the committee have leave to make visits of inspection within the State of New South Wales and other States and Territories of Australia
- (7) a message be sent to the Legislative Council requesting the Legislative Council to agree to the resolution and to fix a time and place for the first meeting.

### **TOTALIZATOR AMENDMENT (EXCLUSIVITY) BILL 2013**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr George Souris, read a first time and printed.**

**Mr George Souris tabled, by leave, a copy of the deed poll executed by TAB Limited on 19 June 2013.**

**Document tabled.**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS** (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [3.27 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Totalizator Amendment (Exclusivity) Bill 2013 will give effect to an in-principle agreement that the Government reached with Tabcorp to extend the TAB's totalisator licence exclusivity for a further 20 years. These arrangements are a demonstration of the Government's commitment to supporting the viability of the racing industry, which provides significant social and economic contributions to the State. TAB Limited holds a 99-year licence issued in March 1998 to conduct off-course and on-course totalisator betting in New South Wales. New South Wales racing clubs also hold 99-year licences for the conduct of on-course totalisator betting, with the TAB undertaking this by agreement on behalf of the racing clubs.

These licences included a 15-year exclusivity period, which expired on 22 June 2013. During the exclusivity period TAB has been the sole holder of an off-course totalisator licence in this State. Under the Totalizator Act 1997 TAB was required to enter into commercial arrangements with the New South Wales racing industry as a pre-requisite to it being granted a licence. Those statutory obligations recognise that at the time of the privatisation of the TAB the racing industry was and continues to be recognised as a major contributor to the State's economy. The extension of the exclusivity arrangements underpins the estimated \$1 billion annual contribution to the State's economy and the 50,000 jobs the industry supports, many in regional areas.

The major source of funding for the New South Wales racing industry comes from the Racing Distribution Agreement between the TAB and the three racing codes. Approximately \$250 million per annum is distributed to the racing industry in New South Wales. The TAB totalisator pool also ensures that the New South Wales public has access to a strong and stable wagering service which offers totalisator and fixed odds on racing and sport. At present the TAB provides this through approximately 2,130 agencies, which consist of TAB retail outlets and outlets in clubs and hotels, as well as its on-course, internet and telephone services. The TAB Racing Distribution Agreement is an important element of a viable funding model for the New South Wales racing industry. It enables the optimal development, operation and marketing of the New South Wales racing industry and its race meetings.

Wagering on racing also makes a significant contribution to the State's economy, with about \$157 million being received by the Government in wagering taxation per annum to be utilised for public services such as health, education and law enforcement. With the view to providing both continuity and revenue certainty on behalf of the racing industry and to securing an important revenue stream for the people of New South Wales as a whole, the Government examined options for the future provision of totalisator betting within the State. Recognising the object of the continued effective and productive operation of the New South Wales racing industry, it was decided to enter into negotiations with Tabcorp for the extension of the TAB's totalisator licence exclusivity. These negotiations were undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers under the guidance of an inter-agency steering committee.

The steering committee was chaired by the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing and comprised representatives of that agency, Treasury, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Crown

Solicitor's Office, and was assisted by an independent probity adviser. Throughout the process PricewaterhouseCoopers provided ongoing legal assistance while the Crown Solicitor's Office also helped guide the Government's consideration of this significant matter. On 20 June 2013 the Government announced that it had reached an in-principle agreement with Tabcorp for it to pay \$75 million to extend the TAB's exclusive licence for on-course and off-course totalisator activities, including through club and pub outlets and their existing fixed odds activities across the State, for a further 20 years until June 2033. The \$75 million payment from Tabcorp will consist of an initial payment of \$50 million, with the balance to be paid over 10 years from 2024.

The bill before the House will enable the Minister to accept the offer made by the TAB to enter into the deed entitled "NSW Exclusivity Deed", which is set out in attachment 1 to the deed poll that I have tabled. The legislation will also amend the Totalizator Act 1997 to extend the exclusivity period that applies in relation to the granting of totalisator licences to the TAB and racing clubs for an additional 20 years. The proposed amendments will also extend the exclusive right of racing clubs to conduct their on-course totalisators. This maintains existing arrangements whereby racing clubs are able to enter into commercial arrangements with the TAB to provide that service so that all can continue to benefit from maximising from the pooling of on-course and off-course activities.

The existing commercial arrangements between the TAB and the racing industry, including the operation of the on-course totalisator, will not be affected. The amendment to extend the exclusivity of racing clubs to conduct on-course totalisators was at no cost to those clubs and indeed the industry as a whole. Racing across the three codes—thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing—provides enjoyment and a recreational outlet for many more thousands of enthusiasts throughout New South Wales. This recreation is accessible to everyone in the community, with many racecourses across New South Wales. It can be accessed through experiencing the colour and atmosphere while attending race meetings, viewing television coverage or listening to broadcasts over the radio. Following a champion racehorse such as Black Caviar adds to the enjoyment; for many, it is having a bet on their favourite runners.

In New South Wales we are fortunate to have the best of the best to showcase the racing industry. We have the living legend Bart Cummings. His training achievements are unlikely to be matched. We have leading jockeys in the industry in Hugh Bowman and Nash Rawiller, with the two currently locked in a fierce battle to win the Sydney Jockeys Premiership. I wish both Hugh and Nash the very best in what will be an interesting race to the title this year. New South Wales is also home to many of the best and most talented trainers. We are fortunate to see horses trained by the likes of Gai Waterhouse and Chris Waller. We see them frequently at race tracks throughout the State. It would be remiss of me not to mention our award-winning racing journalists, with Ray Thomas deserving a special mention for showcasing the New South Wales racing industry. In New South Wales we are ready to embark on a golden age of racing with Royal Randwick Racecourse undergoing a \$150-million facelift to provide world-class facilities.

Carnival days are important events to promoting Sydney as the destination to visit at those times. The Autumn Carnival is recognised as the premier racing in Australia at that time. Nevertheless, it is also true that racing is community based and all race clubs must have non-proprietary status, which means that profits must be directed back into racing if they are to be registered by a racing controlling body. Whether a race club is a city, provincial or country club, each has its carnival day and each has its showcase that demonstrates local pride and tradition. This sense of community identity represents much more than the simple economic contribution. The popularity of racing to a broad spectrum will be well demonstrated this weekend. This Saturday is the San Domenico Stakes at Rosehill Gardens, which is an important lead-up race for three-year-olds for the Spring Carnival, and Narromine Turf Club conducts its Gold Cup on Sunday.

Racing events are part of the group of leading sports that capture the community to provide both entertainment and employment opportunities. They are an important part of the social and economic fabric of the Australian community. Confirming the on-course and off-course totalisator licensing exclusivity arrangements with the TAB by way of legislation will allow for the continued viability and growth of the racing industry in this State and will be a win for the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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



**SECURITY INDUSTRY AMENDMENT (LICENCES) BILL 2013****Second Reading****Debate resumed from 19 June 2013.**

**Mr NATHAN REES** (Toongabbie) [3.37 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Security Industry Amendment (Licences) Bill 2013. I indicate that the Opposition will not oppose the bill. The object of the bill is to amend the Security Industry Act 1997, the principal Act, to resolve an inconsistency between the principal Act and Australia's international trade commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services, otherwise known as GATS, by allowing persons who hold certain visas entitling them to work in Australia to apply for a licence under the principal Act. The bill also makes minor and consequential amendments to the principal Act and to the Firearms Act 1996. Essentially, the bill proposes to allow holders of a valid temporary visa that permits employment in Australia, other than a student visa or a working holiday visa, to apply for a New South Wales security industry licence. These applicants will be in addition to Australian citizens and permanent residents who can already apply. I am advised that only a small number of additional people are expected to become eligible for a security licence via this means.

None of the higher risk, manpower-related security occupations, such as security guards or crowd controllers, appear on the current Consolidated Sponsorship Occupation List. Under this bill, a small number of persons will become eligible to come to New South Wales independently to work in the security industry. Applicants and their dependants who are aged 16 years or older, whether or not they are migrating, must provide police certificates from each country in which they have lived for 12 months or more over the past decade. Foreign service suppliers who apply for a security industry licence under the legislation will be subject to probity checks similar to those used for Australian citizens, permanent residents and applicants for other visa categories, including 189 and 190 subclass visas. The proposed procedure is that they must provide the NSW Police Force with a police certificate from each country in which they have lived for 12 months or more over the previous 10 years since turning 16 years of age. They will also need to pay for the cost of the police certificate or certificates and any required translation costs and obtain verification of the certificates from the relevant authorities in Australia representing other nations.

The procedures aim to ensure that public safety is maintained in New South Wales whilst at the same time making sure we meet our obligations under the national General Agreement on Trade in Services commitments. This is largely an administrative bill. It is proposed to amend section 48 to include a regulation-making power that allows updates to the guidelines from time to time. Those updates will be subject to the usual procedures relating to allowance of amendment of regulations to enable the ongoing amendment to reflect the contemporary standards and changes in the industry. The other minor amendment is to the Firearms Act. That amendment rectifies the unintended consequence of the amended Act in that the definition of "direct supervision" was not carried over to the Firearms Act in 1996 in relation to holders of provisional firearms licences. The bill makes it clear that public safety remains the priority. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [3.40 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the Security Industry Amendment (Licences) Bill 2013. The main purpose of the Security Industry Amendment (Licences) Bill 2013 is to address the inconsistencies with Australia's commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services. The bill also will make minor amendments to the regulation of the security industry. Under the existing free trade agreements, Australia is committed to accord treatment to service suppliers of its free trade agreement partners no less favourably than it accords to its Australian service suppliers.

Currently, under section 15 of the Security Industry Act 1997 only Australian citizens and permanent residents can obtain a security industry licence in New South Wales. With the changing nature of the industry, enormous pressure has been placed on companies and organisations to find people to undertake security work. This may restrict the ability of foreign suppliers, individuals or companies to engage in security-related activities in New South Wales. This is inconsistent with Australia's General Agreement on Trade in Services commitments. The most watertight way to address this inconsistency is via legislative amendment to residency and citizenship requirements. Namely, the bill proposes to allow holders of a valid temporary visa that permits employment in Australia, other than a student visa or a working holiday visa, to apply for a New South Wales security industry licence. These applicants will be in addition to Australian citizens and permanent residents who can already apply.

The website of the NSW Police Force contains a full list of current requirements in relation to new security licence applications and defines who is eligible to apply for a security licence in New South Wales. At

present, most of those requirements will remain. They must be 18 years of age or over; be a fit and proper person to hold the class of licence sought; have the relevant competencies and experience required; have successfully completed the required training, including assessment; and be competent to carry on the security activity to which the proposed licence relates, including the changes in the bill before the House. Under the heading, "Frequently asked questions", the website lists the documents that need to be provided to prove that the applicant is an Australian citizen, a permanent Australian resident or a New Zealand national.

Only a small number of additional people are expected to become eligible for the security licence via these means. Citizenship and permanent residency requirements were introduced in 2002 as a result of the Bali bombings. However, as mentioned by the member for Toongabbie, the proposed amendments are not expected to impact adversely on public safety in New South Wales. The majority of these persons will have been nominated and sponsored by business to work in Australia on a temporary basis in an occupation listed in the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship's Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List, also as mentioned by the member for Toongabbie. Under this bill, a small number of persons will become eligible to come to New South Wales independently to work in the security industry. For example, a locksmith—an occupation that is recognised on the Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List—may become eligible to live and work permanently in New South Wales via a skilled independent visa, a subclass 189 visa. Dog handlers or dog trainers who are licensed under the Act may also become eligible to live and work permanently in New South Wales if nominated by the New South Wales Government via a subclass 190 visa.

Foreign service suppliers who apply for a security industry licence under the proposed provisions in the Act will be subject to a probity check similar to those for Australian citizens, permanent residents and applicants for certain visa categories under subclass 189 or subclass 190 visas. As previous speakers have said, those checks and balances for new security licence applications will remain. Failing to address inconsistencies in our national General Agreement on Trade in Services commitments may make Australia vulnerable to dispute action in the World Trade Organization. In examining this issue, priority was given to identifying a solution that imposes reasonable administrative requirements on overseas applicants while ensuring that probity standards in New South Wales can be maintained with no threat to public safety.

The bill also incorporates miscellaneous amendments to the Act and to the Firearms Act 1996 that are consequential to the Security Industry Amendment Act 2012. These amendments aim primarily to streamline licensing processes. Specifically, section 14 (2) (b) of the Act provides that an application form for a security licence must be accompanied by such information and particulars as prescribed by the regulation, as I have already highlighted. The particulars prescribed by the regulations are freely available on the NSW Police Force website and include evidence of the applicant's competence and experience. The bill amends the Act to clarify that this information does not need to accompany the application form but must be lodged prior to the granting of a licence. This will expedite the granting of a licence as application processing and probity checking will be able to be done in parallel with training.

Sections 35 (2) and 36 (3) inserted by the amending legislation refer to security licences that have been lost, stolen, destroyed, defaced or mutilated. It is proposed that these provisions will be expanded beyond deliberate acts to include "or become illegible". This allows for the smooth process of those applications to ensure that it is done in parallel with applications. This acknowledges that a licence may simply become illegible over time and exempts the person from producing the damaged licence if an application form has been lodged for a replacement. The amendment will ensure alignment with clauses 22 and 23 of the Security Industry Regulation 2007. Section 48 of the Act provides for the making of regulations in respect of a number of issues, including methods and practices relating to uniforms and vehicle signage for the security industry.

These amendments will be welcomed by the industry, particularly those organisations that have difficulty obtaining the required number of security personnel for events across this great State—such as licensed venues, bachelor and spinster balls or race club meetings. It also proposed to make a minor amendment to the Firearms Act 1996 to rectify an unintended consequence of the amended Act in that the definition of "direct supervision" was not carried over to the Firearms Act 1996 in regard to holders of provisional firearms licences. The changes proposed in this bill will ensure that New South Wales meets its obligations under the General Agreement on Trade in Services while ensuring that public safety is maintained and also opening up employment opportunities for those who wish to work in the security industry far and wide. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.49 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Security Industry Amendment (Licences) Bill 2013. The security industry in New South Wales makes a

significant contribution towards keeping this State safe and plays a vital role in a wide range of businesses and government agencies. There are approximately 4,000 security firms of various sizes operating in the New South Wales security industry across different sectors and occupations. Master licensees range from large multinational companies to sole traders. Employing suitable personnel and effectively regulating the industry is important for public safety. People licensed to guard or install security equipment at critical infrastructure sites and other high-risk premises and people working as crowd controllers and bodyguards should be of good character.

New South Wales leads the way nationally in regards to regulation and administration of the security industry. The proposed amendment to the Security Industry Act 1997 in the bill before the House only applies to people entering Australia on valid work visas, excluding student and working holiday visas. These visas primarily apply only to skilled workers who have been nominated and sponsored to work in Australia in one of the occupations listed in the Commonwealth's Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List [CSOL]. None of the higher risk, manpower-related security occupations such as security guards or crowd controllers are on the Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List.

As such, the proposed bill only applies to certain elements of the technical sector of the security industry such as security equipment technicians, sellers, locksmiths and dog handlers. The NSW Police Force Security Licensing and Enforcement Directorate administers the security industry in New South Wales and robust probity checks are in place for security licensees who apply for a licence in this State. It is important to ensure that the same standard of probity checks apply for Australian as well as foreign service suppliers whether the applicants are individuals or companies.

The proposed checks for the potential pool of new security licence applicants include: providing a police certificate from each country the person has lived in for 12 months or more over the previous 10 years since turning 16 years of age; obtaining verification of the police certificate from the relevant country's embassy or consulate in Australia; and submitting the verified police certificate in English to the NSW Police Force at the time of making the application for a security industry licence. The changes proposed in this bill will ensure that New South Wales is meeting its obligations under the General Agreement on Trade in Services while ensuring that public safety is maintained. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla) [3.52 p.m.]: I support the Security Industry Amendment (Licences) Bill 2013. As a member of the World Trade Organization, Australia's commitment to the General Agreement on Trade in Services [GATS] came into effect in 1995. One of those commitments is to not impose any limitations at the Federal or State government level on the supply of investigation and security services. These services include investigation, security consultation, alarm monitoring, armoured car services, guards and other security services. The majority of these services are regulated in New South Wales under the Security Industry Act 1997.

The Security Industry Amendment (Licences) Bill 2013 will address an inconsistency between provisions in that Act and Australia's international trade commitments. Section 15 of the Act will be amended to allow the holder of a valid Australian visa that permits employment in Australia, other than a student or working holiday visa, to apply for a New South Wales security industry licence. Citizenship and permanent residency requirements were introduced in 2002 as a result of the Bali bombings but the proposed amendments are not expected to impact adversely on public safety in New South Wales. Only the holders of a valid work visa, excluding student and working holiday visas, will be added to the list of eligible persons for a New South Wales security licence. Most of these people will have been nominated and sponsored by businesses to work in Australia on a temporary basis in an occupation listed in the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship's Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List. None of the higher risk, manpower-related security occupations like security guards or crowd controllers appears on that list.

The New South Wales Government is committed to effective regulation of the security industry and that is evident from the reforms that came into effect in November 2012. The Security Industry Amendment Act 2012 implemented the recommendations made by the Independent Commission Against Corruption to address the regulatory problems confronting the security industry. The co-regulatory model was abolished and the powers of the Security Licensing and Enforcement Directorate [SLED] of the NSW Police Force were enhanced. The Security Licensing and Enforcement Directorate now undertakes proactive compliance and auditing in relation to the activities of master licensees and the eligibility of individual licensees as well as the operations of registered training organisations that deliver security training. The bill will make a number of

miscellaneous amendments to the Security Industry Act 1997 and the Firearms Act 1996 consequential to the Security Industry Amendment Act 2012 to ensure the continuing strength of the regulatory model. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JOHN FLOWERS** (Rockdale) [3.55 p.m.]: I support the Security Industry Amendment (Licences) Bill 2013. Under existing free trade agreements, including the General Agreement on Trade and Services, Australia must treat the service suppliers of its free trade partners in a way that is no less favourable than the way in which it treats its Australian service suppliers. Currently under section 15 of the principal Act only Australian citizens and permanent residents can obtain a security industry licence in New South Wales. This may restrict the ability of foreign suppliers to engage in security-related activities in New South Wales. This is inconsistent with Australia's General Agreement on Trade and Services [GATS] commitments.

The bill seeks to address this by allowing holders of a valid temporary visa that permits employment in Australia, other than a student visa or a working holiday visa, to apply for a New South Wales security industry licence. The object of the bill is to amend the Security Industry Act 1997, the principal Act, to resolve an inconsistency between the principal Act and Australia's international trade commitments under the General Agreement on Trade and Services. The bill seeks to do this by allowing persons who hold certain visas entitling them to work in Australia to apply for a licence under the principal Act.

The bill also makes minor and consequential amendments to the principal Act and to the Firearms Act 1996. As previously noted, under existing free trade agreements [FTA] Australia is committed to treat the service suppliers of its free trade agreement partners no less equitably than it treats Australian service providers. Currently under section 15 of the Security Industry Act 1997 only Australian citizens and permanent residents can obtain a security industry licence in New South Wales. This is inconsistent with Australia's General Agreement on Trade and Services commitments. The way to address this inconsistency is via legislative amendment to residency and citizenship requirements. Namely, the bill proposes to allow holders of a valid Australian visa that permits employment in Australia, other than a student visa or a working holiday visa, to apply for a New South Wales security industry licence. These applicants will be in addition to Australian citizens and permanent residents, who can already apply.

Only holders of valid work visas, excluding student and working holiday visas, will be added to the eligible persons for a New South Wales security licence. The majority of these persons will have been nominated and sponsored by a business to work in Australia on a temporary basis in an occupation listed in the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship's Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List [CSOL]. None of the higher risk, manpower-related security occupations such as security guards or crowd controllers appear on that list. With the introduction of this bill, a small number of persons will become eligible to come to New South Wales independently to work in the security industry. A locksmith, which is an occupation that is recognised on the Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List, may become eligible to live and work permanently in New South Wales via a skilled independent subclass 189 visa. Dog handlers or trainers who are licensed under the Act may also become eligible to live and work permanently in New South Wales if nominated by the New South Wales Government via a subclass 190 visa.

People who apply for either a subclass 189 or a subclass 190 visa must meet relevant visa requirements. Foreign service suppliers who apply for a security industry licence under the proposed provisions in the Act will be subject to probity checks similar to those for Australian citizens, permanent residents and applicants for certain visa categories, including subclass 189 or 190 visas. The proposed procedures for these applicants are that they will: provide the NSW Police Force with a police certificate from each country the person has lived in for 12 months or more over the previous 10 years since turning 16 years of age; pay for the cost of the police certificates and pay for any required translation costs; obtain verification of the police certificates from the relevant country's embassy or consulate in Australia; and submit verified police certificates in English to the NSW Police Force at the time of making the application for a security industry licence.

These procedures aim to ensure that public safety is maintained in New South Wales and that Australia meets its obligations under the General Agreement on Trade in Services. Failure to address inconsistencies with our national General Agreement on Trade in Services commitments may make Australia vulnerable to dispute action within the World Trade Organization. This bill also incorporates miscellaneous amendments to the Act and to the Firearms Act 1996 consequential to the Security Industry Amendment Act 2012. These amendments primarily aim to streamline licensing processes. Specifically, section 14 (2) (b) of the Act provides that an application form for a security licence must be accompanied by such information and particulars as prescribed by the regulations. This includes evidence of the applicant's competence and experience.

It is proposed to amend the Act to clarify that this information does not need to accompany the application form but must be lodged prior to the granting of the licence. This will expedite the granting of licences as application processing and probity checking can be undertaken in parallel with training. It is proposed to amend section 48 of the Act to include a regulation-making power to allow updates to the guidelines as required from time to time. These updates will be subject to usual New South Wales government procedures to amend regulations. Without this regulation-making power in the Act, the guidelines will be unable to be amended to reflect contemporary standards.

It is also proposed to make a minor amendment to the Firearms Act 1996 to rectify an unintended consequence of the Security Industry Amendment Act 2012 in that the definition of "direct supervision" was not carried over to the Firearms Act 1996 in regard to holders of provisional firearms licences. There are approximately 4,000 security firms of various sizes operating in the New South Wales security industry across different sectors and occupations. The security industry in New South Wales makes a significant contribution towards keeping this State safe and plays a vital role in a wide range of businesses and government. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr TONY ISSA** (Granville) [4.04 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Security Industry Amendment (Licences) Bill 2013. This bill allows the holder of a valid temporary work visa, excluding holiday and working visa holders, to apply for a New South Wales security industry licence. This brings New South Wales into line with Australia's General Agreement on Trade in Services commitments. The bill amends section 15 of the Act to allow individuals to apply for security industry licences if they are entering the country on employer-sponsored work visas despite not being an Australian citizen or permanent resident. These are people who have been permitted to enter the country under the Commonwealth's Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List and include people from a range of professions including architects, engineers, surveyors and town planners. These people must be assessed by Australian authorities before being granted a visa. There is no possibility of the wrong people being granted licences to carry a firearm. High-risk, manpower-related security occupations such as security guards or crowd controllers are on the Consolidated Sponsored Occupation List.

The bill will in no way diminish the safety of the community. There will be no risk to public safety as a result of the introduction of this bill and it is envisaged that only a small number of people will become eligible for a security licence under these measures. Checks for foreign service suppliers are based on the same guidelines that apply to Australian citizens and permanent residents. I am only too aware of the public's concern over the granting of licences to obtain and use firearms. I assure them that the high standards presently employed will not be compromised by this bill. Detailed information regarding competence and experience are part of the screening process in the application. The bill requires this information to be lodged prior to the granting of the licence.

Other requirements of the bill include each applicant must provide police checks from countries they have lived in over the past 10 years for 12 months or more; and foreign service suppliers who apply for a security industry licence under the bill will be subject to probity checks similar to those for Australian citizens and permanent residents and applicants for certain visa categories. The NSW Police Force will be supplied with relevant police checks from other countries. There are further safeguards to maintain high standards within the legislation. For example, the law currently applies to security licences that have been lost, stolen, destroyed, defaced or mutilated. The bill expands the legislation to cover the term "become illegible", as a licence may become illegible over time. This will exempt the person from producing the damaged licence if the application has been lodged for a replacement.

Section 48 of the Act will be amended to include a regulation-making power to allow updates to the guidelines relating to uniforms and vehicle signage for the security industry. This ensures that the provisions of the Act will be regulated by the New South Wales Government should modifications be required. This means that necessary modifications will be subject to New South Wales government-designated procedures to reflect appropriate standards. Amendments to the legislation will ensure that New South Wales meets its obligations under Commonwealth requirements and at the same time ensures public safety is maintained. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [4.09 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the Security Industry Amendment (Licences) Bill 2013 and commend the Attorney General, the Hon. Greg Smith, on introducing a sensible and practical bill that will strengthen the security industry in this State. The main purpose of the bill is to address the inconsistencies with Australia's commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services. It will amend the Security Industry Act 1997 and the Firearms Act 1996 by introducing further provisions in respect of licensing and will also make minor amendments to the regulation of the security industry.

Section 15 of the Security Industry Act 1997 provides that only Australian citizens and permanent residents can obtain a security industry licence in New South Wales. However, this restricts the ability of foreign suppliers, individuals and companies to engage in security-related activities in New South Wales, which is inconsistent with Australia's commitment to the General Agreement on Trade in Services. The bill will allow holders of a valid temporary visa that permits employment in Australia, other than a student visa or a working holiday visa, to apply for a security industry licence. It is expected that only a small number of additional people will become eligible to hold a security licence as a result of this legislation. Therefore, it will have no drastic effect on, nor will they be in competition with, Australian citizens and permanent residents, who will continue to be able to apply and be eligible for such licences.

As we know, many of these individuals will have been nominated and sponsored by businesses to work in Australia on a temporary basis in an occupation included in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's Consolidated Sponsorship Occupation List. None of the higher-risk, manpower-related security occupations, such as security guards or crowd controllers, appear on that list. Under this bill, a small number of people will become eligible to come to New South Wales independently to work in the security industry. As my colleague the member for Tweed stated in his contribution to this debate, a person in an occupation that is recognised on the Consolidated Sponsorship Occupation List, such as a locksmith, may become eligible to live and work permanently in New South Wales under a skilled independent (subclass 189) visa.

Dog handlers or dog trainers who are licensed under the Act may also become eligible to live and work permanently in New South Wales if they are nominated by the New South Wales Government under a subclass 190 visa. As I said, section 15 of the Security Industry Act 1997 allows only Australian citizens and permanent residents to obtain a security industry licence in New South Wales. As a result, the legislation prevents foreign suppliers, individuals or companies engaging in security-related activities in our great State. Foreign service suppliers who apply for a security industry licence under the proposed new provisions will be subject to a probity check similar to that which applies to Australian citizens, permanent residents and applicants for certain visa categories, including subclass 189 or subclass 190 visas.

Applicants will be required to provide the NSW Police Force with a police certificate from each country in which they have lived for 12 months or more over the previous 10 years since turning 16 years of age; pay for the cost of the police certificate or certificates and any translation costs; obtain verification of police certificates from the relevant countries, embassies or consulates in Australia; and submit verified police certificates in English to the NSW Police Force at the time of making the application for the security industry licence. These procedures are designed to ensure that public safety is maintained in New South Wales and that Australia meets its obligations under the General Agreement on Trade in Services. We must take this issue seriously because failure to address inconsistencies in our national General Agreement on Trade in Services commitments may make Australia vulnerable to dispute action in the World Trade Organization.

The bill also incorporates miscellaneous amendments to the Security Industry Act 1997 and to the Firearms Act 1996 that are consequential to the Security Industry Amendment Act 2012—that is, the amending Act. These amendments aim primarily to streamline licence procedures in respect of evidence of the applicant's competence and experience. The bill amends the Act to clarify that this information does not need to accompany the application form but must be lodged prior to the granting of a licence. This will expedite the granting of a licence because the application processes and probity checking will be able to be done in parallel with training. The amendments proposed in this bill will ensure that New South Wales meets its obligations under the General Agreement on Trade in Services while ensuring that public safety is maintained. I stress that public safety will be maintained under these amendments. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.14 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Greg Smith, in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Toongabbie, Tamworth, Cronulla, Rockdale, Granville and Smithfield for their well thought-out contributions to this debate. The New South Wales Government has agreed that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services should take the proposed solution in this bill to the Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management with a recommendation that all Australian jurisdictions introduce a similar measure. The Government raises harmonisation of the regulatory framework for Australia's security industry with the Council of Australian Governments and State and Territory stakeholders at every available opportunity. 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 Craig Baumann, on behalf of 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 2013-14**

#### **Debate resumed from 14 August 2013.**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson) [4.17 p.m.]: During my contribution to the debate on the Budget Estimates and Related Papers 2013-14 yesterday I outlined the substantial public infrastructure investments across New South Wales that are detailed in the budget papers and which total almost \$60 billion. I will now highlight the investments of special significance to my electorate of Davidson, look at the broader issue of job creation and make some brief comments about Federal-State relations. Budget investments particularly relevant to Davidson include up to \$400 million for the F3-M2 link, which will ease congestion on Pennant Hills Road and the Pacific Highway; \$40.6 million to continue the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital redevelopment; \$81.8 million to continue the construction of the Royal North Shore Hospital clinical services building; \$52.1 million to complete the Royal North Shore Hospital public-private partnership redevelopment; \$4.9 million to continue major capital works at Killara High School and major funds to build two new nearby North Shore schools; \$1 million for an extended bus bay on Forest Way at Warringah Road; \$29.1 million for the development of the Northern Beaches Health Service; and \$6.5 million for early hospital roadworks for the promised new Northern Beaches hospital.

As I said yesterday, the Government has committed to constructing a major new Sydney hospital on the Northern Beaches. It will be a world-class facility built under a public-private partnership and will be located on the corner of Wakehurst Parkway and Warringah Road, Frenchs Forest. All the infrastructure projects I mentioned yesterday and today provide opportunities for investment, construction and job creation, which is what the people of New South Wales want. They also want projects to be completed within budget. Good governments regularly go over their budgets responsibly. Unfortunately, Labor governments simply go over their budgets. However, more important than the simple expense level is value for money—delivering timely and quality service that is worthy of the public money spent. We must continue to strive to achieve higher standards and better performance for the same spend. As chair of the New South Wales Parliament's Public Accounts Committee, I note that the committee, together with the New South Wales Audit Office under the Auditor-General, has focused strongly on what results the Government is achieving.

People want their governments to be proactive, responsive, professional, productive, performance driven and long sighted. People also want economic growth. Our Premier has spoken previously about how the central goal of good government under his leadership would be to encourage economic growth, which underpins job creation, opportunities, wealth generation and higher living standards. He highlighted again in question time yesterday how New South Wales is leading the country in terms of job creation. General economic prosperity increases the chance for people to realise their potential and, through hard work, achieve their ambitions. One of the most common ambitions of people is to be engaged in productive work activity. Since the O'Farrell Government came to office, New South Wales has created 115,400 jobs—probably more by now. More jobs have been created here than in any other Australian State. New South Wales unemployment has been at, or below, the national average for 18 consecutive months. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force figures released this month show that New South Wales has the lowest unemployment rate of any State apart from Western Australia.

This follows a decade under the previous Labor Government during which New South Wales had the lowest employment growth of any State. The 115,400-plus jobs created in just over two years exceed our election commitment of creating 100,000 new jobs. That is more new jobs than in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania combined, with the majority of them being full-time. We have encouraged this employment growth through increased payroll tax rebates, which have been continued under this budget, and lifting the payroll tax threshold. This has provided incentives for business to create new jobs. We have also

pursued employment-generating infrastructure projects, which I have outlined, and we have seen business confidence rise strongly compared with other States, making businesses comfortable to hire new staff. While back-office reductions in the New South Wales public sector have rationalised some of the bureaucracy, front-line staff have increased. There are 4,000 more nurses, 370 more police and 500 more teachers.

Employment in the private sector has been encouraged by tough decisions to reduce the costs of business and investment. That has included reforms to payroll tax, in particular. I note that rebates for newly created jobs have been lifted from \$4,000 to \$5,000, and there has been an increase in the payroll tax threshold to \$750,000, with businesses enjoying average savings of \$3,325 in 2013-14 compared with 2012-13. There have also been reforms to rein in a \$4 billion WorkCover deficit, with an average reduction of 7.5 per cent in premiums announced earlier this year. Unnecessary costs have been stripped from our electricity networks, helping to put downward pressure on electricity costs, so that this year they will increase at a rate that is less than inflation.

The Labor Party often talks about the importance of jobs to people, although it gives an undue weighting to the unionised workforce. This weighting to union members is inappropriate because it is driven by self-interest, despite the fact that the level of union membership has fallen to record lows of only 19 per cent of the workforce in New South Wales and only 18.2 per cent Australia wide. Despite its rhetoric, the reality is that New South Wales Labor in government failed to deliver on the employment front. By comparison, the O'Farrell Government is delivering in spades. Our Government realises that the generation of productive, new jobs should not come from bureaucratic growth, but rather from the innovation, motivation and perspiration of the people of New South Wales. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Obviously, with economic growth and job creation, our governments receive greater revenues to deliver the outcomes that the public expects. And people are seeing those outcomes delivered. So economic and employment growth is fundamental, not only to personal wellbeing but also to the prosperity and health of our whole society. The final issue I want to address relates to Federal-State relations. Much has been promised in that regard in recent years, but little delivered. This is largely due to insufficient political will, particularly at a Federal level, and insufficient cooperation between jurisdictions. While a great deal can be said in this area—I am happy to speak further about this on another occasion—time restricts me to making just a few comments today.

The States are entitled to mining royalties and, if a minerals resource rent tax is to continue under a future Federal government, it should belong to the States as opposed to the Commonwealth. Even leaving the Constitution issue aside, the existing vertical fiscal imbalance makes it inappropriate for the Commonwealth to grab more tax powers from the States. Rather, it should do the opposite and give more tax powers to the States to strengthen their finance in order to meet the future service provision challenges that we will face in New South Wales and in other States. Further centralisation of revenue powers blurs the already unclear responsibilities and accountability between the two layers of government in Australia. The Federal Government should not treat the States with contempt. There is no doubt that the former Treasurer, Wayne Swan, did that. Chris Bowen's colours are not quite so clear at this stage.

There is no doubt that a truly cooperative federation requires the Commonwealth to empower, rather than attempt to bully, the States. I am pleased that Tony Abbott used part of his Federal budget reply speech this year, to commit a future Coalition Government to reforming the federation. Abbott also said that the States would remain "sovereign in their own sphere". While that comment is most welcome, the sphere of responsibility of each level of government needs to be better defined, with duplication removed. The Federation of States and Territories in Australia is dysfunctional, wasteful, anachronistic, and in real need of reform as part of a wide-ranging restructure of government responsibilities and accountabilities in Australia.

I was heartened by the comments of the New South Wales Treasurer, Mike Baird, the admirable author of the budget that we have before us. The Treasurer, in his economic update for August, stated his hope for a new leaf in Federal-State relations, where cooperation and reform will result in timely progress on key issues. Hopefully, we will see that when we have a new Federal government and a real commitment from this Government to see real change in Federal-State relations. I commend the Treasurer of New South Wales for his statement. I commend the Federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, for his stated intention. Unfortunately, I condemn the Federal Labor Government for a lack of achievement in this area. Finally, I commend the excellent budget for 2013-14, which the Treasurer has handed down. I am proud to be part of the O'Farrell Government.



**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [4.29 p.m.]: Today I will speak about how the Camden electorate has a secure future under this Government. In the past two years we have hit the ground running, but there is still a lot to do.

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

### **ALBION PARK AEROMEDICAL SERVICES**

#### **Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [4.30 p.m.]: I am delighted to present a petition on behalf of residents of the South Coast and the Illawarra. The petition brings to the attention of the House the proposed removal of aeromedical services at Albion Park. The petition asks the Legislative Assembly to reject the recommendation of Ernst and Young in its independent report to remove aeromedical services from Albion Park. Independent consultants Ernst and Young were engaged to develop a 10-year strategic vision for aeromedical rotary wing retrieval services for New South Wales, and a final report and recommendations were provided to the director general in November 2012.

The Ernst and Young report set out 56 recommendations covering service provision, crewing, coordination and tasking, vehicles and infrastructure, governance and management, and procurement in relation to medical retrieval helicopter services. They included a recommendation that the Government further investigate the option of moving the Albion Park based helicopter service and crew to the planned new Sydney helicopter base. In 2011 there were 384 primary and secondary missions from the Albion Park based helicopter service. In 2012 there were 18 missions requiring winching capability in the area closest to Wollongong. Ernst and Young's report was released for stakeholder consultation in December 2012, which closed in mid-March 2013. Stakeholder feedback did not support the Ernst and Young recommendation and proposed that the Albion Park based helicopter service and crew remain in Wollongong.

Many of us have to share and work with our colleagues as best we can, but all of us come to this place as local members. Nothing I read in the Ernst and Young report at any stage convinced me that moving a helicopter service from Albion Park to Sydney would better service the residents of the South Coast and the Illawarra. When I was advised of this petition I had the opportunity to speak with the Minister for Health and I advised her that I would be taking up a petition from residents across the Illawarra, and I did so in early January when the report was released. Assisting me in taking up this petition were members of Illawarra Rotary clubs. I publicly thank and acknowledge Leigh Robinson from the Illawarra Rotary clubs, who helped coordinate the collection of this petition. But it was not just Rotary; many, many individuals came to my office and took up this petition. This battle was fought in the streets and in the suburbs, door by door, by people who did not want to see this helicopter service removed.

The removal of the helicopter service was attempted by those who sit opposite when they were in government. A report was furnished, a process was established, people were asked for their opinions and they responded with a resounding no. The job of any local member worth his salt is to stand up to whoever is in government—whether or not it is their own—articulate their views and ensure those views are heard, and that is exactly what I did. I have seen first-hand how this helicopter saves lives. Had we not taken up this campaign there may have been a different outcome. There may have been a different outcome also had we not had such a strident and committed Minister for Health, who listened to the community and who held meetings with me and received the information I presented to her. I am delighted that the Minister for Health made not just the announcement that this helicopter would stay in Albion Park but that this Government would invest a further \$39.1 million in aeromedical services across the State, ensuring that on every flight there will be a doctor and nurse or doctor and paramedic. I am delighted with this Government's decision in that regard.

I attended the emergency services awards night in the Illawarra last Friday, and there is no doubt that emergency services personnel were delighted with the Government's response. The Government's Reform Plan for Aeromedical (Rotary Wing) Retrieval Services in New South Wales was released on 17 July 2013. The reform plan confirms that the Albion Park based helicopter will remain at Albion Park to meet the needs of people in the Illawarra and South Coast. Medical and paramedical staff will be located at the Wollongong base to improve take-off times. It will be a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week operation, with dedicated retrieval doctors and paramedics available for every flight. Improved training for staff will be provided. Under the reform plan the Government announced \$150,000 to be funded in the 2013-14 NSW Health budget allocation

to the NSW Ambulance Service for building modifications to the Albion Park base to bring staff day accommodation closer to the helicopter hangar to improve response times. Madam Acting-Speaker, I seek an extension of time.

**Extension of time not granted.**

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields) [4.35 p.m.]: The Reform Plan for Aeromedical (Rotary Wing) Retrieval Services in New South Wales is a good plan, and the decision to maintain helicopter retrieval services at Albion Park is correct. The reform plan contains some very good initiatives, many of which I have called for in the past, both in opposition and when in government. I called for an on-call system for Orange four years ago and I continue to call for one because it will significantly improve the care of patients in that city, especially those with head injuries. Centralising winching services is also a good idea. Winching is not commonly used but it should be done often. Winches are very heavy and it is wise to centralise the service to a smaller team so that all members are experienced in winching. Expanding the medical and paramedical teams so that a doctor is available for every hospital admission is also a very good recommendation. In a road trauma, in particular, doctors may need to administer anaesthetic and intubate a patient with very little notice. So it is wise to have an experienced doctor and paramedic available on every mission.

All in all, the Ernst and Young report is very good. The report is not as specific about Wollongong as it could be and I hope that the Minister can offer some clarification of the services. Page 9 of the report states that the operating hours of the Orange base will be increased to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and that a crew will be on the base for 10 hours a day. That is quite specific: After 10 hours, the staff on call go home. That contrasts with what happens in Newcastle, where staff will be on the base for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which shortens the call-out time. The report states that the Wollongong helicopter base will be retained to meet the needs of the people of the Illawarra and the South Coast, but it does not say for how much of that time the staff will be on site and how much time they will be on call. It changes the functionality of the base because in the case of trauma we have what is called the "golden hour". The first hour after trauma is very important because a doctor may need to prevent the development of shock or treat shock and ventilate early in patients who are critically injured or critically unwell.

It would be great if the Minister could clarify exactly how many staff will be at Wollongong, how often they will be on base and how often they will be on call. For example, will any of their after-hours calls be diverted to the Sydney base if it is judged that it may be more appropriate to have an on-duty team in Sydney rather than an on-call team in Wollongong? While this report is very good and this petition has been very successful, it has not clarified exactly what the service hours of the base will be. The press release states that medical and paramedical staff will be located on base, improving time to take off with a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week operation. It is not clear whether staff will be on base or on call seven days a week.

Facility improvements are important, and I commend the report for recommending that. All in all, this is a good result. It is a victory for people power, and it is supported by the Opposition. My only concern is that the exact role of the Wollongong base has not been clarified by this document. I look forward to greater clarity as to how many staff will be employed at the base, how often they will be on base and whether any calls from the Wollongong on-call service after hours, when most trauma occurs, will be diverted to an on-site service based in Sydney.

**Mr LEE EVANS** (Heathcote) [4.40 p.m.]: I am disappointed that we are discussing an issue vital to the Illawarra, and who is here representing the Illawarra? Only the side of goodness; the Liberals are the only representatives from the Illawarra here today.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! The member for Heathcote has the call.

**Mr LEE EVANS:** For the information of the member for Macquarie Fields, the Government's reform plan for the aeronautical rotary wing retrieval service in New South Wales released on 17 July 2013 is available on the New South Wales website. For the first time in New South Wales there will be a doctor and a paramedic or a doctor and a nurse on every flight from every base across the new helicopter retrieval network. Patients will receive better and faster emergency care. Bases at Wollongong, Newcastle, Sydney, Bankstown, Westmead, Tamworth, Orange, Canberra and Lismore will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which will allow aircraft to respond to emergencies up to 30 minutes faster. The New South Wales Government is committed to employing 11.5 new full-time equivalent [FTE] retrieval doctors and 18 new full-time equivalent paramedics to

enhance the new helicopter retrieval network. I commend the member for Londonderry, who is a member of Child Flight. He was an integral part of the process to start Child Flight in New South Wales, and I commend him for his work with Child Flight over the years.

The new network will be funded by a \$151.2 million commitment from the New South Wales Government, including an additional \$39.1 million in funding over the next three years. For the first time ever non-government organisations and commercial helicopter operators will be able to tender on a level playing field for government-funded helicopter contracts. I remind members opposite of who ruined the system back in the day. When the Labor Government contracted a Canadian company to operate the helicopter service that was the beginning of the rot in the helicopter service. The plan was developed after wide consultation. The new helicopter network will have a northern and southern New South Wales super region to help meet the growing demand for retrieval, which is expected to increase by 23 per cent over the next 10 years, from 3,339 missions in 2011 to 4,000 missions in 2023. The plan will deliver better value for the taxpayers of New South Wales. It is good to see that a Labor representative from the Illawarra has joined us.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [4.43 p.m.], in reply: I will resume where I left off, as I have been advised that I can continue my contribution. Since the release of the reform plan it has been identified that Shellharbour City Council has applied for funding and has been short-listed on the Restart NSW Illawarra Infrastructure Fund. There is a significant difference in the scope of works for both projects. The New South Wales Ambulance Service has tasked the current helicopter operator, CHC, to commence discussions with Shellharbour council to discuss whether the parties can combine their funds and build a state-of-the-art facility at Albion Park. I commend the base manager of CHC headquarters Australia, Nathan Haythorpe, and the station manager of Ambulance NSW, Andrew Ryan.

Other staff members include pilots Michael Kirby, Andre Smith, Jess Yeo, Jill-Anne Holder; and air crewmen David Collins, Scott Sorell and Justin Heath. The hardworking and dedicated paramedics include Rod Wesley, Mark Bartlett, Graham Goodman, Paul Dalton and Wayne Coonam. It is nice to finally see the member for Wollongong in the Chamber, because she participated in this discussion in a bipartisan fashion and was of great assistance in the Illawarra. I cannot necessarily say the same about her Illawarra colleagues. It is disappointing that the shadow Minister for the Illawarra, the member for Blacktown, is not in the Chamber. He is nowhere to be seen on this issue.

What is exciting is that this matter has been resolved in a positive fashion, and it was done so by community consultation, by working with the community and listening to the community. The Coalition went to the last election with a promise to be a consultative government, and we have delivered. Unlike members opposite who simply removed the service, we went through the process of getting a report and then providing the information to the community so that it could have a say in the future of this service. The helicopter retrieval service conducted more than 580 hours of missions last year. No doubt a service that is being used to that degree in the Illawarra is vital. As the local member I felt obliged take up this fight after recently visiting the base and seeing a woman who was being flown to Sydney as she had had a flammable substance tipped over her person and had been set on fire. Such incidents, along with other particularly sad, tragic incidents that require winching, require this service in the Illawarra. Being such a distance from Sydney and not necessarily having all the expertise in the medical faculty, it is important to be able to get people to medical services when required after incidents occur. I thank the member for Wollongong, the member for Heathcote, the member for South Coast and others who supported this bipartisan action. I commend the petition to the House.

**Discussion concluded.**

## **COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS**

### **SERBIAN FOLKLORIC FESTIVAL**

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [4.46 p.m.]: On Sunday 11 August 2013 I joined with members of the Australian Serbian community at the Twenty-seventh Serbian Folkloric Festival at Bonnyrigg Sports Club. The first Serbian Folkloric Festival was held in 1987 at the same club, which was the vision of Dusan Rsavac to preserve and to continue the Serbian tradition and dance in the diaspora. The festival was a great success as members of the Serbian community flocked to the club and traditional Serbian folkloric groups representing all the States in this country added colour and energy to the festival with their dances.

We witnessed the wonderful arrays of beautiful costumes, the Kolo—the traditional dances—and experienced great Serbian culinary dishes that our Australian Serbians had to offer. The festival was blessed by His Grace Bishop Irinej, head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Australia and New Zealand. Also present were the president and board members of the club, leaders from many Australian Serbian community organisations, and representatives of the Serbian diplomatic corps.

#### **LANDCARE AWARD RECIPIENT JENNY CASTLES**

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [4.47 p.m.]: I congratulate Jenny Castles of Shortland, on obtaining special mention in the 2013 Champions of the Catchments Regional Awards, highly commended in the Category of Landcare Legend. The awards are coordinated by the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority in partnership with the Hunter Region Landcare Network. Jenny has been involved with Shortland to Wallsend Landcare for nearly 20 years, is a volunteer at the Wetlands Centre at Shortland and is a life member of the Hunter Region Landcare Network. I thank Jenny for her dedication to our environment and our community.

#### **VIETNAM VETERANS DAY**

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.47 p.m.]: I ask the House to note that Vietnam Veterans Day will be commemorated on Sunday 18 August. The day was originally known as Long Tan Day, chosen to commemorate the men of D Company, 6RAR who fought in the battle of Long Tan in 1966. On that day, 108 Australian and New Zealand soldiers fought a pitched battle against more than 2,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops in a rubber plantation not far from the small village of Long Tan. The Australians prevailed, but only after fighting in torrential rain for four hours. Eighteen Australians lost their lives and 24 were wounded, the largest number of casualties in one operation since the Australian task force had arrived a few months earlier. I recognise the many Vietnam veterans in my electorate of Port Stephens and thank them for their service to our country. I trust the day will be one of remembrance and reflection for our veterans, to whom we all owe a great deal.

#### **IRAQI ORPHANS CHARITY EVENT**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [4.48 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House an event held on Sunday 26 May, 2013. This was the annual charity dinner to celebrate the birthday of Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib and which aimed to raise funds for the support of orphans in Iraq. Trying to help those that have no-one else to help them is a basic human instinct and basic human emotion. It is well demonstrated in the Iraqi community in Australia, which has not forgotten what happened in their homeland and its consequences, including regrettably the fact that there are now many orphans in that land. Congratulations should go to the organisers of the event, such as Dr Al-Taiff, and others who assisted such as Ali Dirani.

#### **MAITLAND ELECTORATE COMMUNITY GROUP ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Ms ROBYN PARKER** (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [4.49 p.m.]: I congratulate St Patrick's Catholic Primary School Lochinvar on being a finalist in the National Disability Awards. St Patrick's has qualified for the Excellence in Improving Education Outcomes Award category. St Patrick's was nominated because it fosters a whole school inclusive model of education involving the staff, parents, students and the community. Children of all abilities have access to a flexible learning program that is closely monitored and assessed to determine positive outcomes for the students. I wish principal Peter Treloar and the school's staff, teachers and pupils all the best for the awards announcement in Canberra on 26 November 2013.

I also congratulate Mortels Sheepskin factory and the Pacific Smiles Group on their success in the 2013 Hunter Business Awards staged by the Hunter Business Chamber. I note Mortels Sheepskin factory at Thornton won the Excellence in Small Business Award. Pacific Smiles Group was recognised with the Excellence in Business title for companies with more than 20 employees. I wish both firms all the best in their future business endeavours.

#### **SYDNEY GYMNASTIC AND AQUATIC CENTRE**

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [4.50 p.m.]: I am pleased to note that tomorrow, 16 August, the Premier, along with Channel 7 journalist Mark Beretta, is scheduled to open the Sydney Gymnastic and Aquatic Centre, situated at 12 North Parade Rooty Hill, part of the expanding facilities around the Rooty Hill

RSL Club. This facility will have a 4,000 square metre Olympic grade gymnastics facility, two 25 metre swimming pools and a sports medicine and rehabilitation centre. This facility will be a great asset for the local community. It will assist in our preparation for future Olympic Games and give opportunities for locals to train in a world-class facility. Congratulations to the Rooty Hill RSL Club, through the Chairman of the Board, Ray Johns, and all concerned with the establishment of this facility.

#### **ATHLETES JESSICA CLARK AND ALEKS VUKIC**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby) [4.51 p.m.]: I congratulate Jessica Clark on being selected to play goalball at the World Youth Championships. Goalball is a Paralympic sport where players are blindfolded, and aim to get a ball with a bell inside it into soccer-like goals. Jessica was the winner of the *Hornsby Advocate's* 2011 Junior Sports Star, Young Achiever award, and is one of six girls and six boys chosen to play at the Championships in Colorado Springs this month. I wish Jessica all the best as she travels to Colorado Springs to compete in the World Youth Championships, and all the best for her future endeavours.

I also congratulate Aleks Vukic for his winning of the Australian Secondary Schools Tennis Championships' singles title in May. Aleks is a 17-year-old year 12 student from Normanhurst Boys High School, and is currently ranked third in his age group in New South Wales and 100th in the Australian men's ranking. Aleks was also part of the New South Wales team which also won the teams title of the event. I congratulate Aleks on these achievements. I wish him good luck for his future endeavours as he completes his Higher School Certificate and pursues his professional ambitions.

#### **BEIJING TONG REN TANG**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [4.52 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House that on 5 July 2013 I was honoured to be part of the official opening of the newest Beijing Tong Ren Tang store, which took place in the Cabramatta central business district. This is the fourth of these traditional Chinese medicine stores in Australia, and I welcome its presence in Cabramatta. It is great to see our Western society freely embracing our Eastern brothers' herbal alternatives, for the health benefits it brings and for the treatment of a range of ailments. First established in 1669, the Beijing Tong Ren Tang Company has been in operation in China for some 344 years. To the company's great credit, its motto is that it has not sacrificed its traditional methods nor skimped on the quality of the ingredients used; it will continue to provide the highest quality of products to ensure it is to the highest standards. This is something that must be commended for there is no doubt that it is this dedication that has contributed to the longevity of this company. I thank Mr Yin Shunhai, the group chairman, and Mr Max Ma, the general manager, for their confidence in the economy not only of New South Wales but also of Cabramatta. I wish the management staff of Beijing Tong Ren Tang medicine store all the success in the future.

#### **ATHLETE JOE WORGAN**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [4.54 p.m.]: I acknowledge and congratulate Inverell's Macintyre High School year 12 student Joe Worgan who has just finished competing at the World Dwarf Games at Michigan State University in the United States of America. Joe competed in three disciplines in track and field and was one of 33 competitors chosen to represent Australia at the games. Joe has just completed his term as school captain and has been a wonderful ambassador at the games, not only for his school but also for the region. His commitment to the games included attending three national training camps, fundraising and improving his fitness level, which was difficult as he had to overcome a knee injury. The Australian team won a total of 76 medals, coming third in the total medal tally for the games. Joe's 4 x 100 metre men's open relay team came fifth in the finals with another Australian team coming in first. My congratulations to Joe on his efforts in Michigan and I wish him all the best for his future endeavours.

#### **JOINT BALTIC COMMITTEE**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [4.55 p.m.]: The Joint Baltic Committee held its annual commemoration and concert at the Latvian Centre in Strathfield on 16 June 2013. The commemoration was held in memory of the first mass deportation of the Baltic people in June 1941 from modern day Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. Annually Baltic communities around the world commemorate the mass deportation from their homelands by occupying forces of the Soviet Union to the Soviet gulag during and after World War II. Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians unite to commemorate the mass exodus of their people from their traditional homelands. The concert comprised performances by the Estonian Ensemble, Sydney Latvian Male

Choir and Sydney Lithuanian Mixed Choir. Congratulations to Mrs Tiiu Kroll-Simmul, the Joint Baltic Committee and the Sydney Latvian Society's Ladies Committee on their organisation and hospitality of the event.

### **MELANOMA INSTITUTE AUSTRALIA AWARD RECIPIENTS**

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange) [4.56 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Premier recently presented the Premier's Award for Outstanding Cancer Researcher to renowned melanoma expert Professor John Thompson. Professor Thompson is the executive director of the Melanoma Institute Australia and Professor of Melanoma and Surgical Oncology at the University of Sydney. He has devoted his life to improving the lives of those afflicted with melanoma. Dr Georgina Long, also from the Melanoma Institute Australia, received the Outstanding Cancer Research Fellow award. Dr Pascale Guiterra received the Wildfire Award. I am very well acquainted with the work of the Melanoma Institute Australia. I congratulate all of these researchers on their fine work and all of the award winners and nominees.

### **DIVERSITY AUSTRALIA**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [4.57 p.m.]: Diversity Australia is an independent organisation cultivating unity within diversity, building social inclusion, peace, justice and human rights. Using a strength-based approach and evidence-based practice, Diversity Australia works to equip and empower communities to embrace diversity, increase empathy, reduce racism, encourage cultural exchange and promote equality. Diversity Australia held a fourth successful conference this year, nurturing respect and understanding through leadership, friendship, and public debate. I was pleased to host the launch of Diversity's Doctors 4 Refugees this week, with health professionals supporting human rights and refugees, and with an inspiring seminar featuring speakers year 11 student Charlotte Akopian; Tobias Andreasson, who worked in Papua New Guinea; and general practitioners, Barri Phatarfod and Richard Kidd. Diversity and Doctors 4 Refugees are excellent examples of passionate people working together to inform, educate and engage with the wider community, and I am proud to support their efforts.

### **TRIBUTE TO MARGARET CORBETT, OAM**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla) [4.58 p.m.]: I highlight the contribution of Caringbah resident Margaret Corbett, who was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the Queen's Birthday honours list for services to netball. Ms Corbett has been involved in netball for more than 40 years in different roles, including New South Wales selector, New South Wales convenor, New South Wales Coaching Director, New South Wales State Coach and New South Wales Institute of Sport Head Coach. Her time as New South Wales State Open Coach between 1984 and 1993 saw the New South Wales team take the Golden Boot on nine occasions. This achievement remains unsurpassed by any other State coach.

In 2006 she became the seventh inductee into the Netball New South Wales Hall of Fame. The prestigious State League Coach of the Year Award was dedicated in her honour and is now named the Margaret Corbett State League Coach of the Year Award. Ms Corbett has trained young netballers to international standard and has been a role model and mentor to players, coaches and other officials in her local community and across the State. Her recognition in the Queen's Birthday honours list 2013 was richly deserved. I commend her for her impressive suite of achievements and extraordinary dedication to netball in New South Wales over several decades.

### **RETIREMENT OF SERGEANT ROGER MAYER AND POLICE DOG JEFF**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [4.59 p.m.]: Today I recognise in this place Sergeant Roger Mayer and his police dog, Jeff. Sergeant Mayer has retired from the NSW Police Force after 34 years of service, 25 of those years with the NSW Police Dog Unit. Jeff will also retire and will continue to live with Sergeant Mayer and his family. Both Sergeant Mayer and Jeff have had illustrious careers. As a member of the Tactical Response Group, Sergeant Mayer was involved in the Bathurst, Redfern and Cronulla riots, while Jeff, a general purpose and cadaver dog, was involved in the search for a victim of Malcolm Naden in Dubbo and the search for six-year-old Kiesha Weippeart in Western Sydney. I take this opportunity to thank both Sergeant Mayer and Jeff for their outstanding service to the community over many years, and wish them all the very best in their well-deserved retirement. I add that I, too, have a dog, a Great Dane, named Jeff.

### **PITTWATER RSL DAY CLUB THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.00 p.m.]: Today I draw the attention of the House to the thirtieth anniversary of the Pittwater RSL Day Club for seniors. This fantastic initiative provides senior residents in our community with a friendly and relaxed environment to meet new friends, participate in activities, share a meal with others and enjoy group entertainment. Importantly, the club also offers an invaluable respite opportunity for local families and genuine care and support for members of our community who may be at risk of social isolation. This highly beneficial service is made possible by the ongoing generosity of the Pittwater RSL Club and the many dedicated and supportive volunteers who donate their time every week. I particularly acknowledge the unwavering commitment and support of the club's coordinator, Sally Bromley, and past coordinator, Cliff Gravenor, whose unfailing efforts have helped make the club the success it is today. I congratulate the club on this impressive milestone and wish it all the best for the future.

### **HUNTER REGION APPRENTICE AND TRAINEE OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [5.01 p.m.]: The great work ethic of apprentices and trainees is alive and well in the Hunter Region. Nicholas Paynter of Muswellbrook and Lauren Castles of East Maitland were rewarded for their diligence, teamwork, self-motivation and positive attitude when they were awarded the Overall Apprentice of the Year and Overall Traineeship of the Year accolades at the sixty-second Hunter Region Apprentice and Trainee of the Year awards in June this year. Mr Paynter and Ms Castles are two of the finest examples of our hardworking apprentices and trainees who make a crucially significant contribution to the communities in which they work and to the New South Wales workforce at large. I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

### **LONDY'S CAFE, CASINO**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence) [5.01 p.m.]: I congratulate Jack and Denise Londy for 59 years of business in Casino. Londy's Cafe has been an institution in the Casino central business district for six decades. Jack and Denise have been an integral part of Casino's business community and they will be sorely missed. I wish Jack and Denise a long and happy retirement.

**Community recognition statements noted.**

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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### **WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [5.02 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the situation of constituents of mine and the impact upon them of the changes to workers compensation legislation in this State. Constituent Joseph Archibald is currently 58 years of age and has worked for some considerable time in the construction industry as a scaffolder. He sustained injury to his knees that resulted in significant incapacity. On 16 July 2009 the Workers Compensation Commission issued a certificate of determination ordering that the workers compensation insurer make weekly payments of compensation under section 37 of the 1987 Act from 21 August 2008. The payments commenced because they found he had suffered injury to his left and right knees as a result of his employment. The weekly payments of compensation were to be at the maximum statutory rate for a worker and dependants.

I have read the statement of reasons provided by the Workers Compensation Commission that followed the hearing in the commission. None of his doctors regarded him as fit for his pre-injury employment. At best, he could do light duties in a sedentary job. That does not seem to have been substantially challenged by the insurer's doctors. One doctor bluntly said he simply needed to get out of the construction industry. His residual earning capacity, in the opinion of the commission, would not be transferable to any meaningful opportunity for work. In other words, he might have a theoretical possibility of getting a job but there is no realistic likelihood of that actually happening in the real world. While this might improve after surgery, it was a view formed by the commission after reading a plethora of reports and Mr Archibald's oral evidence. Mr Archibald, despite all this, subsequently received a letter from the workers compensation insurer CGU dated 3 June 2013 stating that it would cut off the weekly payment that he had been receiving as at 12 September 2013. The letter in part stated:

You have a current work capacity however you are currently not working. Therefore, in accordance with the Workers Compensation Act, your ongoing entitlement to weekly payments is nil.

His capacity to work cannot be realised in the real world and it is fanciful and offensive to assert to the contrary. Of course, if the insurer ever gets around to approving his knee replacements he might actually have a realisable work capacity. Given the attitude of CGU and the legislation, there seems to be no reason why it would do so. No longer able to work in the construction industry and injured with a family to support and a mortgage to pay, Mr Archibald, like so many others, became reliant on his weekly compensation payments. The recent legislation changes have altered his situation.

I add that the doctors upon whom CGU is relying to say Mr Archibald is now fit to work have never seen him and in any event their reports are significantly out of date. Workers compensation changed Mr Archibald's life and disadvantaged him in many ways, but at least with his weekly benefits and medical expenses covered he was able to survive. Without these benefits he will struggle to pay bills and feed his family. He will not be able to afford medication or the treatment needed to manage his injury. Being in receipt of workers compensation payments has placed a huge strain on his relationship and taken an emotional toll on him mentally. The fact he is now not getting those payments is a direct result of this Parliament's changes to the law.

Another resident of my area whose life has been turned upside down by the workers compensation laws of this Parliament is Mr Clifford Franciscus, who was born in 1952. He worked for Boral for 34 years when he sustained an injury at work in October 2006 and underwent operative treatment. There is no dispute from the employer or the insurer, QBE, that the injury occurred. He returned to work doing the best he could but was subsequently made redundant. His skills are those of someone employed in the construction industry. There seems no dispute that Mr Franciscus continues to have physical limitations and is unable to manage his pre-injury employment.

He was issued with a final permanently modified duties certificate that was agreed to by QBE—that is, it agreed that he was not able to do his old job. Whilst he might have some theoretical ongoing and restricted capacity for work, this is only theoretical. No-one with any knowledge of the labour market would expect there is any real likelihood of his return to work. Despite this, QBE tried to terminate his payments, provoking proceedings by Mr Franciscus in the New South Wales Workers Compensation Commission. At the hearing in October last year, QBE agreed to an ongoing payment of weekly compensation, once again accepting the reality of his ongoing incapacity.

Mr Franciscus has continued seeking employment for which he is fit. He has continued to supply weekly job logs—that is, details of jobs he has sought. However, he has now received a letter dated 8 July 2013 from QBE. This letter advised of a number of decisions and determinations made by QBE. They are not appealable but in my view are entirely unrealistic and wrong. They mean he has no ongoing weekly payments. This is a direct result of the recent workers compensation legislation. This has had a massive impact on Mr Franciscus. Having been injured and forced onto weekly payments is tough enough but with weekly benefits and medical expenses paid he was able to survive if not actually prosper. Without these payments Mr Franciscus will struggle to feed his family and keep a roof over his head. He will struggle to survive. That is the direct result of the recent legislation. It is the legislation that has terminated the payments.

### **CLARKES POINT HARBOUR SCULPTURE**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove—Minister for Fair Trading) [5.06 p.m.]: As all members in this Chamber know, I am blessed with many wonderful communities in my electorate and I am blessed also with some beautiful parts of the Sydney Harbour foreshore. One of the stand-outs is Clarkes Point in Woolwich, located at the end of the Hunters Hill peninsula, where an inaugural and unique exhibition is currently being staged for all to see and enjoy—the Harbour Sculpture. This is a community-inspired event run by a team of volunteers as part of a committee of Hunters Hill Council. The purpose of the event is to highlight the arts in our community against the backdrop of beautiful Sydney Harbour.

For 11 days Clarkes Point Reserve and Deckhouse will be home to an amazing collection of sculpture from some of Australia's best artists—crazy, beautiful, startling pieces that will inspire everyone from the newest artist to the seasoned collector. The installations include more than 30 outdoor and 40 indoor exhibits. Harbour Sculpture is a unique concept, driven by a friendship formed between Hunters Hill Council and the community and delivered by a committed group who melded vision, materials, time and passion to create something truly special. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our society and plenty of blood, sweat and tears have been injected into this wonderful event.

I was honoured to be asked to be patron of this event and last Thursday 8 August 2013 was present to help launch Harbour Sculpture at the Deckhouse in Woolwich. It was so good in fact that I returned on the



following Saturday with my family, when the event was officially opened to the public, and was there to see Clarkes Point come alive with noodle markets, a community bonfire, a fireworks display and music, to name a few of the attractions. I commend the Harbour Sculpture committee for its work and dedication: Councillor Peter Astridge, Councillor Justine McLaughlin, Isobel Kidd, Sue Turner, Linda Bell, Alice Whish, Sarah Rennie, Julie Service, Bec Ho, Adrian Black, Rachelle Elliot and Agi Koltai. Many volunteers have spent countless hours on the project, particularly intern Kate Williams. Special thanks also go to Robbie Williams from Hunters Hill Council for building the best bonfire ever for the Saturday evening, and the erstwhile photographers for the event, Kylie Smith and Ella Stacey.

I acknowledge also the many artists who believed in the vision and dedicated themselves to creating the 75 amazing artworks exhibited. I commend Fiona Ryan Clark and Susan Muranty for seeding the concept of Harbour Sculpture and I congratulate, in particular, the winner of this exhibit, Sam Valenz, on his work "Clone". This exhibition would not have been possible without the support of the local business community, which donated funds to provide for the event. I make special mention of the following individuals and companies for their generosity to the community: Caroline and Anthony Johnstone of the URM Group, Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Executive Director Jeff Bailey and Deputy Executive Director Nick Hollo, Con Dedes of the Deckhouse, Anthony Bertrams of J-Steel Australasia, Sue Rose of Nine Design, Robert Oatley of Robert Oatley Vineyards, Adrian Service of JGS Property, Andrew Howard of Howard and Sons, Rolfe Latimer of Altis Architecture, Justin Carroll of the Woolwich Pier Hotel, Simon and Anna Ainsworth of Eden Gardens, and John Paranchi and Tracey Dixon from McGrath Real Estate, Hunters Hill.

I also mention the Kaplan, Rennie, Fisher and Kirk families for their contributions to the project. Further acknowledgement must be made of the owner of the Deckhouse, Mr Con Dedes of Dedes Group, and the very capable Lisa Hobbs, Chief Operating Officer of the Deckhouse. Whilst I am proud of the area I represent, I hasten to add that I am not jealous about it. I want everyone in Sydney and beyond to get down to Clarkes Point and be part of Harbour Sculpture. Take advantage of this glorious weather, see some of the best that our harbour city has to offer, and share the experience with your friends and family.

I conclude by quoting the Harbour Sculpture committee in its identification of the fact that, "Community is more than a word, it is a feeling of belonging and you all belong at Harbour Sculpture." I again pay tribute to the Dedes family, particularly the manager of Deckhouse. Mr Dedes is a tremendous gentleman who looked after everyone so well on the evening. I wish Harbour Sculpture the very best of luck for 2013 and I look forward to seeing it become an annual and much-loved event in the area.

### **LISMORE HOSPITAL AUXILIARIES AND VOLUNTEERS**

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE** (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [5.11 p.m.]: I pay tribute to two wonderful organisations that support hospitals in country and regional areas, and Lismore is no exception. The first organisation is the Blue and White Auxiliary, part of the United Hospital Auxiliaries organisation. The Blue and White Auxiliary provides palliative care support services at St Vincent's Hospital, Lismore. On 8 August 2013 the Blue and White Auxiliary Lismore celebrated 25 years since its inception. On 5 August I joined them for lunch. As well as enjoying a magnificent lunch, I learnt about the history of the organisation. I was pleased to accompany Mary Reid, life member and foundation member; Joyce Cleaver, life member and patron; and Mary Glynn, a patron of the organisation. Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett of the Lismore diocese and Maureen Davy-Hamilton, the current president, were also present.

The specific role of the Blue and White Auxiliary is to provide much-needed equipment for the palliative care unit at St Vincents Private Hospital, Lismore, and community palliative care for those who wish to remain in their homes. They do a fantastic job in their fundraising activities. The members told me that during their fundraising events they are privileged to meet people in the community who are always appreciative of their support. Frank Hannigan, Chairman of the board of St Vincents Hospital Lismore; Wendy McKey, who does a fantastic job as the nurse unit manager of palliative care; Janelle Saffin, the Federal member; Kevin Hogan, The Nationals candidate; and his wife, Karen, were also present at the celebratory lunch. Jenny McFarlane and Clare Bell were recognised for their efforts in the palliative care unit. Tim Allsop, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of St Vincent's Private Hospital, presented certificates to members of the Blue and White Auxiliary in recognition of their service. Everyone present also wished the president of the Blue and White Auxiliary, Maureen Davy, well on her recent marriage to Keith Hamilton.

The second organisation that I commend is the renal unit at Lismore Base Hospital run by Dr William James. Operation Angel is an award given by Kidney Health Australia in recognition of the work done by

members of the community in support of kidney health. In Lismore the award was presented to Mrs Val Courte. Mrs Courte's husband has received support from the renal unit. Mrs Courte originally came from Casino, where I grew up, and later became a nurse. She lived in Casino as a young lady before she married later in life. Sadly, her husband, Tom Courte, has not enjoyed the best of health due to kidney difficulties. Mrs Courte is the last person to seek recognition but her dedication to supporting her husband and other renal unit clients was noted.

Mrs Courte personifies generosity and has provided support not in order to receive accolades. At the award presentation Mrs Courte was embarrassed by the fuss made of her. I want to place on the record of the Parliament of New South Wales appreciation for her commitment to her husband, Tom, and her assistance to the many people who have attended the renal unit in Lismore. I pay tribute to Dr William James and every member of the renal unit at Lismore Base Hospital. Jane Ruane, the Nursing Unit Manager of the Lismore Base Hospital Renal Unit, and Annie Revell, representing Kidney Health Australia, were also present. I once again congratulate Mrs Val Courte and thank her for her support and care of Lismore renal unit clients.

## M2 MOTORWAY SPEED LIMITS

**Mr BART BASSETT** (Londonderry) [5.16 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a small but nevertheless inconvenient issue for Western Sydney motorists who regularly use the M2 motorway. I refer to a very small section of the M2 that has a lower speed restriction of 90 kilometres per hour compared with the rest of the M2 and the M7, which have 100 kilometres per hour speed limits. From the commencement of the M2—from the M7 at Abbott Road, Seven Hills, to the new western ramps at Windsor Road, Baulkham Hills—there is a 90 kilometres per hour speed restriction. The relevant section is not in my electorate but the problem affects my constituents who regularly use the M2 and the M7 to travel to other parts of the greater Sydney metropolitan area, further north or to other States.

Transurban, operator of the M2, has recently completed a major upgrade. Additional lanes and new on-off access points have been built, at a cost of \$550 million, to improve traffic flow and reduce travel times. These works make life easier for long-suffering motorists. After such a significant investment in upgrades, it is disappointing that the 90 kilometres per hour speed restriction remains in place along such a short section when the M7 and the remainder of the M2 have a 100 kilometres per hour speed limit. Following a number of representations from constituents who use the M2 and M7, I had discussions with the Minister for Roads and Ports and his department. The Minister and his staff have been very proactive and attentive to a number of issues that I have raised with them and are working with me to find a solution. I am hopeful that Roads and Maritime Services and the operator of the M2, Transurban, can come together for talks and fix this problem. Motorists from the Hawkesbury area and across outer Western Sydney travel long distances and they should not have to risk receiving an infringement because of what is nothing more than a speed trap.

I ask members to put themselves in the driver seat of a vehicle travelling on the M2 on a regular basis. Motorists from my electorate enter the M7 from Richmond Road at Marsden Park, the Light Horse Interchange at Eastern Creek or from Old Windsor Road having travelled down Windsor Road. They travel east at 100 kilometres per hour for about 10 to 15 minutes and then at Seven Hills the speed limit drops to 90 kilometres per hour. They have already travelled some distance and if they are going to the city they have some way to go. The length of the M7 is 25 kilometres and the M2 is 21 kilometres. For most of that distance the speed limit is 100 kilometres per hour. Motorists from Blacktown, Hawkesbury and Penrith local government areas rely on the M2 and M7 motorways as vital roads to connect Western Sydney motorists to other areas of Sydney, such as the central business district, The Hills, North-west Sydney, Parramatta and the North Shore. They are experiencing problems.

It could be mum and dad taking the kids on an outing or to an appointment. They have other things on their mind and forget to reduce their speed when they hit Abbott Road at Seven Hills. It could be a courier, truck driver or commercial operator going about their normal everyday work routine. They forget to reduce their speed to 90 kilometres per hour while driving on this very short section of road en route to the employment lands in Western Sydney or beyond. The historical reason for the lower limit was to allow for bus pick-up points on this section of road. Minor works are all that are required to rectify this problem. Line marking, signage and improvement to a safety fence will allow the speed limit on this section of road to be lifted from 90 kilometres per hour to 100 kilometres per hour. I am surprised that this was not rectified as part of the M2 upgrade; it is an obvious oversight and somewhat of a shock since more than \$500 million has been spent on the upgrade.

I am surprised also that I needed to raise this matter with the Minister's office rather than with Roads and Maritime Services or Transurban. My advice is that the required safety modifications and improvements

would not be expensive and can be completed with a minimum of fuss to motorists in a reasonably short time. It would be a complete farce to spend more than \$500 million on the M2 upgrade and not rectify this small oversight. As I have said, the Minister's office has been very proactive in examining this problem. I trust that discussions between the Minister's office, Roads and Maritime Services and Transurban will produce a sensible and open-minded approach and an agreed time frame to rectify this problem in a very short period.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.20 p.m.]: I commend the member for Londonderry for raising this speed limit anomaly and thank him for bringing it to the attention of the House in an attempt to obtain consistency of speed limits on that important motorway section between the M2 and M7 link. Transurban and the Minister are well aware of the problem and are working together to resolve it. I take this opportunity also to commend Transurban for its \$600-million investment in the upgrading of this phenomenal road, as it provides the only motorway link to the north-western areas of Sydney. Since its opening only two weeks ago, at which I had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Roads and Ports, Duncan Gay, motorist time has decreased on that section of road. Various members of Parliament have cited how quick it is to now travel to the city. I remind the House also that this link provides the only form of public transport for the many buses in the north-western area that traverse the city daily. Bus times have decreased also, which is great news for our north-western areas.

### **BRAESIDE HOSPITAL FRESH FOOD KITCHEN**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [5.21 p.m.]: On 12 July 2013 I had the pleasure of attending the Vietnamese Community in Australia [VCA], New South Wales Chapter, in conjunction with the Australian Vietnamese Health Professionals Association of New South Wales, the Vietnam Vision Project and the Rotary Club of Cabramatta fundraising dinner to raise funds to build a fresh food kitchen at Braeside Hospital. I congratulate Braeside Hospital's General Manager, Mr Stewart James, and his staff on their ongoing work in the field of palliative care, which is very important in our multicultural and ageing community. Many people know that food for our hospitals is usually cooked off site, brought in and reheated for serving to patients. The building of a fresh food kitchen eliminates the need for double handling of food. The nutritional impact of food cooked on site cannot be understated. Fresh and nutritious meals have a positive impact on the physical, mental and spiritual health care of patients.

Another perk of the fresh food kitchen is enabling the hospital to cater for the specific cultural needs of our multicultural community members and those who may have specific dietary and/or cultural requirements for meals they receive whilst in the hospital's care. Another important aspect of cooking fresh food on site is the long-term cost saving. I understand the kitchen will reduce the cost of providing meals by approximately 20 per cent, which is a rather attractive saving. Braeside Hospital is one of HammondCare's facilities that specialises in community services for the people of south-western Sydney, including rehabilitation, palliative and mental health care. HammondCare was established in 1932 by Anglican Archdeacon R. B. S. Hammond in response to the eviction of inner-city, rent-paying families in Sydney during the Depression. These families were provided with housing through a rent-purchase program on land at Hammondville in the Liverpool city area.

Archdeacon Hammond bought the land through financial donations and his own finances to make the project work. Throughout its history HammondCare has been a highly independent Christian charity working with all denominations but not owned by any. This enables it to be flexible, with the capacity to move anywhere to meet with and identify the needs of any particular community. HammondCare has been and remains innovative in its approach to the health and aged care services it provides. HammondCare has always been a charity that acknowledges the needs of the people and has changed over the years to compensate for changing needs. HammondCare has always focused, and will continue to focus, on those who need its help. HammondCare's philosophy is:

As Good Samaritans we cannot walk on the other side. We cannot ignore or decline to do things because they are too hard, or they involve risk, or they are unprofitable. We continue to be risk takers for those whose lives are at risk.

I thank HammondCare and Braeside Hospital's General Manager, Mr Stewart James, for their unwavering support and ongoing care for those in need within our communities. I thank also Mr Than Nguyen, President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, New South Wales Chapter, and his committee, and Mr Tri Va, Federal President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia. I commend them for their generous fundraising endeavours not only for Braeside Hospital but also for the many other charities they have assisted and will continue to assist over many years to come. May we all walk in the footsteps of Archdeacon Hammond and remember his legacy: Always care for those less fortunate than ourselves.

### COFFS HARBOUR COMMUNITY PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICE

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.25 p.m.]: Tonight I praise the Coffs Harbour palliative care unit. Members of The Nationals are aware of the sad passing of the husband of my electorate officer Diane Leahy, who commenced as a junior employee with Ian Sinclair in Armidale. Diane has been a fantastic electorate officer. Over the past week I have rung her every day to see how she has been getting on. This morning she insisted on knowing what was happening in Parliament. I said that I would be making a private member's statement later today. She asked me, "Would you mind making one about the palliative care unit at Coffs Harbour?" Before her husband, Peter, passed away he spent a number of weeks undergoing chemotherapy and receiving treatment from doctors at the Coffs Harbour Health Campus cancer care unit. Last Friday his condition deteriorated to the stage where he was admitted to hospital. I saw Peter on the Saturday but, unfortunately, he passed away about 8 o'clock on Sunday night surrounded by Diane, their son, Angus, and daughter, Nicole, and other relatives.

I put on the record my sincere condolences to Diane and her family. It is with great sadness that I make this private member's statement because they are one of those great families. People would say that Peter was the quintessential 1970s Australian male who loved to have a beer after work—he worked at Telstra—loved to go to the Friday night raffles at Sawtell Hotel, loved his family and loved life generally. He also loved his football and, thankfully, he had the opportunity recently to attend with his son the State of Origin rugby league match. Even though he was singularly unimpressed with the result—as I was—it was a great night for him and for Angus. During the last few weeks of his life the palliative care unit visited their home daily and attended to his needs. Ironically, Peter's nickname was "Bird" and Dr Bird is in charge of the Coffs Harbour palliative care unit. Not just Diane and her family have mentioned to me the great service provided by this palliative care unit.

Many people who have been involved with the cancer care unit often send emails or comment on the fantastic service it provides. Palliative care is for those who can provide a level of care the majority of us are unable to. They look after people who literally have a death sentence, yet they make their final weeks, days and hours comfortable, not only caring for those patients but also looking after their relatives' needs. Asking me today to make a private member's statement about palliative care and the great service that Dr Bird, his staff and colleagues provide clearly demonstrates Diane's caring nature and goodness.

Diane is most likely recognised in The Nationals circles as the electorate secretaries' electorate secretary. If any other electorate staff members have problems they often ring Diane. She has been employed in both the Federal and State arenas and has worked with me for about 10 years. She is so caring that if someone raises a Federal matter she does not refer them to my Federal colleague; she gets on the phone and resolves the issue herself. Diane and her children are facing a tough time. Nicole is in year 12 and Angus is at the University of Newcastle. Staff and members—including the Premier, the Leader of The Nationals and my Nationals colleagues—have asked me to pass on their condolences. Diane was keen for me to place on record her and her family's appreciation of the great service that Dr Bird and the palliative care service provide at the Coffs Harbour Health Campus, and I am pleased to do so.

### CENTRAL COAST ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICES PLAN

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER** (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [5.30 p.m.]: On Tuesday 30 July 2013 I attended the launch of the Central Coast Aboriginal Health Services Plan 2013-2017, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people living on the Central Coast. More than 100 people attended the launch at Gosford Hospital of this dynamic collaborative agreement between Yerin Aboriginal Health Services, Central Coast Local Health District and Central Coast NSW Medicare Local. This partnership agreement is unique. I am advised that nowhere else in Australia have healthcare providers come together in a strategic agreement that links healthcare provision throughout the supply chain, from acute hospital care to local community care. This plan will be a model for other communities.

The three organisations are working together to improve the coordination and delivery of health care by reducing duplication, allowing for co-location of staff and providing for better placement of services and resources throughout the community. The three groups are already seeing the benefits of the partnership through the attraction of more Federal funding for programs designed to prevent suicide. The plan sets in place strategies that will make a difference to the health and wellbeing of the approximately 9,000 Indigenous people living on the Central Coast. It also acknowledges the importance of cultural wellbeing in achieving equitable health outcomes.

Aboriginal children have twice the mortality rate and the life span of Aboriginal people is approximately 10 years less than that of the rest of the Australian population. Aboriginal people also have higher risk factors when it comes to smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity, and a higher prevalence of chronic diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, liver disease and respiratory disease. The Central Coast Aboriginal Health Services Plan will work to improve Aboriginal health while focusing on maternal and child health, chronic diseases, mental health, child and family safety and wellbeing, drugs and alcohol, and organisational and cultural change. The plan was launched by Mrs Vickie Parry, chair of Yerin Aboriginal Health Services; Mr Graham McGuinness, chair of the Central Coast NSW Medicare Local; and Mr Paul Tonkin, chair of the Central Coast Local Health District.

Yerin Aboriginal Health Services provides a full range of primary healthcare services through the Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Centre, which focuses on the physical, spiritual, social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Central Coast NSW Medicare Local provides a range of services in Aboriginal health, mental health, nutrition and after-hours general practice care. Medicare is helping to close the gap in life expectancy by improving access to culturally sensitive primary care services. The Central Coast Local Health District provides services specifically developed for the Aboriginal community and helps to promote Aboriginal employment. These services include chronic care, child and family health programs, and youth and mental health programs.

I commend each of these organisations for their excellent work and participation in helping to establish the collaborative partnership agreement and the development of the Central Coast Aboriginal Health Services Plan 2013-2017. They already do a tremendous job individually. However, by taking a collaborative approach, they are working together to create greater synergies that will significantly advance the health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on the Central Coast.

I was deeply moved by the speech given by Mrs Vickie Parry, the chairperson of Yerin Aboriginal Health Services. She spoke about her family situation and her father, her mother, her uncles, her brothers and her cousins, the great majority of whom had a severely reduced life expectancy and suffered chronic diseases. Those diseases are easily prevented but they were not because of inadequate health care and advice. She typified the Aboriginal narrative and told her sad story with great grace and dignity. It is a tribute to her and people like her who are determined to redress the imbalance between the health of Aborigines and other people in our community. This program is unique and that is why I have drawn it to the attention of the House. It is a strategic partnership involving every level of health care. It will be of huge assistance to the 9,000-odd Aboriginal people living on the Central Coast, and I commend it to the House.

### SWANSEA ELECTORATE PROJECTS

**Mr GARRY EDWARDS** (Swansea) [5.35 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House two recently completed projects within the electorate of Swansea. These projects have seen immediate benefits—albeit at distinctly different levels—and will have long-term enduring pluses for my constituents who live at the southern end of the electorate. On 25 July I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of the new Woolworths shopping complex on the Pacific Highway at Lake Munmorah. Several thousand residents attended the opening of this shopping destination, which, in addition to a Woolworths supermarket and service station, includes a number of retail outlets, a pharmacy, a medical practice and, in a real coup for Woolworths, a branch of the Newcastle Permanent Building Society.

This development is possibly the most significant project to be completed in Lake Munmorah not only in recent years, but ever. It has the potential to create more than 200 local jobs. For residents living in isolated communities around Lake Munmorah and Mannering Park, a shopping centre such as this can provide a platform for young people to start a first job and develop much-needed skills. Woolworths employs more apprentice butchers than any other company in Australia. The company also offers young people career opportunities, opportunities during their transition from secondary studies to tertiary studies and/or full-time employment.

The close proximity of the development to several of the many residential land lease communities within the electorate will also benefit the several thousand residents of these unique estates who previously were forced to travel considerable distances to do their shopping. Many of those residents are either elderly and/or have mobility issues. Another benefit of this development is the considerable contributions that Woolworths has made to Wyong Shire Council as part of the development application process. Those contributions—which amount to several hundred thousand dollars—will be used to improve footpaths and undertake other infrastructure works in the immediate vicinity.

I congratulate Woolworths on the delivery of this facility and share in the community's excitement about the positives that this project has brought to Lake Munmorah and surrounding suburbs. Following a conversation I had earlier this week with Woolworths representative Mr Anthony Iannuzzi, I am delighted to advise that the shops at the Lake Munmorah complex—not only the Woolworths supermarket but also the specialty shops—are experiencing trade far in excess of expectations. This is a real success story for Lake Munmorah.

I now draw the attention of the House to the wonderful work of the Northern Lakes Regional Business Chamber and the recent successful installation of a number of closed-circuit television [CCTV] cameras at various locations in the Budgewoi/Halekulani central business district. This project has seen the installation of 10 state-of-the-art cameras, which will assist police in combating antisocial behaviour and crime and provide general surveillance of the central business district. This crime-fighting measure is a much-welcomed addition to the Budgewoi and Halekulani business precinct and has received grateful acknowledgement from business owners and residents alike.

Notwithstanding several early setbacks, the chamber and its members, in particular coordinator Maree Hands-Booth, showed selfless determination in completing the vital community initiative. The organisation applied for funding through last year's Community Building Partnership program and it received \$18,000 to go towards its closed-circuit television project. It was a privilege to support Maree and I am proud to support the Northern Lakes Regional Business Chamber. I commend them for completing the significant community project and for their ongoing leadership role within the community.

### **MOOREBANK INTERMODAL TERMINAL**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Menai) [5.40 p.m.]: Tonight I will update the House on the proposed establishment of the Moorebank Intermodal Terminal facility, which is causing a great amount of concern and fear in my community. I say "proposed" but the community and I feel this is a bit of a joke because the proponents are powering ahead. There are two intermodals proposed: one by a private consortium, SIMTA, on the site of the Defence National Storage Distribution Centre; and the other by the Federal Government, on the site of the land it owns at the School of Military Engineering. Since I was first preselected to run for this seat I have argued that this is not the right location for such a facility. It may be a good thing for Sydney, but at what cost to local residents? SIMTA recently put its environmental impact statement on public exhibition and many concerned local residents have made personal submissions. Until recently, the Federal Government seemed to have stalled as it continues to withhold access for a rail spur across its land. Obviously two intermodals would introduce competition.

Tonight I focus on the Federal Labor Government proposal that looks to be going ahead soon. "Federal Labor Government" is how it was termed in the joint press release by Anthony Albanese and Penny Wong. Officially we are being told that it is still a proposal, but to me and the residents it seems like it is already a done deal. There has been no environmental impact statement for the community to comment on and it has not been consulted to show how the proposal may impact on it. An office has been established in Canberra—where they would not know the true impact on or the fear of the locals—to enable phone calls to be taken from residents in south-western Sydney. In addition, the Moorebank Intermodal Company, a government business enterprise, has been established. The Federal Labor Government has now called for private companies to register their interest in developing and operating the terminal. In a press release of 21 May this year the Federal Government stated that it has engaged widely with industry. I ask that it do the same with local residents, particularly those residing in Wattle Grove and Casula, who have been crying out loudly that they do not want this project to go ahead. What does the Federal Government do?

**Mr Jamie Parker:** Nothing.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** Absolutely nothing. I thank the member for Balmain. There has been no consultation, no assistance, no opportunity to meet part way, and no opportunity to have their fears addressed. This facility is set to handle up to 1.2 million containers annually. It has the capacity to handle another 500,000 containers to meet interstate demand. It would apparently remove 1.2 million trucks each year, or 3,300 trucks per day, from Sydney's roads. These are impressive figures, but reading between the lines it is not such a rosy picture. The containers will first travel by train to the facility. They will then need to go into warehouses and be moved about by trucks along local roads. These local roads are now used by residents travelling to and from work, parents taking their kids to school, and by local businesses, and they are already struggling under the ordinary everyday pressure.

I regularly receive complaints about congestion and the poor quality of our roads due to increasing loads travelling across them. I am thrilled that the long-awaited widening of the M5 is happening, but the widening should address and ease the current capacity. The freight terminal will now bring more trucks in and around our local suburbs. The congestion on the M5 will create rat runs down the Hume Highway, past the hospital, or along Nuwarra and Newbridge roads to bypass it. These local roads are already under pressure. The community has had no consultation, no sorry, no "hope you understand"; just, "We stand to generate about \$10 billion in economic benefits." I understand the want, I understand the need, but there are major costs for our area.

We live in the Sydney Basin. Our air quality is poor, our asthma rates are high. We have a proposal that will bring in more pollution to local communities. We are talking not about a site that is surrounded by industrial warehouses but one that is merely metres away from homes, schools and community areas, and our roads are already at capacity. We have one of the biggest hospitals in the Southern Hemisphere, but the increased traffic may cut off access to it, which is a huge problem when considering emergency services. Schools, parklands and homes are near the earmarked site, all of which will be affected by traffic, noise and increased pollution. The Federal Labor Government is not known to put the needs of residents first because it refused to provide sound barriers along the South West Rail Link and the southern Sydney freight line, neighbouring homes in Casula and alongside the Liverpool Hospital. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

This is not a Government known for putting residents first. This will be a 20-hour a day operation with trucks starting and braking, containers being loaded and reverse alarms sounding. It all equates to a lot of noise. With a round-the-clock operation, residents will be subjected to light spill late at night. Floodlights will light the site to ensure that the work will go on, regardless of the residents who will be affected. Yes, it will allow more freight to be delivered to south-west Sydney by rail instead of by road from Port Botany, but our backyards will become a truck parking lot instead of the suburban streets they are now. This is more than simply a NIMBY issue. I know other areas that would better suit this development, primarily because of the location and the jobs that are needed. In this case, the site reduces the use of land for jobs and the location does not work. It is time the Federal Labor Government listened to the residents and put the needs of locals first before benefitting itself.

### RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES LEGISLATION

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [5.45 p.m.]: Last month I had the pleasure of attending a residents forum organised by the Port Stephens Park Residents Association in Salamander Bay. The forum was attended by more than 100 residents representing residential parks across the Mid North Coast, Port Stephens and Central Coast areas with the specific aim of raising their concerns with respect to the Residential (Land Lease) Communities Bill 2013. I acknowledge members in the other place, the Hon. Mick Veitch and the Hon. Jan Barham, who also attended the forum.

The Government's draft bill will impact thousands of residents in caravan parks, manufactured home estates, mobile home villages and relocatable home parks. During the forum a number of the park residents, many of whom are elderly pensioners, raised their concerns about how the draft bill will negatively affect their livelihoods. I have been inundated with many submissions and responses to the draft bill since the consultation process began. The particular issues that were raised at this forum included concerns in relation to part 6, division 3, regarding determination of site fees; part 8, Community Rules; and part 10, division 2, the payment of park sale price to the operator. The villages that have sent submissions include: Ocean Breeze Village, Banksia Grove Village, Sea Winds Village, Sanctuary Village, Princess Marina Gardens Retirement Village and Racecourse Beach Village. The organisations that have made submissions, a number of which were present at this forum, include: Port Stephens Park Residents Association, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, Park and Village Service Advice Advocacy, and Tweed Broadwater Homeowners Association.

More than 1,300 comments have been made in relation to the draft bill since the forum was held. The Government has since released a post-consultation amendments document, which is a summary of the main changes to the draft bill. Given the great interest in this legislation, there is a clear need for the New South Wales Government to continue further discussions and to continue the consultation process with stakeholders, residents, and the representatives of those individuals and associations. The forum did provide me with an opportunity to hear firsthand the concerns that those residents hold in relation to the Government's proposed Residential (Land Lease) Communities Bill 2013.

I thank Christina Steel, Janice Edstein and Ron Mclachlan of the Port Stephens Park Residents Association Incorporated for their kind invitation and hospitality on the day. I also take the opportunity to

acknowledge the representatives of the Park and Village Service who were present at the forum. I understand there will be a number of other opportunities for residents to meet as they did in Salamander Bay. I know the Hon. Mick Veitch, along with the Hon. Jan Barham, indicated their interest in attending further forums. I have no doubt that there will be more deliberations as progress is made—I hope that progress is made—in addressing some of the genuine concerns that those residents have raised.

#### **AUSTRALIA DAY YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR DOUGLAS WALTHER**

**Mr GLENN BROOKES** (East Hills) [5.50 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to an outstanding young man from the East Hills electorate. Douglas Walthers received the Australia Day Young Citizen of the Year Award from Bankstown City Council. I commend Doug for the range of volunteering initiatives that he is involved with in the local community—initiatives such as mowing lawns for the elderly, coaching youth teams at Panania RSL Soccer Club and being elected chairperson of the Bankstown Youth Advisory Committee. With what I can only describe as remarkable vision, Douglas leased a rundown non-operational golf course in the heart of my electorate and is currently running his own farm from the site, with hundreds of sheep and cows. The farm is neatly hidden from the world—only minutes from the M5—and most people do not even know it is there.

Not only does young Mr Walther operate this farm from a location 35 minutes from the Sydney central business district, but he also attends university and is in his third year of a four-year degree studying a Bachelor of Agricultural Economics, majoring in commercial law. This young man embodies everything that it means to be an outstanding young Australian. I commend Mr Andrew Walther and Mrs Leanne Walther for raising such an outstanding and community focused young man. Douglas is an asset to the East Hills community, and I know that we, the people of New South Wales, have not yet seen the extent of this young man's talent. I wish Douglas Walther all the very best for a happy, long and successful future. I will be watching his career and life achievements with great interest.

#### **COOGEE ELECTORATE EVENTS**

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [5.53 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about some positive events in or near my Coogee electorate. Last night I attended the Eastern Suburbs Building Business Expo at South Sydney Juniors Rugby League Club with the Minister for Fair Trading. The expo was a fantastic opportunity for builders, tradesmen and contractors in my electorate and across the eastern suburbs to hear firsthand from the Minister and me about the Government's important reform agenda, and the positive impacts that it will have on the building industry in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government's building expos are designed to be education and awareness programs that offer tradespeople and contractors direct access to industry experts. They allow tradespeople to receive practical advice to help them run their businesses effectively. As well as hearing from the Minister and me, attendees also listened to important presentations from a range of government and non-government agencies.

Amongst the organisations there were representatives of NSW Fair Trading, the NSW Self Insurance Corporation, the NSW Small Business Commissioner's office, Breene and Breene Solicitors, Harvest Accounting Group, Long Service Corporation, the Australian Taxation Office, the Housing Industry Association, Master Builders Australia and WorkCover NSW. These organisations represent all the daily concerns and considerations involved with running a small trade business. The expo was a terrific opportunity for me to engage with tradespeople and industry representatives in the Coogee electorate. I encouraged attendees to continue an open dialogue with me as their representative in Parliament, particularly during tough financial times when many small builders are feeling the pinch. But there are strong signs that the industry is heading in the right direction, with a 15 per cent increase in monthly approvals under this Government compared with the past five years under Labor. Nevertheless, the Government is committed to putting in place the right mechanisms to assist businesses in making the correct financial and business decisions. This is particularly important as we head into the next few decades, when dwelling requirements are projected to increase by 70 per cent. As an incentive to attend, licensed builders and swimming pool builders earned continuing professional development points for their presence.

I will also update the House on an issue that I spoke about a few months ago, which was the appalling proposal to transform the existing Bronte RSL site in my electorate into a complex of high-rise apartments, small retail stores and a large Harris Farm market. The height of the proposal exceeded current council guidelines by 7.5 metres and also would have seen the RSL dramatically reduced in size. I am very pleased to report that at a special meeting three weeks ago of the joint regional planning panel the proposal was rejected unanimously. It was rejected on the basis that it was of immense concern to residents of Bronte because of its



size and bulk. It certainly would not have been in the best interests of the community. I agree entirely with the community sentiments. The proposal flouted all good planning principles for the purpose of maximising profits. There is no doubt that the Bronte RSL site needs redevelopment. However, this proposal goes way too far from what is needed for Bronte and what is desired by its residents.

Over the past months I have sought to be in close contact with my constituents in Bronte and throughout my electorate who were outraged at this proposal. I made my position clear on this issue in the local media and I have attended events in support of the campaign against it, including a rally held outside the Bronte RSL site. The person we must thank most for this excellent outcome is Dr Stephen Lightfoot. Dr Lightfoot established Save Bronte Village, a campaign that has actively fought against the proposal for so long that it attracted the attention of ABC's 7:30, which ran a story on the ongoing saga. I note that the work of Dr Lightfoot and the Save Bronte Village campaign may not be over if the developer decides to appeal the decision in the Land and Environment Court. In the event of an appeal, I will again be supporting Dr Lightfoot's efforts and the efforts of the community of Bronte to get a reasonable outcome for this site. I commend Dr Lightfoot for his work on behalf of the community and I commend all the other people who have contributed so much to making the Save Bronte Village campaign a success so far. Dr Lightfoot is a great example of a grassroots activist whose efforts have truly made a difference in effecting a much more desirable outcome for Bronte.

### **PENRITH RSL SUB-BRANCH**

**Mr STUART AYRES** (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.58 p.m.]: Today I will update the House about the Penrith RSL Sub-branch. It was my pleasure to attend the RSL Annual Appreciation Luncheon at the Penrith RSL Club on Sunday 11 August. One of the highlights of this luncheon was the announcement of Mr Paul Crofts as a life member of the Returned and Services League of Australia. Paul is one of those fantastic people whom I am sure plenty of members have come across in the course of their duties as members of Parliament. He is dedicated and committed to volunteer work. The RSL has recognised him for this long and outstanding commitment to the welfare work of the RSL, particularly looking after a number of veterans who have returned from overseas.

As many members will be aware, great care is taken when nominating service members for life membership. They must have displayed long, continuous and outstanding service. It is a huge honour to be recognised as a life member by the national executive, through the recommendations of the State branch. It is probably recognised as one of the most important honours for any member of the RSL. The Penrith RSL Sub-branch is one of the largest in New South Wales and has more than 860 members. The club focuses on the welfare of men and women who have served and are serving in the armed forces. Through natural attrition the numbers have declined a little over the years. I understand that the number of members was well over 1,000 in earlier days.

It is now the goal of the RSL sub-branch to restructure and focus on young and contemporary veterans and to encourage them to become involved in their local RSL. In years gone by it was common for veterans to get together with other men and women and to share a drink. That behaviour is changing. Therefore, it is important for RSL sub-branches to adapt to the culture of modern society. I believe it is up to the challenge. Historically, the RSL has learnt many lessons about dealing with veterans. The RSL employs many Vietnam veterans who display great leadership to our younger contemporary veterans as they return to civilian life. They also ensure that generations of ex-service personnel, both older and younger, are catered for.

President Neville Barnier and Mr John Love of the Penrith RSL Sub-Branch recently started a day club to assist not only ex-service personnel but also elderly members of the community who all too often are becoming isolated. At the day club people are encouraged to obtain new skills and make new friends. When this idea was originally mooted 14 people volunteered immediately—a terrific indication of the commitment of the members of that club. The volunteers are currently in their final stages of training by the Department of Veteran Affairs. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the fantastic work done by that agency in support of RSL sub-branches and veteran groups across the country. Each week the volunteers will use a Salvation Army bus to pick up the attendees and take them to a designated venue to have some lunch, listen to a guest speaker, mingle and make friends, and then they will be taken home. To date, approximately 50 people have expressed an interest in attending the day club.

The Penrith RSL Sub-branch has also been heavily involved in working with Penrith City Council on the redevelopment of Memory Park, a long-term point of ceremony in the Penrith region. Earlier this year the

Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, rededicated this park, which is important as a place of solemn ceremony in particular on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. The Penrith RSL Sub-branch has continued to drive the attendance of people at our Anzac Day services. Indeed, this year we had a record crowd at the Dawn Service held at Memory Park and I look forward to seeing even more people attending next year. The club has also done a lot of work in promoting Anzac traditions. It now has a permanent display of artwork and photographs. It also continues to engage with young people through its school-based Anzac Day services. The club is a vital component of the Penrith community and I commend the work it does in my electorate.

### **PENWOOD MINIATURE RAILWAY**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [6.03 p.m.]: On Sunday 4 August I was pleased to attend the official reopening of Penwood Miniature Railway at Jaspers Brush. Founder Les Irwin purchased his original property at Berry 18 years ago. The railway opened in 2000 and continued until 2011 without incident or interruption on the first Sunday of every month. In August 2011 Shoalhaven City Council issued a stop order, claiming that the entry was unsafe. Following a community-led campaign, the council suggested that it would provide the use of a piece of land parallel to the Princes Highway to provide a safe entry, with a clear sight view of 250 metres each way—the Roads and Maritime Services requirement for a road with a 100-kilometre-per-hour speed limit. There was also an issue with the right of way, and I commend the neighbours for being so compliant and assisting with that issue. Over a six-month period the new entry was completed to the satisfaction of council, and Roads and Maritime Services.

I acknowledge Penwood president Steve Burrows; secretary Frank Tynan; project manager Les Irwin; Grant Blow, who also assisted with driving in fence posts; Colin Taylor, who helped with fencing; Jeff and Kerry Rumble of Berry, who built the road; Mark Nelson, who gave Penwood a very good price on all materials and coal wash for the road and also provided compaction testing for the road at no charge; John Smith who tarred the entry at a reduced price; and Dave Rumble, who lent his heavy machinery, including an excavator to Jeff Rumble to do the job. I acknowledge the Independent Steel Company from South Nowra that gave Penwood a reduced price on fencing material such as wire and steel posts, and South Coast Quarries also gave a reduced price on blue metal for the road. General Manager Russell Pigg of Shoalhaven City Council and Robert Russell and James Bonner from the council were extremely helpful throughout the process. I commend the council staff for assisting Penwood in the reopening. I also thank my colleague in the other place the Hon. Paul Green, MLC, the former Mayor of Shoalhaven City Council; Councillor Greg Watson; and my good friend Councillor Andrew Guile, who also attended the official reopening day.

I am pleased to report that since the reopening there have been two running days, with approximately 200 people attending the first day and almost 400 people the second day. Happily, I drove the first train out of the station at the reopening and all the kids in attendance that day really enjoyed it. I have no doubt that Penwood, which has opened its doors to young people for birthday parties and social events, will continue to be a successful operation. Les Irwin put this whole operation together and he is to be commended. Les has spent thousands of hours working on his miniature railways and model trains pursuing his hobby—which has become somewhat of an obsession for those who have seen the layout—but also ensuring that members of the public can enjoy this facility. I take this opportunity to extend an invitation to the Minister for Transport who is present in the Chamber not only to visit Penwood but also to drive one of the trains and inspect the first-class job that Les and his team are doing. It really is a remarkable facility.

We are very lucky on the South Coast to have a number of rail enthusiasts, of which I am one. The Albion Park Light Railway Museum, under Brad Jones, has an enormous array of memorabilia and a functioning light railway system. Both facilities are great credits to their operators and volunteers. I was delighted to attend the opening at Penwood after so much time, effort and energy has been invested in negotiating with the council, working with the Roads and Maritime Services staff, working with the volunteers to find the materials and the energy, enthusiasm and enterprise to put together the necessary upgrades to make Penwood work. This is a great achievement for a local community that could have lost a facility that Les and his team had spent thousands of hours working on for the enjoyment of the community. I look forward to Penwood continuing to operate long into the future, and to its being a wonderful example to Sydney Trains.

### **WYONG PUBLIC SCHOOL 125TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr DARREN WEBBER** (Wyang) [6.08 p.m.]: During the Parliamentary winter recess I had the privilege of attending many community events in my electorate of Wyong. One of the most significant events I attended was on Friday 2 August, when I joined with teachers, parents and students, both past and present, to

celebrate 125 years of great public education in Wyong at a special assembly held on the grounds of the Wyong Public School. What a significant milestone in public education in Wyong, and I congratulate the school communities at Wyong Public School, Wyong Grove Public school and Wyong High School on such a magnificent effort. The organising committee had been meeting for many months to plan this event, which went off without a hitch. It was a great success.

In recognition of this special occasion, I was pleased to have designed and produced 550 special medallions commemorating 125 years of public education in Wyong. I was also pleased to personally contribute towards the cost of those medallions. Each student from Wyong Public School and Wyong Grove Public school received a medallion. The medallions featured the school logo from each of the three Wyong township schools. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the many hundreds of teachers, ancillary staff, cleaners, parents and citizens association members and, of course, the thousands of students who have played a part in the rich history of education in the town of Wyong over the past 125 years.

It is quite staggering to consider that public education has been active in Wyong for more than half of modern Australia's history. Back in the late 1800s Wyong was very much a frontier timber town and there was a strong need for the many pioneering families to have education for their children. In 1888 Wyong Public School was established and has been serving the people of Wyong continually with quality education ever since, although not now on the original site. In 1979 Wyong Public School moved from its Alison Road site to new buildings at its current location in Cutler Drive in order to provide better facilities and learning opportunities for the expanding student population. To keep pace with current needs, education must always be prepared to change and grow to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing environment.

In order to ensure the best educational opportunities it has been decided that nearby Wyong Grove Public School will amalgamate with Wyong Public School at the end of this school year. This decision was taken as a result of falling enrolments at both Wyong Grove and Wyong public schools after an extensive review undertaken by the Department of Education and Communities, ending many years of uncertainty and rumours as to Wyong Grove Public School's future. All students will be relocated to Wyong Public School or other nearby local schools of the parent's choice for the start of the 2014 school year. Every family is being individually managed in this process and I commend and thank all Department of Education and Communities staff involved.

The amalgamation was not an easy decision for the department, but it has the support of many of the parents and teachers and this Government, who recognise that combining the two schools will create better and more diverse learning opportunities for all students. Those benefits include greater flexibility in class organisation to better meet student needs, the potential for a non-teaching deputy principal in addition to a non-teaching principal, an enhanced opportunity for students to mix and develop rapport in the wider community, and the pooling of resources to consolidate and enhance staff professional development. This action reunites the two schools after the students were placed on two sites in 1981 because student numbers were greatly in excess of the current schools' combined enrolments.

Under the banner of one combined Wyong Public School and complemented by Wyong High School, Wyong's public education future is both exciting and filled with endless possibilities for all students. We have a world-class public education system in New South Wales that both the New South Wales and Federal governments are strongly supporting and investing in for the future education of all our young students. As a product of a public education myself, having proudly attended Berkeley Vale Public School, Terrigal High School and later Wyong TAFE, I always do the best I possibly can as the State member for Wyong to ensure public education in my electorate is of the highest quality possible. I wholeheartedly support my Government's education reforms that deliver outcomes, not four-word slogans like "I give a Gonski".

In closing, I again pay tribute to everyone who assisted in organising the 125th anniversary celebrations. It was a great privilege for me to be able to attend and play a small part in recognising all the magnificent achievements in education over so many years. I would also like to add a very special thank you to the Wyong Public School captains, Jene Kroeger and Remy Tidy, who did such an excellent job in representing their school on that special day.

#### **MARTIAL ARTS MASTER JOHN TOOBY**

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [6.13 p.m.]: Today I speak about a great friend and upstanding businessman in my electorate, Mr John Tooby. John is the owner of Toodokan Self Defence Academy in

Smeaton Grange and this year he celebrates 20 years in the business. John's love of the sport of martial arts began in 1978. He has dedicated his life to practising and teaching the skills of the sport to literally thousands of students over that time. In 1993 John transitioned to full-time teaching and opened his self-defence academy, enabling him to teach his own style of martial arts that places a large emphasis on personal development and life skills to improve all aspects of his student's lives, including the ability to defend themselves.

John currently operates one of the largest and most professional schools in the world. It is widely recognised as one of the best schools in the country. As a true master of the martial arts, John has an enormous amount of experience that he can call upon when he teaches. He has black belts in several styles of martial arts, as well as an impressive full-contact fight record of 48-0. Over the past 25 years John has taken his skills into other areas of employment, as a hospitality owner and a bodyguard. With this unique combination of real-life experiences, John has taken the opportunity to pass on to his students his knowledge to prepare them for almost any situation that they may encounter.

In 1996 John was inducted into the World Karate Union Hall of Fame and the Australasian World Martial Arts Hall of Fame for his significant contribution to martial arts and the community, and recognised as the Self Defence Instructor of the Year. It is his dedication to the sport and his commitment to his students that have given him this world-class recognition. The passion and inspiration that John receives to continue with his successful business and teach his students is credited to his family and a few close friends. John's love of the martial arts has enabled him to pass on his skills as a teacher, building self-belief and discipline in his students as well as improving their health and fitness, safety awareness and self-defence skills.

John's wife, Abby, has been there supporting him throughout. Abby is a Toodokan black belt and a wonderful advocate of what can be achieved through a life dedicated to martial arts. Together they have the most beautiful daughter, Scarlett, who, although not yet two, will grow to be extremely proud of both of her parents. Without the leading students in the gym, who give back to the school with their time and help to provide the best instruction in the martial arts industry, the school would not be the success it is. On behalf of John Tooby I recognise those men and women and thank them for their ongoing support: Lincoln Harris, affectionately known as "Bones"; Habib Ataya; Stephen Morgenthaler; Rachel Lamden; Stephanie Talty; Murray Haines; Dokota Simonds; Steven Potts; Carol Zarb, Zeke Simonds; Michael O'Shea; Brayden Taylor; Blake Sneddon; Adam Hobman; Melissa Pisani; Richard Simon; Felicia Simon; Guy Russo; Hans Versteeg; Natalie Koteski; and Josh Manzione, who all contribute to the success of the Toodokan Self Defence Academy.

I share with many other parents a pride in our children's achievements as a result of their attendance at the Toodokan Self Defence Academy under the watchful eye of Master John. I am not talking about the colour of the belt achieved by the children but rather the self-discipline, confidence and life skills that come out of training with Master John. All my four children are students of John. I am extremely proud that my three eldest, Amelia, Tom and Sophie, are only 12 months away from provisional black belts and that Mathew, my five-year-old, is enjoying his time in the Dojo tremendously. What Master John teaches is that to achieve any goal one needs to be dedicated and never give up. Master John has a saying: The more you sweat in peace the less you bleed in war. That sums up his approach and professionalism to his much-loved karate. John, Abby and Scarlett are wonderful friends of mine, Vicki and our kids. It is an honour to stand in this House and give this private member's statement in recognition of John and his service to karate.

#### **GWYNNEVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [6.18 p.m.]: Tonight I inform my colleagues of a visit I undertook recently to Gwynneville Public School in my electorate of Wollongong. I was contacted by frantic members of the school's parents and citizens association about the state of the school and how they were unable to get any assistance from the Department of Education and Communities to address a great number of maintenance issues. I have been to Gwynneville Public School many times, but on this visit the deterioration of the school was astounding. Members of the parents and citizens association, led by President Michelle Nayagodamu, showed me problem after problem. Some problems required minor repairs to fix while others were just plain dangerous to staff and students alike.

I was shown the sick bay, and as an asthma sufferer I could only bare to be in the room for a matter of minutes. The smell of mould permeated the whole room, and mould spores on the walls and on the carpet were visible to the naked eye. The staff informed me that due to the horrendous condition of the room they were no longer able to use it at all and there was nowhere for sick children to go. Then it was off to the school library, a demountable building with cracks running down the walls. The library was nothing short of a disgrace, the damp and mould in the room has resulted in the school having to throw out thousands of dollars' worth of books; and due to the damp they were unable to use any mod cons such as an interactive whiteboard or the television in the room for fear of electrocution. Cords ran across the middle of the classroom and up the roof, some were gaffer taped along the walls and some simply dangled. This room was an accident waiting to happen.

Off we went to another demountable classroom, which really took the cake. The doors and windows did not lock properly, so that if the school ever had an emergency it could not be locked down for the protection and safety of staff and students. When it rained, water would leak in through the light fittings. This was clearly visible. I saw more gaffer tape being used to cover up cracks in the walls, and big cracks in the corners of the building. In one room, parts of the ceiling were actually falling down. Bird lice infested what used to be a storage facility, and the school currently has no canteen facilities at all. They were told they would be receiving an upgrade to the canteen. The staff and the parents and citizens cleared it all out to make way for the upgrade—only to be told they would not be receiving it, at least not this term.

The school had put in a submission for shading and fencing, which it was told it would get. But apparently those are not to be delivered now either. The parents and citizens informed me that the school had been on the list for a total rebuild and had been told three times it was not going to happen. The school has a large parcel of land that used to be used as a playground. But that has become so overgrown that it is no longer in use. On the occasions when the school had the land cleared, it had to pay for it through funds raised by the parents and citizens. Quite frankly, the conditions these students and staff find themselves in are unacceptable. I demand that the Minister for Education get involved and have these issues dealt with as a matter of urgency. The Occupational Health and Safety issues involved in this case alone are frightening. I have very real fears that a serious accident could well occur if this school continues to be ignored. In January this year Premier Barry O'Farrell said his Government was fixing up our schools and replacing more than 100 demountable buildings across the state.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** That is why we signed Gonski.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** The member for Kiama might find it funny, but I can assure him that the students and staff at Gwynneville Public School do not find this funny.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: I found nothing about this amusing. I take schools and education very seriously.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! There is no point of order. The member for Wollongong has the call.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** In January this year Premier Barry O'Farrell said his Government was fixing up our schools and replacing more than 100 demountable buildings across the State. Obviously he and the Minister for Education missed the memo on Gwynneville Public School. I congratulate Michelle and all the members of the parents and citizens, as well as Principal Trish Payne on their dedication and determination to see this school brought back to a decent standard for the children to learn in. I will be taking up the fight on their behalf with the Minister for Education and demanding that he come to Wollongong to see firsthand exactly what the issues are and the urgency with which they need to be addressed.

## PLANNING REFORMS

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [6.23 p.m.]:** I address the matter of planning, particularly in relation to the Government's proposed changes to the planning laws released in its white paper. Members will be aware that I regularly raise issues in this place relating to developments in my local community. I do this because I am a strong believer in the importance of protecting what is precious in both our built and natural environment. I also believe we need to have appropriate development in our community to house a growing population and to make sure we protect and extend the residential amenity we have in our community to include a higher number of people.

Planning is an important part of what creates our sense of community. The most important way that our sense of community is developed is the way our neighbourhoods are planned. Community participation must therefore be the basic underlying tenet of all planning and development decisions, and this must be underpinned by a strong legislative framework, including the right to judicial review. When residents are empowered to help plan their own communities, we see the very best examples of good neighbourhood planning—planning for people and the environment. When a community is not involved and lacks the right to have a say in planning, we see the opposite—planning that often then delivers for developers at the expense of residents and undermines confidence in and support for the planning system.

We saw this under the former Labor government. For decades, we saw a system that has since been identified in several areas as being incredibly corrupt. It was run on developer favours while sidelining residents and genuine strategic planning. The Coalition Government was elected on the promise of reforming Labor's disastrous system. However the changes proposed in the white paper show that the outcomes with this Government may be even worse. I have been critical of the Government's plans to change the planning laws,

which will remove many of the rights of residents to have a say on developments that impact directly on them. I know the Better Planning Network, a network of more than 300 local community groups, has called on the Minister to withdraw the planning bill if it cannot be amended to resolve the issues and to commit to an open, honest and accountable process.

It is important to note that the Independent Commission Against Corruption has made two submissions to the planning consultation process highlighting the corruption risk contained in this white paper due to the sheer amount of discretion provided to the Director General and to the Minister. This is something the Minister should take quite seriously. We also heard this week the State's top planning official admit that key communications sent by his department were misleading and inaccurate, and gave a false impression of the impacts of the controversial new planning laws. This is an admission from the department that is tasked with delivering the new planning regime that will inform development decisions for decades to come. This demonstrates that they have failed to properly communicate with residents and that in fact they have misled the community on these issues.

Under the changes, residents' involvement in development applications would be limited to upfront strategic plans. At the moment, if a development application is lodged for a property near you or something you care about then you can make a submission. We know that the current arrangements will not be allowed under the new planning laws and there will be almost no avenue of appeal against controversial or inappropriate developments. The ability of councils to protect heritage and diversity would be diminished, and there is no mention in the proposed exposure draft of the bill of environmental considerations such as planning for climate change. The department has claimed that ecologically sustainable development [ESD] principles were "enshrined" in the draft legislation. However, in a letter to the Better Planning Network, the director general has now admitted that:

... not all the principles are expressly referred to in the Bill. ... the principles cannot properly be described as "enshrined" if not all of them are expressly referred to in the Bill.

We know, of course, that there is in fact no enshrining of ecologically sustainable development, as there is in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. It is important that ecologically sustainable development be at the heart of this. The precautionary principle, a critical principle of ecologically sustainable development, is not mentioned. The director general has also acknowledged that the claims by department officials at community events that judicial review rights were to be expanded were misleading. In the letter I have just mentioned he said:

I agree that there has been a 'disconnect' with the messaging being communicated to the public and the drafting of the judicial review provisions in the Bill.

I think that disconnect needs to be addressed. In my community we have an alarming example of what is possible when the Government of the day gets the planning laws wrong. The Rozelle Village development was sectioned under part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act under the former, and now discredited, Labor Government. We as a community are still fighting the legacy of that decision, with a drastically inappropriate proposal for massive towers in an area that has predominantly two-storey buildings. That will destroy what we love about this community. The developer has ignored traffic problems highlighted by Transport for NSW, and Roads and Maritime Services, and has recently submitted another proposal to overdevelop the site.

In Glebe, I have worked with local residents and community groups to seek an appropriate development on the Harold Park site. I share residents' concerns that the development will have unacceptable impacts, including the most recent proposal for a major supermarket open seven days a week from 6.00 a.m. until midnight, which will generate excessive traffic and parking problems. The developer's plans ignore the need for local childcare, which is critical, and will take hundreds of square metres of the park. I pay tribute to the Better Planning Network; Rozelle Residents Action Group; the Forest Lodge, Annandale and Glebe Harold Park residents group; Hands off Glebe; and The Glebe Society. They have all been fighting these issues in the community for many years and have done a magnificent job. I endorse their campaigns.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.28 p.m. until  
Tuesday 20 August 2013 at 12 noon.**

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