

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE	2502
AL FAISAL COLLEGE MINTO	2497
AUSTRALIA ORIENTAL MEDIA GROUP	2500
BILL POULOS, KENNEDY AWARDS FOR INDIGENOUS WRITING	2497
BLUESCOPE STEEL PORT KEMBLA	2508
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	2469,
2502, 2513	
CARE LEAVERS AUSTRALIA NETWORK	2506
COMMONWEALTH BANK AGQUIP FIELD DAYS	2539
COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS	2496
CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY	2514
CRIMES (SENTENCING PROCEDURE) AMENDMENT (FIREARMS OFFENCES) BILL 2015	2512
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	2537
ELECTRICITY PRICES AND IRRIGATORS	2502
FUSION WESTERN SYDNEY SLEEP IN YOUR CAR	2498
GLEN INNES HELIPAD	2538
GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY	2511
HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (AMBULANCE SERVICES) BILL 2015	2469
HUTCHISON PORTS	2536
IMPOUNDING AMENDMENT (UNATTENDED BOAT TRAILERS) BILL 2015	2523
JACK PAGE, MID NORTH COAST FOOTBALLER	2500
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY	2513
KARITANE CARRAMAR TWENTY-FIRST ANNIVESARY	2498
LINDT CAFE SIEGE CORONIAL INQUEST	2504
LOWER NORTH COAST SURF LIFE SAVING AWARDS	2496
MAITLAND ELECTORATE ROTARIANS	2497
MARRIAGE EQUALITY	2499
MID NORTH COAST FLYING FOX MANAGEMENT	2534
MR PETER HEATON-JONES, NORTH DEVON MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT	2499
MUSWELLBROOK UNDER 13 REPRESENTATIVE NETBALL TEAM	2497
PETITIONS	2513
PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL	2533
PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	2533
QUAKERS HILL EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL	2535
QUESTION TIME	2502
RENEWABLE ENERGY	2510
RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PUBLIC	
HOUSING—ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR) BILL 2015	2528
ROSEHILL LOCAL AREA COMMAND	2500
ROSEVILLE CHASE ROTARY	2501
RURAL FIRE SERVICE CUMBERLAND ZONE ANNUAL BALL	2498
RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (BUSH FIRE PREVENTION) BILL 2015	2521
SENIORS AND SILKY RESCUE	2498
SMOKY CITY: A HISTORY OF AIR POLLUTION IN NEWCASTLE	2499
STATE ECONOMY	2503,
2516	
STATE INFRASTRUCTURE	2505
TRADE AND INVESTMENT	2509
TRIBUTE TO DAVID HALL	2501
TRIBUTE TO LERRYNN MUTTON, OAM	2534
TRIBUTE TO MARGARET MCMAHON	2498
TRIBUTE TO WAYNE GLEESON	2499
UNDER CONSTRUCTION CHOIR	2500
VISITORS	2501

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
WOMEN IN POLICING

100TH

2506  
ANNIVERSARY  
25

00

## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Wednesday 12 August 2015

---

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

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

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Notices of Motions**

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

*[During the giving of notices of motions.]*

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: The notice of motion of the member for Wollongong should be ruled out of order. How can the member for Wollongong call on the Government—

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

**Mr Gareth Ward:** It is relevance. How can the member for Wollongong call on the Government to do something—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wollongong was giving notice of a motion to be debated. The member for Kiama will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

**Pursuant to sessional order Government business proceeded with.**

### **HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (AMBULANCE SERVICES) BILL 2015**

#### **Second Reading**

**Debated resumed from 4 August 2015.**

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [10.11 a.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I speak to the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. I say at the outset that the Opposition will oppose this bill through this House and the other place. The bill allows non-government organisations to provide non-emergency patient transport services. The bill creates two definitions: "emergency ambulance services" and "supported non-emergency transport". The bill enables emergency ambulance services to be undertaken by a non-government organisation if consent is given by the health secretary.

It is important to reflect on the role of ambulance services and the affection and respect that the community have for them. Few people in this Chamber, and I suspect in the broader community, would not have had personal contact and experience with the Ambulance Service. An ambulance is often required during difficult times in the home, at car accidents or somewhere in the public. Ambulance officers are well respected and conduct themselves professionally in life-and-death situations. They perform their duties with enormous calm and a high level of skill. The broader community understands that the Ambulance Service can be contacted and relied on in emergency situations where an ambulance is required. I, like many others, and my family and friends have had experiences where an ambulance was required. There is often a sense of panic when a medical situation occurs in our homes but we are

comforted by knowing that an ambulance will arrive as quickly as possible.

The Opposition opposes the bill. It creates two distinct definitions of patient transport, which I have enunciated. Currently the Health Services Act prohibits any operator other than the Ambulance Service of NSW from providing transport for sick or injured patients for a fee or reward. Currently non-emergency patient transport services are run by NSW Health through non-emergency patient transport [NEPT], which works in collaboration with the Ambulance Service of NSW and New South Wales paramedics. Members of this House will recognise that the NEPT vehicles are the green ambulances we often see on our roads. While the work they do is less urgent than regular paramedics, it is still vital that they have the relevant training and expertise in case an emergency develops. Currently the NEPT services run a centralised booking and dispatch service for transportation of patients between hospitals and other health services. Once again, this service is well understood and absolutely vital, particularly in the regions, to enable patients to receive the care and services they require.

To ensure patient safety, New South Wales paramedics and healthcare workers are amongst the best in the world, but the reality is that even in patient transport situations where there is no clear emergency patients may begin to deteriorate at short notice. The majority of patient transport in this State is undertaken by the State Government, which is of a high standard thanks to the New South Wales paramedics and the employees of the non-emergency patient transport service. Paramedics and other NSW Health employees do a wonderful job. If the Government is serious about making transport services better, it should respond to the 1,300 serving ambulance officers who have signed a petition calling for better resourcing.

During the election campaign I had the opportunity to accompany the shadow Minister for Health and the Leader of the Opposition to meet with a delegation of paramedics from all over the State who talked to us about their distress that their needs are being ignored by the Government. Paramedics do not undertake signing petitions carelessly, but 1,300 of them are calling for better resourcing. The Minister for Health comes into this House on a regular basis and spruiks about what she has done for health services. The simple fact is that the Ambulance Service is under enormous pressure. There is a desperate need for better resourcing and we are starting to see cracks appearing in that service because of its lack of resourcing.

Ambulance officers are at the coalface and they know the problems that our health system is facing. Recently I had the unfortunate experience of spending two days in emergency in a large teaching hospital in New South Wales. I could see what pressure exists in emergency services. I do not know what was going on outside, but within the emergency department there were at least nine or 10 trolleys and ambulance officers waiting. I am not making this up. I am not being dramatic. I saw this with my own eyes. You cannot tell me that there is not an enormous problem with resourcing emergency waiting rooms and with ambulance trolley block. That is an important aspect to our consideration of what is an ideological bent in privatising a service that is crying out for more resources, is well respected, is professional and is one we all rely on for our wellbeing and our safety.

These 1,300 ambulance officers are not calling for this change, despite the Minister's claims to the contrary. One cannot argue with 1,300 signatories to a petition. I am so sick of the idiotic rhetoric that this is all about fights between unions. That is an insult to ambulance officers and to the paramedics who see more trauma in a week than we will see in our whole lives. It is an insult to those workers who save lives, who are so intrinsic to getting people to hospital and who give comfort and medical support. It is an insult to those workers to say that somehow or other this bill is needed. Government members and I know that it is not needed. Those ambulance officers and paramedics also know that it is not needed.

The level of legislation that goes through this House is shameful. I can say that because I know what it means to be in government and to be a Minister. The fact that we see legislation after legislation that is nothing short of unnecessary, nothing short of ideological and nothing short of symbolic is a waste of taxpayers' money, and this bill clearly fits that description. Last week it was reported in the media that

an individual in the highest triage category was forced to wait 44 minutes before treatment and admission. This bill will do nothing to fix that problem. It will give no solace to the person and the family who had to wait that time. This bill will do nothing to decrease ambulance response times, which are currently up to 10.8 minutes, from 9.5 minutes in 2005.

The Minister has guaranteed that regulations will be in place to ensure high patient care will continue if private operators are used but these regulations have not been made public. I urge the Minister to publish them before the bill is voted on. It is the height of arrogance to rush unnecessary legislation through the House without consultation or making it public. The Minister may wish to explain herself along those lines. In Victoria similar changes have been made and the service was privatised. Let us look at the result. It seems to me that the Government is unable to look across State borders. It just blunders on with changes that will have deleterious effects.

When the service was privatised in Victoria the result was a less efficient and more expensive service. This is a purely ideological move from the Government. The community has legitimate fears that this is the beginning of a privatisation push. In fact, it is absolutely the beginning of privatising a service that is loved, understood and trusted. Much like the Minister's Northern Beaches Hospital, this appears to be the beginning of an attempt to privatise a significant part of our health system. The Minister has not undertaken any meaningful consultation with stakeholders and it is extremely disappointing to see such substantial changes to these services being made without appropriate discussion. One must ask: Why has there not been any discussion? It is because the Minister knows it is an inappropriate path, and that is why Labor will oppose the bill. The Ambulance Service of NSW is already under strain. If the Government plans to privatise patient services, it should come out and say so rather than attempting to do it by stealth. The Opposition opposes the bill.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [10.25 a.m.]: It is with great pride that I speak on the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. Like many members I have a high regard for my local paramedics. Indeed, on a couple of occasions I joined local paramedics on their Friday and Saturday night shifts. I know how hard they work and how dedicated they are. I was very impressed with their high level of training and understanding. On one particular night we dealt with a young chap who had burnt himself severely with petrol on the beach. On the same night a number of elderly people had suffered cardiac arrests. The paramedics attended car accidents and dealt with other incidents. They were extraordinarily professional and understanding. It gave me a true insight into their dedication.

I turn now to the Health Service Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. As the member for Canterbury stated, paramedics top the list as the most trusted profession, and I concur with that public recognition. The Liberals and The Nationals have a proud record of achieving on health. The Baird Government will spend more than \$5 billion to build and upgrade more than 60 hospitals and health services over the next four years. The major ambulance station in my electorate, which is currently located at the Tweed Hospital, is being relocated; it will be a brand-new station. Down south, a new \$5.9 million ambulance station will be built in the great town of Pottsville. This has impressed not only the paramedics in my town; the local community is deeply impressed with the Government's commitment to the provision of health services as far away as the Tweed. The Tweed Hospital will also undergo a \$48 million upgrade.

This will bring the total spend on health infrastructure to almost \$10 billion since the 2011 election. The Government has recruited 270 additional paramedics since coming to office in 2011 and enhanced aeromedical services. The Government is rebuilding ambulance stations that were neglected for 16 years under the former Labor Government. Response times have improved, with the most recent Auditor-General's report showing that the median ambulance response time for all potentially life-threatening cases in New South Wales decreased for the first time in five years. These simple facts reflect the Government's commitment to health services, and particularly the Ambulance Service. It also reflects the high level of dedication and the commitment to work by people in that profession.

The bill will not put patients at risk. The NSW Health Service specifications state that a medical practitioner or registered nurse must assess a patient as being clinically stable for transfer and at low risk of deterioration during transfer. Any public or private provider engaged through the centralised booking service must have protocols in place to escalate to an emergency ambulance in the event of patient deterioration. For supported non-emergency transport outside the centralised booking service arrangements, the bill requires that any person wishing to engage a supported transport provider take all reasonable steps that the clinical oversight and monitoring during transport will ensure patient safety.

The bill contains a prohibition power whereby the Secretary of the Ministry of Health can, to ensure public safety, prohibit a person from providing supported transport, or place such conditions as required if a provider breaches the safety requirements under the Act. Requirements include ensuring that there is appropriate clinical care and monitoring during transport. The definitions have been developed carefully to ensure that they reflect appropriate levels within emergency transport, supported transport and general community transport. Those definitions are based on legislation that was introduced in Victoria in 1993 by the Bracks Government—a Labor Government. So it is not ideological.

The bill provides levers to free up emergency ambulance resources to improve efficiencies in responding to life-threatening incidents as well as to improve patient flow in the non-emergency sector by allowing non-government and private providers to offer supported transport. I have seen first-hand the inefficient use of ambulance resources, when a number of cases that were transported were of a very minor medical nature—people coming from nursing homes and so on. The bill supports the strategic reforms necessary to separate emergency and non-emergency patient transports to ensure that the New South Wales Ambulance Service can focus on responding to emergency situations. This is a very good bill and part of a strategic plan. Like many in this place, I have deep respect for the commitment and dedication of our paramedics and ambulance crews—in fact, all our health workers. Therefore, I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON** (Maitland) [10.30 a.m.]: I oppose the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015 on the grounds that it is merely an attempt at privatisation by stealth of a crucial aspect of public health infrastructure. In a briefing with the chief of staff of the Minister for Health last week we discussed provision of the non-emergency patient transport [NEPT] service. I had received representations from my constituents regarding this matter, which I had forwarded to the Minister but had not had a response at that stage. There were concerns about the efficiency of the program since its centralisation from John Hunter Hospital to Parramatta at the end of 2014. Prior to 2014, patients experienced an efficient service. They were transported to and from health facilities without delay as a result of the proficiently coordinated service provided by Hunter New England Health.

The centralised booking system, on the other hand, has severely affected the manner in which patients are transported, particularly in the Hunter area. In many cases, patients are experiencing inadequate service, with drivers failing to arrive on time to get them to appointments or, in some instances, not arriving at all. I was quite horrified to hear of an incident involving an elderly female patient who was transported to a Cardiff medical practice from Maitland Hospital for an appointment at 9.00 a.m. The driver, who was organised by the centralised booking hub at Parramatta, informed the patient that he would return to collect her within the hour and transport her back to Maitland Hospital. At approximately 7.00 p.m.—10 hours later—staff at Maitland Hospital received a call to say the elderly woman was still in Cardiff because the driver had not returned to collect her. This is unbelievable and unacceptable. I am told that this sort of situation never occurred under the transport system managed by Hunter New England Health.

I have heard of another incident where two patients were required to be transported from John Hunter Hospital to Sydney Hospital. The centralised booking system sent two transport vehicles, each with a driver and a nurse, to transport the patients even though they were going to the same location. It was not until they arrived at Sydney Hospital that the drivers realised the mistake that had been made by the system. This miscalculation by the centralised booking system meant that a vehicle, a driver and a

nurse were taken out of the local Hunter transport pool for an entire day. Despite repeated assurances from the Department of Health, there are concerns that the centralisation of the NEPT program has failed to reduce delays or improve coordination of the transport fleet in the Hunter region.

Since its inception, patients and staff have suffered. They have experienced inadequate service, which has led, in many cases, to prolonged treatment and increased hospitalisation as patients have had to return for appointments. The number one priority of our health service should be to provide high-quality service and care while ensuring that patients are treated with the respect and courtesy they deserve. However, it would seem that the move to the centralised booking system is failing; it is proving to be an inadequate transport system for many patients. What is the Government's response? When I raised this matter with the Minister's chief of staff I was advised that they are aware of this issue and they are working to resolve it. I was very excited to hear this news.

Unfortunately, the commitment by the Minister's chief of staff did not go beyond blaming union rostering for all the problems. I worked in logistics and transport for 17 years and it is clear to me that the problem is with the centralised computer system. There are teething problems but when I raised this with the chief of staff I was told, "We have a system that has the capacity to deal with these multiple issues of coordinating patients, doctors, hospitals, drivers, vehicles and nurses but we have not been able to implement it." The Government is implementing a system that does not work and is not fit for the purpose. All the people involved—the patients, the doctors and the hospital staff—are wasting their time.

The lack of a clear solution is evident when we examine the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. Instead of adequately delivering an efficacious computerised booking service, the Government has chosen to blame the unions, evade its moral obligation and introduce a bill that will enable the privatisation of this service. Let us have a closer look at the bill. The bill creates two definitions: "emergency ambulance services" and "supported non-emergency transport". The Government has been crafty in the language it has chosen for this bill. Object (a) of the bill proposes to "make it lawful for non-government organisations and private operators to provide supported non-emergency transport ... without the consent of the Secretary of the Ministry of Health." Object (b) tries to reassure the people of New South Wales by stating it prohibits "emergency ambulance services ... from being provided by non-government organisations and private operators for fee or reward" but then it adds the seven crucial words, "without the consent of the Health Secretary".

And there we see the Coalition's ideology at work. The Coalition pretends to care about maintaining the quality of an essential public health service but is sure to add an escape clause—an opportunity for the health secretary to give consent for private operators to provide emergency ambulance services, not just occasionally when there is no other choice or when lives are at risk but regularly and, eventually, permanently. If the Government leaps at the opportunity to privatise ports and electricity networks, why will it not also privatise ambulance services? If that is not worrying enough, the Government has seen fit to introduce a bill that changes the essential nature of the Ambulance Service without putting in place any new quality regulations. The Minister said:

The bill adds proposed new sections designed to provide light-touch regulation of supported transport.

Light-touch? When the public's health and safety is at stake the Government chooses "light touch regulation". Let us return to the Minister's speech to learn a bit more about this. She continued:

Organisations providing supported transport will be obliged to ensure that the vehicles used are equipped in a manner that ensures patient safety.

In other words, the Government will leave it up private operators to let the Government know that they are doing everything correctly. The Minister went on:

Similarly, hospitals, aged care facilities or other organisations that contract or engage service providers will be obliged to take reasonable steps to assure themselves the transport provided is safe and appropriate.

In other words, the Government is saying, "Just sort it out amongst yourselves; leave us out of it." If members are not alarmed by what I have read from the Minister's speech so far, consider this comment from her:

It is important to note that New South Wales does not have a well-established market for supported transport. Therefore the bill anticipates standards being assured through other mechanisms. These will be developed through further consultation with the community, health service providers, aged care providers and support transport providers.

Should the Minister not have done that before introducing the bill? This goes to the heart of the issues I have raised. Why is the consultation taking place after the bill has been introduced? Why is the cart being put before the horse? The Minister is concerned about not imposing rules on the sector. Just last week the Government made a big performance about making it illegal to call yourself a paramedic without appropriate credentials. Labor supported that move. I struggle to reconcile this show of support for the integrity of our first responders with the Government's stripping so many resources from paramedics that many people now believe it is faster to attempt to make their own way to hospital. I note the Government has told journalists that the new Lower Hunter hospital will not contain cancer services as they will be provided at the tertiary hospital at Mayfield, which is not well connected by public transport for patients who live in Maitland.

I note also that the Government has closed the rail line into Newcastle, which transported many Maitland and Upper Hunter residents to health specialists in Newcastle. I note the Government has stopped the free shuttle service for the John Hunter Hospital that offered transport from free parking. Transport is a major social determinant of health and this Government is attacking the ability of people on low incomes, with less mobility and access to transport, to access quality health services and now it is seeking to privatise non-emergency patient transport. I am so sick of this Government saying one thing and meaning another. I am concerned that by giving a statutory value to the name "paramedic" one week and the following week throwing open the possibility of privatisation, it will change the discussion about first responders altogether. I urge the Government to put its money into the public provision of health and of patient transport and to support individuals in our community who need help to access quality health care.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [10.40 a.m.]: I support the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. I say at the outset that it is always useful to read a bill before debating and criticising it—a basic step that it seems both the member for Canterbury and the member for Maitland have overlooked. The member for Canterbury told us that the bill will make it possible for the health secretary to consent to private contractors providing non-emergency transport. However, that capacity already exists in the current legislation, which this bill amends to remove the need for consent in relation to supported non-emergency transport—non-emergency being the key point. If the member for Canterbury, who leads for the Opposition in this debate, does not understand the bill then we are not off to a great start.

Similarly, the member for Maitland told us that the Government has inserted the magic words "without the consent of the Secretary". Again, those words are in the current legislation. The Government is merely changing the prohibition on all transport without the consent of the secretary and limiting it to emergency transport without the consent of the secretary. We did not add those words; they have been in the legislation for years. It is unfortunate that the Opposition should get off to such a bad start. If Opposition members choose to criticise and argue against legislation they should at least understand it.

This is a simple proposition in a small but sensible bill. The bill separates emergency



transport—red ambulances, which we all know—from supported non-emergency transport. They are the green ambulances that transport people on non-emergency trips between hospitals, to clinics, to aged-care services, to radiography appointments and so on. Those trips are important and vital for people's health care but they are not in the emergency category. The time of the much sought after red fleet of ambulances staffed by highly skilled practitioners should not be spent providing that transport.

Clearly, non-emergency services should be separate and provided in a manner that does not impact on the resources of emergency services. Making that separation a little clearer and more distinct will allow health districts around the State to contract non-emergency services to other providers, so long as they are in line with the standards set out in the regulations by the Minister and community needs are met in a sensible and rational way that does not call upon the resources, focus, energy and time of the emergency fleet, which should deal only with emergencies.

It is not such a remarkable proposition and it is in the interests of patients. The Government is of the view that health services exist to serve the interests of patients, not unions—particularly when two unions are squabbling over membership and trying to show who is stronger and tougher on the Government. Part of the problem is that the Opposition has forgotten to focus on the interests of patients. We all agree that we want better response times from our Ambulance Service and that emergency services must be available when we need them. We live in the real world and service response can take some time, but we can enhance resources by increasing the number of paramedics, as Opposition members have mentioned. During our term in government the Coalition has employed 270 extra paramedics.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** How many?

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** There are an extra 270 full-time equivalent paramedics, and the Minister for Health is committed to increasing resources over the coming term. We are investing \$150 million in new ambulance stations in New South Wales. How many ambulance stations were constructed in 16 years under the former Government?

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** I wasn't here. I am sure you are going to tell us.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** You have told me. There were none—none in 16 long years of rapid growth across north-west Sydney. The member for Prospect knows about the growth areas in the north-west. Did the former Government reach out to the north-west sector and build more infrastructure?

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** They were coming out of hospitals, they didn't need the stations.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY:** Are bed block and trolley block new problems? Were they invented in the past couple of years? Of course not. The situation got worse and worse during the 16 years that Labor was in government because it would not invest in hospital construction. Under Jillian the builder we have spent billions of dollars on hospitals across the State, expanding capacity and providing new beds, new wards and new emergency services. We have also increased the number of nurses employed in the system by more than 4,000 full-time equivalents to make sure that those beds can be utilised. That was done by the Minister for Health over the past four years, and this Government will continue to improve response times. This legislation is a small but sensible step forward that ensures emergency services focus on emergency patients.

Last week members unanimously supported a bill that protects the title of paramedic, as has been mentioned during debate. Paramedics want to be recognised as paramedics—professionals who respond in emergency situations. They do not want to be viewed as taxi drivers. Sadly, all too often some in the community take advantage of those services and treat ambulances as taxis and view paramedics as taxi drivers. None of us wants to waste precious emergency resources on unimportant or less essential tasks. Emergency services must be focused where they are needed. This bill is only a small part of the big

picture. There is much more to be done but the bill helps. It is a sensible, positive step and, contrary to what Opposition members would have us believe, nothing to be scared of. The bill is targeted and focused. If Opposition members were to read it they would realise it is worthy of support. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT** (Prospect) [10.48 a.m.]: I oppose the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. The hypocrisy of this Government is staggering. In the previous sitting week the Government pushed through new laws, which the Opposition supported, that introduce the offence of presenting as a paramedic when one does not have the appropriate qualifications. Yet today the Government has introduced a bill that divides paramedics into two categories. The people of New South Wales want to know why. Where does the Government stand? We know that the Government adores privatisation and that is what this bill is about—even though the Government knows privatisation will put at risk the quality of our State's emergency and ambulance services and paramedics.

I have no doubt that the Minister for Health—or at least a solid handful of her advisers—will be aware of the royal commission into the Victorian ambulance service that was held about 15 years ago. If they are not, perhaps they should read about it on the internet. The royal commission exposed corruption in the privatised ambulance dispatch office, which was making phantom calls in order to boost its performance and receive financial incentives. This would not have happened under a public system as there would have been no private company seeking to make a profit wherever it could. That is the great danger with this bill. Furthermore, the royal commission exposed some of the questionable secrets in the tender process for Victoria's ambulance dispatch service to an overseas company. Response times blew out and there were multiple reports of ambulances going to the wrong addresses.

The turmoil that this created eventually led to the downfall of the Kennett Government. It was a key factor that the people of Victoria considered when they decided to remove the Kennett Government and put Labor in office. Here is my warning to the Minister for Health and, indeed, to the Government: The road to privatisation of the Ambulance Service in New South Wales is dangerous and will lead to the Coalition Government falling apart. Do not do it; withdraw this amendment and keep Pandora's box shut. The people of New South Wales do not deserve to suffer because of the Government's bad decisions and incompetence.

I acknowledge the work of non-government organisations that are currently providing patient transport services in New South Wales. In particular, I acknowledge the Royal Flying Doctor Service, an Australian icon, and Careflight—which we know very well in Western Sydney—which operates out of Westmead Hospital, some 15 minutes from my home in Greystanes. Those organisations operate on a not-for-profit basis. They also have highly specialised equipment and personnel—in this case, qualified emergency doctors and aircrew that I doubt would be the ideal business model of an entrepreneur looking to profit from the privatisation of patient transport services.

The Minister has not released any information about what regulations she will introduce to ensure quality of care in privatised patient transport services. Why not? The people of New South Wales deserve to know about the quality of care and to have a certain standard. The Government is turning its back on what should be the first priority of health care—ensuring quality care for patients. The Opposition understands that the private sector is very important in health care, and I support free enterprise and entrepreneurialism in the sector. However, the Opposition understands the importance of separating business from government. The Government wants to privatise patient transport services not because it believes it will improve service—not at all. It wants to privatise the service because it will allow its supporters to make a quick buck.

Privatisation is in the Government's DNA. The Minister does not seem to care that this will cause a deterioration in patient care; nor does she seem to care about the security of her position or the longevity of the Baird Government in the event of this proposal's inevitable failure, as happened in Victoria. The Opposition opposes this bill with good reason. In Western Sydney in electorates such as

Prospect patients are already suffering. One need only look as far as Fairfield Hospital to see that patients are being let down, with an undersized emergency department and a surgery department in demountable buildings. Patients who attend Fairfield Hospital depend on non-emergency patient transport to travel to hospitals that are able to treat them.

It is important that those patients, who are already suffering and who have already been let down by this Government, get the best care available given the circumstances. Their costs, which are often exacerbated by their being out of work during their hospitalisation, must be kept as low as possible. This is another lesson we must learn from Victoria. Costs increased under privatisation of the ambulance system. So the outcome of this bill is clear: poorer services to patients, increased costs for the Government, scandal and irreparable damage to the State's healthcare system. This bill cannot be allowed to pass. I join the Opposition in opposing the bill and I urge the Government to withdraw it as soon as possible.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Order! I welcome to the public gallery school student leaders from the Hornsby electorate.

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [10.54 a.m.]: I address the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. Paramedics in New South Wales are highly trained professionals. We have come a long way from the times when ambulances were merely special conveyances to hospital, under the control of a driver who provided little or no medical support to the patient. They were drivers, not paramedics. Medical care would come at the hospital—as was only proper in those times. Now medical support begins the moment the ambulance arrives. This training is expensive; the vehicles we use as ambulances, including planes and helicopters, are expensive too. The charges reflect the cost, but only partially. New South Wales residents requiring ambulance transport by road, fixed-wing aircraft or helicopter, or a combination of these from the scene of an accident, illness or injury to a public hospital or other destination nominated by the Ambulance Service are currently charged a call-out fee of \$349 plus an additional charge of \$3.15 per kilometre or part thereof.

Kilometres are calculated more broadly than one might perhaps expect—on the round trip between the ambulance station, the pick-up address, the destination and return to the ambulance station. It all adds up. If the service is non-emergency, the call-out fee is \$275 plus \$1.69 per kilometre. In both cases there is a maximum charge of \$5,715—a fee that has risen by 23 per cent since 2013. This is a safety net sum, but it is still intimidating. These fees, though not insubstantial, represent 51 per cent of the actual cost when the patient is a resident of New South Wales. The balance is subsidised by the New South Wales Government. New South Wales ambulance services are provided free of charge in a number of different situations, including for pensioners or concession card holders. The Ambulance Service of NSW also makes certain provision for those in financial hardship and who are unable to pay for the service. A number of health insurance schemes also cover New South Wales ambulance fees.

As a rough guide, health fund NIB calculated that in 2014 its customers paid an average ambulance transport fee of \$807. It remains an expensive and heavily subsidised service. There are other issues to consider. In some locations there are few ambulances at hand. There is always the risk in a regional or rural situation of an emergency occurring on a farm, in a factory or on a country road, where the local ambulance is urgently required but is engaged elsewhere on a non-emergency activity. An ageing population is also a cause for concern and for a review of service provision. With increasing age and the availability of more medical options and diagnostic testing, our society is facing an obvious escalation in the number of patient movements between hospitals, nursing homes, retirement villages, homes and diagnostic testing facilities. For example, in Albury many patients are taken to hospitals and services in Melbourne rather than Sydney. New South Wales ambulances are used for a proportion of those trips.

That is a round trip of at least seven or eight hours per patient. It also removes a specialist ambulance vehicle from the border region. We should also remember that the Ambulance Service of

NSW responds to a 000 call every 26.7 seconds. While many of these calls do not end in the dispatch of an ambulance, this striking figure reminds us of how critical the Ambulance Service and its expertise are to the lifestyle we enjoy in this country. The Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015 modernises the way that New South Wales will deal with the issues surrounding the engagement of non-ambulance services to deliver supported but non-emergency transport of a kind currently provided by an ambulance. As the Minister said:

The use of ambulance services and vehicles that are designed to respond to emergency situations is an inefficient use of high-cost specialist emergency services that, in turn, can impact on the efficiency of the service.

The bill seeks to create an expanded complementary service, provided by the private sector and potentially non-government organisations, to carry out non-emergency transport. Importantly, these providers will be able to charge a fee for their service. However, it raises the issue of who pays for the non-emergency transport service. This point is of substantial import for the people of my electorate, who travel long distances in pursuit of medical attention and health services. Will pensioners, who currently are not charged for ambulance transport, be asked to pay a private provider for a service that once was free? Will private and non-government providers of transport services seek government funding? And will this type of cost have an impact on Ambulance Service budgets?

Returning to the bill, I note that "supported non-emergency transport" is defined now and provides for situations where there is no need for urgent medical assistance to be delivered but where patients require transport that includes a level of clinical monitoring or oversight of their health situation. Emergency services are defined in the bill and will remain the domain solely of the Ambulance Service of NSW. Other providers are prohibited from working in this area by new section 67E, which reads:

#### **Unauthorised provision of emergency ambulance services**

- (1) A person must not directly or indirectly provide or take part in the provision of emergency ambulance services for fee or reward unless the person has the consent of the Health Secretary and acts in accordance with such conditions (if any) as the Health Secretary may from time to time impose on that consent. Maximum penalty: 200 penalty units.
- (2) The Health Secretary may revoke any consent given, or revoke or vary any condition imposed, under this section.

One of the critical steps will be determining the correct standards to be applied to providers of supported non-emergency transport services. To begin, we turn to new section 67FA which reads:

#### **Regulation of supported non-emergency transport**

- (1) A person must not directly or indirectly provide or take part in the provision of supported non-emergency transport for fee or reward unless the person has taken all reasonable steps to ensure that:
  - (a) any vehicles or other methods of transportation used to provide the supported non-emergency transport are equipped in a manner that ensures patient safety, and
  - (b) clinical care or monitoring provided as part of that transport is provided in a manner that ensures patient safety.

Maximum penalty: 50 penalty units.

Thus there are two elements to this: the standard of the vehicle and the standard of available clinical care

or monitoring of the patient. Note that a requirement is being placed on the service provider to "ensure patient safety", which is central. Prescribed standards will follow with the regulations. New section 67FA (3) sets the broad parameters for these standards. It reads:

Without limiting the matters for which the prescribed standards may provide, those standards may make provision for or with respect to the following:

- (a) the circumstances in which a patient will be required to be transferred to an emergency ambulance service,
- (b) the accreditation or authorisation of vehicles or the drivers of vehicles,
- (c) staffing levels,
- (d) the training and qualifications of staff,
- (e) the maintenance and safety of vehicles,
- (f) the equipment that must be available for use in vehicles and the maintenance of that equipment,
- (g) restrictions or prohibitions on the livery and lights used on vehicles.

Exempted from those standards will be taxis and community transport service within the meaning of the Passenger Transport Act 2014 if:

- (i) the operator of the service is accredited as the operator under that Act, and
- (ii) clinical care or monitoring is not offered or provided in connection with the service

Also exempted is the Home and Community Care service operated by the Commonwealth or any program operated by the Commonwealth or the State that replaces it. Local feedback on the bill has been supportive. A retirement village in Albury has expressed interest in the new, regulated form of patient transfer proposed in the bill. Patients going from the village to hospital or to diagnostic tests currently use one of three modes of transport: ambulance; driving with a family member, which is far and away the largest category; or with the assistance of a volunteer driver from a pool of volunteers maintained by the village management. Management has indicated that it would certainly look at new options when a private provider steps forward.

From an Ambulance Service perspective, I have been informed that there is not a dedicated patient transport service for non-emergency patients in regional New South Wales that might be replaced by the proposed new services. Any new service that meets the standards will be welcomed as it will relieve pressure currently borne by paramedics. I will give an example of what happens now. Take a patient going for routine dialysis. Although this is not an emergency situation, it is common for an ambulance to provide transport to hospital. On board are two trained paramedics. It is unlikely they will both be needed on the trip but, having taken the patient to hospital, the ambulance might receive a call to attend a cardiac arrest that would require both paramedics. In other words, we cannot simply say that an ambulance is ever just on a routine, non-emergency call. That ambulance must be fully staffed and ready to attend an emergency wherever it finds itself. A new form of service providing non-urgent transport would help in cost saving. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

A second problem outlined to me is that ambulances are not always the most convenient solution. Ambulances can be late in picking up a patient for a non-urgent trip if they have been attending an emergency. They will then be late for the appointed test or procedure, leaving doctors, nurses and

medical facilities waiting. An ambulance can also, for the same reason, be quite late in taking patients home from hospital or from their tests. The emergency needs to override the routine call even though it might leave the patient in limbo for some time. Again, there are some categories of patients who are feeling quite well but who can only travel lying down. Must they use an ambulance, or will private providers create vehicles appropriate for this service? To a degree we can expect the market to innovate with new methods of service delivery.

The Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill will help to ensure that our communities have the right balance of affordability and service in the areas of emergency and non-emergency transport of people to and from hospital. We can expect the private sector to develop new options and new job opportunities for drivers and those supplying levels of clinical care and monitoring of patients. I look forward to seeing the standards in due course and I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA** (Mount Druitt) [11.05 a.m.]: I oppose the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015 because I see it as nothing other than the work of a Liberal ideology pursuing its privatisation agenda. Since its inception this Government has done nothing but put privatisation agendas forward one after the other. Its agenda is now touching the Ambulance Service of NSW, which is a core health service. The ideology has to stop. When pursuing privatisation the Government needs to be aware that there is a difference between the provision of a core government service and a privatised service. Governments put service before profits. The private sector does the opposite; it puts profits before service.

The health sector should be immune from the privatisation agenda of this Government. Ambulance Service staff are highly dedicated professionals who do their very best. I can only commend them and take my hat off to every ambulance officer performing that job. Last week the Health Services Amendment (Paramedics) Bill was brought before the House. Opposition members supported that bill that clearly defined the role of paramedics, but today I am feeling a bit cynical. I am wondering whether last week's bill was just—pardon the expression—fattening the pig to allow the Ambulance Service to be properly defined for a future sale.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 76 and relates to relevance. As much as I am loath to interrupt my friend from Mount Druitt, I have read the bill and I cannot find any mention of a privatisation of the Ambulance Service. I see provisions that allow for the operation of private providers, which is already occurring, but to claim that privatisation is somehow underway is not relevant because it is not in the bill. I ask you to direct the member to return to the leave of the bill. To make a claim about privatisation is not relevant because it is not in the proposed legislation.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Order! I have been listening carefully to the contribution of the member for Mount Druitt. I rule that his contribution at this stage is in order under Standing Order 76. I note the comments of the Parliamentary Secretary, but overall the member's comments have been germane to the bill.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA:** My point is this: There is no doubt that this is a partial privatisation of the Ambulance Service. The green ambulances and red ambulances are all part of the government Ambulance Service. Transferring the non-emergency services section of the Ambulance Service to the private sector is a partial privatisation. I have not read anywhere that the Government has ruled out further privatisation of core emergency services. The Government has not and cannot rule out further privatisation—just like when it partially privatised other services. So my contribution is relevant as this legislation will do nothing more than set up a system for privatisation. My biggest concern—and my biggest fear—is that we are now tackling services that are considered core government services. I can only relate this particular service to my electorate of Mount Druitt. Mount Druitt had fully functional ambulances servicing the Mount Druitt electorate.

Today only two ambulances are allocated to the Mount Druitt electorate—that is two ambulances

for 83,000 people. That is not good enough. This bill does absolutely nothing to get to the core of the problem—that is, resourcing the Ambulance Service of NSW. It is not good enough that the people of Mount Druitt have to rely on ambulances that come all the way from the Blue Mountains. That is not good enough. That is the core issue that should have been addressed by this bill. That is the core issue that should be addressed by the Government. Over the past four years callouts for emergency ambulance services have increased by 30,000. So 30,000 extra calls have been made for ambulance services, which is an increase of 4 per cent. Has the Government resourced the service to keep pace with this increased demand? No. One has only to talk to paramedics to learn more. I do not know to whom the Government is talking but it should talk to the paramedics about their resource levels. I am meeting with some paramedics today to get to the core of the issue.

**Mr Bruce Notley-Smith:** Name them.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA:** I will not name anybody. We are experiencing what it means to not adequately resource the Ambulance Service to fulfil growing needs. There is an opportunity for this Government to address the core issue—to talk to paramedics, to talk to the association and to talk to the front-line staff and ask them what the issues are. They are stuck between a rock and a hard place because this has a domino effect. When they bring patients to a hospital and there are no beds available in the emergency department they are stuck there. The Government cannot just wash its hands of this issue. The Government cannot say it is going to resolve the ambulance crisis by selling the ambulances.

**Mr Mark Coure:** We're not doing that.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA:** That is exactly what the Government is doing. When the Government finds it difficult to manage the ambulance crisis and hard to resolve the issue what is the path it takes? It says, "Let's just sell it. Let's just dispose of it."

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: Again I have referred to every provision in the bill and not one of them suggests that the Ambulance Service of NSW is up for sale. That is not the intent of this bill; this bill is about confirming what already occurs in relation to private sector operators. For the member for Mount Druitt to suggest that is not only misleading but also irrelevant.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Order! The member for Prospect will cease interjecting. On the point of order, as I have already ruled, Standing Order 76 requires members to contain their remarks to the leave of the bill. Overall the comments of the member for Mount Druitt have been within the leave of the bill in relation to ambulance services. However, I note that in rulings by previous Speakers, and I reference the ruling of Speaker Rozzoli in 1989—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Speaker Ellis.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** No, it was not Speaker Ellis; it was Speaker Rozzoli. The member for Kiama keeps mentioning Speaker Ellis. Members are required to confine their remarks not only to the leave of the bill but also to potential implications that may result from the implementation of the bill. Members will have differing views about what the implications of the bill might be. Clearly the member for Mount Druitt has a particular view, and he is entitled to debate that within the confines of the leave of the bill. I call the member for Mount Druitt.

*[Extension of time agreed to.]*

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA:** I think I have made my point. The Government has not ruled that out. I would love the member for Kiama to stand up on behalf of the Government and rule out any future privatisation of the remainder of the Ambulance Service. I have talked about privatisation because that is exactly what the Government is doing—it is privatising a section of the Ambulance Service.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: I will say this really slowly—we are not privatising the Ambulance Service. This is not emergency patient transport. The member for Mount Druitt is not being relevant to the bill.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Order! That is not a point of order, as the Parliamentary Secretary well knows. He is being disorderly, and if he does it again he will be called to order.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA:** I make this point: The Government should be addressing the core issue before us—the crisis that is before us—that is, the shortage of staff in the Ambulance Service rather than taking the easy way out and disposing of a part of this service. That is not good government. It is not good government when, every time the Government is confronted with a crisis or an issue, it takes the easy way out by saying, 'Let's wash our hands of this. Let's get rid of this headache by letting the private sector worry about it. Let's just dispose of the service.' Good governments should tackle problems and address the issues before them. I oppose the bill for this reason—I see it as nothing more than a road to privatisation and completely privatising the Ambulance Service. I hope I do not have to stand up in this place again and defend the remainder of the Ambulance Service. If I ever do, I will remind members opposite of their contributions today.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [11.18 a.m.]: I support the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. This bill proposes to amend the Health Services Act to make it lawful for non-NSW Health organisations to provide supported non-emergency transport for fee or reward without the consent of the Secretary to the Ministry of Health. This bill is designed to open up a new opportunity for private sector and non-government organisations to provide non-emergency transport alongside the Ambulance Service of NSW. The amendments proposed in this bill are not new ideas but rather come from a long history of ambulance service reviews looking to the future of patient transport in New South Wales.

The 2012 Ambulance Reform Plan included two key objectives—first, to establish non-emergency patient transport as a separate service to the existing Ambulance Service of NSW; and, secondly, to bring together a range of providers, including community transport services, the existing ambulance Patient Transport Service, local health district transport services and private operators to provide non-emergency transport services. Both these objectives have been used in the development of this bill. Under the proposal, this prohibition will be limited to emergency ambulance services, thereby allowing private operators to provide supported non-emergency transport services.

The current Health Services Act contains no definition of "emergency" or "supported transport". The only stipulation is that anyone other than the Ambulance Service of NSW is prohibited from providing transport for sick or injured persons for fee or reward. To fix this issue, the bill separates the provisions for emergency ambulance services and supported non-emergency transport. Supported non-emergency transport is defined to mean a service, other than an emergency ambulance service, that provides transport to sick and injured persons to and from hospitals or to other places where those persons can obtain medical services. In many cases, patients require non-emergency transport to get to and from medical appointments, to transfer between hospitals or from home to hospital with minor clinical assistance. Instead of relying upon our already stretched ambulance network, as we heard said in this Chamber again this week, these patients would be then able to take advantage of a range of non-emergency transport options.

Upon lifting of the prohibition, private sector and non-government operators would still be subject to legislative oversight to support safe and appropriate care. There is a common fear that private services are no longer required to adhere to the same levels of health and safety regulations. The bill sets out that although these private operators will now be allowed to run their supported non-emergency transport services, they must still maintain a high level of care for their patients. Under the bill, supported non-emergency transport providers and people who engage those providers to transport patients are



obliged to ensure that the vehicles used to provide the transport are equipped in a manner that ensures patient safety. Providers must also ensure clinical care or monitoring during patient transport. The bill adds proposed new sections designed to require that organisations providing support transport equip their vehicles to ensure patient safety.

Patients utilising these private operators should receive the same level of care that they would expect from government provided patient transport services. Furthermore, healthcare facilities such as hospitals, aged care facilities or other organisations that will use such service providers for transport will be obliged to ensure that the transport provided is safe and appropriate for their patients too. The scheme will adopt certain safety requirements and enable the Secretary to the Ministry of Health to make orders prohibiting specific operators who breach requirements from continuing to provide such services. In addition to the express requirements for supported non-emergency emergency transport providers and engagers, the regime complements existing regulatory frameworks to ensure patient safety.

I am also pleased to see that a number of safeguards have been included. The Secretary to the Ministry of Health will also be able to make an order prohibiting providers who breach statutory requirements from continuing to provide such services. Similar legislation for a supported non-emergency transport scheme has existed in Victoria for several years now. Using their framework and successful operation of both emergency and non-emergency services alongside one another, I believe New South Wales will be able to achieve similar results. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of our existing patient transport officers throughout NSW Health. They provide an incredible service to those unable to travel without medical assistance or those requiring regular transport to and from treatments. They deserve to be acknowledged and supported.

They also allow our paramedics to get on with the job of dealing with our emergency victims and providing emergency care. Although the current market is not yet well established, it is hoped that this legislation will help to pave the way for a number of patient transport providers to start business in New South Wales. Supported non-emergency transport is an important service to NSW Health and this bill is another step towards providing a solid framework for existing and future operators in this area. With our ageing population, the need for supported non-emergency transport will only grow; and I believe having more transport options available for patients in New South Wales is a good outcome for all. I thank the Minister for Health for bringing this bill to the House and for working hard to improve the standard of healthcare in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [11.24 a.m.]: It is difficult to know where to start in this debate when so much bile and excrement has poured from the mouths of those opposite; that almost had me reaching for the phone to ring 000 to get paramedics into the Chamber to treat them. Obviously, Opposition members have no idea what this bill is about. They try to spin this as privatisation of the Ambulance Service of NSW. That is absolutely untrue; they are talking rubbish and misrepresenting what the bill will do. Contrary to what those opposite say, the proposal in this bill is what the paramedics of this State have wanted for years and years.

Paramedics traditionally were doing inter-hospital transfers of patients for dialysis, or from home to hospital, or from nursing home to hospital. It is unacceptable in this day and age that highly qualified paramedics are undertaking these duties when they could be undertaken by suitably qualified and trained non-paramedic professionals. We must commend the Minister for Health for this innovative way of making the health service as efficient as it can possibly be, while still delivering the highest-quality care. We should be aiming to ensure that we get the absolute best value from each and every health dollar spent in this State.

The member for Mount Druitt mentioned that ambulances had been called from the Blue Mountains to attend to calls in his electorate, and that only two ambulances are stationed in Mount Druitt. I do not know when the member for Mount Druitt became an expert on how to locate emergency service vehicles, whether they be police, ambulances or fire brigade vehicles. Experts have been locating those

emergency service vehicles for decades, and have been doing so very competently. Considering that every 26 seconds a 000 call is made to the Ambulance Service of NSW, it is a commendation of the level of professionalism of the service that we rarely hear complaints about ambulances not getting to patients in a timely manner. The argument that this bill will privatise the Ambulance Service of NSW is an absolute disgrace; it is misleading to the nth degree. I am speechless that Opposition members could peddle such rubbish.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** It's just unionism.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH:** That is it. I think the member for Mount Druitt was going to meet with paramedics today—or was he meeting with union hacks in the offices of Sussex Street, rather than going out to the ambulance stations and talking to the paramedics themselves, the people on the frontline. Earlier this morning, I spoke to a senior paramedic and said, "We are discussing this bill in Parliament today. What do you think about it?" He said, "Bring it on." This is fantastic news for the service; but it is also fantastic news for our broader health service because this is one of the means by which we can alleviate bed block in New South Wales hospitals. The fact is that if there are not enough of these non-emergency transport services, patients stay in wards waiting for those services, or paramedics are called upon to fill the void. That is unacceptable.

This bill will ensure that we have more suitably qualified, non-emergency transport services available across the State. That is already happening, but this bill will streamline the system to ensure that we have more of them. The Royal Flying Doctor Service is not part of NSW Health; it is a private contractor. Non-government organisations are providing those services. This bill will open up these services to private sector providers, which have expressed a desire, and which have the competency, to provide these services. They will be able to tender for these works, while still being under the oversight of the Secretary to the Department of Health. The Secretary to the Department of Health will have the ability to prohibit any provider from transporting patients unless the provider has the secretary's consent; and the secretary will be able to issue fines to those who contravene his or her orders.

The Secretary to the Ministry of Health still has oversight of this system and will ensure that the required standards are met. Many health services are provided privately. Private providers must meet standards set by the Government. The local general practitioner is a private provider who is paid by the Government through Medicare. The standards to which they work are set and overseen by the Government. The arrangement introduced by this legislation is no different from any other service division in Health. The private sector already provides many health services that are as good as, if not better than, those that the Government could provide. If this is an ideological matter, if this is neoliberalism, why did the Bracks Labor Government in Victoria introduce the same arrangement in 2003? Could Mr Bracks be described as a neoliberal? That arrangement in Victoria, introduced by the Labor Party, has worked well.

The Reform Plan for NSW Ambulance, which was released in 2012, outlined five strategic directions, including the one under discussion today. There is nothing new here. It is not something that has been pulled out of the box to surprise and ruffle the feathers of the Opposition. But Opposition members never seem to read anything that comes out of this Parliament or the ministries. If they look back to 2012 they will see that this initiative was planned then. I commend the Minister for Health for her work. There are major hospitals in my electorate of Coogee: the Prince of Wales Hospital, the Royal Hospital for Women and the Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick. People in my electorate are incredibly impressed with the work that the Minister has done—Jillian the Builder. A total of \$500 million will be provided over the next four years to rebuild the wards in the Parkes building at the Prince of Wales Hospital. When was the last significant rebuild at the Prince of Wales Hospital? It was under the Greiner-Fahey Government.

**Mr Adam Crouch:** There is \$368 million for Gosford Hospital.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH:** All across the State we are seeing great reforms. The Opposition

should support this one. Opposition members are always complaining about bed block and queueing ambulances. They should support this legislation, which will enable paramedics to get on with the work they do best—that is, attending casualty calls, and making decisions about how best to treat patients and where to transport them. Paramedics should be more available. Years ago it was not uncommon—and it probably still happens today—that an ambulance transporting a non-urgent patient to hospital would be redirected to respond to a casualty call nearby. With one patient already on board, an ambulance would respond to an emergency call to assist a second patient until another ambulance was available. That should not happen. Highly professional, highly trained, highly skilled and highly respected paramedics should not have to respond to non-urgent calls. I commend the Minister, Ms Jillian Skinner, for the innovative way in which she manages the Health portfolio. I commend this bill to the House.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.34 p.m.]: Access to quality health care in emergency situations is a fundamental right in Australia. It is widely acknowledged that ambulance services perform a crucial role in delivering excellent health outcomes in life-threatening circumstances. But there are occasions when the fundamental right to access an ambulance does not need to be delivered at the same level of urgency as other services relating to health transport. One metric used to assess the efficiency of health services is the ambulance emergency response time. It measures the time that it takes for an ambulance to arrive at the scene in response to a 000 emergency call. In New South Wales the ambulance emergency response time has been under pressure at times, with an average response time of 11 minutes.

Losing critical minutes in the emergency care of patients can lead to dangerous complications and increase the risk of a tragic death occurring. This acute issue is compounded by the mounting pressures of projected population growth and an ageing demographic. Scarce economic resources necessitate a solution that addresses multiple pressure points on the New South Wales health system. It is therefore imperative that we pass the Health Services Amendment (Ambulances Services) Bill 2015. The initiatives introduced by this bill should help to free up the Ambulance Service of NSW to attend to serious, life-threatening cases by directing non-urgent cases to a separate, supported non-emergency transport service. The current Health Services Act 1997 does not facilitate public health resources to be channelled in this manner and thereby inhibits the sensible expansion of quality healthcare in New South Wales.

As has been indicated already in this debate, similar healthcare reforms targeting ambulance services have occurred in Victoria and have achieved pleasing results. The Ambulance Victoria Referral Service was introduced in 2003 to mitigate demand for ambulance services by assessing a patient's condition during a 000 call and referring them to an alternative service in non-urgent cases. In 2012-13 this reduced demand for emergency ambulances by 9.5 per cent in metropolitan Victoria, thus freeing up resources for vital emergency care. In a similar way, the Health Services Amendment (Ambulances Services) Bill 2015 aims to deliver safe, timely and appropriate care for patients in non-emergency situations. The bill contains robust measures to protect and regulate the supported transport industry. Supported non-emergency transport providers, hospitals and other healthcare facilities are together responsible for taking all reasonable steps to ensure patient safety. The arrangements for alternative transport services, pursuant to the passing of this bill, should not compromise this responsibility for quality patient care.

I join with others in applauding the tenacity and professionalism of the men and women on the front line of the Ambulance Service of New South Wales. The Health Services Amendment (Paramedics) Bill 2015 that recently passed this House recognised that paramedics should be treated as highly skilled and valued professionals. The provision of alternative non-emergency patient transport will allow those skilled professionals to better deliver high-quality medical attention to those people who need it most. Addressing the issue of appropriate ambulance response times and adequately meeting future demand requires a suite of demand- and supply-based initiatives. It is very easy to say that we must provide more resources, more paramedics, more ambulances and more ambulance stations. I am pleased that the Government has done that. The Minister for Health has indicated that the Government has increased the

ambulance budget by 26 per cent. But that of itself is not the answer; a government has to be more strategic and clever in the way it uses its resources.

The Government is conscious of the need to educate consumers to be careful about using the emergency services in less than life-threatening situations. The Government's multidimensional but sophisticated response acknowledges that there are rarely easy answers, and this bill reflects a sophisticated and thoughtful response from the Government that involves real action. Earlier in the debate we heard how Labor is big on rhetoric and how Labor demonstrated in its 16 years in government that it is very light on action. Labor accuses others of being hypocritical, but Labor's hypocrisy is demonstrated through its lack of action when it had plenty of opportunities to do what it now suggests the Government should do. In conclusion, I congratulate the Minister for Health on another excellent demonstration of her leadership and her desire to improve our health system. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [11.41 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. This bill makes amendments to the Health Services Act 1997 to better define the emergency services provided by the Ambulance Service of New South Wales and to recognise a role for private sector and non-government organisations in providing non-emergency transport for patients. These amendments support the essential emergency response role of the Ambulance Service of New South Wales by providing a distinction between emergency services and non-emergency transport services for patients.

The bill will define "supported non-emergency transport" and "emergency ambulance services". Supported non-emergency transport occurs when a patient needs medical or other clinical oversight or monitoring during their transportation but does not require urgent transport to a health facility. Examples of this may include transfers between hospitals and transport to or from a hospital for particular procedures or tests. The reforms introduced by this bill are necessary to recognise the role of private and community operators in the supported transport market. The amendments also make clear that other forms of more generic transport, such as community transport services, will not be caught by the prohibitions or requirements of the Health Services Act.

The Government continually looks at ways to improve the lives of people in New South Wales whether in the sectors of health, education or law and order or by making sure that we have the appropriate resources for the providers of services to undertake their very important role in looking after people in our communities. This is another great example of how this Government is on a continuous improvement exercise to look at meeting the requirements of people in our community. The Government must look outside the square in determining how to deliver those services effectively, efficiently, timely and in accordance with community expectations. We are doing things differently from 10, five or even two years ago because the community has demanded that we keep pace with their requirements. This bill is a fine example of how we are doing that. No doubt a series of protocols will be outlined in relation to the categories of transport transfers—from home to hospital, inter-hospital or from hospital back to home.

The Ambulance Service of New South Wales continues to be responsible for the vast majority of urgent patient transport. The Secretary of the Department of Health will retain a capacity to approve other emergency ambulance services as appropriate. Under the bill all supported transport providers will be required to be appropriately licensed under the relevant existing regulatory regime in New South Wales. Additionally, the bill requires that any person seeking to engage a supported transport provider must take all reasonable steps to assure themselves that the provider has obtained the required authorisation or accreditation in relation to the transportation of passengers, which comes back to my earlier point about setting up a series of protocols.

The bill will assist communities in regional New South Wales by ensuring additional transport services are available for patients who do not need urgent attention. People living in regional New South Wales—where the tyranny of distance can often be a significant problem for people wishing to access

medical services—have a right to good health services, the best clinicians and the best medical facilities. Sometimes in regional New South Wales the Government is unable to deliver every service that everybody wants, but the Government does the very best it can to provide services and sometimes that means looking outside the square. This bill is an example of the Government doing that so that transport providers have the option of providing transport for patients who require a non-urgent home to hospital or inter-hospital transfer.

The Government is continually looking at ways to better deliver services. For example, in Gunnedah the Gunnedah hospital is being upgraded to meet the needs of the community. We have done an enormous amount of work in relation to the emergency department and the ambulance bay. I pay tribute to the dedicated team of paramedics in Gunnedah, led by Scott Clarke. There is some good news on the horizon in relation to personnel and resources there, which we are looking forward to. The paramedics do an outstanding job, often in difficult circumstances, and there is no doubt that they are stretched. When they get a call it may not be the only call they receive at that time, so they need to know there are options available for the transportation of patients. We have been pushing for an upgrade for Gunnedah hospital for quite a long time.

The emergency department, the ambulance bay and the administration area have been upgraded and it is now necessary to focus on the acute sections through the middle of the hospital. The hospital has not had an upgrade for many years and it desperately needs tender loving care. I thank the Minister for Health and Michael DiRienzo, chief executive officer of Hunter New England Health, for their commitment to this project. Two million dollars has been allocated to start that work. Gunnedah is a growing community and just one of many in regional New South Wales that will benefit from the opportunity to recognise a role for private sector and non-government organisations in providing non-emergency transport for patients in outlying regional areas such as Werris Creek, Quirindi, Boggabri and Barraba. We need to know that opportunities exist to provide the transport needs of our patients, regardless of the level of healthcare they require. This is not new in Australia. Similar legislation for a supported non-emergency transport scheme has existed in Victoria for several years and has been operating quite successfully.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Have a look at its results.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** I note the interjection from the member for Wollongong. I am not sure why she would interject because this is an excellent opportunity to provide ongoing healthcare and transportation options to people who need them most. In regional New South Wales we need to stretch the boundaries quite often; we need to look outside the square and say, "How can we make this happen? What do we need to do to provide a better service for people in regional New South Wales rather than a one size fits all?" We do that pretty well in regional New South Wales. We look at how we can do it better. Let us consider some of the health investment in regional New South Wales, particularly in Tamworth with the \$210 million redevelopment of Tamworth Hospital, which is about to be open and is just fantastic; the North West Cancer Care Centre; the Werris Creek Multi Purpose Service [MPS]; the Manilla MPS and Manellae Lodge where we are about to invest almost \$200,000 worth of refurbishment and tender loving care.

The Government is looking at investing in people in regional New South Wales and considering better ways of doing things. It is examining better ways to serve people to make it easier for them to get on with their lives. I think this bill, which acknowledges the role of private sector non-government organisations in providing non-emergency transport for patients, is a good step forward. It shows that we care about the people of New South Wales and I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [11.51 a.m.]: I speak on the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. I state at the outset that the member for Tamworth—

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** He is a good guy; he is a really good guy.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** He may be a good guy but he knows absolutely nothing about health. He should stick with the music. The member for Tamworth asked why I interjected and spoke about how they were going to make it happen. They are the Government; they should fund it. That is a news flash for him.

**Mrs Melinda Pavey:** Where's the money tree, Noreen?

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** Who woke you up today?

**Mrs Melinda Pavey:** Is it in Eddie's backyard?

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** I am very happy to see that members on the Government side are awake and paying attention. Recently Minister Jillian Skinner said that the ambulances and emergency departments were suffering because people were presenting with ingrown toenails. Anyone who has seen someone suffering from an ingrown toenail would not make light of it. Ingrown toenails can cause significant pain and result in serious consequences. A number of organisations are keen to enter the New South Wales medical transport market. It is clear that this is just another step in the process of privatising and fending off wherever possible a health service that was being delivered successfully by the Ambulance Service.

In my opinion this was a world-class health service but, according to internal data that revealed the true scale of the New South Wales hospital overcrowding crisis, ambulance crews were kept off the road for more than an hour on nearly 6,000 occasions in August 2011. In March 2012 Bureau of Health figures reveal that emergency department waiting times and off-stretcher times were worsening, with only 65 per cent of patients being transferred from the ambulance to the emergency department within the recommended 30-minute time frame, which is well under the 90 per cent target. This is one of the reasons why the Ambulance Service and paramedics are feeling so pressured and undervalued.

As I indicated in the House yesterday, ambulance paramedics are frustrated with being held up in emergency departments due to trolley block, particularly at Wollongong Hospital. In August 2012 paramedics called on the Minister to fix the bed block crisis at Wollongong Hospital. It peaked when one crew was stuck at the emergency department for 11 hours. We cannot say that the Ambulance Service and paramedics were not superefficient and doing a great job. However, many community transport services already have been changed, downgraded or cancelled in readiness for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Indeed, the member for Tamworth referred to changes in community transport.

In August 2012 doctors at Wollongong Hospital stated they were under pressure to discharge or transfer patients as management attempted to deal with a bed shortage crisis. How will privatising the transport of patients resolve that issue? At that time Wollongong Hospital had been short of up to 38 beds, with staff given directives at least six times in the month to urgently review and discharge all patients where possible. There were reports of people and emergency departments being moved to another room to adjust the number of people, how they are seen and in what time frame. A number of directives were given, which included:

1. "Urgently review patients currently in Wollongong Hospital and discharge where possible.
2. "We have reached a critical point in relation to available beds.
3. "We urgently require patients who can be discharged, either home, home with support, to another ISLHD ... facility or to a private hospital to be discharged or transferred as soon as possible."

The pressure is on constantly to play the numbers game. On many occasions I have heard Government members speaking in this House about how great the health system is, but that is not proving to be the case. In September 2012 Minister Skinner was concerned that some paramedics were being paid too

much in their annual overtime on top of their base salaries. A Health Services Union [HSU] Illawarra ambulance delegate and paramedic with 20 years' experience said that officers were doing so much overtime because of staff shortages. He said that the overtime involving paramedics is not usually scheduled in; it is caused by extensions of their shifts or by bed block at Wollongong Hospital. In March 2013 I condemned the then O'Farrell Government for its plans to cut \$4 million from the Ambulance Service.

I made the point that unprecedented funding and staffing cuts dangerously undermined health services in Wollongong, the Illawarra and across the State. In January 2014 again I condemned the then O'Farrell Government for short staffing ambulance services across regional stations. Some regional stations had been left in the hands of interns while other intensive care units were left understaffed. According to the HSU in July 2015, just one month ago, the bed block at Wollongong Hospital was back with a vengeance. An HSU representative gave an example from the evening of Monday 20 July 2015 when six ambulances, two-thirds of the Illawarra's entire fleet, were stuck babysitting patients at Wollongong Hospital.

There are numerous examples of that. But now there is a move to privatise part of the patient transport service. I have no doubt that is the thin end of the wedge in view of the Government's history of health service funding cuts, reduced services and moving patients around to alter health service outcomes in New South Wales, which is particularly concerning in Wollongong and the Illawarra. The member for Tamworth referred to the privatisation of services in Victoria, where a royal commission into the privatisation of the ambulance service found that it was more expensive in the long run. Instead of bragging about the great result in Victoria the member for Tamworth should have tabled the outcome of the royal commission into the delivery of ambulance services. Some non-emergency services are provided by the non-government sector agencies, such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service, on a not-for-profit basis. But that is not the intent of the legislation.

The overwhelming bulk of patient transport in New South Wales is government run and the Government is responsible for it—which is how it should be. The bill maintains the prohibition on outsourcing emergency ambulatory services without consent. However, consent may be given by the Health Secretary, as occurs sometimes with CareFlight services out of Westmead. The bill is also silent on the provision of clinical support for patients during transport. The Minister for Health went to great lengths to say in her second reading speech that there would be regulations to ensure standards for private patient transport providers. However, those regulations were not revealed. There has been no consultation with stakeholders. The Health Services Union [HSU], which covers paramedics, was told about the bill after its introduction. The HSU does not support the proposals in the bill, and nor does the Opposition. I, for one, am gravely concerned about health service delivery in Wollongong and the Illawarra.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY** (Oxley) [12.01 p.m.]: I support the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. I acknowledge the contribution by the member for Wollongong. I marvel at how Opposition members think there is a money tree at the bottom of the garden. As I said by way of interjection, the only money tree at the bottom of the garden was in Eddie's backyard. It is the responsibility of government to manage the resources of this State well and not burden the taxpayer and business. We must continue to provide services that society expects and demands, which is why this bill is so important.

I acknowledge the varied health services experience of the member for Gosford, who is in the Chamber. I will give an example of how health services have improved in New South Wales at an extraordinary rate, which is particularly beneficial for rural and regional people. Fifteen years ago Wagga Wagga was the only community in regional New South Wales that was considering providing radiotherapy services and it raised the necessary funds itself. Fifteen years on, 95 per cent of the New South Wales population is within 100 kilometres of radiotherapy services. That is an amazing commitment from the community to serve the needs of the community. That is an indication of the level of service

availability we have now compared to 20 years ago.

Twenty years ago the Health budget was about one-sixth of the State budget. This year the Health budget is about one-third of the total budget, and demand continues to grow. Any suggestion by members opposite that this Government is decreasing spending on Health is an absolute lie, as evidenced by the budget papers and the commitment from the Commonwealth Government regarding primary care and general practitioners. We are receiving assistance to rebuild our hospitals and construct new ones, such as in Kempsey. The Government is committed to providing modern, efficient health services throughout New South Wales. We must ensure that the money allocated to the Health portfolio is spent in a way that best serves patients, which is why the Government has introduced this bill.

The Liberal-Nationals Government has a proud record of achievement when it comes to health. The member for Wollongong said that the Health Services Union [HSU] was greatly concerned about the bill. Members will recall that was the union made famous by Craig Thomson from the Central Coast. The HSU is concerned about the amount of overtime that its members must work, but that was part of the reform process undertaken three years ago by the Minister for Health to ensure we did not overburden our ambulance officers by asking them to work double shifts. They got improved rosters and better occupational health and safety conditions, which was the proper way to address the management of our Ambulance Service.

Yesterday the Minister referred appropriately to comments by the chief executive officer of the Ambulance Service, Ray Green, which were misconstrued by the member for Wollongong. Mr Green said that a big issue is that people with an ingrown toenail call for an ambulance to take them to hospital. I do not know about members opposite, but I could never imagine calling for an ambulance if I had an ingrown toenail. I understand that they are very painful—I have never had one although my children have. But I would never expect emergency services to take me to hospital in such circumstances when other primary care options are available. This Government is looking at doing things more efficiently so that we deliver a better service for all patients across New South Wales.

The Baird Government will spend more than \$5 billion to build and upgrade more than 60 hospitals and health services over the next four years, including at Macksville and Kempsey in my electorate. This will bring the total spend on Health infrastructure to almost \$10 billion since the 2011 election. We have recruited 270 additional paramedics since coming to office in 2011 and we have enhanced aeromedical services. I am so proud of the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. In my role as Parliamentary Secretary for Rural and Regional Health, I witnessed the amazing work of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in western New South Wales, of which I am immensely proud.

Ambulance response times have improved, with the most recent Auditor-General's report also showing that the median ambulance response time for all potentially life-threatening cases in New South Wales has decreased for the first time in five years. This bill will not put patients at risk. The NSW Health Service Specifications state that a medical practitioner or registered nurse must assess a patient as being clinically stable for transfer and at low risk of deterioration during transfer. Any public or private provider engaged through the centralised booking service must have protocols in place to escalate to an emergency ambulance in the event of patient deterioration.

For supported non-emergency transport outside the centralised booking service arrangements, the bill requires that any person wishing to engage a supported transport provider take all reasonable steps that the clinical oversight and monitoring during transport will ensure patient safety. The bill contains a prohibition power whereby the Health Secretary can prohibit a person from providing supported transport or place such conditions as required if a provider breaches requirements under the Act in order to ensure public safety. Requirements include ensuring appropriate clinical care and monitoring during transport. The definitions have been developed carefully to ensure that they reflect appropriate levels of regulation between emergency, supported and general community transport, and are based on legislation already in place in Victoria.



The bill provides the levers to free up emergency ambulance resources to improve efficiencies in responding to life-threatening incidents—as the community expects—and to improve patient flow in the non-emergency sector by allowing non-government and private providers to provide supported transport to those who may have an ingrown toenail, for example. The bill supports the strategic reforms necessary to separate emergency and non-emergency patient transports to ensure that New South Wales ambulances can focus on responding to genuine emergency situations. I congratulate the Minister on her reforms that are designed to ensure that those who most need ambulance services in a hurry can get them as quickly as possible. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [12.10 p.m.]: The Health Services Amendment (Ambulances Service) Bill 2015 amends the Health Services Act 1997 to better define the emergency services provided by the Ambulance Service of NSW and to recognise a role for private sector and non-government organisations in providing non-emergency transport for patients. The amendments support the essential emergency response role of the Ambulance Service of NSW by making a distinction between emergency services and non-emergency transport services. The bill will define "supported non-emergency transport" and "emergency ambulance services". Supported non-emergency transport occurs when a patient needs medical or other clinical oversight or monitoring during their transportation but does not require urgent transport to a health facility. Examples may include transfers between hospitals and transport to and from a hospital for procedures or tests.

This morning I took the opportunity to contact a local ambulance officer from my electorate of Upper Hunter to ask him what he thought about this idea. When he joined the Ambulance Service 15 years ago he worked in non-emergency patient transport. He said that this reform should have happened a long time ago. He also said that his staff and the emergency ambulance vehicles available throughout the Upper Hunter spend far too much time performing patient transfers. For example, transporting a patient from Scone to Maitland to receive non-emergency services involves a round trip of anywhere between four and five hours. That includes travel time, loading and unloading the patient at each end and the procedures that go along with that.

The ambulance officer said that in the meantime it is not unusual for two or three Upper Hunter ambulances to be in Maitland, in Tamworth or at John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle doing non-emergency patient transfers because of the lack of non-emergency transport services in the Upper Hunter. It is absolutely critical to provide the opportunity to establish necessary services in regional areas such as the Upper Hunter. Let us not forget that when ambulances from Scone take people to Maitland or John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle for a non-emergency patient transfer those ambulances are off duty for the purpose of meeting their emergency services requirements.

My electorate covers 27,600 square kilometres. It takes me approximately six hours to drive from one end of it to the other. Unfortunately, accidents occur. It does not matter whether they are road, farm or workplace accidents, if an emergency situation requires an ambulance; but none is available because patients are being transported to non-emergency services in an inappropriate vehicle. It puts lives at risk. That is the story in the Upper Hunter. I am sure it is replicated throughout regional areas because of the vast distances that services must cover when emergencies arise—especially the many motor vehicle accidents that unfortunately occur.

The reforms introduced by the bill are necessary to recognise the role of private and community operators in the supported transport market in New South Wales. The amendments also make clear that other forms of more generic transport, such as community transport services, will not be caught by the prohibitions or requirements of the Health Services Act. Under the existing provisions of the Health Services Act it is prohibited to transport sick or injured persons for fee or reward without the consent of the Health Secretary. The bill retains the prohibition on transporting sick or injured persons for fee or reward but limits it to emergency ambulance services. In effect, that means the Ambulance Service of NSW continues to be responsible for the vast majority of urgent patient transport. The Health Secretary

will retain the capacity to approve other emergency ambulance services as appropriate.

Under the bill all supported transport drivers will be required to be licensed appropriately under the relevant existing regulatory regime in New South Wales. Additionally, the bill requires that any person seeking to engage a supported transport provider must take all reasonable steps to assure themselves that the provider has obtained required authorisation or accreditation in relation to the transportation of passengers. Under the bill both supported transport providers and those who engage supported transport providers must ensure that vehicles or other methods of transportation used to provide supported transport are equipped in a manner that ensures patient safety. Additionally, all supported transport providers must comply with the relevant passenger transport requirements of vehicle maintenance and road rules.

The Government is engaging in a targeted consultation process with relevant stakeholders, including primary health service providers, aged-care providers, private health facilities, paramedic associations and supported transport providers, to understand the need for and scope of any prescribed supported transport standards as provided for in the regulation-making power of the bill. Consultation in the Upper Hunter would reveal to the Government and the health services that more opportunities for non-emergency patient transport services are needed desperately. The ambulance driver I spoke to today said that paramedics get somewhat frustrated because they are highly trained ambulance drivers who are qualified and registered paramedics and yet they spend hours transporting up and down the highway people who simply do not need the level of care that paramedics can provide.

There are plenty of opportunities to support people in regional areas who need genuine care. I restate the example I gave about transporting a patient from Scone to Maitland Hospital. It is a four- or five-hour round trip for paramedics in a traditional ambulance. That is four or five hours that the ambulance and those paramedics are not available to do what they are meant to do: provide assistance to people who need actual emergency care. We should also remember that supported transport providers have always had the opportunity to apply for the Secretary's consent to transport sick and injured persons for fee or reward.

So we are not changing anything from the point of view of capacity or ability; we are simply making it easier to provide such services. This is critical not only in my electorate of Upper Hunter but also in regional New South Wales generally. I spoke earlier about the distances involved and tying up the time of traditional ambulances unnecessarily. There have been few applications from other transport providers over the years, and consequently the market for supported transport is not established. That goes to the heart of my argument: We must extend opportunities for transport providers. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

This legislation does that. Regional areas such as the Upper Hunter will benefit from the extended services that can now be provided. I note that New South Wales is not the first State to enact such legislation. As has been mentioned, for several years Victoria has had similar legislation regarding supported non-emergency transport. Finally, it is all about the patient. It is not about the union; it is not about ideology; it is not about anything else other than the patient. If those opposite cared about the patients and service delivery, they would support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.21 p.m.]: I am absolutely delighted to make a contribution to debate on the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. I congratulate the Minister for Health on acting to address an ongoing concern and I will cover that issue during my contribution. The bill will make it lawful for non-government organisations and private operators to provide supported non-emergency transport—that is, transport for sick and injured persons to or from hospitals or other places where they can obtain medical services—for fee or reward without the consent of the Secretary of the Ministry of Health, subject to certain requirements.

It will also prohibit emergency ambulance services—rather than all transport services for sick or

injured persons, as occurs at present—from being provided by non-government organisations and private operators for fee or reward without the consent of the Health Secretary. Previous contributions have well and truly canvassed all aspects of the bill. Indeed, in introducing the bill the Minister gave a broad overview of its purpose and the intent of all clauses. I remind members that I first raised this issue in the House in a private member's statement on 1 June 2007. I made that contribution after Mr Eric Cox wrote to me regarding his concerns about the then licensing of private ambulance services. He outlined a number of concerns, and stated:

Our company has been applying for a licence to operate a Private Ambulance Service to transport the sick and injured for a fee in New South Wales since 1998. Our application is always denied.

We have brought to the attention of several legal Bodies including the legal Dept of NSW Health the Illegal operations of several Private patient Transport operators in NSW.

At this point in time it is illegal to transport sick and injured patients unless you are the NSW Ambulance Service. This is not yet legal for private operators to transport the sick and injured for fee or reward in NSW without permission from the Director-General, NSW Department of Health. This is stipulated specifically, section 67E of the act.

The bill deals with section 67E of the Act. Mr Cox continued:

We have provided photographic evidence that these companies exist, these complaints have fallen on deaf ears.

Mr Cox went on to provide relevant information about patient transport that was occurring, and to which the then Government was turning a blind eye. He explained that all his attempts to operate legally had fallen on deaf ears or been rejected. I wrote to the Minister for Health at the time asking what was going on and what he intended to do about service provision that was technically illegal. Again, he turned a blind eye to it. I also raised my concerns with the Parliamentary Secretary who was at the table, the then member for Strathfield. I asked her:

... to ensure that either the Minister or the New South Wales department, by way of reference by the Minister, investigates this complaint and makes an appropriate response.

I had written to the Minister but I raised the issue in the House because I was unhappy with the Minister's response. I took the step of coming to the Chamber and appealing to the then Parliamentary Secretary to take up the issue. However, as was typical of the former Labor administration, it did absolutely nothing. When we raised an issue that clearly needed attention—it was spelt out; there was photographic evidence and correspondence to back it up—the government of the day did nothing. So for Opposition members to make the contributions they have today—and I have been observing and listening to them—I think is pretty damn poor.

The bill will deliver better outcomes for patients—the people this Government is focused on. The Minister is clearly focused on delivering services. During the election campaign the Health Services Union [HSU] campaigned aggressively against the Government; it did not support any Coalition candidates. The union issued statements in the Wagga Wagga electorate that it wanted certain conditions for its members. It campaigned hard and spent a lot of money campaigning against the Liberal-Nationals Government. The Government is building new hospitals across the State, constructing new emergency services buildings and investing record funds—in fact, 20 per cent more than the previous administration. The HSU campaigned hard against new hospitals that were half built; it did not want Liberal-Nationals members of Parliament re-elected.

The Wagga Wagga Base Hospital redevelopment is the biggest investment in regional New

South Wales—it will total half a billion dollars by the time it is finished. Yet the HSU campaigned against it, claiming that its members wanted a Labor government. The union statement claimed that the 225 members of the HSU were the voice of the Riverina. The Murrumbidgee Local Health District has 4,600 employees, of whom about 3,600 are full-time. No-one can claim that 225 people are representative of 4,600 people, or 3,600 full-time staff. What a joke. Perhaps only a couple of paramedics are paid-up members of the HSU. I know they appreciate that this bill will relieve some of the stress and strain that the Ambulance Service is experiencing.

We are treating more patients through the public health system than ever before. Times are improving dramatically under Minister Skinner and her health administration. Reports provided to Parliament—which members opposite should take the time to read—clearly demonstrate the very good results emanating from area health services. We are treating more people, with record funds and record infrastructure building. One has only to look at Dubbo, Parkes, Forbes, Tamworth, Bega, Port Macquarie, the northern beaches, Kogarah, Armidale or Lockhart to see what is happening. The Government is investing in health, but in order to do that it must reassess the services provided and find efficient ways to deliver them. That is what this bill does. It will allow ambulance operators to deal with emergency cases and other patient transfers to occur through the appropriate services. It makes the system more flexible.

This is a great bill. This is a bill that the Labor Party refused to bring to this Parliament. It is needed to address the concerns raised in 2007 by me. If I searched *Hansard*, I am sure I would find that other members have raised this issue as well. I congratulate the Minister and the staff who have put this bill together, as it will, finally, improve services for the people that we should be focused upon—the patients, our constituents. I commend the Minister for introducing the bill. I encourage all members to vote for it, to stop worrying about their union mates and to start being worried about the people of this State.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [12.30 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. The bill raises an issue in which I have taken some interest, mainly because, as many members will know, the Ambulance Service of NSW is located in Rozelle, in my electorate. It has an important role to play, not only in the health sector but also in my local electorate. I note that plans are afoot to move that service to Parramatta as part of a commitment made by the Government. I expect the purpose-built facility there will be much better than the facility that my constituents currently have as that facility leaves a fair bit to be desired.

I understand this bill has been the subject of significant discussion and research. The 2012 Ambulance Reform Plan speaks in some detail about its main objectives. I am a supporter of one of those issues, which is improving integration of the Ambulance Service with the broader health system. That, to my mind, is very important. I understand the Government is making a move in that direction. Some money from the Government to facilitate the move would be helpful; but I understand the Minister probably will be considering that matter relatively soon.

The Ambulance Reform Plan identifies a significant problem. In 2011-12, there were 420,000 non-emergency patient transports, and the strategy document indicates that the red fleet, the emergency ambulance fleet, was used in 104,000 of those. That clearly is not an optimal outcome. It is an outcome that has arisen, in no small part, due to the lack of capacity of the former Government, and most recently by the current Government, to deal adequately with the fact that local health services have been generating their own solutions in many cases. The strategy talks about lack of integration and lack of a statewide approach. So I acknowledge that that is an issue that has to be resolved. As to a solution, I am aware that Victorian Labor supported a model very similar to that proposed by this bill. I am sure the Labor Government would have loved to have supported a model like this, if it had had that opportunity.

However, this proposal does warrant caution. I look at this issue from my perspective. What has happened to health services in my local area? Actually, they have gone backwards. The Balmain hospital used to provide a 24-hour casualty service; now, it provides a much reduced service. We had a huge fight before the election about trying to retain the pulmonary rehabilitation service in the electorate. So my

personal experience is that within the boundaries of my electorate there has been a withdrawal of services. Of course, we are very lucky to have the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital only a short distance from my electorate; and I understand there has been a significant commitment to that hospital.

But the proposal in the bill deserves caution. My experience is that within the boundaries of my electorate there has not been a positive outcome when it comes to the extension and development of health services. So I, too, express my concern about this proposal. I am sure there will be more discussion about it in the upper House. The Minister, in her second reading speech, talks about the need to develop a detailed approach to standards and specifications. I would feel more comfortable if I had a clear idea of the process for the management of these non-emergency services. The Minister said in her second reading speech:

The legislation is also designed to rely, where possible, on existing processes and requirements that are in place to maintain appropriate standards for supported transport. These include general transport safety standards and requirements under State and Commonwealth law and, where the service is being provided under arrangements with NSW Health, detailed standards and specifications must be set contractually.

One of the things we know about NSW Health, as with many government departments, is that the contracts are often hopeless and/or problematic. The Minister went on to say:

It is important to note that New South Wales does not have a well-established market for supported transport.

That is true. The Minister continued:

Therefore, the bill anticipates standards being assured through other mechanisms.

It would be worthwhile if the Minister, who talked about enforcement powers, outlined what kinds of standards are envisaged, because, even if practice is slightly different with the green fleet, people have confidence in that system. They have confidence, when they see a red ambulance turning up out the front of their place, that they will have a quality service provided. And they are confident when a green ambulance turns up. That is because this Government and this State have built confidence in the healthcare system. Patients know, when an ambulance turns up, they will have a qualified paramedic to look after them. Though the bill does not deal with transport for emergency patients, in my view it is important that there be very solid justification by the Government for this system, and it is important that we have a clear idea of what standards will be applied to this non-government private form of transport.

I think that is an issue worthy of discussion and comment by the Minister. I expect there will be more discussion when this bill goes to the upper House. I hope that, after those discussions, we will have assurances about standards and that the "other mechanisms" that the Minister spoke about will be a little clearer. On that basis, we will not be supporting the bill as it stands; but I understand there will be more discussion. I am always very cautious because history tells us that if we are not clear before a bill proceeds about what is being replaced, sometimes we create a problem that is more significant for us.

Before I conclude I turn to the issue of the Ambulance Service. I am really proud to have the Ambulance Service in my electorate. I meet quite often with people involved in the Ambulance Service. They are key stakeholders on the Callan Park site. I trust that the Government will look at moving them to a better facility at Parramatta. Often, members stand up in the House and say, "We do not want government services closing; we will lose jobs," and so on. Sometimes we have to look at things without putting on our aggressive, parish pump local member's hat. If that facility is moved to Parramatta, they will have a better service. They will have better facilities; and, hopefully, if the Government gets it right, they will have a much better standard of accommodation. I would welcome that. It is not possible in the existing building.

I think moving the service to a purpose-built facility will be of significant benefit, not just to the staff but to the people of New South Wales. So I am not against those staff leaving my electorate. I know that moving a few hundred people from the area will affect a lot of local businesses, but the existing accommodation is clearly substandard. So I encourage the Government, when it is looking at dealing with the Ambulance Service, to ensure there is sufficient investment in the service, so any movement of the Ambulance Service is done in a way that provides significant benefits, not only to the staff but also to the people of New South Wales who use that service. Finally, the future of Callan Park, which is intimately linked with the Ambulance Service, is an issue on which we are working constructively with the Government. We trust that if the service leaves that building, there will be a good use to which the building can be put, for the benefit of all of the people of New South Wales.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [12.38 p.m.]: I support the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015 and pay tribute to the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, for bringing this bill to the House. It is clear, from what we have heard in this debate today, that those on this side of the House support change while those opposite adopt scaremongering and rhetoric in support of their union colleagues. The clear object of this bill is to make it lawful for non-government organisations and private operators to provide supported non-emergency transport; that is, transport for sick and injured persons to or from hospitals and other places where those persons can obtain medical services, for a fee or reward, without the consent of the Secretary to the Ministry of Health, subject to certain requirements.

This bill will lift that prohibition. It separates the provisions for emergency ambulance services from those for supported non-emergency transport. The reality is that ambulances are constantly called out to non-emergency and non-life-threatening cases. This bill will provide a new service that will free up emergency services to respond to the life-threatening cases that public hospitals see on a daily basis. The Government is acutely aware of the growing need for health services. The Minister for Health is keenly advocating for improved health services on the Central Coast. Over the next four years \$368 million will be spent on Gosford Hospital. That will deliver a 720-bed hospital. In addition, \$9.1 million has been allocated for two new ambulance stations, in Wyong and Toukley, to provide the additional emergency services that the people of the Central Coast need.

In question time yesterday Opposition members misquoted the Minister for Health as saying that patients with ingrown toenails were clogging up emergency departments. That comment was actually made by Ray Creen, Chief Executive of the Ambulance Service of NSW. I have had an ingrown toenail. I can attest that, while it was incredibly painful, at no time did I feel the need to call an ambulance to take me to hospital. I engaged the services of my local general practitioner, and the offending toenail was dealt with later at a hospital. The Ambulance Service of NSW provides information about the use of ambulances. An example is its document titled "Which one is a taxi?" The Ambulance Service recommends that people call 000 in life-threatening cases. The document says:

If you need non urgent medical advice or treatment, see your doctor or pharmacist.  
You can help save lives.  
Only call an Ambulance if it's an emergency.  
Using an Ambulance as a taxi stops paramedics from doing their job—saving lives.

That is as clear as it gets. In a newspaper article last week the Chief Executive of the Central Coast Local Health District, Mr Matt Hanrahan, addressed the issue of ambulance response times at Gosford Hospital. The article said:

"Seriously ill patients will always be the priority and may mean that those with less serious conditions may have to wait regardless of whether they arrive by ambulance or via the emergency department waiting room," Mr Hanrahan said.

"Our staff work closely with our colleagues at NSW Ambulance to minimise wait times for both

patients and ambulances."

Mr Hanrahan said night duty staff had been increased to help manage the winter demand.

He said patients who had been stabilised were being moved from the acute emergency department to the short stay unit for monitoring and observation, providing more capacity in emergency.

This is a clear case of how local area health services are working hand in hand with the Ambulance Service of NSW. Rather than running a scare campaign, they are working together to ensure that they provide efficient emergency services to patients on the Central Coast and in New South Wales more broadly. The NSW Health service specifications state that a medical practitioner or registered nurse must assess a patient as clinically stable to be transferred and at low risk during transfer. By implementing the legislation being debated today there will be safeguards in place to protect patients during transfer. The legislation also frees up the emergency services to deal with the life-threatening cases that they see on a daily basis. I commend this bill to the House. It has the support of Government members. I recommend that Opposition members also support this fantastic initiative from the Minister for Health.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [12.44 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. The objects of the bill are twofold, as follows:

- (a) to make it lawful for non-government organisations and private operators to provide supported non-emergency transport (that is, transport for sick and injured persons, to or from hospitals or other places where those persons can obtain medical services) for fee or reward without the consent of the Secretary of the Ministry of Health, subject to certain requirements, and
- (b) to prohibit emergency ambulance services (rather than all transport for sick or injured persons, as at present) from being provided by non-government organisations and private operators for fee or reward without the consent of the Health Secretary.

In essence, this bill gives greater clarity to the role of the Ambulance Service of NSW as the only provider of transport in emergency situations. The bill also properly recognises the role that supported non-emergency transport plays in transporting patients with non-urgent conditions. I note that supported non-emergency transport services already exist. The bill is not creating a new sector to act in competition with the Ambulance Service, as some Opposition members have suggested, but it codifies and puts in place proper rules for a service that already exists in this State.

Already hundreds of patients in my electorate of Northern Tablelands are transported to essential appointments by private providers, from public hospitals to private and vice versa. It is appropriate that they are not transported by the Ambulance Service of NSW. The role of ambulances is not to act as taxis, ferrying people around for non-urgent care. Ambulances are our first responders, to respond to urgent and life-threatening situations. Patients are already using private transport services. This bill better defines the role that those services play in the health system. It protects the critical front-line role of the Ambulance Service and better values the service that it offers. The bill also provides clear rules on how private operators should operate and to what standards they must adhere, which will give confidence to patients that private transport operators are properly accredited. Private providers must adhere to the same standards across the State; otherwise, their services will be terminated. This bill does that very well.

The bill is very short. It is elegant in its simplicity, but that belies its importance for patients and the ambulance sector as a whole. The amendments introduced by this bill support the essential emergency response role of the Ambulance Service of NSW by providing a distinction between emergency services and non-emergency transport services. The Ambulance Service of NSW plays a vital role, particularly in rural areas. I note the recent retirement in Armidale of Ambulance Service inspector

Neale Waters, after an admirable 43 years in the service. Through his career he served in Tenterfield, Tamworth and Armidale. He is an Armidale boy, born and bred.

In 1972, as an 18-year-old store clerk, he attended a first-aid course, a decision that would shape the rest of his professional life. Neale formally finishes with the Ambulance Service on 20 November, but Wednesday was his last day on the job. In this important debate acknowledging our ambulance service employees, I pay tribute to Neale for the service he has rendered to the people of Armidale, Tenterfield and Tamworth. We should salute people like Neale Waters. In his career he has no doubt been responsible for saving lives. There are many people alive today who, without his expert intervention, might not have been. I thank Neale and acknowledge his service to our community. He is a fine man who has had a fine career.

The amendments in the bill amend the Health Services Act 1997 and make it clear that other forms of more generic transport, such as community transport services, will not be caught up by the prohibitions or requirements of the Health Services Act. Our electorates all have community transport services. In my area, community transport does a lot of great work conveying people around the electorate, for example, for renal dialysis services. We do not have renal dialysis units in every hospital in our region—as much as we would love to have them it is just not feasible for a number of reasons—but we have community transport for those patients. Community transport services will not be caught up by the rules and regulations of this bill; they operate under different provisions.

However, the bill retains the prohibition on transporting sick or injured persons for fee or reward and limits such transportation to emergency ambulance services. In effect, this means that the Ambulance Service of NSW continues to be responsible for the vast majority of urgent patient transport. The Secretary to the Ministry of Health will retain a capacity to approve other emergency ambulance services as appropriate. Under the bill, all supported transport drivers will be required to be appropriately licensed under the relevant existing regulatory regime in New South Wales. In addition, the amendments made by this bill require that any person seeking to engage a supported transport provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the provider has obtained the required authorisation or accreditation in relation to the transportation of passengers.

Under the bill, both supported transport providers and those that engage supported transport providers must ensure that vehicles or other methods of transportation used to provide supported transport are equipped in a manner that ensures patient safety. Currently, some of those provisions do not exist. This underscores the importance of this bill in giving peace of mind, security and confidence to the public that when they seek a transport provider they can be assured that the provider is properly accredited. As with a lot of public transport that we regulate, such as taxis, people can be assured that a certain safety standard is applied across the board and they are not putting themselves or their loved ones at risk by being transported in that fashion. Of course, all supported transport providers must comply with the relevant passenger transport requirements for vehicle maintenance and road rules.

The Government is currently engaging in a targeted consultation process with all relevant stakeholders, including primary health service providers, aged-care providers, private health facilities, paramedic associations and supported transport providers, to understand the need for and scope of any prescribed supported transport standards, as provided for in the regulation-making power of the bill. There will be a lot of consultation because currently there is not a huge market for private transport operators, although there may well be as a result of this legislation. But I emphasise that it will not be at the expense of the Ambulance Service of NSW, which does a magnificent job. Its role in our health system is enshrined in other pieces of legislation, including this one, and it will continue to be the only emergency first responder in this State. This legislation is about relieving some of the pressure on the Ambulance Service in having to transport non-emergency patients, and allowing private providers to offer that service. The Ambulance Service of NSW will retain its strong front-line capabilities.

As I said, over the years these applications have been few, but the market for supported



transportation in New South Wales will be established. In conclusion, I note that New South Wales is not the first State to enact such legislation. Victoria has had very similar legislation operating for a number of years in relation to supported non-emergency transport. I thank the Minister for Health for bringing this bill to the House. I again acknowledge the contribution that ambulance services make to this State, and I particularly acknowledge Inspector Neale Waters. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [12.54 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to debate on the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015 and acknowledge the work of the Minister for Health and her team on this legislation. I also acknowledge the work the Minister has done in my electorate since I was elected as the member for Camden. In 2011 Campbelltown Hospital was given a pre-election promise of \$40 million. Following the 2011 election the Minister, the Cabinet and the Premier determined that \$133 million needed to be spent on the hospital and I am proud to say that that has happened.

Prior to this year's election the Premier and the Minister went to Campbelltown Hospital and committed \$300 million to the upgrade of stage two. Camden is the fastest-growing electorate in New South Wales and I thank the Minister for that investment. The Minister has been a tremendous friend of the Macarthur region—Camden, Campbelltown, Wollondilly and Macquarie Fields—because that is the area to which people are moving, and I know that that commitment of \$300 million for stage two is much needed in our community. The Minister goes around to all the hospitals within the State; she was at Campbelltown Hospital the week before the last election and I know she will be back there before the end of the month. I thank the Minister and her team and the Government for their commitment to our area.

The Ambulance Service of NSW does a tremendous job. The Government supports the Ambulance Service and will continue to do so. This bill ensures that an outstanding and much-needed service gets the recognition and support it needs. To pick up on a good point made by the member for Northern Tablelands, Labor is opposing the legislation simply for the sake of it. Today the Opposition Whip and I gave a talk to members of the public service in Parliament House. We were sitting there sort of singing *Kumbaya*, saying how wonderful it was that we were holding hands, supporting 99 per cent of bills and how we work together to achieve outcomes. This is one of those rare occasions where politics is being played and there is no *Kumbaya* hand-holding.

It is a shame because similar legislation was introduced by the Bracks Labor Government, I think in 2003, and it is working successfully in Victoria to this day. It is sad for this Parliament that the Opposition is opposing this bill for the sake of it. Our Ambulance Service needs bipartisan support—it is a tremendous service within our community. What the Ambulance Service does not need is grandstanding by the Opposition in a campaign run by the Health Services Union. I commend the Minister for the stance she has taken and I commend her and her team for their efforts in bringing forward this legislation. I could ask for an extension of time to speak about the merits of this bill.

**Mr Adam Marshall:** Don't.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON:** This side of the House is not about grandstanding; it is about delivering real outcomes for our community. As the Minister is now in the Chamber I will not waste any more of her time. This is a tremendous bill; it does what it needs to do. I commend the Minister for getting it done and I commend this bill to the House.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Minister for Health) [12.58 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Services) Bill 2015. They are too numerous to mention but they have all made a substantial contribution to the debate. The bill proposes amending section 67E of the Health Services Act to remove the current prohibition on transporting sick or injured patients for fee or reward without the consent of the Secretary of the Department of Health for supported non-emergency transport. The bill will retain the prohibition on the provision of emergency ambulance services except with the consent of the health secretary.

The bill supports the strategic direction identified by the 2012 ambulance reform of separating supported non-emergency transport from urgent or emergency retrieval services by more clearly delineating between these types of services in the legislation. This was not just a review done then; it was a recommendation from several reviews undertaken by the former Labor Government but the recommendations were not enacted until now. Supported non-emergency transport is required where a patient needs clinical oversight or monitoring during their transportation but does not require urgent transport to a health facility. That should be reserved for the 000 call and the red emergency fleet. Use of ambulance red fleet vehicles and resources in non-emergency situations is an inefficient use of high-cost specialist services. These reforms are necessary to ensure that our emergency paramedics can focus on responding to life-threatening situations.

The bill clearly delineates between emergency ambulance services and supported non-emergency transport. To that end, the bill introduces new definitions of "emergency ambulance services" and "supported non-emergency transport". These definitions are consistent with legislation already in place in Victoria. The bill imposes a range of quality and safety requirements in relation to supported non-emergency transport that are appropriate and tailored for the nature of the services being provided and also includes a capacity for additional standards to be prescribed by regulation where necessary.

Under the bill, supported non-emergency transport providers are obliged to take all reasonable steps to ensure that vehicles used to provide the transport are equipped in a manner that ensures patient safety, and that clinical care and monitoring is provided as part of the transport in a manner that ensures patient safety. In addition, the bill permits regulations to be made for the standards to be complied with in the provision of supported non-emergency transport. The matters that may be covered by the standards include the circumstances in which a patient will be required to be transferred to an emergency ambulance service, the accreditation or authorisation of vehicles or the drivers of vehicles, staffing levels, the training and qualifications of staff, and the maintenance and safety of vehicles.

Importantly, New South Wales does not have an established supported transport market currently and any additional standards will be developed through targeted consultation with key stakeholders including the aged care sector, the primary care sector and private health facilities. The bill also imposes obligations on persons who engage, whether by contract or other arrangement, another person to provide supported non-emergency transport. This will effectively create an additional level of oversight of supported non-emergency transport services. These obligations will include an obligation to take all reasonable steps to ensure that vehicles used to provide the transport are equipped in a manner that ensures patient safety, and that the service provider is able to provide clinical care and monitoring in a manner that ensures patient safety that complies with any prescribed standards.

The bill creates offence provisions for persons who contravene these requirements. The regulatory measures contained in the bill complement other existing regulatory requirements on those who both provide supported non-emergency transport or engage the provision of such transport. This includes existing requirements under New South Wales transport legislation in relation to vehicle maintenance and registration requirements in passenger transport legislation, and driver licensing requirements requiring licensing of drivers and registration of vehicles. Private hospitals licensed under the Private Health Facilities Act 2010 that engage or contract with supported non-emergency transport to transport patients to or from their facilities will also be subject to obligations regarding that transport pursuant to their licence conditions.

Any supported non-emergency transport provider that provides services to NSW Health under its centralised booking and dispatch or hub arrangements must comply with the comprehensive minimum service specifications set out in the 2014 NSW Health policy directive "Service Specifications for Transport Providers—Non-Emergency Patient Transport". The aim of these minimum service specifications is to ensure consistency across the hub network and ensure that appropriate patient

transport vehicles, equipment and staff will provide a safe service for patients using supported non-emergency transport within NSW Health. Compliance with the specifications is enforced through contractual arrangements between providers and the Health Administration Corporation, which administers the hub. The bill also contains provisions permitting the health secretary to impose a prohibition order on persons providing supported non-emergency transport or to place conditions on such persons.

It is an offence under the bill for a person to provide or take part in the provision of supported non-emergency transport in contravention of an order made by the health secretary under section 67FC. The maximum penalty for contravention of a prohibition order is 200 penalty units. The obligation on a person who "takes part in" the provision of supported non-emergency transport extends to a director or person otherwise concerned in the management of a corporation that provides supported non-emergency transport. In conclusion, this bill has been prepared following recommendations by numerous reviews of the Ambulance Service of NSW. I believe it will improve the responsiveness of the red fleet, those emergency vehicles that should be responding to emergencies. It will make it much more efficient and easier for patients in a non-emergency situation to be transported to medical appointments, between hospitals and so forth. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 47**

Mr Anderson	Ms Goward	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Roberts
Mr Ayres	Mr Hazzard	Mr Sidoti
Mr Barilaro	Mr Henskens	Mrs Skinner
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humphries	Mr Speakman
Mr Brookes	Mr Johnsen	Mr Stokes
Mr Conolly	Mr Kean	Mr Taylor
Mr Coure	Dr Lee	Mr Toole
Mr Crouch	Mr Maguire	Mr Tudehope
Mrs Davies	Mr Marshall	Ms Upton
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mr Ward
Mr Elliott	Mrs Pavey	Mr Williams
Mr Evans	Mr Perrottet	Mrs Williams
Mr Fraser	Ms Petinos	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr George	Mr Piccoli	Mr Bromhead
Ms Gibbons	Mr Piper	Mr Patterson

**Noes, 37**

Ms Aitchison	Mr Harris	Mr Minns
Mr Atalla	Ms Harrison	Mr Park
Mr Barr	Ms Hay	Mr Parker
Ms Burney	Ms Haylen	Mr Robertson
Ms Car	Mr Hoenig	Ms K. Smith
Ms Catley	Ms Hornery	Ms T. F. Smith
Mr Chanthivong	Mr Kamper	Ms Washington
Mr Crakanthorp	Ms Leong	Ms Watson

Mr Daley  
Mr Dib  
Ms Doyle  
Ms Finn  
Mr Foley

Mr Lynch  
Dr McDermott  
Ms McKay  
Mr Mehan  
Ms Mihailuk

Mr Zangari  
  
*Tellers,*  
Mr Lulich  
Mr Warren

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

### **Third Reading**

**Motion by Mrs Jillian Skinner 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.**

**Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.**

### **COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS**

---

#### **LOWER NORTH COAST SURF LIFE SAVING AWARDS**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [1.15 p.m.]: I inform the House that some outstanding individual surf life savers and clubs have been named as major award recipients in the 2014-15 Awards of Excellence for the Surf Life Saving Lower North Coast Branch. For the Cape Hawke Surf Life Saving Club the award recipients are: Team of the Year, Ladies Boat Crew; Under 19 Competitor of the Year, Brock Van Kampen; Administrator of the Year, Peter McTiernan; Assessor of the Year, Wayne Barry; Volunteer of the Year, Kerry Scott; Age Manager of the Year, Dave Russell; and Lifesaver of the Month, Jeff Horn.

For the Black Head Surf Life Saving Club the award recipients are: Open Competitor of the Year, Jordan Connolly; Open Lifesaver of the Year, Jordan Connolly; Training Officer of the Year, Sandra Donkin; Age Manager of the Year, Natalie Carrier; Lifesaver of the Month, David Castle; Masters Lifesaver of the Year, Leigh Croker; Rescue of the Month, Terry Aldridge, Kevin Boag, Trevor King, Julian Boag, Jordan Connolly, Vicki Smith and First Aid Officer, Kellie Connolly. I commend their achievements to the House.

#### **MAITLAND ELECTORATE ROTARIANS**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON** (Maitland) [1.16 p.m.]: I salute Andrew Percival, Douglas Tilse and Richard Fry, three of my constituents who, between them, have almost a 160 years experience as Rotarians. All of them have served in the Maitland Rotary Club's executive and all of them have contributed to the club and the community over the years. Mr Percival, inducted in 1959, is noted as a quiet but effective achiever and a true stalwart of the club. Mr Tilse, inducted in 1963, is described as an inspiration to younger members. Mr Fry, inducted in 1966, served as the club's president from 1983 to 1984 and maintains an active profile as a senior member. As a former Rotarian, I applaud those three men for their dedication and commitment to our community. We are all richer for their endeavours. Bravo

to those gentlemen.

### **MUSWELLBROOK UNDER 13 REPRESENTATIVE NETBALL TEAM**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [1.17 p.m.]: I congratulate Muswellbrook's under 13 Representative Netball Team, which has taken out the Under 13s in their division in the State Age Championships in Penrith. The team recorded 16 wins, one draw and a loss during the course of the tournament. It recorded wins against towns and cities from across the State. The team was supported by a dedicated network of coaching staff and support crew. Once again, congratulations to the Muswellbrook under 13 Netball Team that comprises: Isobel Bates, Nadia Owen, Lucy Britten, Isla Folpp, Abbey Ellis, Sarah Mitchell, Ella Drayton, Emily Bishop, Daisy Durham, Ella Matthews and Jessica Dimmock. I also congratulate the coach, Ian Ingle; assistant coach and strapper, Tony Deakin; assistant coach, Emily Duggan; and managers Kerrie Bates and Rachael Crossley.

### **AL FAISAL COLLEGE MINTO**

**Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG** (Macquarie Fields) [1.18 p.m.]: Education and a stable learning environment are fundamental to a prosperous and successful society. On Monday 15 June I had the pleasure of meeting students and teachers at Al Faisal College Minto at their school assembly. What was once the site of an old squash court is now a place full of students who will become responsible future citizens making a valuable contribution to our community. I was impressed with how polite and organised the students were in the way they presented themselves to guests attending that day.

Two young students, Kawther and Fatima, did a wonderful job as emcees with their public speaking skills, showing no signs of nerves. The voices of students from across the different grades sang the national anthem, and Woodley and Newton's *We are Australian* with enthusiasm and energy. Visiting Al Faisal also gave me the chance to again meet Fatima and Intissar, two students I had met earlier at the school's event at Parliament House. Both embody the aspirations and futures of young Australian Muslim women. I am confident that with dedication and hard work they will achieve great things in their lives and make valuable contributions to our community. I had an enjoyable visit and wish each student every success.

### **BILL POULOS, KENNEDY AWARDS FOR INDIGENOUS WRITING**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [1.19 p.m.]: I recognise Moree racing writer Bill Poulos, who recently won a prestigious Kennedy award for Indigenous Writing for a piece he wrote in the *Northern Daily Leader* on his hometown football hero, Bernie Briggs, and his battle with pancreatic cancer. Bill triumphed over much more notable rivals in the final, the *60 Minutes* program and *The Australian*, to win the John Newfong Award for Outstanding Indigenous Reporting. When Bill is not scribing about the thoroughbreds, he moonlights, along with his lovely wife, Cindy, as a master barista running their very successful business, Deluxe Cafe Moree—the best coffee and hot chocolate anywhere in town. Well done to Bill. I congratulate him on his writing and due recognition for marvellous penmanship.

### **KARITANE CARRAMAR TWENTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [1.20 p.m.]: On 10 June 2015 I had the pleasure of attending celebrations to mark the twenty-first birthday of Karitane Carramar and 100 years since Karitane has been running baby clinics. Since 1923 Karitane has been leading the way in parenting services across New South Wales. Present on the day were nurses, staff and volunteers who gathered to celebrate this wonderful achievement. The Chief Executive Officer of Karitane, Ms Grainne O'Loughlin, and the board of directors hosted a magnificent luncheon to acknowledge Karitane's work over the years. At the gathering we listened to personal stories reflecting on how Karitane has made a substantial difference to people's lives. I commend the organising committee for displaying a history of service through priceless

memorabilia and I congratulate Karitane on proudly serving the south-west Sydney community for the past 21 years from their facility at Carramar.

### **TRIBUTE TO MARGARET MCMAHON**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [1.21 p.m.]: I recognise Moorebank resident Margaret McMahon, who has been noted by the Moorebank Physical Culture Club for her longstanding dedication to physical culture. Margaret founded the club in 1971 and has been teaching physical culture for 50 years. Some families that participate in Margaret's classes span three generations. At a recent celebration, more than 100 people came together to celebrate Margaret's achievements. Margaret says she has no plans to stop teaching physical culture anytime soon. I congratulate Margaret on her 50 years of service to physical culture. I also congratulate her on previously receiving a Quota award and the Order of Liverpool Award; I believe she has been nominated for council's Australian of the Year Award as well as a Seniors Award for Community Service. She is someone who obviously gives a great deal to her community and deserves to be recognised in this House. I wish her every success as she continues to teach at Moorebank

### **FUSION WESTERN SYDNEY SLEEP IN YOUR CAR**

**Ms PRUE CAR** (Londonderry) [1.22 p.m.]: I recognise Fusion Western Sydney, which recently held its third annual Sleep in Your Car event as part of Homeless Persons Week. Fusion Western Sydney is a non-profit, youth and community organisation based in St Marys committed to the wellbeing of young people across Western Sydney. On any given night, more than 10,000 young people are sleeping rough in New South Wales. This number paints a stark picture of how this epidemic affects the lives of so many people in our State, and how the State Government must do everything it can to support vital services. With the support of organisations such as Fusion Western Sydney our communities are making strides to raise awareness and combat this issue. I commend Fusion Western Sydney for holding its third annual Sleep in Your Car event and I encourage everyone to think about ways that we can all contribute to this cause.

### **RURAL FIRE SERVICE CUMBERLAND ZONE ANNUAL BALL**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES** (Mulgoa—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.23 p.m.]: On 1 August I had the pleasure of attending the NSW Rural Fire Service Eleventh Annual Cumberland Zone Ball. National medals and clasps were presented in recognition of the years of service put in by hardworking volunteers who go above and beyond their roles in serving our communities. This year's medal recipients have served 166 years between them. They are: Morag Conroy, Peter Hyett and Anthony Head, members of the Communications Brigade; Luke Hughes of Londonderry Brigade; Adam Quin and Garry White of Erskine Park Brigade; Phillip Toms and Greg Speed of Orchard Hills Brigade; and David Brown from Marsden Park Brigade.

Guests attending the event included Assistant Commissioner Jason Heffernan; Councillor Ross Fowler, OAM, Mayor of Penrith City Council; Councillor Tony Beasdale of Blacktown City Council; Majors Ian and Kerry Spall; Mr Paul Scott; Superintendent Richard Petch, AFSM; Cumberland zone inspectors and staff; group officers; brigade officers; and service members. I congratulate all members of the NSW Rural Fire Service on their hard work, dedication and commitment to the community and I thank their supportive families who enable them to serve. I commend their service to the House.

### **SENIORS AND SILKY RESCUE**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [1.24 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the work of the Seniors and Silky Rescue [SSR], which is a small animal rescue group based in Sydney's inner west. SSR was founded by Linda Burgess and Anna Faulkner, who together saw a need for a specialised approach to finding new homes for rescue dogs. Dogs are available for adoption only after quarantine,

assessment, veterinarian work and, if required, health or temperament rehabilitation time. SSR was deservedly presented the title of Master Rescue at the Dog Owner's Choice Awards.

I commend and congratulate Linda, Anna and all the carers, administrators and volunteers on the special commitment they make to vulnerable animals and I wish them continued support. The organisation has a wonderful commitment to dogs and takes a holistic rescue approach, which ensures the best possible outcomes for everyone involved on the rescue and adoption journeys. It is a family-style rescue group where all carers, administration staff and volunteers work together. The organisation does not receive government funding. I encourage people to visit its website [www.seniorsandsilkies.org.au](http://www.seniorsandsilkies.org.au) and consider supporting this great organisation.

#### **TRIBUTE TO WAYNE GLEESON**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [1.25 p.m.]: I congratulate retiring Woollooware High School Deputy Principal Mr Wayne Gleeson on his 38-year teaching career. Mr Gleeson has been praised by the school community in my electorate for his excellence in teaching, his commitment to helping students realise their full potential and his contribution to professional development not only at Woollooware High School but also across the State. He was instrumental in introducing legal studies as part of the Higher School Certificate in 1991, and in 2012 he received a Rule of Law Institute of Australia award for excellence in teaching. He is also a founding member of the Legal Studies Association of NSW. Mr Gleeson will be taking an overseas holiday before the school community formally farewells him. I wish him all the best for an enjoyable retirement.

#### **SMOKY CITY: A HISTORY OF AIR POLLUTION IN NEWCASTLE**

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [1.26 p.m.]: The Hunter community congratulates historian Dr Nancy Cushing and atmospheric scientist Associate Professor Howard Bridgman, who have combined to write a book entitled *Smoky City* exploring the history of Newcastle's air pollution problem. The fabulously interesting work is a must read for Novocastrians who are interested in our local history. Former Newcastle Lord Mayor John Tate launched the book. I know that the research it contains will aid in our understanding of how air pollution has impacted upon the lives of people in the Hunter.

#### **MR PETER HEATON-JONES, NORTH DEVON MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT**

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) [1.27 p.m.]: From Pittwater resident to local member for North Devon in the United Kingdom—I recognise and congratulate Mr Peter Heaton-Jones, who was elected as the member of Parliament for North Devon at the May 2015 general election. His constituency had been an erstwhile Celtic stronghold of the Liberal Democrats. Before entering politics Peter had a media career spanning 20 years as a broadcaster, journalist and marketing professional. Peter was a reporter, producer, editor and presenter at the BBC and in the commercial sector, as well as working for himself as a media trainer and consultant. He was also an accomplished turkey plucker.

For a time Peter lived and worked in Pittwater and he was head of marketing for the ABC's national radio stations. Peter's media career was the foundation of his rise in politics, which included him being an integral member of my 2007 campaign team. Following the election Peter worked with me in my electorate office before returning to Blighty. Back in the United Kingdom he volunteered for a number of Conservative Party candidates. Peter was elected as a councillor for Swindon Borough Council in 2010 and today represents North Devon. Once again, I congratulate Peter on his new role.

#### **MARRIAGE EQUALITY**

**Ms JO HAYLEN** (Summer Hill) [1.28 p.m.]: I recognise the tireless work of marriage equality campaigners and community members who are engaging respectfully to see all loving relationships

become equal before the law. Last night our Federal Government let them down. It let all Australians down. I share their great disappointment at the Federal Coalition party room's rejection of a free vote on marriage equality. Tony Abbott's plan for a national plebiscite means we are now set for a divisive and unhelpfully inflamed debate in which loving relationships and families will be political footballs. I say to marriage equality campaigners and supporters and to all gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer-identified Australians and their families that they are on the right side of history. Love is love and they will win the day.

#### **AUSTRALIA ORIENTAL MEDIA GROUP**

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [1.29 p.m.]: Last week I attended the Australia Oriental Media Group eighth anniversary celebrations. Almost 18 per cent of the population in my electorate of Oatley are of Chinese background. I am very aware of the enormous contribution that the Chinese community has made in my electorate and across Australia. Their contribution spans business, culture, innovation, education, tourism and of course trade. China is our largest trading partner, our biggest source of international tourists and a key priority market for New South Wales. Our excellent relationship has been built over generations, and I am confident that it will continue to grow with future generations. The relationship is strengthened by organisations such as the Australia Oriental Media Group, which offers platforms for cultural exchange between Australia and China, and founding General Manager Richard Liu. Programs provided by the Australia Oriental Media Group are listened to by thousands of Chinese at home and abroad. I wish it many years of continued success as a media outlet.

#### **UNDER CONSTRUCTION CHOIR**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON** (Charlestown) [1.30 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the Under Construction Choir, a choir that focuses on melodious social inclusion. Back in 2008 Karen Harmon, a mental health nurse, had the idea of starting a weekly choir where people could sing and socialise in a supportive environment. Together with musical director Kay Lane, the pair grew the choir. It now performs at community events throughout the Hunter region. Karen and Kay are ably assisted by Janice Benton, Helen McLauren, Lindsay Christian and Dianne Carson.

The choir has benefited from the assistance provided by mental health support organisation Richmond PRA, which recognises that people being treated for depression and anxiety gain long-term benefits from singing and performing. The focus of the choir is on improving quality of life through singing. Having seen the choir perform and spoken with choir members, their families and their friends, I can attest to the fine tunes they sing, their enjoyment of performing and reports of the health benefits they gain from their participation.

**Community recognition statements, by leave, taken forthwith for an additional five minutes.**

#### **JACK PAGE, MID NORTH COAST FOOTBALLER**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [1.31 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge an aspiring footballer in my electorate, Jack Page, an emerging football star from Port Macquarie. He has been invited to join the West Ham United Oceania Academy tour in the United Kingdom this September. Jack is 11 years old and dreams of a football career. So far Jack has built a solid base for football success. He started playing at age five for the Port United Football Club, coached by Glen Pollard. He now plays in the Under 12 Crocodiles, coached by Nathan Wade. He joined the Under 11 Skills Acquisition Program guided by Michael Chandler and has played in Football Mid North Coast Under 11 State championship and in the Under 12s at the Primary Games recently held in Tamworth.

Jack shows great sportsmanship and motivation and never wants to miss a game or training. His



parents, Matt and Penny Page, are ever supportive, with Jack attending Sydney training academies during school holidays. One of these was the West Ham United Football Club identification camp, which led to his selection for the academy tour. The Page family and their supporters are currently raising funds to ensure Jack seizes this rare opportunity. I congratulate Jack on taking one more step towards achieving his dream.

## **WOMEN IN POLICING 100TH ANNIVERSARY**

### **ROSEHILL LOCAL AREA COMMAND**

**Ms JULIA FINN** (Granville) [1.32 p.m.]: I acknowledge the 100 years of women in policing in New South Wales and, in particular, the wonderful ceremony held by the Rosehill Local Area Command. In 1915, two women were chosen from more than 500 applicants to be sworn in as probationary special constables. They were unarmed and required to wear civilian clothes, and sign an indemnity for their safety. In 1965, 58 women working in the police force were sworn in as regular officers with full police powers. But it was not until 1975 that policewomen were integrated into the promotional system. Today there are 4,542 female sworn police officers and 2,581 female unsworn police officers in New South Wales.

Highlights of the Rosehill Local Area Command ceremony included the baton relay and speeches from serving female police officers—including Superintendent Doreen Cruikshank, the longest-serving female police officer in New South Wales—officers from the Rosehill Local Area Command and an officer from the Maldives police who is completing her PhD in New South Wales on the role of women in policing. It was great to join the wider community in celebrating this important milestone. I congratulate the Rosehill Local Area Command on hosting a successful event.

### **TRIBUTE TO DAVID HALL**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.33 p.m.]: I congratulate my great mate David Hall on his service to the local Kiama community. Mr Hall started at the *Kiama Independent* in 1987, working for the Western family. He then spent 16 years working for the *Kiama Independent*, and later for the *Lake Times*, before leaving to work for the South Coast rugby league and dabble in real estate. Four years later, "Hally" rejoined the *Kiama Independent* under Southern Independent publishers, spending another seven years on the local paper.

Local news will not be the same without David Hall. He is a true community man and one of Kiama's favourite sons. I wish him and his family all the best upon his retirement. David Hall has been at the forefront of reporting so many important community stories. He is particularly passionate about local sport. Anyone who knows local sporting reporters knows how passionate they are about supporting the various games they report on. "Hally" is without peer. He will be missed by all the people he has commented for and written on. He has written some of the greatest stories in the history of my local community. I wish him all the best for what I am sure will be a bright and promising future.

### **ROSEVILLE CHASE ROTARY**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.34 p.m.]: I congratulate the Rotary Club of Roseville Chase, under the leadership of Duncan Campbell, on the opening of a new children's playground. On Saturday 1 August the local community gathered to celebrate the fantastic new facility and acknowledge the contributions of the State Government, Ku-ring-gai Council, various philanthropic and corporate sponsors, the local scouts and many Rotary members. I congratulate them all on an excellent initiative and note that also on the day a plaque was unveiled to commemorate the longstanding contribution of former local scout Ken Ewen.

**Community recognition statements concluded.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith) left the chair at 1.35 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

## **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** We have lots of guests in the gallery today for question time. Welcome to all of you. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of 25 students and their teachers from the international postgraduate studies program at the University of New South Wales, guests of the Premier, Minister for Western Sydney and member for Manly, and also guests of the member for Coogee.

I also welcome to the gallery a number of participants in the Introduction to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly Public Sector Seminar, which is being run by the Department of the Legislative Assembly. I trust that you are finding the seminar useful and informative. It was really nice to meet all of you this morning. I trust that you have had a good day.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** Hear, hear! It is nice to meet public servants who are doing the hard work.

**The SPEAKER:** I just said that. Where were you this morning?

**Mr Jamie Parker:** I did not get an invite.

**The SPEAKER:** Next year you will get an invite. The Clerk will note that the member for Balmain would like an invitation next year. I also extend a welcome to seven students and their teachers from Narromine High School and the Dubbo School of Distance Education, guests of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing, and member for Dubbo. I also welcome eight students—oh, this is old home week for me; my old stomping ground—attending the annual Willoughby Electorate School Leaders program from Chatswood High School, Willoughby Girls High School, St Pius X Chatswood—I remember those boys from St Pius X—and the Rudolf Steiner school. We threw rocks at them, actually; we were naughty girls. Welcome to those students, guests of the Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, and member for Willoughby.

I also welcome to the gallery today representatives from the Mona Vale Probus Club, guests of the wonderful Minister for Planning, and member for Pittwater. I also welcome to the gallery today representatives from the Kiama Show Society, including their President David Young, guests of the wonderful Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast, and member for Kiama. I welcome also to the gallery today Warwick Shanks and Natalie Burroughs, representatives from Regional Development Australia Illawarra, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast, and member for Kiama.

I also acknowledge Michael Hayes, Mayor of Cabonne Council, councillors Kevin Walker and Janelle Culverson from Cabonne Council, and Dale Jones, Communications Officer with Cabonne Council, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Deputy Premier and Regional Roads, and member for Orange. I also welcome to the gallery 24 students and their teacher from Glenwood High School, guests of the member for Riverstone. And, finally, I acknowledge in the House today Ms Pat Tate, the recipient of the Tweed Woman of the Year award, guest of the member for Tweed. It was lovely to meet you this morning too.

## **ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE**

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Governor:

DAVID

vernment House

HURLEY  
Go

Governor

Sydney, 11 August 2015

General David Hurley, AC, DSC (Ret'd), Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that he has re-assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Notices of Motions**

**Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.**

### **QUESTION TIME**

*[Question time commenced at 2.23 p.m.]*

### **ELECTRICITY PRICES AND IRRIGATORS**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals. In light of the evidence given last week by the Chief Executive Officer of the National Irrigators Council, Mr Tom Chesson, who said that overturning the Australian Energy Regulator's determination would be "an absolute disgrace", why will the Government not accept the determination rather than pursue legal action to increase power prices for irrigators and regional communities?

**Mr TROY GRANT:** The Leader of the Opposition is a man who knows absolutely zero about regional New South Wales. During the election campaign he campaigned for the job losses of all Essential Energy workers—thousands of jobs gone. His party has a disgraceful record of failing to invest in regional New South Wales. That the Leader of the Opposition has the hide to ask a question about the regions is without parallel.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order. The Deputy Premier has the call.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I note the interjections of members opposite, particularly the member for Wollongong, who is also known as a person of interest. She is another member of the Opposition who shows zero interest in regional New South Wales unless there is an opportunity to make populist remarks. Irrigation costs, general costs of living and costs imposed on businesses in regional New South Wales have been issues that government has grappled with for years. When in government, members opposite helped lead the charge to suck the life out of the regional economy. They imposed enormous costs on businesses in regional New South Wales. They even stripped from the rivers the water that was used to irrigate crops grown by farmers in regional New South Wales to feed our nation. The Opposition, who now purport to represent farmers, are the ones who locked up—

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The question was asked in light of comments made by the National Irrigators Council and went to the determination of the Australian Energy Regulator. The Deputy Premier can be as big a man as he likes, but he should answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is being relevant. There is no point of order. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. I warn members that if they do not cease interjecting I will stop the clock, and we will stay here until 6 o'clock if necessary. The Deputy Premier has the call.

**Mr TROY GRANT:** I note the interjection from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who wanted

to be the Deputy Premier of New South Wales. The regions are a big part of New South Wales. When asked a question about what she would do in regional New South Wales, the member said, "It's all too complicated." I worked closely with the National Irrigators Council in my former role as Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources. In the past four years the Government has navigated a much more viable industry for them than they have ever had. The submission of the New South Wales Government to the Australian Energy Regulator [AER] has been about a couple of matters that are important for regional New South Wales. One is security of supply. Imagine if irrigators did not have the security of supply to power the pumps and irrigate their crops.

What would they do then? The Government is also ensuring that prices are directed down, without compromising the safety and security of supply for irrigators on the land and the communities that support them. It is the same power that services small and local businesses in regional communities—communities those opposite have no understanding of and do not care about. This is a responsible submission to get the AER to look at all opportunities to drive down the price of electricity for everyone in this State, including people in regional New South Wales, without it all being about job losses. Ironically, the New South Wales Labor Party is pushing the argument that every saving will have to be made by job losses. We think there is a better way.

### **STATE ECONOMY**

**Mr MARK TAYLOR:** My question is addressed to the Premier. How has the Government restored investor and consumer confidence in New South Wales?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I thank the member for his question and for his interest in an economy that is moving, with investor confidence and jobs booming. It is great to be part of a State that is on the move. I know members opposite do not understand this and do not focus on this, but we are very proud that New South Wales is leading the nation in jobs growth. We think that is great for the economy.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I know those opposite reflect on their track record. Their track record is very clear and everyone can see that for the last 10 years of the former Labor Government New South Wales had the lowest jobs growth in the nation. Labor was happy having the lowest jobs growth, but we are happy having the highest jobs growth. Last week the Treasurer released statistics that showed that since March 2011, 251,000 jobs have been created in New South Wales—leading the nation—and we are very proud to be back at number one. Today the Westpac-Melbourne Institute Survey of Consumer Sentiment was released and it shows that confidence has risen strongly in July—an increase of another 11 per cent in New South Wales. That shows that, yet again, there are more optimists in New South Wales than pessimists. I think we all know a collection of pessimists when we see one—there they are, sitting opposite.

**Mr Luke Foley:** Jai Rowell and friends.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I am glad that a survey of consumer confidence has not been taken of the opposite side of the House.

**Mr Chris Minns:** Where did you put the body? Where's Jai?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Just be careful on that. The good news is that consumers are confident, jobs are coming and New South Wales is on the move. I was a little bit disturbed to get a letter from the member for Newcastle. In the context of optimists and pessimists, I do not know where the member for Newcastle sits, but he said:

Dear Premier, I noted you visited the wonderful city of Newcastle last week.

Which I did, and it was a great visit—

The people of Newcastle would no doubt be disappointed to hear that you did not let me as the local member know you were in their electorate.

It is a fair point and it is a little bit sad. The problem is that when I go to Newcastle I want to spend time with people who want things to happen. I want that city to be renewed. They are happy with investments, they are happy with the retail contest, they are happy with what is happening in the university and it is go, go, go. They are optimists.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: Is that why you lost every seat there?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. Members will come to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I am happy to go to see the member for Newcastle, as is the Minister for Planning. We are all happy to visit him. He has to be positive about the city and he should promote it. That is why we were in Newcastle—promoting change. We are very proud not only of where Newcastle is going under the investment strategy we have for that great city, which will make it even greater, but also of where the economy is heading in terms of more jobs. Across New South Wales consumers are telling us that they are confident in what they are seeing, and that is because New South Wales is on the move. We are proud of the infrastructure that we are delivering. It is great for the people of this State after what they saw for the last decade of the former Labor Government, and indeed for the whole 16 years, when nothing happened—no jobs growth, no investment, no growth in infrastructure. It is a different story under this Government. This is a State on the move and that is great news yet again for the people of this State.

#### **LINDT CAFE SIEGE CORONIAL INQUEST**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** My question is directed to the Attorney General. Will the Attorney General direct her department to release all documents relating to Man Monis for examination by the coronial inquest into the Martin Place siege?

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** I thank the shadow Attorney General for his question. That is the first question I have been asked by my counterpart in the four months since I have been Attorney General.

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

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** It is not even a question about better policy for the safety of our community; it is a tricky question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Swansea will come to order. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** The Baird Government has a very strong commitment to the safety of our community. That is why we introduced bail laws.

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

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. We are not talking about bail laws. We want to know why the Government is refusing to give documents to the Coroner.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is entitled to make introductory remarks and that is what she

was doing. If there were not so many interjections—

**Mr Michael Daley:** This is a very important matter.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I caution the member for Maroubra not to argue with me. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. The Attorney General has the call.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** To answer the question: This is a matter for the Coroner. We will comply with the Coroner.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. The Attorney General has the call.

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** We will comply with all requests that are properly made by the Coroner and we look forward to working with the Coroner to ensure that this State is a safe State for all the members of our community.

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

### **STATE INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. How is the Government keeping New South Wales number one through investment in infrastructure?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I thank the member for his question on a great issue for this Government. Let us face it: Cranes are on the skyline, jobs are on the ground and investment confidence is number one in a State which is determined to get on with the great build.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** We are setting a cracking pace when it comes to infrastructure and public transport rollouts here in New South Wales with the Sydney Metro, the CBD South East Light Rail, the Wynyard Walk, Wynyard station upgrade, Newcastle light rail, Parramatta light rail, the International Convention Centre—the list goes on. In 100 years' time when people look back at what we have achieved they will be able to say that the State was truly transformed and that the foundation was laid to guarantee the future of this great State. For too long the people of New South Wales have had second best with clapped-out infrastructure that can no longer meet the needs of our growing population.

It is time to build tomorrow's Sydney and tomorrow's New South Wales. That is exactly what we are getting on with. While our neighbouring States to the north and the south are cancelling contracts and refusing to build anything, the eyes of the international community and international investors have turned to New South Wales. In fact, before question time today I met with the former United States Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater, who indicated very strongly to me that the confidence coming out of New South Wales is absolutely tremendous for our citizens.

A perfect example of the projects we are getting on with is Sydney Metro City and Southwest, which will change the face of rail travel in Sydney. In June we hosted an industry briefing with around 500 representatives from local and international firms—representatives from the United Kingdom, the United States, Singapore, Hong Kong, Spain, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Germany, China, Austria and France—at which we outlined the scope of works. They all want a piece of the action. It is an iconic project and we will ensure that the very best build it. For the first time in Australia we will finally have a metro rail service that will be truly comparable to the world-class networks of most major global cities and, just like in Singapore, Hong Kong, Paris and Dubai, people will not need a timetable on Sydney metro; they will just turn up and go.

This Government is delivering the biggest and most exciting change to Darling Harbour in 25 years. The International Convention Centre [ICC] Sydney is coming to life—a \$1.5 billion development that will reinstate Sydney as one of the world's premier business events destinations. The project involves a complete facelift for Darling Harbour. In addition to the new convention centre, it includes a new landmark luxury hotel, reinvigorated and expanded public spaces and Darling Square, a new city neighbourhood with offices, residential and student housing, public car parking and retail outlets. ICC Sydney will boost the economy by at least \$200 million each year. More than 20 events are booked at the venue, including Sibos in 2018. This is the world's leading financial services event and will bring 6,000 international delegates to Sydney.

While we crack on with our massive infrastructure agenda, driven by an air of confidence not seen before in this State, we are creating tens of thousands of jobs. One need only go to the north-west and see stage one of the metro project. We have three tunnel-boring machines in the ground and 900 jobs are being supported in the tunnelling phase of the construction project. We have the Spanish involved in the CBD and South East Light Rail project. They, too, are supporting the rollout of this important project for Sydney, with 1,800 jobs per year associated with its construction phase. Wynyard Walk, which will connect the station to the Barangaroo waterfront, is underway and is supporting 900 jobs per year. The Northern Sydney Freight Corridor is delivering around 2,700 jobs per year.

WestConnex will create 10,000 jobs, including hundreds of apprenticeships to foster future skills development, while NorthConnex will create 8,700 jobs. As everybody already knows, the South West Rail Link—which was completed ahead of schedule and under budget—created 3,000 throughout construction. These are real jobs with real projects. We can all reflect on the dark old days of those opposite—16 years of broken promises and an embarrassing infrastructure record. We have turned the tide when it comes to infrastructure rollout.

**Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.**

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Our infrastructure rollout was summed up perfectly by Chris Sturdy, a tradie interviewed recently, who said:

It's flat out; a different job every day ... I've never had to turn away work before in my life.

That is the mood in the community and in this State. It demonstrates confidence in what the Government is doing—an investment confidence that is unprecedented in this great State of New South Wales. There is one thing that will threaten it, and that is a political party prepared to cancel contracts and construction jobs, and in so doing trash our international reputation while it brings uncertainty to the infrastructure rollout this Government is delivering. Those opposite need to grow up; they need to get on board and support the Government in delivering something tremendous for the people of New South Wales—truly generational change by way of infrastructure rollouts that will change their quality of life.

**CARE LEAVERS AUSTRALIA NETWORK**

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** My question is directed to the Attorney General. Why has the Attorney General refused a request to meet with the Care Leavers Australia Network, the national not-for-profit group that supports people who grew up in orphanages, children's homes, foster care and other institutions?

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** I thank the member for Prospect for his question. I am very happy to consider his request. I am always open and willing to meet with stakeholders. I thank the member for raising the matter with me. We will talk after question time.

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business. How is the New South Wales Government investing in the skilled workforce of the future?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order. Those who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time. The member for Cessnock will come to order. His comment was not appropriate.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** I thank the member for Clarence, and Parliamentary Secretary, who understands his community. He is a strong advocate for the community and knows the importance not only of job creation and having a strong economy but also of making sure we provide opportunities for young people to get skills training for the jobs of the future. He represents a strong region that is home to the North Coast TAFE. I note for members opposite, who like to spend their days damaging the TAFE brand, that the North Coast TAFE—

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Civil construction enrolments at the North Coast TAFE increased by 200 per cent this year. That is on the back of what the Government is doing in the vocational education and training [VET] and skills space. The Government is working with industry to create opportunities and will leave a legacy of a skilled workforce—on the back of a strong record infrastructure spend in this State. It provides fantastic opportunities for young people to learn and work in a workplace environment. I am proud to say that the North Coast TAFE Institute is doing this at a level that represents exactly where we need to be in this space. Over the past four years the Government has boosted the economy; that is our job. We have turned this State around from the mess that was left by those opposite and we are rebuilding New South Wales.

We are making sure that our communities are getting the schools, hospitals, roads and bridges that they deserve. But a great State cannot be built on roads and bridges alone. A great State needs a great workforce. Our policy and our investment in skills are about exactly that. Through Reskilling NSW we are investing \$8 million over four years to provide jobs to young people in regional areas with high levels of youth unemployment and limited support services. Our \$25 million scholarship fund for science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] courses—we accept that technology will be part of the jobs of the future—will give young people the opportunity to gain skills and training for the jobs of tomorrow. We need to create opportunities continually within our economy, and we are doing that by building partnerships and connections with industry.

This morning I announced a fantastic initiative. The New South Wales Government's collaboration with industry is giving Aboriginal students the practical experience they need for their future careers. This initiative will ensure that students get practical qualifications in construction. This comes on the back of record investment in the Pacific Highway and road upgrades that not only are important to our communities and to the State but give young people the opportunity to gain skills, especially in construction. The next upgrade is between Nambucca and Urunga. We are of course protecting the most vulnerable in our community through our 200,000 fee-free scholarships, giving priority to those in social housing.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** These students have an opportunity to choose from more than 580 qualifications. I update the House that in the program's first five weeks more than 5,000 students have enrolled. The member for Wyong thinks a \$48 million investment in TAFE, VET and fee-free scholarships is irrelevant. He is completely out of touch.



**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wyong will come to order. I call the member for Wyong to order for the first time. The member for Wyong will cease interjecting and waving that item around.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** We are giving young people the opportunity to gain skills. As for our most vulnerable, 50 humanitarian visa holders have taken up the opportunity of fee-free scholarships. The scheme has also been successful in targeting those who recently left school and providing opportunities for young women. Of the scholarships awarded, 70 per cent of students are aged between 15 and 24, and 60 per cent are women. This Government is about strengthening the economy and creating opportunities. Yesterday we saw how out of touch the member for Wyong and all those opposite are. Sarah, who is the recipient of a fee-free scholarship, said, "I know it could not have come at a better time, I just had to get the car fixed and rego is due next week ... I am heaps happy." The member for Wyong tweeted, "Hardly a ray of sunshine." The Opposition is up to its same old tricks, misleading students and telling them not to enrol. The greatest threat to TAFE and VET in this State are those opposite. How could the member for Wyong look Sarah in the eye and say, "Hardly a ray of sunshine"?

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

**Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.**

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Many of us have a connection to the strong immigration policy of this nation. Zainab, a young woman from Iraq who is now an Australian citizen, is about to undertake a Certificate III qualification in pathology. She completed years 11 and 12 last year at TAFE NSW and will now attend classes on two days a week and work part time.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Maitland to order for the first time. I call the member for Swansea to order for the first time. I call the member for Swansea to order for the second time. She will cease shouting.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** A fee-free scholarship has given her an opportunity and a career path. Upon completion of her pathology studies she intends to study nursing. The best those opposite can offer is to say, "Not a ray of sunshine." A young man has also been in touch with our office.

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

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** He has received extensive support from community services throughout his life. A fee-free scholarship has given him an opportunity to launch a career in retail and secure employment. While eligible for a concession fee, it was a considerable amount for him and had put training out of his reach. He said that the free-free scholarship program was allowing him to complete his very first qualification. This Government's priority is to support young people and encourage them to get training, education and skills for the jobs of tomorrow.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time. I call the member for Maitland to order for the second time. She will cease interjecting.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** These are only some of the initiatives and programs that this Government has put in place to make sure it supports young people in this State to gain skills. That is important for this State. If we continue to grow the economy it is vital to have a strong, skilled workforce that will continue the great investment and economic growth. As we continue to create jobs, young people in this State will have the investment they need to gain training for the jobs of tomorrow. [*Time expired.*]

#### **BLUESCOPE STEEL PORT KEMBLA**

**Mr RYAN PARK:** My question is directed to the Premier.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. The member for Keira will be heard in silence.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** Given the grave uncertainty surrounding the future of BlueScope Steel in the Illawarra, will the Premier agree to mandate that a minimum ratio of Australian-made steel is used in major New South Wales infrastructure projects?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I have met with representatives of BlueScope Steel, which is working carefully on a strategy to combat the challenges it currently faces. The Government is happy to remain engaged with BlueScope Steel. In relation to procurements, we obviously focus on any opportunity to drive the economy forward. But at the same time we must ensure that there is value for taxpayers. That is what you would expect across the policy area. We must consider that as we pursue any form of policy. Free trade agreements are great for jobs. I continue to wait for Opposition members to talk about the free trade agreement. It is estimated to deliver 9,000 jobs annually to the economy yet those opposite are happy for scare campaigns to be run against it. I have been waiting for someone on the Labor side to stand up—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the second time. Members will come to order. There are too many interjections.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order: I am sure the member for Heathcote and the member for Kiama do not think it is a scare campaign.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I warn the member for Keira that if he takes another spurious point of order he will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I think he is mixing the two things, but I hope the member for Keira is not backing that union campaign against free trade.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We heard a lot of talk from the member for Keira that if he saw it again he would stand up and say something. Where is he? He has a chance to make a difference. This country relies on multiculturalism and free trade, and he is letting it rest.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: I refer to relevance.

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

**Ms Linda Burney:** I am not sure that is the case.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** It is totally relevant; it is totally about jobs. I know the member for Maroubra opposes the scare campaign and this is an opportunity for him to stand against it. I know the member for Kogarah and the member for Lakemba are against the campaign, and the Leader of the Opposition should be. Those opposite can send a very strong message to the people—

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

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: If the Premier wants to allege reprehensible behaviour—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! What is the standing order?

**Mr Michael Daley:** It is Standing Order 129. We might direct him to be brave about what happened in East Hills. Why don't you call that out?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. The Premier's answer is relevant to the question. There is no point order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** On this side of the House we will continue to do everything to support jobs in the New South Wales economy at every opportunity.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** There is an opportunity for those opposite to make a difference on this issue. I look forward to their contributions because the State needs them to stand up to the kind of behaviour we are seeing. We will continue to support jobs.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Prospect to order for the first time. The member for Prospect will cease shouting.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Whether it is in BlueScope Steel or any other industry across the State, we are happy to support jobs because they drive the economy forward.

## **TRADE AND INVESTMENT**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport. What is the Government doing to ensure that New South Wales remains the number one destination to do business?

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

**Mr STUART AYRES:** I thank the member for Davidson for his commitment to growing jobs across New South Wales, to strengthening business and for understanding the importance of the State's international relationships. I take great pride in standing before the House and confirming that New South Wales is the leading State in which to do business in this country—the powerhouse of the nation's economy. Month by month, New South Wales grows ever stronger as we work hard to rebuild our economy and position the State, nationally and internationally, as Australia's principal location to grow business and industry. One in five Australian jobs is linked to international trade, and it is almost certain that this number will continue to increase. In fact, many of the students in the gallery today will leave school and take up jobs that are more linked than those of any other generation to our actions internationally.

Sixty per cent of our trade and eight of our top 10 export markets are now in Asia. In 2014 New South Wales attracted an estimated 72 per cent of all Chinese investment in Australia, which makes Asia the key trading partner of New South Wales. Make no mistake: This State's future is inextricably linked to Asia. Against that background, the Government hosted the Boao Forum for Asia conference just two weeks ago in Sydney. More than 280 delegates, 40 foreign and domestic media outlets and some of the Asia-Pacific's most senior and influential government and industry leaders attended the conference to talk about the importance of integration across Asian economies.

Australia is at the forefront of that, as the commitment of Boao Forum attendees to come to Sydney demonstrates. Sessions were focused on the growing financial services technology industry and other areas in which Sydney shows strength and is a regional hub. I am confident the Boao Forum for Asia has put New South Wales in the world spotlight as a key partner for Asian economic integration and, in doing so, has laid down the platform for additional export growth and employment opportunities across the State. Our timing could not be better given that new free trade agreements with China, South Korea and Japan provide significant opportunities to grow exports to those key markets and encourage investment in the State.

We are leveraging those relationships to create a strong business environment for New South Wales and demonstrating clearly to the world that New South Wales is open for business. With this exciting international outlook it is no wonder that business in New South Wales is thriving. The Premier mentioned the Westpac confidence index. The Sensis Business Index showed in March 2015 that confidence among small and medium businesses in New South Wales surged ahead in the March quarter, with a 13 per cent rise in business confidence since the last quarter. Beyond growing business confidence, it is crucial that we take advantage of the opportunities created by the free trade agreement and by the new Asian middle class. We will do that by creating an incredibly strong export culture in New South Wales so that future generations will continue to benefit from the prosperity that we have created.

New South Wales is leading the way not just in business and investment but also in tourism. Recently New South Wales was again confirmed as the number one State for tourism in Australia. Over the past 12 months New South Wales had a record 3.3 million international visitors, which is almost 1.1 million more visitors than either Victoria or Queensland received. International visitation is crucial to New South Wales and has been worth almost \$7.5 billion to the State's economy over the past 12 months. Given the work done by Destination NSW, it is no wonder that figure is up by 9 per cent on last year. There can be no doubt that we are going from strength to strength.

According to the latest CommSec State of the States report, New South Wales has secured the number one spot in the nation's economic rankings for the third consecutive quarter. Today the world is paying attention to New South Wales. Our infrastructure agenda is the focus of worldwide investors. Our universities and start-up businesses are leading the global innovation agenda in our region. With trade barriers coming down and a growing middle class in Asia there has never been a better time to be an Australian exporter. The New South Wales Government will be with them every step of the way.

## **RENEWABLE ENERGY**

**Ms TAMARA SMITH:** My question is directed to the Premier. Given his Minister's statement last year that New South Wales should be the California of renewable energy, what is the Government's plan and timetable to transition New South Wales from coal and gas to clean renewable energy generation?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We are proud of our renewable energy track record. We are proud of the work that the Minister has done and our record of reducing emissions and increasing renewables in a sensible and sustainable way that drives the economy forward. That means we will have an ongoing energy mix that includes coal. It is an important part of the economy that provides many jobs. Obviously, renewable energy offers new opportunities, and we are pursuing those. The former Leader of the Opposition let the cat out of the bag that he wanted coal to shut down, full stop. We remember that secret plan that never came about. We also know that the former Leader of the Opposition took an approach that was not sustainable for this State. That was his solar bonus scheme. We remember that.

**Mr Michael Daley:** The one you said in *Hansard* wasn't generous enough.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** No, you needed to do more. I thought members opposite might be able to stick to their budget of \$350 million. Where did it get to? It went up to \$1.7 billion. I congratulate the former Leader of the Opposition. We continue to do everything to protect households, drive new jobs and ensure that New South Wales remains competitive. Renewable energy is certainly an important part of that mix. The former Minister released—

**Mr John Robertson:** You're in Tony's camp? Is that right?

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Just so you know, member for Blacktown, this is State Parliament. The former

Minister released our NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan 2013. He did a great job. We are pursuing ambitious targets and it is great that New South Wales continues to lead on the issue. We have 32 per cent installed capacity renewals. That is a good thing and we will continue to drive it forward. Indeed, over the past six years renewable energy generation has doubled, which is good as well. Some \$8 billion has been invested over the past 14 to 15 years. We have \$13 billion worth of large-scale renewable energy projects in the pipeline that, if they come to fruition, will add 8,400 megawatts to our base load. We also introduced a resource efficiency policy because the Government takes a leadership role on this issue. We have tried to be as efficient as we possibly can across our assets to help drive a reduction in our overall emissions. One critical thing a State Government can do is build public transport and encourage people to use public transport. Part of our plan is to invest a record amount in rail.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** It will be the most ever spent on rail in the history of this State. That shows we are for public transport. Yet for some reason the Opposition is against public transport. Labor is the party that is against public transport. It never funded the second harbour rail crossing.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Keira to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Opposition members want more cars and buses in George Street instead of light rail. They do not want public transport. I was trying to work out why and I realised that transport is sort of a career path into the Labor Party. The member for Macquarie Fields did a good job in transport. The member for Granville did a good job in transport. Where has the member for Keira gone? He did not do a good job in transport. I also think the member for Summer Hill advised the Federal Minister on transport, so she has some transport credentials. Why does the Opposition not like transport? Why will those opposite not support our investment in transport to help us meet the challenge of reducing emissions? Public transport must be part of the mix. I thank the member for Ballina for her question. We are proud of our leadership on renewable energy. We will continue to lead in a sensible and sustainable way that drives the economy forward. We ask the Opposition to help with that by supporting public transport, which is critical as we drive the economy forward.

## **GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY**

**Ms ELANI PETINOS:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance, Services and Property. How is the New South Wales Government improving efficiencies in the areas of government property, service delivery and technology?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind members that several of them are on three calls to order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Yesterday we said that we were the party of the worker. Can I also say that we are the party of enterprise, the party of the entrepreneur and, importantly, the party of efficiency? From Service NSW to State Fleet, insurance to Information and Communications and Technology [ICT], and property to procurement, we are driving efficiency everywhere. We will start with property. As the Minister for Transport has said, we have improved efficiency since the dark days of Labor Government. When we think of Labor and property we think about housing fat cat bureaucrats in prime real estate in the central business district. We think of Tony Kelly. When he was not backdating letters he was pulling off some of the best property deals this State has ever seen. My favourite was the sale—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time. I call the member for Hornsby to order for the first time.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. It is a bit rich for the Minister to talk about a bloke who is not even here to defend himself. It is not relevant and it is not right.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I do not need a commentary.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** My favourite was his sale of 70 hectares of Crown land in the Hunter Valley. How much do members think he got for that land? Was it \$600,000, \$500,000 or \$100,000? No, it was \$1.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. I call the member for Kiama to order for the second time. I call the member for Hornsby to order for the second time.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: Under Standing Order 73 the imputation of improper motives is improper and disorderly unless it is done by way of substantive motion. If the Minister wants to do what he is doing he should move a motion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I draw the Minister's attention to that particular standing order. I will continue to listen to his answer.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We are opening up our assets for productive use like the sandstones and we are transforming them into luxury hotels, which will bring investment, jobs and tourism to this State. Through our asset recycling program we are leasing non-core assets and investing the proceeds into productive assets and infrastructure.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! All members who were on one or two calls to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order—that is about 15 members.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** In contrast, how does Labor propose to pay for infrastructure? It proposes to pay for it through a \$7,500 tax on businesses in this State, which is not very efficient at all. Let us talk about fleet services. For those opposite their idea of the efficient use of the government car fleet was to give them to union members to go on fishing trips to Darwin. What have members on this side of the House done? We have cut the size of the fleet, introduced innovative car sharing and explored new tendering options. In the process we have saved millions of dollars for taxpayers in this State.

Anyone wanting to know which is the true party of progress and efficiency need look no further than the issue of technology. Those opposite decided to build their own systems instead of getting the private sector to do it better and cheaper. They are the ones who refused to release government data to the public. They are the ones who, back in 2006, gave us the Learning Management and Business Reform program, or LMBR. We all know what LMBR stands for—Liverpool, Maroubra, Blacktown and Rockdale. LMBR is a wholly owned subsidiary of the New South Wales Labor Party.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** In contrast, this is the Government which built the Service NSW app, providing efficient customer access to services all in the one place. This is the Government which is releasing data, including timetable data and property data, to tap into everyday entrepreneurs and to make life easier for our citizens.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Blacktown to order for the first time. Members will come to order. I call the member for Lakemba to order for the second time.

**Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** We are putting more government transactions online and we will be amongst the first jurisdictions in the world to have digital licences. Under the Baird-Grant Government, New South Wales has become the start-up State. I am not surprised that those opposite are upset about how efficient this Government is, because they are so inefficient. They are so inefficient they have not even managed to get rid of the socialist objective from their constitution 26 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Despite what the Leader of the Opposition says, we know that socialism is alive and well in the New South Wales Labor Party today. They have just appointed a bloke called Lennon to be the President of their party—"Markovich Lennon". The great-grandson of Vladimir is alive and well today. He goes by the name of "Mark" but we know who he really is.

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

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** Unlike those opposite, efficiency and growth is part of everything we do. We have the strongest economy, below average unemployment, rising retail sales, booming confidence, surging housing approvals, a positive budget with expenses under control and a triple-A credit rating. We have got our house in order and New South Wales is number one again.

**Question time concluded at 3.16 p.m.**

#### **CRIMES (SENTENCING PROCEDURE) AMENDMENT (FIREARMS OFFENCES) BILL 2015**

**Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.**

#### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

##### **Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

**Motion by Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to provide for the following routine of business after the conclusion of the motion accorded priority:

- (1) Government business;
- (2) private members' statements;
- (3) matter of public importance; and
- (4) the House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.

#### **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY**

##### **Inquiry**

**Mr Aplin**, as Chair, informed the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety had received a referral from the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight to conduct an inquiry into motorcycle safety in New South Wales, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

#### **PETITIONS**

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

### **Sydney Electorate Public High School**

Petition requesting the establishment of a public high school in the Sydney electorate, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

### **Liverpool Plains Open Cut Mining**

Petition opposing open cut mining on agricultural land on the Liverpool Plains, received from **Mr Paul Toole**.

### **Inner-city Social Housing**

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

### **Same-sex Marriage**

Petition supporting same-sex marriage, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

### **Pet Shops**

Petition opposing the sale of animals in pet shops, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

### **Slaughterhouse Monitoring**

Petition requesting mandatory closed-circuit television for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

### **Plastic Bags Ban**

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

### **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 petitions signed by more than 500 persons were lodged for presentation:**

### **Woodford Railway Station Lifts**

Petition requesting the installation of lifts or ramps at Woodford railway station, received from **Ms Trish Doyle**.

### **Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Services**

Petition requesting the Government not to support a rail trail on the Casino to Murwillumbah train line without providing for a regular rail service, received from **Ms Tamara Smith**.

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



## State Economy

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.18 p.m.]: This motion deserves to be accorded priority because there is no greater priority for the people of New South Wales than building a strong and prosperous economy, and that is exactly what this Government has done. From day one it has implemented the policies to grow our economy. That is not an end in itself but the means through which we provide the services and infrastructure that the people of New South Wales need. As I said earlier, every policy we have implemented has been about growing our economy and building a stronger, more prosperous economy. That is exactly why we implemented the Jobs Action Plan, it is exactly why we have focused on lowering taxes, it is exactly why we have focused on reducing red tape and it is exactly why we are building the infrastructure that this State missed out on for so long—infrastructure like the North West Rail Link, the South West Rail Link, NorthConnex and WestConnex. This is the stuff that creates jobs and builds our economy. What is the result of these policies?

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George)**: Order! I remind all members who have been called to order that they have been deemed to be on three calls to order.

**Mr MATT KEAN**: The result of those policies is that New South Wales is back on top; we are number one again. But do not believe me; believe CommSec's State of the State report. The member for Strathfield interjects. I note that she is not interested in jobs. She is interested in only one job, and that is the job of Leader of the Opposition.

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

**Mr MATT KEAN**: The State of the State report said New South Wales is back on top. It is irrefutable evidence that we are back on top. This Government has created more than 250,000 jobs since it came to office. So when the Minister for Finance says we are the party of the worker, the statistics back that up: we have created more jobs, more prosperity and opportunity for everyone.

**Ms Noreen Hay**: Workers do not back it up.

**Mr MATT KEAN**: I will not be lectured about hard work by the member for Wollongong. What she knows about hard work I could write on a match head. To understand where we are, one needs to appreciate where we have come from. Under those opposite, New South Wales had the lowest jobs growth in the Commonwealth. We were last. We were being lapped by Tasmania.

**Mr Guy Zangari**: What have you got against Tasmania?

**Mr MATT KEAN**: We have nothing against Tasmania. But we do have something against the fact that its economic growth outstripped that of New South Wales when Labor was in government. What does Labor want to do should it be returned to office? It is no secret, because we have found the Labor Policy Forum document titled "Jobs and the Economy Policy Commission". Labor wants to increase taxes, increase debt, introduce a progressive broad-based land tax, and introduce a congestion charge that will kill jobs. [*Time expired.*]

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George)**: Order! I have a list two columns long of members, on both sides of the House, who are on three calls to order.

## Regional Electricity Prices

**Mr CLAYTON BARR** (Cessnock) [3.21 p.m.]: I support the moving of my motion, which will condemn the Liberal-Nationals Government for pursuing higher living costs in regional New South Wales.

To be honest, when the Leader of the House stood earlier to suspend standing orders, I thought he might have been willing to indulge the House with the opportunity for the Government to put forward its case on exactly why it is interesting in pursuing higher living costs in regional New South Wales. I thought that might be something that Government members are proud of; I thought they might want to stand up, stick their chests out, beat the drum and explain to New South Wales why they are so proud about going to court to make sure that the cost of living in regional New South Wales goes up. They must have been so embarrassed this morning when Tom Chesson said:

... energy and electricity bills are crippling the irrigated agricultural sector's ability to function, and as a result, is impacting on our competitiveness.

In most of our commodities we do compete on the international marketplace. It is impeding regional job opportunities and it is undermining the social and economic wellbeing of irrigated ag communities.

So we have looked forward to what the Australian Energy Regulator has done. We believe that in some of the tariffs that our irrigators use under the determination that has been handed down, they could be facing a 40 per cent cut in their network charges.

A 40 per cent cut. Just remember that some on the Government side are members of The Nationals when I quote this:

This is a huge help to our members. To have that overturned would be an absolute disgrace.

A disgrace indeed it is. Members on the other side, the completely economic illiterate, otherwise known as The Nationals, have failed to realise that the economic nexus of this State is being controlled by those living on the northern beaches—from a space not even as big as the electorate of the member for Upper Hunter. That is where all the decisions are being made about the economics of this State. So the decision to challenge the Australian Energy Regulator's determination is a decision being made by those on the northern beaches of Sydney, and that is not in the interests of regional New South Wales. I am yet to hear anything from The Nationals espousing or explaining the impact on energy prices for Essential Energy customers once the Government sells off Endeavour, Ausgrid and TransGrid. They are not saying anything because they do not understand what will happen if the Government succeeds in its court challenge.

I wonder what they are putting in their newsletters that are going out to their communities. Let me guess: "I am your local Nationals MP; let me tell you how wonderful higher electricity prices will be. They are so wonderful we are going to spend more money fighting this in court." Please send me a copy of those newsletters; I just cannot wait to read them. It is a wonderful thing that they are doing for their communities. Let me ask them whether they understand what will happen to energy prices with Essential Energy with privatisation?" They should put up their hands if they do. [*Time expired.*]

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 48**

Mr Anderson  
Mr Aplin  
Mr Ayres  
Mr Barilaro  
Ms Berejiklian

Ms Goward  
Mr Grant  
Mr Gulaptis  
Mr Hazzard  
Mr Henskens

Mr Provest  
Mr Sidoti  
Mrs Skinner  
Mr Speakman  
Mr Stokes

Mr Brookes  
Mr Conolly  
Mr Constance  
Mr Coure  
Mr Crouch  
Mrs Davies  
Mr Dominello  
Mr Elliott  
Mr Evans  
Mr Fraser  
Mr Gee  
Ms Gibbons

Mr Humphries  
Mr Johnsen  
Mr Kean  
Dr Lee  
Mr Maguire  
Mr Marshall  
Mr Notley-Smith  
Mr O'Dea  
Mrs Pavey  
Mr Perrottet  
Ms Petinos  
Mr Piccoli

Mr Taylor  
Mr Toole  
Mr Tudehope  
Ms Upton  
Mr Ward  
Mr Williams  
Mrs Williams  
  
*Tellers,*  
Mr Bromhead  
Mr Patterson

**Noes, 38**

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

Mr Harris  
Ms Harrison  
Ms Hay  
Ms Haylen  
Mr Hoenig  
Ms Hornery  
Mr Kamper  
Ms Leong  
Mr Lynch  
Dr McDermott  
Ms McKay  
Mr Mehan  
Ms Mihailuk

Mr Minns  
Mr Park  
Mr Parker  
Mr Piper  
Mr Robertson  
Ms K. Smith  
Ms T. F. Smith  
Ms Washington  
Ms Watson  
Mr Zangari  
*Tellers,*  
Mr Lalich  
Mr Warren

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** I welcome to the gallery as my guests this afternoon Brendan Seed and Cheree Freeburn. I trust that they enjoy their time here.

**STATE ECONOMY**

**Motion Accorded Priority**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.32 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the previous Government left New South Wales with the slowest economic growth and slowest jobs growth of all States over a decade.
- (2) Notes the latest figures show that under this Government, New South Wales now has the strongest jobs growth and lowest unemployment rate in the nation.
- (3) Acknowledges the Government has well and truly made New South Wales number one again.

I am glad that the motion has been accorded priority. What could be a greater priority than building a stronger economy, creating more opportunities for everyone, creating jobs and building infrastructure? That is what we need to do in New South Wales.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Members wishing to converse will leave the Chamber.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** There is nothing more important to the people of New South Wales than being able to get a job. This Government has had a singular focus on building a stronger, more prosperous economy to create opportunity for everyone in the State. In my electorate of Hornsby the Government is building infrastructure such as the North West Rail Link that is turbocharging my community.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Wollongong will come to order.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** NorthConnex will transform the lives of everyone in north-west Sydney, everyone on the Central Coast and everyone who uses the rail network.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Even in Parramatta?

**Mr MATT KEAN:** Yes. The topic of this motion accorded priority is jobs. New South Wales has consolidated its position as the nation's strongest economy and the leader on jobs growth. The latest labour force figures confirm that. Recently the Treasurer, Ms Gladys Berejiklian, reported that data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that there were 29,500 new jobs in New South Wales in July, more than four times the number in the next highest State on the list. That is a strong result and accounts for more than three-quarters of the jobs added across Australia. It confirms that New South Wales, under the Baird Liberal Government, is truly the nation's strongest economy. New South Wales has come a long way from the horror days of the Labor Government. I note the integral role that the member for Wollongong played in that Government. Under Labor, New South Wales had the lowest jobs growth, the highest unemployment rate and the worst economic growth in Australia.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** What planet are you on, Hornsby?

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I am on the planet that saw people suffering under the abysmal Labor regime. Labor broke the budget. It doused us in debt. That followed a long tradition of Labor failure. It was not enough that Labor ruined the New South Wales economy; it then decided to have a go at the Federal economy. There was no greater risk to jobs than the Rudd-Gillard carbon tax. The carbon tax was a destroyer of jobs. It was rejected by the people at the ballot box, and rightly so. Labor wants to bring back the carbon tax, but not the benign carbon tax that we saw under the Rudd and Gillard governments. Labor wants to turbocharge it and have a 50 per cent renewable energy target in 30 years' time. I would like to know what the member for Cessnock thinks about that. It will ruin the economy in his electorate and destroy jobs in the Hunter region. The Government cannot abide that. We are for jobs. We are for opportunity. We are for growing a stronger economy to create more prosperity. The only job that the member for Wollongong is interested in is her own.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** And the job of the member for Shellharbour.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** Yes, and the job of the member for Shellharbour. The Government is interested in creating jobs and opportunities for everyone in the State. Creating a bigger and more prosperous economy is not an end in itself. It is also important to look at how to deliver the services and infrastructure that we need. It is important to deliver better health outcomes and more schools and to provide better education. The Government's record speaks for itself. We have employed more nurses. We have employed more police on the frontline. We have employed more teachers. We have created jobs where they are needed. The onus to create jobs is also on the private sector, which is the largest employer in

New South Wales.

That is why the Government has created an environment to enable private enterprise to thrive and do what it does best—that is, employ people and expand the economy. That is why the Government introduced the Jobs Action Plan. That is why we have been trying to reduce taxes. That is why we have cut red tape and green tape, which is the great impediment to job creation in this State. No-one loves green tape more than the Labor Party, especially when it is looking to be awarded preferences from The Greens. The Government is for lower taxes and less regulation. It is for building a greater economy and creating more jobs. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr CHRIS MINNS** (Kogarah) [3.37 p.m.]: The motion accorded priority was moved by the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. The Opposition opposes the motion.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** He is not the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. He is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** In any event, it is a gormless and sycophantic motion from a backbencher who will not stand up to his own frontbench. The member for Hornsby will not stand up to members on his own frontbench. This Government is not good enough for backbenchers to go to sleep. At the same time that Government members are giving themselves a huge pat on the back, the Minister for Education is spending money like a drunken sailor in Kings Cross. He is spending half a billion dollars on an information technology [IT] system that is being installed in only one in 10 schools in New South Wales. The Government is not good enough to pat itself on the back. There has been a cover-up of the State's finances by frontbench members.

No-one on the Government's backbench is prepared to do anything about it. Backbenchers sit passively by and pray for promotion. They hope that the Premier will accelerate them to the frontbench. They are not good enough to support a government that is deceiving the people of New South Wales and wasting money hand over fist. The Learning Management and Business Reform [LMBR] program is a classic example of where this Government is going wrong. Half a billion dollars of taxpayers' money has been wasted. The Minister for Education said that he would fix the problem four long years ago. At the moment the IT system is in one in 10 schools. An IT system that cost \$500 million is available to only one in 10 schools. That is \$25 million per school for an IT system. To send an email costs \$25 million. It probably costs somewhere in the vicinity of \$4 million to get a finance report; maybe \$5 million to expel a kid.

**Mr Matt Kean:** Point of order: The member for Kogarah is entitled to his own opinion—

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

**Mr Matt Kean:** —but he is not entitled to his own facts.

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

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The truth of the matter is that the state of the New South Wales economy has nothing to do with the member for Hornsby and it has nothing to do with the Government; it has everything to do with the drop in iron ore prices. The Government has been nothing but lucky with the rise in the New South Wales real estate sector and a drop in iron ore prices. On 9 July *The West Australian* reported:

The drop in the iron ore price to levels below Western Australian Government forecasts spells trouble for the state ahead of a decision on a possible ratings downgrade.

Overnight the iron ore price dropped below the US\$47.50 per tonne forecast in the 2015-16 WA budget, to a 10-year low of \$US44.10 a tonne.

In other words, the price in Western Australia has dropped and in New South Wales it has gone up. According to a CommSec report—exactly the same report that the member for Hornsby just quoted from:

New South Wales has reclaimed the title of the nation's best performing economy as the strong housing market props up the state's finances.

In other words, it has nothing to do with the member for Hornsby or his Government's policies. The Government has done nothing, but been hit in the arse by a rainbow and it expects everybody on this side of the House to give it a round of applause. We will not give the Government a round of applause.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: The member's language was highly unparliamentary.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** I withdraw it.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I did not hear the point of order.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** The words used were unparliamentary, but the member has withdrawn them.

**Mr CHRIS MINNS:** The truth of the matter is that this Government wants to do nothing but keep the underdog down. Why else would the Government propose a policy to increase the GST to 15 per cent? If the economy is going so good why does the Government want to slog the people who are down on their luck the most—people who need help from the Government and from everybody in this Parliament? Over the past month Government members have revealed their true colours: They want to keep the underdog down and they want to keep themselves up. [*Time expired.*]

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.42 p.m.]: I support the motion of the member for Hornsby. I too congratulate the Baird Government on its wonderful track record, with 29,500 jobs created in July alone. This is an important motion because the member for Kogarah thinks we did not do anything and it has all happened by accident. In 2011 this side of the House started working and made tough decisions. Unlike those opposite who spent every cent and put more on the credit card, we on this side of the House lived within our means. We were the ones who made those hard decisions and we were investing in the Jobs Action Plan.

We had four years of strong fiscal management and what has been the result? We took New South Wales from being number eight in the nation in the 16 years of the dark old days of the former Labor Government—even behind Tasmania—to being number one. CommSec reports that we are number one in its State of the States report, St George Bank reports it and *The Australian* reports it. What a fantastic result it is. The Baird Liberal-Nationals Government had a vision for the future—a bold plan, a big plan. At the last election we saw the scaremongering, xenophobic attitude of those on the other side compared with those on this side, who had a clear vision to turbocharge the economy and deliver the services and infrastructure wanted by the good people of New South Wales, and we are well on our way to doing that. In the last budget the Treasurer announced a record \$68 billion for infrastructure alone in New South Wales over the next four years. In addition, \$20 billion will come from the poles and wires transaction. We are very proud that we are going to turbocharge this State, fix the congestion and create jobs.

The member for Hornsby is quite right: The economy is important but jobs are very important too because they enable people to buy a house, pay rent, pay for their food, pay for their kids' education and make decisions about their lives. This is about self-determination and giving the good people of New South Wales opportunities. We on this side of the House stand for a strong economy and strong jobs growth. In the past four years we have made tough decisions, but we have had a strong fiscal plan and

we are delivering those services. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA** (Mount Druitt) [3.45 p.m.]: I thank the member for Hornsby for bringing this motion before the House because it gives us an opportunity to fix the fantasy and to put the facts on the table. I will quote from the 2011 Budget Speech:

The 2010 budget result is a \$1.3 billion surplus compared to a budget forecast of \$773 million. The better than expected headline result has been driven by a range of factors including lower expenses. The surplus is welcome.

Who delivered that Budget Speech in September 2011? It was the Treasurer at the time, Mike Baird.

**Mr Mark Coure**: September 2011?

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA**: On 6 September 2011 Mike Baird, the then Treasurer, commended the budget that was left to him by the former Labor Government.

**Dr Geoff Lee**: No, he didn't

**Mr EDMOND ATALLA**: I suggest the member for Parramatta read the Budget Speech. Today Government members have given themselves a pat on the back because they say New South Wales is doing so well. I will put forward some facts. Today youth unemployment is at 12.7 per cent. Is the Government proud of that? Today regional unemployment is at 7.5 per cent. Is the Government proud of that? Let me put some skin on the bones. Let me tell The Nationals what their results are. In 2011 when Labor left office, unemployment in the Hunter region was at 5.8 per cent. Today it is at 11.6 per cent. Is the Government proud of that? On the mid North Coast unemployment was at 10.1 per cent. Today it is 12.4 per cent. Is the Government proud of that?

In the Murray region unemployment was at 1.3 per cent. Today it is 8.1 per cent. Is the Government proud of that? Is this what the Government considers is making New South Wales number one? When the former Labor Government left office the unemployment rate was at 4.9 per cent; it is now 5.8 per cent. Labor kept our triple-A credit rating during the global financial crisis and brought our books back into surplus within one year and we did not have to sack a single government worker to do it. Since 2011 this Government has sacked 15,000 public servants. Government members have given themselves a pat on the back, but according to 2015 CommSec results the State is coming fifth. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.48 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their contributions to this debate. What is lost on members opposite is the critical role that the Government plays in building a bigger and stronger economy. There are now more opportunities and prosperity for everyone in this State. That is what this Government has been all about since day one. Every policy that we have implemented has been about growing our economy and providing opportunities for everyone. Probably the most offensive thing that we heard today was the contribution by the member for Kogarah, who said that the Government does not care about the underdog.

I remind members that those opposite did not care about the underdog when they introduced the carbon tax that destroyed thousands of jobs. They did not care about the underdog when the cost of living went through the roof under their watch as a result of the solar bonus scheme to appease their mates in the green movement. They did not care about the underdog when they were trashing the coal economy, again trying to appease The Greens, by introducing more renewable energy into the market just to pursue an ideological agenda. They did not care about the underdog when they let Eddie Obeid line his pockets with gold at the expense of the hardworking taxpayers of New South Wales. They sat idly by while he did it. It is a disgrace. They did not care about the underdog when he was doing that.

**Mr David Harris**: How is Chris Hartcher going?

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I note the interjection of the member for Wyong, who indeed was beaten and outsmarted by Darren Webber at the last election. The difference is that Eddie Obeid lined his pockets with taxpayer dollars. Labor members did not care about the underdog when he was doing that. Finally, they did not care about the underdog when those in the trade union movement, like Craig Thomson and Michael Williamson, were using members' money—

**Mr David Elliott:** Workers' money.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** It was the workers' money, those most vulnerable and who would be classed by many people as underdogs and most in need of protection. Those opposite did not care when they used their funds and resources to look after themselves. We will not be lectured about being unfair to the underdog. Every policy we have implemented has been about growing our economy to provide more opportunities for those defined by members opposite as the underdog, by giving them jobs and creating a great education system.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Nick Lalich:** I remind the Government about Bob Askin.

**Mr MATT KEAN:** I don't remember Bob Askin because I was not even born, unlike the member for Cabramatta. The point is that this Government's responsibility is about growing our economy and providing opportunities for everyone, regardless of where they come from, who they are and what their parents do. Everyone deserves to get ahead and that is this Government's agenda. [*Time expired.*]

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 45**

Mr Anderson  
Mr Aplin  
Mr Ayres  
Mr Barilaro  
Mr Brookes  
Mr Conolly  
Mr Coure  
Mr Crouch  
Mrs Davies  
Mr Dominello  
Mr Elliott  
Mr Evans  
Mr Fraser  
Mr Gee  
Ms Gibbons  
Ms Goward

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

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

*Tellers,*  
Mr Bromhead  
Mr Patterson

**Noes, 38**



Ms Aitchison	Mr Harris	Mr Minns
Mr Atalla	Ms Harrison	Mr Park
Mr Barr	Ms Hay	Mr Parker
Ms Burney	Ms Haylen	Mr Piper
Ms Car	Mr Hoenig	Mr Robertson
Ms Catley	Ms Hornery	Ms K. Smith
Mr Chanthivong	Mr Kamper	Ms T. F. Smith
Mr Crakanthorp	Ms Leong	Ms Washington
Mr Daley	Mr Lynch	Ms Watson
Mr Dib	Dr McDermott	Mr Zangari
Ms Doyle	Ms McKay	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Finn	Mr Mehan	Mr Lulich
Mr Foley	Ms Mihailuk	Mr Warren

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Pursuant to sessional order Government business proceeded with.**

## **RURAL FIRES AMENDMENT (BUSH FIRE PREVENTION) BILL 2015**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr David Elliott, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT** (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) [4.00 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme was introduced in New South Wales following the destruction of the October 2013 bushfires. Those fires left a devastating toll on people living in the Blue Mountains and across other parts of the State, including the Hunter and Port Stephens. Many properties were extensively damaged and homes lost. The Government's response was swift. We provided more than \$13.6 million in funding for a range of packages for affected communities, including clean-up, disposal and much-needed support for their ongoing recovery. On 1 August 2014 this Government introduced the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme. The philosophy behind the scheme was simple: to protect lives and livelihood. We wanted to make sure that people living in bushfire-prone areas had a greater ability to protect their homes by removing obstacles such as the requirement to obtain approvals before trees or vegetation could be cleared. Giving home owners in high-risk areas the opportunity to minimise fuel loads and fire risk around their homes is a key bushfire preparation activity.

On 1 October 2014 the NSW Rural Fire Service announced its review of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme. This was in response to community concerns that in certain areas the scheme was being used for purposes other than bushfire protection. The spirit of 10/50 is to enable people to guard their homes against bushfire with a minimum amount of red tape. It is not to improve your views or increase the value of your home. The proposal to bring forward the review was strongly supported. This is reflected in the more than 3,500 submissions received. To assist with the review, a working group was established comprising representatives from the NSW Rural Fire Service, Department of Planning and Environment, Department of Justice (Police and Emergency Services), and the Office of Environment and Heritage. I thank Minister Speakman and Minister Stokes for the invaluable contribution of their agencies.

Together, the working group has made 30 recommendations that will significantly improve the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme in New South Wales. The findings of the review are resoundingly positive for the community. The result is a stronger, more integrated framework for bushfire prevention in New South Wales. We will protect environmentally sensitive areas—world heritage areas, Ramsar wetlands, certain koala habitats, mangroves and saltmarshes, littoral rainforest, coastal wetlands, certain critically endangered ecological communities, plants and critical habitats, and other areas of high environmental significance—by excluding them from the operation of 10/50. They are all to be safeguarded.

We will see a greater relationship between 10/50 and planning arrangements through controls to prevent clearing of vegetation required to be retained as a condition of development consent or any Land and Environment Court orders; clarity that exempt and complying development structures such as decks cannot be used to extend the development footprint to enable trees or vegetation to be removed under the 10/50 scheme; and restrictions to prevent owners of buildings under construction from accessing 10/50 until an occupation certificate is issued. We are focusing the scheme on the types of vegetation that are particularly likely to lead to dangerous fires.

The management of bushfire risk has been strengthened through the retention of category 1 vegetation, which includes forests, woodland and heath greater than one hectare in size that carries a higher bushfire risk. A new category 3, which will include grasslands and arid shrublands, is being established. This category will be included in the 10/50 scheme, ensuring that people who live in rural and regional areas can continue to access vegetation clearing arrangements. Lower risk vegetation such as rainforest and small isolated pockets of vegetation, are being removed from the 10/50 scheme. The vast majority of changes to the way the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme works will occur through an update to the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice.

Copies of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice will be able available from the NSW Rural Fire Service website—[www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)—when the new arrangements come into force. However, some machinery amendments to improve its legislative framework are being made through this bill. The term "tree" under section 100P of the Rural Fires Act 1997 will be amended to include trees with multiple stems within the definition. Section 100R will also be amended to clarify that a landowner can remove the whole tree if part of the trunk of the tree falls within 10 metres of the external wall of a building. This rectifies the confusion that landowners had on their ability to remove trees that fell partly within the 10-metre rule.

The bill also amends section 100R to require a landowner to obtain written consent from their neighbour if they want to remove a tree or vegetation on their property that falls within 10 metres or 50 metres of their neighbour's home. This responds to concerns raised during the review that trees or vegetation that were being relied upon by a person's neighbour for shade or privacy were being removed. The amendment also addresses complaints regarding the clearing of land for development purposes. If no consent is given, the landowner will be required to adopt other processes available to remove the tree or vegetation, such as applying for approval through council.

An important amendment being made through this bill is the extension of the 10/50 scheme for farm sheds. For those members who live in rural and regional areas, we know that a person's farm shed is their livelihood. It is the place where tractors and assets that are critical to primary production are housed. The ability for primary producers to clear under the 10/50 scheme is consistent with other arrangements, such as provisions that exist for routine agricultural management activities under the Native Vegetation Act 2003. To be able to access the vegetation clearing provisions, certain criteria must be met. For example, the farm shed must be situated on land that is in one of three land use zones—primary production, rural landscape or primary production small lots.

The farm shed must have a floor area of more than 50 square metres and be used for the

purpose of carrying on a primary production business such as dairy farming, poultry farming or aquaculture. The shed must not be moveable. This is to prevent any unnecessary vegetation clearing from being undertaken. Plant nurseries are not included in the definition. If a farm shed is being used for processing products, the majority of those products must be produced on the property on which the farm shed is situated. Amendments are also being made to the Rural Fires Act 1997 to permit authorised bush fire hazard reduction and vegetation clearing works under a number of Acts. These include the Native Vegetation Act 2003, the Fisheries Management Act 1994 and the Soil Conservation Act 1938.

The amendments will improve the way in which bush fire hazard reduction work under the 10/50 scheme or through a bush fire hazard reduction certificate is undertaken. The bill also clarifies that people who do not comply with the conditions set out in the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice or a bush fire hazard reduction certificate may be liable to offences under those Acts. Section 100R (7) states that vegetation clearing must not be carried out unless it is in accordance with the 10/50 code of practice. Similarly, section 100C (4) will be amended to state that a person may undertake bushfire hazard reduction work without any requirements for assessment or approval only if:

- (a) work is carried out in accordance with a bush fire risk management plan that applies to the land, and
- (b) there is a bush fire hazard reduction certificate in force in respect of the work being done and the work is carried out in accordance with any conditions specified in the certificate, and
- (c) the work is carried out in accordance with the provisions of any bush fire code applying to the land specified in the certificate.

Failure to comply with those requirements when the works are carried out may expose a person to offences under the identified Acts in section 100C (5). That message will be clearly conveyed when a bushfire hazard reduction certificate is issued. The amendments before us today, together with the amendments that will be made to the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice, strike a better balance between the rights of people to protect their homes and the responsibilities that we have to our environment.

The NSW Rural Fire Service report entitled "Review of the 10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement scheme" will be made available on the Rural Fire Service website. Landowners will be able to find out how the new arrangements will apply to them through the NSW Rural Fire Service online tool. That means that property owners will not have to check with their councils or agencies to find out if the exclusion applies—once again, reducing green tape. The NSW Rural Fire Service frequently asked questions information sheet and its website will also provide advice on the new arrangements. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Guy Zangari and set down as an order of a day for a future day.**

## **IMPOUNDING AMENDMENT (UNATTENDED BOAT TRAILERS) BILL 2015**

### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 5 August 2015.**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [4.12 p.m.]: From the start let me say that the Impounding Amendment (Unattended Boat Trailers) Bill 2015 is a mess. It is a shambles. Better yet, it is a dog's breakfast. On the eve of Fit for the Future—the most significant local government reform in a century—the Minister for Local Government has given us a boat trailer bill. Our local government areas should be

rather concerned about the Minister. The object of the bill is to bestow additional powers on council officers to allow them to issue notices and impound boats that have been left unattended for three months or more. At first glance, the legislation appears to have the right intentions. However, good intentions are not always the right choice when they are enacted swiftly into law. The legislation will define a boat trailer that is parked legally or otherwise as unattended if it has not been moved for a period of three months or more. That is a bit of a concern for boat owners. How will council officers know whether a boat has been sitting in one location for three months or more?

Boat Owners Association President Mr Jeff Richards has spoken out on this legislation and cited the positives and negatives from the stance of a boat owner in this State. Views have been expressed that the bill will make it hard for a number of boat owners who are doing the right thing. The new laws will be a nuisance for boaters such as fishermen who may leave at around 3.00 a.m. each day and return just after lunch. How would the general community feel if council officers began issuing notices giving 15 days for residents to move their vehicles because the officers had not seen the vehicle moved in three months? There would be pandemonium. How can a council adequately monitor those scenarios and issue infringements accurately unless the vessel and trailer are in an obvious state of disrepair?

We are all aware of how much of a pain it would be for boat owners to take time out of their busy schedules to deal with the impound notices that they will be issued with given that they may or may not be in a position to move their boat trailer within the specific time frame. Consider the professional fisherman who may be at sea for months at a time. That poor person, who has been out slaving away on the high seas, will return home to find his recreational boat and trailer missing and an impound notice in the letterbox. He will be subject to paying the exorbitant impound fees in order to get the vessel back—and for what? That poor person will be penalised for legally parking his boat trailer out the front of his property while working at sea.

It is a sad day for boat owners across New South Wales. Some of them cannot afford to house their boat in dry storage facilities, at a marina or on a mooring due to the high ongoing costs. The message this Government is sending to boat owners in New South Wales is to put up or get out of the water. It is worth noting that boat trailers are not the only trailers that park on our roads and streets. Other forms of trailers and trailer-like vehicles, including car trailers, pop-up campervans—

**Mr John Sidoti:** Caravans.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI:** There are caravans, box trailers, canoe trailers—

**Mr John Sidoti:** Advertising trailers.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI:** There are advertising trailers, specialist maintenance trailers, pet grooming trailers and the campaign trailers of the member for Drummoyne, which are still on Lyons Road. I inform the member for Drummoyne that the election is over; he got in with a 17 per cent margin in Drummoyne. Basically, we must recognise that there is an endless list of trailers and that targeting one specific group of trailer owners is somewhat foolish. In the Fairfield and Holroyd local government areas that I represent the largest issue we have is truck drivers doing the wrong thing and leaving their trucks and trailers, large and small, in our residential areas after hours. The councils are rendered powerless to stop them, given that they have no extra resources to operate during those hours. That is certainly an issue of contention in my area. However, the Government can give itself a pat on the back: Cracking down on boat owners will certainly help us all sleep at night.

As hard as it is to believe, the legislation does have some merit. Although it was hastily prepared, not very well thought through and focuses solely on boat owners, the essence of the legislation is close to the mark—the Government just needs some help finding the goalposts. When was the consultation with community groups and which members were involved? Was it the member for Drummoyne, the member for Coogee or the member for Vaucluse? When did the conversations happen? Let us get things straight.

We are not saying that this concept is bad; we are saying that the legislation needs a lot more consultation to offer up a real solution. Throwing bureaucratic red tape at a problem while hoping for a quick fix to make it go away is certainly no way to legislate.

As I have said before, my family has been actively involved in professional fishing in New South Wales for generations. It is the environment I grew up in, as the member for Drummoyne knows, I know all too well how this legislation will impact on the boating community. It will alienate boat owners and force them to either sell their vessels or have them impounded. There is no real solution even if they are able to afford to pay the fee and retrieve them. Minister Toole must assure the community that small business owners who use boats in their core business are exempt from impounding. They generally move their vessels frequently. However, there may sometimes be periods of inaction due to weather, the winter season or ill health. The Minister needs to provide an ironclad guarantee about that.

In the inner city many owners of boats and trailers are unable to store them at home. Some do not have a driveway or garage. In some cases their street may be too small to manoeuvre a trailer into their driveway. There are clear examples of this in the electorate of Drummoyne. The member for Drummoyne would know this; he claims to be a champion of Drummoyne. There are examples in East Street, West Street, Newcastle Street and in front of Five Dock Public School—where, I am lead to believe, the member for Drummoyne regularly hands out certificates. The member for Drummoyne will know that in those streets it is impossible to swing or even push a boat on a trailer into a property because the streets are restrictive. So the boat owner has no option but to leave the boat trailer—or any other type of trailer for that matter—in front of their property.

Although the Labor Opposition and I support the essence of this legislation—that is, getting derelict boat trailers and boats off our local roadways—I firmly believe a lot more needs to be done to ensure that residents of New South Wales who own trailers are not unfairly targeted and penalised for absolutely no reason. I wholeheartedly support further community and stakeholder consultation, with a review of the legislation to take place at a later date. These are the views in the broader community, these are the views of many boat owners across New South Wales and these are views that I believe the Government needs to consider before passing this legislation into law today.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.22 p.m.]: I begin my contribution to debate on the Impounding Amendment (Unattended Boat Trailers) Bill 2015 by reading onto the record some comments by the member for Maroubra, who said:

... there is a piece of legislation before the House that could be dealt with quite readily. I do not imagine that the "getting the tinnies off the street" bill will lead to too much debate in this place ...

If Government members wish to pass the tinnie bill through the House quickly then we will leave the schedule as it is so it can be sent to the upper House.

I am glad the Opposition is on board. I am happy to support this legislation. In recent years the problem of boat trailers being parked in residential streets has been brought to my attention by many concerned residents of the electorate of Drummoyne. The issue is an ongoing source of frustration for many residents. It is particularly frustrating for those residents living in areas where there is limited on-street parking. Effectively, boat owners are using the streets as long-term storage facilities—and often they are not even residents of the area. The City of Canada Bay council, a Labor-dominated council, has also expressed frustration because it does not have the power to deal effectively with this problem. I state at the outset that I am happy to work with everyone on this issue. If the Opposition offers reasonable solutions to problems then we are all ears—a good Government always listens. I am just waiting to hear some of those good solutions from those opposite.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** It could be a while.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** We might be waiting a long while.

**Dr Hugh McDermott:** We'll give you some solutions, don't worry.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** We are all ears. I have been working with the City of Canada Bay council. For quite a while now it has expressed frustration that it does not have the powers it requires to deal effectively with this problem. In October 2012 the New South Wales Government established the Boat Trailer Working Group. Its work included a boat trailer parking trial, which aimed to discourage on-road boat trailer parking in areas where alternative off-road sites were available. Initial discussions regarding the trial were held with the City of Canada Bay council and Woollahra Municipal Council. These councils were selected because on-street boat trailer parking had become a serious problem for residents.

Officers from the City of Canada Bay council conducted a survey in November 2012 and identified a total of 81 individual boat trailers parked within the municipality. Roads and Maritime Services was able to match 75 of the plate numbers to valid current registrations. Of the plates where the owner could be identified, 56 trailers were found to belong to residents of suburbs in the Canada Bay local government area and 19 were found to belong to owners from other local government areas. There were a further six where officers could not match the plate to a valid owner or registration. Of these, two were not displaying registration, two were from interstate and two could not be matched due to having expired registrations.

It was finally recommended that if a boat trailer had been left unattended for three months or more then the offending vehicle could be impounded. The group further found that the current legislative powers available to councils were completely inadequate. The Impounding Act 1993 currently allows a council officer to take action if they believe a vehicle or trailer has been abandoned or left unattended. There is no definition of "unattended". We have been working with a number of different groups to come up with solutions, and we have heard quite a few of them during this discussion.

The Government takes this issue very seriously. That is why it has been working for some time to improve boat storage facilities, particularly dry storage facilities. We have been considering improved mooring designs and putting more moorings in the harbour so that boat owners have alternative places to leave their boats. We are not about discouraging boat ownership—in fact, quite the opposite. Boat ownership is on the rise on a year-to-year basis. While these powers allow council officers to impound clearly abandoned or unattended boat trailers, they cannot direct that legally parked trailers be moved by their owners. The member for Fairfield mentioned other sorts of trailers. If that is something the Opposition wants to look at, it is totally within State jurisdiction to take action. The Government has not mentioned trailers other than boat trailers. If Opposition members want to pursue that issue, it is totally up to them.

Under the current provisions of the legislation, councils will be given more power. That is an important point. Issues vary from area to area. For instance, if boats can be parked on the street in larger open areas in Fairfield and do not bother anybody that is fine. Fairfield City Council will have the discretion to say, "It's not an ongoing problem. We do not have to impound them, book them or monitor them." We are talking about giving individual councils the flexibility to deal with this issue where it is a problem, particularly in areas like Drummoyne, Woollahra and some beachside suburbs.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** It is a case-by-case basis.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** That is it 100 per cent. We are allowing flexibility and working with our partners in local government. As the grassroots level of government, it is best suited to monitor problems in the local area. This is not about a simple yes-or-no or black-or-white answer. We can work with our local government counterparts to achieve real, meaningful solutions. Under the provisions of this legislation, councils will be given the power to impound boat trailers that have not been moved for three months, provided that 15 days prior notice has been given to the owners. I will continue to work with the City of

Canada Bay to solve this problem. I will not play politics with the council on this issue; it is a serious issue. If the council wants to play politics that will be its choice, but I am not going to do that. I want to extend the olive branch; I want to work with councils on this issue, because when council and government work together the outcomes produce real solutions. I have already mentioned that discretion is the key factor in this issue; I think if council officers have that discretion, it will go a long way to solving a longstanding problem.

I stress that this legislation is not in any way intended to prevent boat owners from parking on streets for a reasonable period of time. The member for Fairfield gave the example of a fisherman who had not been fishing for more than three months because of adverse weather. That could be a matter that a council officer would look into. The member also mentioned a number of streets in Five Dock and elsewhere in the Drummoyne electorate where it is difficult to manoeuvre boat trailers. If a boat trailer cannot be manoeuvred because a street is narrow, how does he think people who live in a narrow street will feel when a boat is parked there for an unlimited time? That is not acceptable. I have had a number of complaints from elderly citizens in my electorate who have had difficulty getting out of their driveways because they are obstructed by boats that have been parked there for years. There are boats all over the place. One that comes to mind, in Arlington Street, is huge. When it is moved, once a year, witch's hats are left in place so that when the boat is returned the parking spot is available.

This legislation is not intended to prevent short-term parking by visiting boat trailer owners. At the end of the day, if people want to move their boat around, that is fine. If people take out their boat on a regular basis, we have no problem with that. But a huge problem arises when a boat is planted in one spot to the detriment of everybody who lives there or visits from elsewhere in the community. Long-term boat trailer parking also poses community safety issues, and is not acceptable. The primary intention of this legislation is to deal more effectively with trailers that are left unattended for inordinate periods. I have received numerous complaints from my constituents about those trailers taking up parking spaces, blocking vision on roads, and rusting and collecting garbage. Current legislation allows them to stand where they are until they rot and fall over.

I also note that this legislation is just part of a package that the Government intends to implement to assist in the management of boat trailer parking. I note the presence in the Chamber of the member for Balmain. I have noted that a number of parking spots have been occupied by those coming from the Balmain electorate into the local government area of Drummoyne. That also poses a problem for a one-size-fits-all system. Parking in the Balmain electorate is at a premium, especially as many homes do not have on-site car parking; they have residential parking schemes. Once again, flexibility in local government should allow the parking of boats as part of a residential parking scheme, under which they could park for a certain time. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I can assure all members that the member for Drummoyne does not need any help.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** We have already commenced delivery of a new five-year boating infrastructure program called "NSW Boating Now". This comprehensive program has received \$37.5 million in funding for 192 programs throughout the State. All those projects support boating access improvements. We are not against boating by any stretch of the imagination. My electorate of Drummoyne received funding through this program to upgrade boat ramps at popular Bayview Park, Taplin Park and Rhodes. As part of this program, the Government has set aside \$5 million to assist local councils and other organisations to establish dedicated off-street boat trailer parking facilities.

Again, I think it is responsible to work with councils to identify certain parts of local government areas where parking facilities could accommodate large numbers of boat trailers. It is incumbent on local government to identify those areas, as local government is best placed to do that. This bill is good news for boat owners in New South Wales. Already, there are more than 200,000 boat owners in this State, and that figure is rising by almost 3 per cent annually. It is that information that has influenced the

Government to decide to dedicate resources and money to the boat owners of this State. This bill will ensure that owning a boat does not guarantee on-road storage for that vehicle for an unlimited period of time. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT** (Prospect) [4.37 p.m.]: I address the House on the Impounding Amendment (Unattended Boat Trailers) Bill 2015. There is very little doubt that this Liberal Government loves boats. We know that the Treasurer loves the view of sails over Middle Harbour in the morning, that the Premier's constituency chooses the more adventurous game-fishing boats, that the member for Drummoyne sees mooring spaces at a premium in his electorate and that the member for Miranda deals with productivity loss in her electorate as a result of people taking sick days off work to go fishing in the Georges River. It is ironic that a party room of members with so many boats in their electorates to look after still put their faith in a national leader who was elected to stop the boats. It gets better. It is not the responsibility of the State Government to stop boats, so the Government has taken the responsibility upon itself to stop boat trailers instead. I can see Premier Mike Baird's new slogan: Stop the boat trailers.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Turn them back.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** Turn back the trailers. Under this bill, local councils will have the power to impound boat trailers that have not been moved for three months or more. This is a reasonable policy; it makes sense. Boat trailers that are left kerbside for months at a time often obstruct the vision of drivers on busy roads as well as posing problems for pedestrians. Some even argue the extent to which boats affect the appearance of suburban streets. I understand that. Essentially, this bill is calling on the power of the State Government to introduce what is effectively an inflated council bylaw. This, too, is ironic, considering the Minister wants to cripple the effectiveness of local councils in New South Wales by amalgamating even the most financially prudent ones, against their will, to make councils regional in focus, rather than just local. The Minister is determined to change local government in New South Wales for the worse.

**Mr John Sidoti:** Point of order: My point is relevance. The debate is not about amalgamations and effectiveness of local government; it is about boat trailers.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I cannot see in the bill any reference to amalgamations. I ask the member for Prospect to return to the leave of the bill.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** My electorate is covered by three councils: Blacktown, Holroyd and Fairfield. Luckily, Blacktown is not in the crosshairs of the Minister and will not be affected by the changes made in the amalgamation process. However, Holroyd and Fairfield will be. Councils like Holroyd have been fighting the amalgamation process. But I move on from that and look at what they have not been doing: wasting their time on—

**Mr Mark Coure:** Point of order: My point is relevance.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I expect the member for Prospect will now return to the leave of the bill.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** I had noted that schedule 1 to the bill refers to the Local Government Act. That is relevant to what we are talking about here, because local government is affected by the amalgamation process. If Government members read their bill, they would know that.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Does the Local Government Act refer to amalgamations?

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** I imagine it does not yet, but it may later this year. Holroyd City Council has not wasted time fighting over unlawfully parked boat trailers but has instead provided a fantastic local



service to residents. The council's budget is balanced. Residents benefit greatly from the ease of access that they have to their council. Fairfield City Council is in a similar situation. Fairfield is the heart of multicultural Australia. I have been impressed by that council's commitment to creating a comfortable home for many of the tens of thousands of migrants who have come to this country. Some arrive on boats; some arrive by other means. Many are refugees fleeing conflict.

The Minister has not answered questions about the obvious loopholes and problems with this bill. For example, ordering a resident to move a boat trailer a metre or so or to the other side of the street every few months exempts the council from its responsibility under the bill. That is the expected response from a Minister who will not say why he feels it necessary to destroy the structure of local government as we know it. Supporting this bill is a "gimme". Of course action should be taken against nuisance boat trailers. That makes sense. It is good policy. However, the Minister should look at ways to strengthen local government and allow councils, not State Parliament, to make the determination.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Mark Coure and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.**

*[Quorum called for.]*

*[The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.]*

## **RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AND HOUSING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PUBLIC HOUSING—ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR) BILL 2015**

### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 5 August 2015.**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [4.45 p.m.]: The Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015 must not be an important bill if the member for Bankstown, who is leading the debate for the Opposition, forgets that the debate is on.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George)**: Order! I remind members that they are still on three calls to order.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST**: This is a very good bill. I applaud the Minister for Social Housing for introducing it. The bill will make social housing safer for the many vulnerable people who need it by addressing antisocial, illegal and fraudulent behaviour. The measures in the bill deliver on an election commitment and are a key element of the Government's reform of social housing. The Department of Family and Community Services will introduce a policy, not requiring legislation, of probationary tenancies for new tenants who would otherwise be given five- or 10-year leases.

The bill seeks to make the following changes to the Act. It introduces a one-strike policy that will require the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] to make a termination order when an occupant has been charged with illegally storing firearms or show cause offences under the Bail Act, particularly drug supply or manufacturing and violence involving grievous bodily harm. The bill will require NCAT to terminate a social housing tenancy in certain other serious cases, such as running a brothel. The bill introduces a three-strikes policy to deal with repeated antisocial behaviour and, where three strikes occur within a 12-month period, to seek a termination order. The bill introduces neighbourhood impact statements to assist NCAT to understand the effect that antisocial or illegal behaviour has had on neighbouring residents and other persons. Antisocial behaviour is an issue that affects every electorate. I am sure the member for Orange, who is at the table, agrees.

**Mr Andrew Gee**: It's a big issue.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** The Government should be applauded for introducing this legislation in an effort to alleviate antisocial behaviour. The bill will reinstate the previous arrangement, overturned by a recent NCAT decision, that, when a tenant has fraudulently claimed a rent subsidy, the debt arising is treated as rent arrears, not a separate civil debt. This makes it easier to recoup the money. There is a large amount of money outstanding. The bill limits to 28 days the period within which an order for possession of social housing premises is to take effect, except in exceptional circumstances. It will ensure that the actual cost of damage caused by the tenant is recouped. The community has been looking for leadership from the Government on that matter. It is pleasing to see action being taken through this bill.

The bill will also provide the Department of Family and Community Services [FACS] with powers similar to those given to other agencies to gather information for the purposes of investigating fraudulent claims for rental subsidies. It will extend the prosecuting period to 12 months, following detection of rental fraud. At present, landlords of social housing tenants have limited tools available to manage antisocial behaviour. All proposed changes to the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and the Housing Act 2001 have been drafted to ensure that any changes can apply to both public and community housing providers.

If a tenant who experiences mental illness is involved in antisocial behaviour FACS will be the first support service to work with mental health services and it might also offer to move the tenant to a different location where there is less tension with neighbours and greater access to support services to assist him or her. Tenants who are evicted under these reforms will have access to the same types of support services that currently exist when people are evicted from social housing. Where appropriate they may be provided with assistance to rent in the private rental market, such as with loans for a rental bond.

Behaviour that would trigger a strike under the three-strikes policy can include obscene or threatening language towards neighbours and visitors; bullying and harassment towards neighbours and visitors; noise and causing nuisance—for example, loud and uncontrolled parties, excessive shouting or screaming or excessive noise from music or televisions; environment and common area issues—for example, drawing graffiti, abandoning vehicles in the front yard and refusing to remove them or carrying out noisy car repairs in communal areas; leaving large amounts of rubbish within the home or garden; behaviour which limits other tenants' access to communal facilities, such as preventing other tenants from accessing communal gardens or laundry facilities; and damaging any FACS property including individual tenants' properties and common areas.

The aim of the three-strikes approach is to encourage tenants to modify their behaviour and to keep their tenancy. Other States, such as Queensland and Western Australia, have found that more than 80 per cent of first strikes do not progress to a third strike, which is quite remarkable and demonstrates the effectiveness of the approach to modifying behaviour and sustaining tenancies. Neighbourhood impact statements are required, as currently the only way that NCAT can hear about the impact of antisocial behaviour on neighbours is when FACS can find a witness who is willing to appear at the tribunal.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** This is difficult as many tenants fear retribution. In the Tweed electorate many elderly clients live in social housing and they would be quite intimidated by some of the behaviour that is going on. They are quite stressed by it and I think this is a very valuable provision in the bill. Tenants may give evidence about illegal behaviour at the tribunal only to find out that their neighbour is not evicted and they have to continue living alongside them. I can relate a number of cases in the Tweed where that has happened. The person exhibiting the antisocial behaviour obviously made life hell for the elderly people who eventually had to move because they were so intimidated. As local members we always try to help those less fortunate within our local community, in particular frail-aged people, who are hampered by red tape and tied up by bureaucracy. I applaud the Minister for introducing this bill as most

tenants are not confident that they will be properly protected if they give evidence.

I am buoyed by the experience of Queensland and Western Australia where more than 80 per cent of first strikes do not progress to a third strike. I have taken the liberty of speaking to some providers in the community housing sector and those who have experience in the Queensland system believe that this is appropriate legislation that is easy to understand and that produces real results. Once again, I applaud the department and also the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing for introducing this legislation and taking a common-sense approach to a difficult issue that affects most members in this place. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [4.55 p.m.]: I lead for the New South Wales Opposition in debate on the Residential Tenancies and Housing Legislation Amendment (Public Housing—Antisocial Behaviour) Bill 2015 in my capacity as the shadow Minister for Family and Community Services and shadow Minister for Social Housing. It is important that I speak on this bill today because the Government needs to know what amendments should be made to it. The bill proposes various amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and the Housing Act 2001 to enable social housing providers to terminate a social housing tenancy for antisocial behaviour and for other purposes. More than 279,000 people in New South Wales live in social housing across approximately 140,000 tenancies managed by social housing providers. The New South Wales Opposition is firmly committed to addressing the genuine concerns of some social housing residents regarding the minority of occasions when instances of antisocial behaviour or other illegal behaviour may arise during the course of a social housing tenancy.

While I state from the outset that the New South Wales Opposition will not oppose the bill, I will give consideration in detail to a number of concerns identified by the New South Wales Opposition and stakeholders, including the Tenants Union of NSW, the Law Society of New South Wales and various community legal centres, regarding possible infringements upon tenants' fundamental rights, among other concerns, that on the face of it could lead to unjust and unfair outcomes for vulnerable social housing tenants. I will foreshadow a number of amendments to assist the Government, given that it has haphazardly introduced this bill with little consideration of some of the impact that it will have in its current form.

Under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010, a private or social housing landlord may issue a notice to terminate a tenancy agreement for a variety of reasons, including a breach of tenancy agreement under section 87; non-payment of rent under section 88; serious damage or injury by a tenant or other occupant under section 90; the use of premises for illegal purposes under section 91; and under section 92 the tribunal may terminate a residential tenancy agreement for threat, abuse, intimidation or harassment.

The provisions within this bill propose to amend part 7 of the Act, which will impact on all social housing tenancy agreements entered into with a social housing provider, adding provisions that would apply specifically to all social housing tenants, further to existing provisions under the Act. Under part 7 of the Act, a social housing landlord may issue a termination notice under section 142 on the grounds that a tenant is not eligible for social housing or, under section 152, for breach of an acceptable behaviour agreement. Currently, should a tenant be issued with a termination notice, that tenant may attempt to rectify the breach and negotiate with the landlord to rescind the termination notice. Should the landlord not be satisfied with the rectification of the breach, or if the tenant were to fail to respond to the termination notice, the landlord may then apply to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] for a termination order under section 83 and the tribunal could issue an order for possession of the property if it is satisfied there has been a breach.

Under the existing legislation, NCAT retains a certain degree of discretion to determine the outcome of a tenancy dispute under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. This bill proposes to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to introduce a scheme for social housing providers to record strikes against tenants for certain breaches of their social housing tenancy. A social housing provider will be able

to seek termination of a social housing tenancy on the proviso that three or more strikes have occurred within a 12-month time frame. The strike will follow the tenant, including if the tenant were to change his or her property or social housing landlord.

The bill seeks to remove NCAT's discretion in the case of the one-strike offences as per proposed section 154D. The bill proposes to introduce a one-strike policy for certain cases where the tenant or any person not the tenant but a person who is occupying or joint occupying the premises has been charged with the following offences: drug manufacture, sale or supply; storing a firearm for which a licence or permit is not held; serious damage or injury by a tenant or other occupant and the violence involved grievous bodily harm; and show cause offences under the Bail Act 2013. It is important to note that the current legislation provides for the termination of a tenancy for serious criminal conduct as referred to in the proposed section. In these circumstances the tribunal, if satisfied that the alleged conduct occurred, must issue a termination order for breach of a social housing tenancy.

Proposed section 154D (2) contains a lesser category of one-strike offences where a termination order must also be issued unless the tribunal is satisfied that exceptional circumstances were present to justify a termination order not being made. This includes where the tenant or any person not the tenant but a person who is occupying or joint occupying the premises has been charged with the following offences: serious damage or injury by a tenant or other occupant and the violence did not involve grievous bodily harm; premises being used unlawfully as a brothel; premises being used to produce, disseminate or a tenant found in possession of child abuse material; premises being used to facilitate organised car or boat rebirthing activities; and any other unlawful purpose in the use of the premises is sufficient to justify the termination.

It is the view of the New South Wales Opposition that while the termination of a social housing tenancy is the appropriate course of action in some circumstances, particularly surrounding the serious category of criminal offences referred to in proposed section 154D, the Government is misguided if it truly believes that a one size fits all for mandatory termination orders is a just outcome in all circumstances; none more so than in cases where an occupant rather than the tenant is the party that is engaged in the serious criminal behaviour in question. I note that the Minister in his second reading speech raised an example of his interpretation of how proposed section 154D would apply to a social housing tenancy if an occupant were to engage in antisocial or illegal behaviour. The Minister stated:

If a tenancy is at risk through the one-strike process because of the behaviour of other household members, the Department of Family and Community Services will still have to prove, as now, that the tenant intentionally or recklessly caused or permitted the behaviour.

Take for example a scenario where a mother and son are living together in social housing with the mother holding the lease and the son found to be dealing drugs. While the mother is the tenant and is liable for the breach, if she is unaware of the drug dealing it is unlikely she will be evicted.

However, I note that the submissions that I have received and I believe the Minister received from the Law Society of New South Wales, the Tenants Union of New South Wales, and on behalf of various community legal centres—Kingsford, Marrickville, Redfern—and the Eastern Area Tenants Service have all outlined that the Minister was misguided in his interpretation of the bill. The Law Society of New South Wales stated:

Tenants can currently be subject to termination orders even if they have no knowledge of unlawful use by an occupant. It appears that this would continue to be the case under the proposed measures, as is particularly demonstrated by proposed ss154D(2)(b)(ii). It is likely that an occupant (for example, the son of elderly parents who are the tenants) engaged in the dissemination of child abuse material would be doing so without the knowledge of his parents.

The Tenants Union of New South Wales stated:

The bill will not produce this outcome. Quite simply, if the mother in this scenario is taken to the Tribunal because of her son's conduct, her tenancy will be terminated.

The Tenants Union also referred to the case of *Aboriginal Housing v Corrie*. In this matter a tenant had her tenancy terminated following her casual boyfriend doing drug deals at her social housing property. The tribunal believed it did not have the discretion to decline a termination order despite noting that the tenant was not involved in the drug deals, was not charged, had cooperated with police, had no previous issues with her tenancy and was a single Aboriginal mother with a history of domestic violence and mental illness. Undoubtedly the termination of the tenancy in the case of Corrie was an unjust outcome for the social housing tenant.

The New South Wales Opposition believes that the bill at hand requires amendment to prevent such unjust outcomes by ensuring that the tribunal retains a certain degree of discretion when determining matters where the antisocial behaviour in question is that of an occupant of a social housing residence rather than the tenant. If tenants have no knowledge of antisocial behaviour occurring at or near their property they should not have their tenancy terminated. By narrowing the scope of proposed section 154D, an amendment in this respect would have the added benefit of protecting tenants who are not the perpetrators of antisocial or criminal behaviour, particularly those tenants who could be the victims of family or domestic violence.

I now address proposed section 154C of the bill, which provides for the scheme to record a strike notice against a tenant for a breach of his or her social housing tenancy agreement. A strike notice must be in writing and must state that it is a strike recorded against the tenant. The strike notice must also inform the tenant of the nature of the strike, of any existing strikes against the tenant within the previous 12 months, including at prior properties, and must contain a warning that a third strike within 12 months may lead to a termination notice. Under proposed section 154C a strike notice must also inform tenants that they have the opportunity to make a submission to the landlord if they disagree with the notice, and the method and date before which they must make the submission.

If a tenant were to receive a third strike within a 12-month period, the landlord may give a termination notice under section 87 of the Act if the landlord was satisfied that the tenant had breached his or her social housing tenancy agreement. The landlord could also record another strike against the tenant without issuing a further strike notice. However, the New South Wales Opposition has significant concerns regarding the time period for a tenant to make a submission against the issuing of a strike notice. The bill has proposed a time period being not less than 14 days after the tenant is issued with the notice. The New South Wales Opposition firmly believes that this period is insufficient and impractical for the majority of tenants to make a submission. In regard to the 14-day proposal the Law Society of New South Wales stated:

Fourteen days is a very short time frame in which to respond to a strike notice, particularly as many social housing tenants are vulnerable and are unlikely to have easy access to legal assistance, are likely to have low literacy skills, speak English as a second or third language, have poor mental health and may be themselves victims of violence.

From a practical perspective, the human rights and Indigenous issues committees note that these provisions are also likely to result in increased workloads for legal aid, community legal centres and client service officers in the Department of Housing. A briefing paper issued on behalf of the Kingsford, Marrickville and Redfern community legal centres and the Eastern Area Tenants Service stated:

Vulnerable tenants will face extreme difficulty in challenging strike notices within 14 days. In that time they will have to contact a legal service, obtain legal advice and write a submission. It is unlikely that vulnerable tenants—such as older people, tenants with little English or low literacy,

domestic violence victims, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants, tenants with physical or intellectual disabilities or mental health conditions—will be able to comply with this very short time limit.

The consequences of this will be serious, and have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable tenants who lack the capacity to challenge strike notices. If a third strike is issued and an application is made to the Tribunal for termination, the tenant will not be able to challenge the strikes if they did not initially challenge them.

The concerns raised by these stakeholders are significant with respect to the impact of a failure to make a submission due to circumstances such as a the low level of literacy of tenants, hospitalisation or on-site rehabilitation may have prevented the tenant from physically accessing their mail, a violent or controlling partner may be withholding/tampering with the tenant's mail, or any other demonstrable good reason for failing to make a submission within the required time. The Minister should have taken the time to conduct thorough consultations with legal centres, and certainly with the Tenants Union and the Law Society of New South Wales. I am surprised, given the Minister's record of consulting in relation to other bills introduced in this place.

The Minister must take these significant concerns into account and consideration should be given to expanding the minimum period of 14 days to 28 days for a tenant to make a submission. This would be a more reasonable time, giving vulnerable tenants a better opportunity to receive either legal advice or assistance in making a submission. Consideration must also be given to amending section 156A to obtain a fairer outcome for vulnerable tenants. As per proposed section 156A (3), if the tribunal is satisfied that a strike notice was issued and the tenant did not make a submission in the required minimum time period, the associated evidentiary certificate would constitute "conclusive proof" that the matter referred to in the strike notice occurred. The Opposition is concerned about that.

At the bare minimum, a tenant should have the capacity to submit to the tribunal that there may have been factors outside of their control that contributed to their failure to make a submission against the issuing of a strike notice within the minimum time period. Proposed section 154E provides that the tribunal must have regard to certain factors when determining whether to make a termination order for a social housing tenancy. These factors include the effect of the tenancy on neighbouring residents, the likelihood of neighbouring residents suffering adverse effects in the future if the tenancy is not terminated, the landlord's responsibility to other tenants, the history of the current tenancy and any prior social housing tenancy, and whether the tenant has previously been in breach of an order of the tribunal.

As per proposed section 154F, the tribunal must also have regard to a neighbourhood impact statement, which is a summary of statements made by neighbouring residents, before proceeding to terminate a tenancy. This section states that the neighbourhood impact statement "should not identify the neighbouring residents or other persons" in section 154F (2) (b). While the Opposition agrees that the confidentiality of such statements must not be compromised, it has reservations concerning a lack of procedural fairness, particularly where a tenant would not have access to a statement, nor the opportunity to respond to an accusation concerning their behaviour. I note that the Law Society of New South Wales recommended:

The Committees are of the view that at minimum the substance of any statement would be disclosed to a tenant to enable them to respond.

The Opposition agrees with this recommendation and I urge the Minister to reconsider proposed section 154F in lieu of these concerns. The bill proposes under section 154G to limit to 28 days the period within which an order for possession of a social housing premises is to take place, unless there were exceptional circumstances to justify a longer time frame. This time period for possession would apply for both one strike and three strike terminations. There is the possibility that this time period would also apply in other instances, such as when a tenant in financial distress does not have the ability to pay their rent.

To make a clear distinction between these cases, and reasons pertaining to criminal or antisocial behaviour, the Opposition believes that the tribunal should provide a longer time period of 60 days when determining an order for possession of a social housing tenancy. As per proposed section 154B, the tribunal must have regard to previous breaches of prior social housing tenancy agreements in determining whether to terminate a tenancy under section 87 of the principal Act. However, I note that the tribunal is not required under the bill to take into account any steps taken by a tenant to remedy any prior breaches. On the balance of things, this is a significant omission, and the Minister should reconsider this position.

As I stated from the outset, the Opposition will not oppose this bill. The overwhelming number of law-abiding citizens who are living in social housing in New South Wales have a fundamental right to feel safe in their homes and in an environment that is free from antisocial and criminal behaviour. It is important to remember that we have a considerable housing waiting list, with more than 60,000 in this State. It is growing fast in this State given that only 4.7 per cent of the \$7.29 billion this Government collected in stamp duty was allocated to social housing capital infrastructure.

However, given the seriousness of the concerns raised by stakeholders such as the Law Society of New South Wales, various community legal centres and the Tenants Union of New South Wales, there is the potential for some provisions in this bill, if unamended, to cause unnecessary injustice to some of the most vulnerable citizens currently residing in social housing. I take this opportunity to thank Ned Cutcher from the Tenants Union and Edwina MacDonald from the Kingsford Legal Centre for their consultation and advice, particularly considering the short time they had to consider the bill. I also thank Kirk McKenzie, chair of the Law Society's Human Rights Committee, for the Law Society's submission.

With more than 60,000 on the social housing waiting list and the continuing demand on social housing, given the housing affordability crisis and rising levels of homelessness, the Government must not absolve itself from its duty to protect social housing tenants from unnecessary eviction from their social housing tenancies. Last March the Government announced that \$1 billion was to be set aside for housing, but we are yet to see one dollar of it or any documentation about it. We all know that \$20 billion supposedly will be spent on a whole range of infrastructure projects from the sale of electricity, but not one dollar is going towards increasing housing in this State. We know how important it is to care for our tenants and to provide them with a very safe home and shelter. I reiterate that the Opposition supports law-abiding citizens in our social housing network.

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

**Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.**

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

---

### **PORT STEPHENS COUNCIL**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON** (Port Stephens) [5.19 p.m.]: Recently I joined representatives of numerous community groups at a rally outside Port Stephens Council who were to there to express no confidence in council. It is not a move we took lightly, but the interests of our community were under threat from a council agenda fraught with potential problems. What led us to take that action? The current Port Stephens Council was elected as a result of what was described by the *Newcastle Herald* as "an intricate web of preference deals ... cemented multi-millionaire mayor Bruce McKenzie's leadership". This intricate web delivered him seven out of 10 council seats.

According to the *Newcastle Herald*, of the 66 so-called independent candidates, 32 were aligned

and at least eight were funded by Bruce MacKenzie, who was ultimately installed as mayor. This was not his first gig. The *Newcastle Herald* has reported that Mayor MacKenzie was first elected to council in 1968, he was the first and second local councillor to be suspended by a pecuniary interest tribunal, and he has three criminal convictions including assault, negligent driving and failing to stop at the scene of a crime. According to local media, he is a developer and "a self-made millionaire sand miner" but, despite contributing to the campaigns of other candidates during a local government election, no-one has seen fit to hold him or anyone to account. Instead, intimidation, abuse and disrespect has become par for the course in Port Stephens.

I must apologise for the unparliamentary language that I am about to use. Recently, a wheelchair-bound constituent complained to me that the mayor called him a "spastic fucking arsehole" at a public function. Another resident was called a "fucking grub" at a recent community forum. It is offensive language. I have statutory declarations attesting to those events. During the hearing of a joint regional planning panel, I witnessed the mayor shout offensively at a woman in the public gallery whilst the mayor was a member of the panel. But it is much worse than just poor behaviour. Buildev, formerly part owned by disgraced businessman Nathan Tinkler, is a company that gained infamy during the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] hearings. The ties to Buildev across elected representatives in Port Stephens are longstanding.

Darren Williams is a co-founder of Buildev and was best man at the wedding of the mayor's son. Councillor Ken Jordan, the defeated Liberal candidate at the last State election, was best man at Darren Williams's wedding. Former member for Port Stephens Craig Baumann moved to the crossbench after admitting he lodged a misleading electoral funding declaration for his 2007 campaign, concealing significant support from Newcastle developers Jeff McCloy and Hilton Gurgeon. He also told ICAC that Buildev donated \$10,000 to his 2011 campaign, but the money was refunded. Federal member for Paterson, Bob Baldwin, was referenced twice during the ICAC Spicer inquiry as being an advocate for Buildev. The *Daily Telegraph* reports that he did consulting work for Buildev prior to re-entering Parliament in 2001. It has also been reported that a property purchased by Bob Baldwin was bought from him by Darren Williams's wife, who, 10 months later, sold it at a loss.

It is unsurprising that, with a history of connections between developers and local elected representatives at all levels of government, a developer mayor who bought his position and his voting bloc on council, and with intimidation and disgusting behaviour by the mayor, my community had finally had enough and joined together at the recent council meeting to demand honest governance. The final straw was that the mayor and his voting bloc approved a highly lucrative sandmining lease be transferred at the request of none other than Nathan Tinkler from one Buildev-related company to another. The original lease was awarded to Buildev against the recommendation of council staff and outside of a tender process in which the mayor's own sandmining company had made a bid. The mayor and his voting bloc also approved the rezoning of 21 per cent of a historic public park for residential development.

Prior to the recent meeting, Port Stephens Council has been responsible for other appalling decisions, many of which have been made against the recommendations of council staff, the Rural Fire Service, Hunter Water and even the Department of Defence. Last week I convened a community forum to inform concerned residents about the mayor's latest business proposal to increase truck movements from his company's sand mine onto the main arterial road in Port Stephens by 200 per cent. At the forum I noticed Mayor Bruce MacKenzie standing next to a man who, prior to the election, sent me a threatening email, shouted at me on pre-poll and whose employees abused me on election day. If these people think they can intimidate me, well think again.

It is not acceptable that people in positions of public office gain advantages that are not available to anyone else, that developer interests continue to prevail over the community's interests, and that some residents of Port Stephens feel they cannot speak or act freely for fear of intimidation or retribution. If Minister Toole is truly committed to his words that "the New South Wales community deserves their councillors to conduct themselves appropriately in the interest of residents at all times" he has no option



but to act on the many pleas for assistance that he has received from my community. I am referring these matters to the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC], but there is also an onus on the Minister to ensure that we have a local council that acts in the interests of my community, not an elite club with the interests of just one man and his mates at its rotten core.

### **TRIBUTE TO LERRYN MUTTON, OAM**

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.24 p.m.]: I offer my condolences to the family of Lerryn Mutton, OAM, a former member of this House, who passed away on 26 July 2015 aged 90. Mr Mutton was the member for Yaralla from 1968 until 1978 and served his constituents with distinction. Prior to his election to Parliament, Mr Mutton served in the RAAF during the Second World War as a fighter pilot. He later wrote a book outlining his wartime experiences, titled *Lest I Forget*. The book was published in 2012. Mr Mutton served on Concord Council as an alderman and later as mayor. In his autobiography he stated:

Politics should be left to the politicians of this State House and Canberra and local government should be kept local and independent.

I have opposed always, in all quarters and at all levels, participation of party politics in local government. No man can serve two masters.

How right he was. Having also served as a councillor and mayor I can categorically say that at the local level party politics should not come into the equation. Mr Mutton and his wife, Mavis, retired to Macmasters Beach on the Central Coast more than 20 years ago where he remained active in the local community in Rotary, the church and various community events. Lerryn Mutton was a man who lived life to the full and in his own words "made every moment count". He was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in June 2010. He will be remembered as a hardworking member, devoted family man and as a man who spent his life trying to make a difference. Again I express my sincere condolences to his family, and his many friends and colleagues.

### **MID NORTH COAST FLYING FOX MANAGEMENT**

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY** (Oxley) [5.27 p.m.]: There are continuing issues with flying fox camps in several communities along the mid North Coast. The two key locations that my constituents are concerned about are Rudder Park, East Kempsey, and Gordon Park, Nambucca Heads. I am sure there are more. Those two popular public areas are virtually rendered unusable by the smell, noise and defecation of many thousands of flying foxes in local trees every day. We have all heard of the direct risks to human health posed by the rabies-like lyssavirus and Hendra virus, but we must also appreciate the suffering and anguish of local residents who have no choice but to live next to or under the camps of these animals. Interestingly, it is widely acknowledged that the East Kempsey camp relocated to its current site when the Kempsey bypass road works started near the colony's previous camp—that is, the relocation was caused by humans.

The general issue of flying foxes in urban areas has been the subject of a major petition debated in this House and innumerable correspondence to and between local, State and Federal governments. That indicates that the majority of people regard it as untenable and intolerable that ensuring flying foxes have their choice of trees to camp in is prioritised over the impacts on people in urban areas. Two of my constituents, Mrs Delma Buczko from Kempsey and Mr Cec Smith from Nambucca Heads, have raised this issue for some time—actually, for far too long. For a community to have to avoid the local park because of low-flying bats, their urine and faeces, noise and stench is not the right outcome. To have bats move into trees right next to houses where the washing cannot be hung outside anymore, where the kids cannot play in the yard and where people have to get the Gerni out every weekend to wash faeces off house walls, paths, cars, the back deck and so on is just not right.

There are hundreds of thousands of other locations on the mid North Coast where the bats can and do set up colonies that are not in the middle of urban areas. I do not know where the obsession that we should not encourage bats to move on to another site where they do not affect humans came from, but it certainly did not come from country people. I very much appreciate the work of the Government through the previous Minister to make some welcome changes to the regulations governing flying fox management. However, in moving to implement those changes local government is now confronting expensive requirements to prepare management plans. The plans are so expensive that they are beyond the financial capacity of smaller regional councils. I have read with some interest about the work that has been done in the Pittwater region where councils have spent hundreds of thousands on approval processes.

I do not think it is right or fair that local government has to bear the costs of the policy of a State Government agency, nor is it right that local government has to bear the brunt of criticism when locals want something done to fix the problem. The fact is that there is clearly a blockage in the implementation of the Government's policy intent. I have made representations to the Minister for the Environment and spoken earnestly with him about these community concerns. In the first instance this means minimising the costs of the plans of management or at least contributing in some way to the costs. I have also raised this issue with the Parliamentary Secretary for the North Coast, Mr Chris Gulaptis. He has done a lot of work in his region over many years on the impact of bats in his community at Maclean. I acknowledge his presence here in the Chamber this evening.

I have had a number of conversations with Councillor Liz Campbell, the Mayor of Kempsey Shire Council. We have been in contact with Councillor Rhonda Hoban, the Mayor of Nambucca Shire Council. I reiterate that this is having a profound impact on people and communities in urban areas. I welcome the Government's changes, announced previously, to allow the plan of management process to continue. I highlight, sincerely and with a great deal of concern, the fact that the plan of management process is expensive. It is beyond the reach of many smaller regional and rural councils. I urge the Government to take a good look at this issue and the practical implementation of a policy intent that was very clear when the changes were made. We need to find a way forward to ensure communities can live in their local environment in the way they so desire.

### **QUAKERS HILL EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [5.32 p.m.]: On 29 July I had the pleasure of attending Education Week open day at Quakers Hill East Public School in my electorate of Riverstone. Education Week provides a valuable opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of New South Wales public education, as well as the contributions made by staff, parents and students within our local schools. Quakers Hill East Public School celebrated Education Week by inviting the school community—parents, grandparents, carers and other family members—to observe the work of the teachers, staff and students firsthand. I was shown around a number of classes and saw kids engaged in active, vibrant learning. They were clearly in an environment where they felt very comfortable, very much at home and very supported.

Quakers Hill East Public School has been educating children in the local area for the past 51 years. It was founded on a site on Lalor Road, Quakers Hill, and moved to its current site in Acacia Gardens in 2002. It retained the name Quakers Hill East Public School. Over the years it has built a strong reputation as a school that strongly supports kids, has high standards of learning and produces rounded citizens. It is because of the hard work and dedication of Principal Michele Hedge, Deputy Principal Colin Ross, and all of the teaching and administrative staff that Quakers Hill East Public School demonstrates the way in which our public schools encourage students to achieve positive educational outcomes while fostering a sense of community and engagement.

I also pay tribute to the contribution of former Principal Mrs Marketa Bird, who retired in 2014 after a long career in public education, most recently at Quakers Hill East Public School for a number of years.

She was a legendary educator and someone who was well regarded by all in the community. She was much loved. She farewelled the school last year. On Education Week open day I had the privilege of being part of the official opening of the new synthetic grass soccer fields at the school. These fields were funded partly by the contribution of the NSW Premier's Sporting Challenge. The school community has enthusiastically embraced this program with the aim of providing its students with a sense of enjoyment around exercise and physical activity.

The Premier's Sporting Challenge is a program aimed at encouraging schoolchildren to participate in physical education and sporting activities to improve their physical fitness. As part of this program, when schools sign up to the program they are provided with a \$2,000 start-up grant that contributes to supporting sport, physical activity and healthy lifestyle initiatives. The program rewards students with either bronze, silver, gold or diamond awards. These awards acknowledge the moderate to vigorous physical activity of the class and are based on the average daily activity of the students who participate in the program. The schools are eligible to receive these awards when, over the course of the program, the average daily physical activity level of students reaches 30 minutes or more. In order to achieve the highest level—that is, diamond level—the average daily activity level must reach at least 80 minutes of moderate activity per student.

The new synthetic grass surface will enable students to extend the range of activities they can take part in at Quakers Hill East Public School. I saw a demonstration of soccer skills training by a provider that has engaged actively with the school to provide students with that kind of training and to enhance their physical fitness. The benefits of exercise and sporting activity include not only the health benefits of being physically fit but also enhanced psychological wellbeing, stress management and an increased ability to concentrate and to focus on learning. All these factors influence a child's performance at school. They also learn about team work and cooperation from working in teams during sport. I commend Quakers Hill East Public School for its commitment to student growth and development in all areas. I hope these new sporting fields will assist Quakers Hill East Public School to meet and exceed its goals in the program and foster an enthusiasm for sport and physical activity amongst students well into the future.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.37 p.m.]: I commend the member for Riverstone for his advocacy—evident in his comprehensive private member's statement—for not only Quakers Hill East Public School but all schools in his electorate. His advocacy has gone a long way towards providing them with state-of-the-art facilities. He has brought Education Week to the attention of the House this evening. We are fortunate to have so many great State schools right across New South Wales. The students, parents, teachers and principals contribute so much to making our suburbs and electorates better communities.

## **HUTCHISON PORTS**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [5.38 p.m.]: I remember the days of the Patrick waterfront dispute in 1998 when we saw the Howard Government engaging in conduct that was unconscionable, particularly in the modern industrial age. Workers were locked out of the ports without warning. Thugs and goons in balaclavas moved in to keep them out. These workers were family men and women who worked on the waterfront. The goons had Alsatian guard dogs. Naturally the Australian populace recoiled upon seeing images of that unconscionable conduct. I thought it would be quite some time before I saw conduct such as that repeated—if ever. But it has been repeated at the Hutchison Ports wharf at Port Botany. Last Friday 100 workers from Hutchison Ports were sacked via an email sent at midnight. According to the Maritime Union of Australia the email said:

... your position will not be retained. There are no redeployment opportunities. The intended last day of your employment will be Friday 14 August 2015. I realise that this is a lot of information to take in. Accordingly you are not required to attend work, effective immediately. We will of course pay you your normal salary to your last date of employment.

Well, that was big of them—to pay their workers their normal salary until their last date of employment. There are now guards on the gates at Port Botany. Workers were not even allowed to clear out their lockers. There is a picket line, which consisted initially of the sacked workers. Workers from all walks of life, both unionised and non-unionised, have now joined that 24-hour picket. Last Monday I went out to join the picket and to lend my support, small as it is, on behalf of the people of Maroubra, to the men and women manning the picket line. One of them was Leyre Diaz. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported this week, she thought she had a job for life. She said:

It's pretty scary because I'm paying \$610 a week rent on my own and I have two kids and I have no family in Sydney.

I have to pay the rent, the car bills and food for two boys 16 and 13 ... When I got the job, everyone was saying if you work at the wharves, it's a job for life. I thought I won the Lotto when I got the job out here.

Some might say that Leyre Diaz's ambitions about having a job for life might have been a little bit lofty in this day and age. But what was not lofty, what should not have been lofty, and what should never have been overambitious on the part of any worker in Australia is an expectation that their employer will treat them with decency. Being sacked by text and email at midnight, using the cold and heartless words sent in those messages is unconscionable. The maritime workers union's Paul McAleer told those picketing earlier this week:

This company knows what they've done. They know they're wrong, as does the vast majority of the Australian community. We've seen it all through the media. Almost everyone, to a person, has said that no Australian worker, no matter what industry they work in, deserves to be sacked by text message at midnight.

Hear, hear! So this afternoon, in this place, I speak for at least every member of the Labor Opposition, and I think one or two, if not more, on the Government benches, when I say to Hutchison and to employers who would treat their employees like that: This is a disgrace; people deserve better; they all have stories to tell, lives to lead, families to support; and getting treated like this in Australia, in your workplace, in 2015 is unacceptable. We say to the sacked workers, to the union and to those manning the picket that we are thinking of them, and we hope that through this action they have been forced to take they can bring this company back to the table and have it reconsider its position and treat its workers as they deserve to be treated.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Mr ALISTER HENSKENS** (Ku-ring-gai) [5.43 p.m.]: It was a very appropriate recognition of Rosie Batty's contribution to exposing the problem of domestic violence that she was made Australian of the Year. But her terrible suffering was a tragic precursor to the bestowing of that high honour. Her loss simply should never have happened. I wish to speak about domestic violence, which is a topic on which I have no first-hand knowledge. But my absence of any first-hand experience is the very reason that I choose to do so. Like many people, I have been shocked by the often-quoted statistic that about one person every week is killed in Australia in an act of domestic violence. For every person killed, there are many more other tragic relationships in our community where violence is ever present.

I suspect that drugs, alcohol abuse and mental illness are significant contributors to domestic violence. But because men are statistically a significant cause of this terrible social problem, we need to talk about what it is about our current male culture that has led to this problem. Has there been a decline in our male culture in recent times? Boys go to primary schools with few male teachers. Often on the home front, the father is not present because of work, a court order or a family breakdown. Physical play that develops discipline and restraint in young boys is not encouraged in our schools. Fathers and

mothers are working long hours. Are the values against domestic violence that I grew up with being passed on to the current generations of young men? I have always told my now 14-year-old son, "You never hit a woman." That was my father's simple message to me as a boy growing up. It is cowardly and unmanly to strike a woman.

All men, especially fathers, have a big role to play in the prevention of domestic violence. But it seems that hitting women is part of a range of cowardly conduct that is accepted by some men today. The coward's punch, gang violence, instances where several men physically attack a single man, or pulling a knife or worse on someone, are all examples of cowardly male conduct. I remember being brought up with a different dominant male culture. Growing up in Newcastle in the 1960s and 1970s was hardly a soft environment. But there was a clear culture of proper manly behaviour. Those universal values now seem to have been lost. Hitting women, coward punches, ganging up on a person or cutting another man's grass were all things which, when I grew up, would result in censure from your mates. But I can think of well-publicised examples of each of these behaviours; in recent years the media has given us examples of this behaviour by elite sportsmen off the sports field, and sometimes on the sports field.

What has happened to the male code of conduct? We need to re-establish a proper male culture. Men need to speak to each other about what is acceptable behaviour in their relationships with other people. This must include mates taking a strong position against their mates who commit violence against women. We need to get back to an appreciation of what is truly manly conduct. Domestic violence is not something bound by postcodes, although there are higher rates of domestic violence in some socioeconomic areas than there are in others. Just over a week ago I met members of the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services in my electorate office. This is a valuable and vital service that has 28 offices across New South Wales. Under new government reforms to streamline the response for victims, the advocacy service is required to be in contact with a domestic violence victim within 24 hours of a report to police, then support the victims in various ways, including in their court appearances.

The service informed me that domestic violence is very much a factor on Sydney's North Shore, but that in many cases it is "hidden", as women who are victims are loath to report it because they wish to protect the dignity of themselves, their children and their family name. I was dismayed to hear figures relating to the number of domestic violence cases on the North Shore of Sydney. Figures presented to me showed that in the 20 days before that meeting in my office there had been 31 referrals after reports of domestic violence to local police. The Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services recorded 902 clients with more than 4,000 contacts last year alone. That is just the official record of women who have stood up and reported domestic violence to the authorities. Many, many more are too fearful to do so, as I have mentioned. Men must take stock of themselves—it is not cool or macho to strike a woman under any circumstances. As a society we need to restore our focus on manly values and re-establish a culture of self-discipline in men's relationships with other people. If it is not any longer, then it should be "the Australian way." I thank the House.

#### **GLEN INNES HELIPAD**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [5.48 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the strong desire and unstinting efforts of the Glen Innes community to have a helipad constructed adjacent to its local district hospital. This desire has manifested itself into a community campaign; and, typical of the Glen Innes spirit and its pragmatic approach, there has been an outpouring of donations to raise the funds required to see the helipad constructed. This campaign has my absolute backing; and I am now appealing to Hunter New England Local Health District to end the obstinateness and get behind this project, too.

Currently, there is nowhere for helicopters to land at the Glen Innes District Hospital. When helicopters, whether Westpac Rescue or aerial retrieval, have to bring people to this hospital, or take them from the hospital to larger hospitals, say at Armidale, Tamworth or John Hunter in Newcastle, they have to land or take off from Wilson Park netball fields, about 500 metres from the hospital. That does not

sound like a long distance, but it is very inconvenient, particularly when every time a chopper lands and a patient has to be delivered from the chopper to the hospital, or from the hospital to the chopper, the Ambulance Service has to be engaged to transport the patient. That comes at a cost to the local hospital and the local health district; but it also takes those valuable ambulance resources away from their frontline services. In essence, the community demands, and is entitled to have, a helipad built at the Glen Innes hospital site. The Glen Innes community has been fundraising for this helipad for about two years. So far, the community has raised a little over \$80,000 for it.

I pay tribute to Jan Sharman, president of the local hospital auxiliary, her daughter, Elizabeth McCarthy, who is the treasurer, and all members of the auxiliary who already have \$40,000 in a fixed deposit bank account earmarked for the hospital helipad. In another account they hold almost another \$40,000—\$39,752—from a number of donors in the community. The Glen Innes community is incredibly generous. Some of the organisations that have been supporting the push include the Glencoe Sports Club with \$500, the staff of Glen Innes Severn Council with \$408, the year 12 students at Glen Innes High School who raised \$644.80, the Christian Life Centre, the Club Hotel at Emmaville, KCL Childcare, Glen Innes Red Cross, Glen Innes Quota, Glen Innes Rotary, Glen Innes National Service Association, Glen Innes Quilters, the Glen Innes Men's Shed and the Glen Innes Opportunity Shop. They are just some of the many groups that have put their shoulders to the wheel and got behind this cause. It is typical of the spirit in the Glen Innes community.

The Glen Innes Lions Club has committed the substantial sum of \$30,000 to the project. However, it is not willing to contribute the money until it receives an assurance from the Hunter New England Local Health District that the project will proceed. The Lions Club is not alone. There are many people in the community, who wish to remain anonymous, who are willing to donate if they are given an assurance that the project will go ahead. I have had more than 10 conversations and items of correspondence with Hunter New England Local Health District on this issue. To assist the situation it commissioned a feasibility study last year, which found that it will cost the community \$600,000 to have its helipad. I am not one to use unparliamentary language, but it is fair to say that that is absolute bollocks. There is no way that a helipad at Glen Innes District Hospital will cost \$600,000, given that one is being constructed for less than \$100,000 at the Guyra multipurpose service 60 kilometres down the road.

Chief Executive of Hunter New England Local Area Health Service Michael DiRienzo has said that the health service is more than willing to work with the community to resolve any issues and see this project go ahead. The health service wants to move to a concept design phase, which it estimates will cost \$25,000. My plea to Hunter New England Local Health District is: Stop putting barriers in the way and get behind this project. Pay for the plan and get the designs. The community will raise the money. The community will find local contractors to build the helipad for much less than \$600,000. Glen Innes is a great community. It has my full support and I will continue to fight on its behalf until the helipad is built.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.53 p.m.]: The Hunter New England Local Health District is probably better off proceeding with the project, because the member for Northern Tablelands is like a dog with a bone. Once he gets hold of an issue he will advocate for it right to the end. Congratulations to the member for Northern Tablelands on his advocacy and congratulations to the wonderful Glen Innes community. The need for a helipad at Glen Innes is not new. I recall that the now member for Oxley, when she was Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Health, mentioned the issue three years ago. The member for Northern Tablelands has now acted on it. He is listening to his community and doing his best to deliver for them. We, as members of Parliament, cannot ask for more than that.

#### **COMMONWEALTH BANK AGQUIP FIELD DAYS**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [5.54 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House one of the biggest field days in New South Wales: The Commonwealth Bank AgQuip Field Days. This event is

occurring in the great township of Gunnedah next week, on 18, 19 and 20 August. I note that the former Mayor of Gunnedah, now member for Northern Tablelands, Mr Adam Marshall, is in the Chamber. He is a huge fan and supporter of the field days. I thank the Commonwealth Bank for its continued support of the AgQuip Field Days. Without such sponsorship, events of this nature would struggle to continue. The Commonwealth Bank AgQuip Field Days is the nation's biggest showcase of agricultural products. For many companies it is a rare chance to talk with and get a direct response from the people who use their products and services. Not only is it a chance to see agricultural innovation and the latest technology; it is a chance for farmers to get together. They have been out on their properties working hard all year, and they often do not get the chance to go to town and socialise.

Making a living off the land can be stressful for families who endure the hardship of drought. AgQuip Field Days provides an opportunity for families to come together. Service organisations such as the Red Cross, the Country Women's Association and the United Hospital Auxiliaries of NSW hold events over the three days that families can get involved in. People check out the latest in tractors, cattle, marketing and silos—you name it, it is there. People also have the opportunity to catch up with each other. AgQuip Field Days is held in Gunnedah. Gunnedah is known as the koala capital of the world due to the abundance of healthy koalas living right in the township. I encourage my parliamentary colleagues, friends and staff to find their way to Gunnedah to experience what AgQuip Field Days has to offer.

AgQuip Field Days began many years ago in the early 1970s. At first it had only 69 participants and attracted 30,000 visitors, but the number of exhibitors and participants has grown significantly. The site now caters for more than 100,000 visitors. That is up from the numbers in 1978, when BAL Marketing was set up as a marketing division of Radio 2TM to organise the AgQuip Field Days on a full-time basis. The Commonwealth Bank AgQuip Field Days is a wonderful event. The Nationals will be there, as we always are. We will be on stand J24. Parliamentary members of The Nationals like to come along to touch base with their constituents, with the grassroots. It is a good opportunity to say g'day, to listen, to learn and to get a greater understanding of people's lives.

I note that the member for Oxley and former Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Health, Ms Melinda Pavey, is in the Chamber. She will be most welcome at AgQuip Field Days at Gunnedah. I am sure she will come and say hello. The Assistant-Speaker, Mr Andrew Fraser, who is in the Chair tonight, regularly attends. We look forward to welcoming him in Gunnedah next week. AgQuip Field Days is a great opportunity to see the latest innovation and technology. It is also a wonderful opportunity for families in regional New South Wales to come together, in camaraderie and fellowship, to share their stories of life on the land. I look forward immensely to attending AgQuip Field Days next week.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.58 p.m.]: I am considered an honorary member of The Nationals. I commend the member for Tamworth on his statement. The Commonwealth Bank agricultural quip field days sounds fantastic. The event gathers 100,000 people and displays agricultural products, innovation and technological advances. More people attend that event than live in my electorate. The great Ferragosto takes place in Five Dock, in my electorate, this Sunday. That will attract more than 50,000 people, and I encourage members to attend. As the member for Tamworth alluded to, people on the land do a great job and field days are a great way to unite the community. [*Time expired.*]

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I advise the Parliamentary Secretary that AgQuip is about a bit more than half a dozen bantams in your backyard—and it is "AgQuip", not "agricultural quip".

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**Pursuant to resolution matter of public importance proceeded with.**

**INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY**

## **Matter of Public Importance**

**Ms JODI McKAY** (Strathfield) [6.01 p.m.]: I thank the House for the opportunity to speak on this matter of public importance. Today is International Youth Day. International Youth Day was designated by the United Nations in 1999 and is held on 12 August every year. The theme for this year is "Youth Civic Engagement". How we engage and support young people in public life and civic engagement is an issue that I feel very strongly about—as I am sure do many other members because it is often when we are young that our interest in politics and current affairs develops. It is important that we support young people in public life and in political engagement, which is why I raised the notion of young people being given the opportunity to vote at the age of 16.

We have discussed the issue many times in this country but we have never had a serious conversation about it. It was raised at the 20/20 Youth Forum and since then very little has been said about it. However, I believe the notion has merit and I will tell the House why I think it is important to pause and think about the issue today, on International Youth Day. Young people do have a view. As well-known constitutional lawyer George Williams said, young people are actively engaged at school in what is happening with educational issues, and it is part of the curriculum. School students are well placed to think about and consider some of the issues that will impact on their lives. Of course, at present young people cannot vote until they are 18 years old. As Mr Williams also said, at the age of 18 young people are entering the workforce or finishing university and they may be disrupted by what is going on in their lives. Therefore, if young people were able to vote at age 16 or 17 it would get them more engaged in the political process sooner.

I raised this issue in my inaugural address to the Parliament as the member for Strathfield. I did so because I witnessed firsthand the enthusiasm and desire of young people to know more about politics. A number of young people worked with me on my election campaign—they doorknocked with me, visited train stations and did a lot of work. It is important to note that they did so knowing that at the end of the day they could not have a say in who was elected to represent them in Parliament—they were supporting me but they were not allowed to vote. That struck me as wrong, which is why I have pushed this issue. I have been overwhelmed by the support I have received. I believe that voting at 16 should be optional and that the community should continue to discuss the issue.

One young woman, Rose Cox—I have mentioned her in the House before—is a carer for her mother, who has multiple sclerosis. She is in the Young Carers NSW program and is a leader in her school. She feels strongly about many issues. I spoke to her on the weekend at a marriage equality rally. She feels very strongly about health care and transport and about young people having a say on issues such as climate change, but she cannot do anything about it. Rose is a good example of young people who I believe deserve to have a say in their future. Issues that impact on young people were played out in the Youth Parliament here a few weeks ago.

I was pleased to be in the chair when this issue was debated. The enthusiasm and arguments of the young people were extraordinary. I was moved and incredibly heartened by the fact that they got up and argued the case for being able to take part in politics more readily. Many young people may be disengaged from politics. That is why I believe voting at 16 or 17 years of age should be optional. But I believe we should consider the issue; it is an important issue and it recognises the wonderful contribution of young people in the community. I thank every member who will contribute to this discussion tonight.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [6.06 p.m.]: Today is International Youth Day. International Youth Day is an important event that encourages young people around the world to come together and make a difference. Coming together is something we have done across this Chamber today. I do not know whether the member for Strathfield is aware that we both submitted the same matter of public importance today. Joe Andrade, who has worked in the Speaker's office for the past 24 years, tells me that it is one of only a handful of times that has happened in those 24 years.



**Mr John Sidoti:** Brilliant minds think alike.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** Brilliant minds think alike. I am pleased that something as important as supporting and encouraging our youth brings us together across the Chamber. There are more than 1.2 billion people aged between 15 and 24 around the world, and they are obviously the foundation for our future. In December 1999 the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and declared that 12 August be known as International Youth Day. In 1995 the General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth, which set a policy for national action and international support to improve the lives of young people. The program prioritises 15 key areas that were adopted by the General Assembly. Some examples of these priorities include policies for education, HIV-AIDS, and girls and young women.

Today the program still plays a prominent role in youth development, with a strong focus on improving the quality and quantity of opportunities for young people around the world. This year the theme of International Youth Day is "Youth Civic Engagement". This theme reflects the importance of young people being a part of discussions that will affect them directly in the future. Whether it is a political, economic or social issue, as the member for Strathfield mentioned, often very few people actively participate in the conversation. In describing this year's theme, United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon said:

In this landmark year, as leaders prepare to adopt a bold new vision for sustainable development, the engagement of youth is more valuable than ever.

At this critical moment in history, I call on young people to demand and foster the dramatic progress so urgently needed in our world.

The United Nations has acknowledged that in more recent times governments, United Nations entities and other organisations have been increasing their focus on policy that relates to youth civic engagement. As chair of the Committee on Children and Young People, I am delighted to speak about young people and, more importantly, about youth engagement. The Baird Government is committed to ensuring that young people in New South Wales have the opportunity to succeed. This Government established the Advocate for Children and Young People, which is now a statutory office that reports to this Parliament.

The office was established by the Young People Act 2014. I met with the advocate this week and I know that many good changes will be made as a result of his involvement. Over 2015-16 the Advocate will prepare a draft three-year whole-of-government strategic plan for children and young people in New South Wales. In the future, children and young people will be able to participate in the decisions that impact their lives. The development of the plan has already started and so far 2,500 children from all over the State have been consulted. In addition to the office of the Advocate for Children and Young People, there is also the Youth Advisory Council. The Government recognises the importance of seeking the view of young people as it is their generation that is most affected by decisions made in this House.

The Youth Advisory Council has a statutory role to advise the Government on issues, policies and bills that affect young people in New South Wales. The Youth Advisory Council also engages with other local government youth advisory councils across the State. The Government's Youth Opportunities program provides grants of up to \$50,000 for young people to lead and participate in youth-driven community development activities, essentially making it easier for young people to be involved in their communities. I am pleased to announce that over the past 2½ years this Government has provided more than \$5 million to support 89 projects. Liverpool's Autism Advisory Support Service was one of the lucky recipients of funding through this program, and I acknowledge Minister Andrew Constance, who was involved in supporting AASS when he was Minister for Disability Services.

In July 2015 the Government announced a fourth round of funding, providing an additional \$1

million for the Youth Opportunities program and I hope to see some more local recipients benefiting from this grant program. Let us make it our mission to connect with our young people and encourage them to join in the conversation. I thank the member for Strathfield for joining me and bringing this matter of public importance to the attention of members.

**Mr JIHAD DIB** (Lakemba) [6.11 p.m.]: It is great to have the opportunity to discuss this matter of public importance, especially given my background prior to coming into this place. I thought I would begin by quoting Confucius, a quote that I think is very apt. Confucius says:

A youth is to be regarded with respect. How do you know that his future will not be equal to our present?

Today is International Youth Day and I commend the member for Strathfield and also the member for Holsworthy for raising the matter simultaneously. International Youth Day—Youth Civic Engagement is such an important thing to talk about. There is always something refreshing, inspiring and invigorating about spending time with young people, especially those between the ages of 15 and 24. Anyone who spends time with young people will find that their enthusiasm and outlook on life is not only infectious but also keeps things in perspective.

Last week and even yesterday, like many of my colleagues, I visited a number of schools for Education Week and hosted a number of school groups. After each occasion that I spent time with these groups I felt the better for it. Many years ago we founded the Mateship Trek, a bipartisan project in which kids from different cultural backgrounds who did not know each other participated in the treks. We took them on the Kokoda Track, the Sandakan Death March Trek and also the Black Cat Track in Papua New Guinea. We saw leadership among young people that we had never seen before. Throughout my career of working with young people I saw the best in them. One often sees incredible leadership, most often in those from whom one would least expect it. All they needed was to be given the responsibility and the opportunity. We see that in schools, in student representative councils, outside in universities and through political engagement and social enterprises.

I am a big believer that everyone has leadership abilities. We just have to find a way to activate it; to provide them with real opportunities for decision-making. During the last school holidays I had the great fortune of joining kids in the Youth Parliament, which was a wonderful opportunity. I managed to preside over this legislation—and I know it is a prop—the Voice of Youth Bill 2015, a great concept that builds on what already exists, including expansion of the Youth Advisory Council. All youth are considered, not just those with means, and there is an expectation that marginalised youth and official bodies will be involved. As young people often do so well, there was reference to social media and ways of connecting with one another. What they do they do really well and we should give them credit for it.

I have met a number of different people and have heard many people talk about the good old days. They lament what has happened with today's youth. My experiences have left me inspired because we find energy in young people. When we take the time to listen and to be inclusive we see the best in them. If they follow their dreams, their aspirations, and have a sense of ownership they become much more involved. Indeed, the lives of people like me have been made all the better for working with young people. I am sure that many of my colleagues in this place would say the same. On this important day it is fitting to reaffirm our commitment to always work in the best interests of people, especially our youth. It is important to encourage them, to protect them and to provide them with every opportunity to reach their potential, regardless of what they may choose.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I remind the member for Drummoyne that whilst devices are allowed to be used in this House, the use of such devices should be discreet and not disrupt the proceedings or other members.

**Ms TAMARA SMITH** (Ballina) [6.15 p.m.], by leave: On behalf of The Greens, I acknowledge

International Youth Day. I am particularly thrilled that this year's theme is Youth Civic Engagement. Designated in 1999, International Youth Day is an annual celebration of the role young women and men play as agents for change, I believe, this year. It is an opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges and hardships facing the world's youth. Almost half of the world's forcibly displaced people are children and youth. The displacement of youth across the world due to extreme weather events associated with climate change, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and mudslides is increasing in frequency and is predicted to be the single most threatening issue facing our young people in the next decade and beyond.

When I reflect on young people and on our obligation as politicians to young people—just today my nephew, Tom Peter, attended a school captain's leadership event at Parliament House, which was thrilling—it is difficult to think of any issue more important or more pressing than the need to ensure we have a healthy planet in the future. If we fail as legislators to act on climate change we are failing the leaders of tomorrow and burdening them with the legacy of our mistakes and inaction. We have known for many years that the economic impact of failing to take action on climate change will be far greater than taking action today. We know that there will be exponential job creation from the paradigm shift to renewable energy. If our parliaments fail to position Australia to make this transition, we will be left behind and many opportunities for the next generation will be squandered.

However, I am inspired by how many young people are on the front foot in pushing us as politicians to support a different approach. Whether it is action on climate change and support for renewable energy or campaigning for the fair treatment of people seeking asylum and marriage equality, as we have seen in the past week, often it is young Australians who are dragging our community and politicians into the future. I am proud to be the member of a party that supports lowering the voting age to 16—I acknowledge Labor's position, which is exciting—and that is committed to empowering more young people to be part of the political process. Last month's Greens State conference was a youth conference at which young people were prioritised as speakers and facilitated all debates. Young groups exist across all political parties, which is great.

I acknowledge also that many young people do not feel politically empowered or believe that our governments are supporting their needs. Cuts to services, increased fees for education, dramatic reductions in Newstart and Youth Allowance diminish life chances for young people. Far from being engaged, too many young Australians are struggling to get by. On this International Youth Day, and on behalf of The Greens, I hope all members in this place can work together to support our young people to lead better lives and to leave a healthy and sustainable planet for the future.

**Ms JODI McKAY** (Strathfield) [6.18 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their support for this matter of public importance that recognises that 12 August is International Youth Day—a day that was designated by the United Nations in 1999. That both the member for Holsworthy and I sought to bring this matter of public importance to the attention of members tonight shows the commitment of this place to supporting young people in civic engagement and to encouraging them to participate in public life, which is not always easy for young people. Tonight the member for Holsworthy, the member for Ballina and the member for Lakemba gave a commitment to do their best to ensure that we have a platform for young people to engage in those issues that are important to them.

I note that the member for Ballina referred to climate change, which is as important an issue to her as it is to me. It is an issue that is important to young people. We have a duty to do what we can to ensure that they have a say in the issue throughout their teenage years and even into adulthood. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Lakemba. It is wonderful for our party to have one of the most celebrated principals in New South Wales. His contribution has been valuable. He knows firsthand the excitement of working with young people, seeing their potential and understanding what is required to support them, nurture them and challenge them. That is what comes from participating in public life.

I acknowledge also the member for Holsworthy and thank her for her support. She is committed to young people, not just in her electorate but also through her role as Chair of the Committee on Children

and Young People. I am pleased she has recently met with the new Commissioner for Children and Young People. I know she will do well working with the new commissioner and indeed in her role as chair. I thank the House for its support for this matter of public importance. It is important to me and my electorate. I have one of the highest proportions of young people in my electorate so it is important for me to speak out on their behalf in my role as the member for Strathfield. More importantly, the onus is on us all to be advocates for young people in our areas. Being advocates for them in this place is an important start and an important way to show our support for them.

**Discussion concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 6.20 p.m. until  
Thursday 13 August 2015 at 10.00 a.m.**

---